

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JANUARY 2010

“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

The glorious truth of the everlasting safety of the church of God has always been precious to God’s people. “Upon this Rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Never has this truth been more precious than in the present day when the church is assailed on every side by those who would overthrow it.

The little-known vision of Zechariah in chapter 1, verses 18 to 21, throws a beautiful light on this truth. It was a frightening sight that the prophet saw. “Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and beheld four horns.” He saw four ferocious horns coming against God’s people to destroy them. And he knew what horns signified! God’s ancient people were a pastoral people who knew well the ferocity of a ram or a wild bull, especially when angered. Throughout the Old Testament the horn is a symbol of strength. Here were Israel’s enemies, fierce, powerful, ready to destroy.

The number *four* is significant. Assaults and opposition, from every quarter – north, south, east and west; from without and from within. At this difficult time for God’s people, wherever they looked there were mighty powers to oppose. There were the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Samaritans to the north; the Egyptians to the south; the Philistines to the west; the Moabites and Ammonites to the east.

So it is today. There is opposition against even the outward form of Christianity, with one malicious design – to destroy. Witness the daily press, politicians, the media, scientists like Richard Dawkins. The church of God, as never before, is surrounded by the powers of hell.

But Zechariah saw “four carpenters” coming on a special mission to “fray” the horns, and to “cast them out” (verses 20, 21). The emphasis is on the agreement of the numbers: *four* horns; *four* carpenters. For every enemy of the church of God complete provision is made to destroy

them. For every trouble there is a refuge; for every problem an answer; for every temptation deliverance.

The word is very clear: the prophet *saw* the four horns; the Lord *showed* him the carpenters. How easy it is to see “mighty enemies without; much mightier within”; but may the Holy Spirit *show* us the glorious answer. And as “carpenters” are mentioned, we cannot help thinking of that glorious Person of whom it was said, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?”

What are the enemies that confront the church of God today? Writing just after the first War, a leading Nonconformist minister listed the four as: Sacramentalism (including priestcraft, ritualism and Romanism); Worldliness; Christian Science; and Spiritualism. It is interesting to reflect that little is heard of the last two today. So, one by one, “He must reign till every enemy is beneath His feet.”

But there are others which, like giants, have risen up. First of all, we might mention the growing power and influence of Islam. Then there is the appalling atheism. We can think of materialism and increasing immorality, defiance of God’s laws. But it still stands: “O’er every foe victorious.”

“Gates of hell shall never
 ’Gainst His church prevail;
 We have Christ’s own promise,
 And that cannot fail.”

What happened soon after, historically, proved the truth of this prophecy. The temple at Jerusalem was completed, despite all the powerful opposition. But what of the mighty nations who opposed at that time? They are long since forgotten. Their once-magnificent cities are now heaps of desolation.

What is true of the whole church of God is true of every believer. Tempted by Satan, feeling the power of indwelling sin and unbelief, opposed or allured by the world, the believer is safe. “He that has loved us bears us through,” despite all our weakness and helplessness. Greater are they that are for us than all that are against us.

In a word: “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.”

These are exceeding great and precious truths, but they should not, must not, lead us to complacency. Things are very solemn in our nation, and in our churches.

What need there is for prayer! May the Lord give us a spirit of wrestling, prevailing prayer, believing that still,

“Prayer can force a passage through
 Iron bars and brazen gates.”

It was remarkable that in the very week in November when our congregations were meeting for special prayer for the nation, such a wonderful answer should be given. We know that in some places, prayer was specially made that the “Exclusion Clause”* (that the House of Lords had retained) should not be thrown out by the House of Commons. Though this was feared, yet prayer was answered. May we not be amiss in returning thanks, and may we be encouraged to pray on.

But what a need there is for repentance! We are part of the nation that has sinned. Like godly Nehemiah (chapter 1, verses 6 and 7) may we be humbled in self-abasement, and come on the ground of mercy alone.

In the church of God we pray for more power and blessing to rest upon the work of the ministry. In the first half of the eighteenth century, things in England, morally and spiritually, were in a dreadful state, and then the Lord sovereignly intervened, raising up men like Whitefield, Venn, Berridge and Grimshaw, and England was transformed – even outwardly and morally. The clarion cry of Whitefield for the vital necessity of the new birth was used by God to the awakening of thousands.

People have wondered if something could be said about the preaching. But it is not just the preaching; it is the condition inwardly and spiritually of the church. Why in some places is the blessing withheld? We know God is sovereign – but when He revives His work there are usually a few things present.

1. *Real prayer.* Who knows the value of the secret wrestlings in prayer for God’s blessing in the church (perhaps by some unobtrusive member)? We understand that Charles Henry Gascoigne once felt wonderfully favoured in preaching. Toward the end of the service, a poor old woman went out – and as she went through the door, he felt the flow of his preaching began to dry up.

Mention of Mr. Gascoigne reminds us of the occasion when he welcomed Mr. P.O. Laver of Rotherfield home from preaching, and enquired how he had got on. On Mr. Laver saying he felt he got on well, Mr. Gascoigne replied, “I knew it! I have been wrestling for you all evening, and I was able to lay hold on the hem of His garment!”

2. *A godly example.* There are so many exhortations to the people of God to walk worthy. In former days our chapels were admired for the uprightness of the members’ lives, even by the world who despised their doctrines. Enemies of William Gadsby were compelled to confess that no congregation in the city of Manchester exceeded the godliness of his church members.

* The “Exclusion Clause” guaranteed freedom of speech. If removed, it would have caused tremendous difficulties to Christians witnessing for the truth and against error, and contending that Christ is the *only* way of salvation.

Also, in former days the Lord often used the gracious walk of the church members to convince those without: here was a difference; here was something they did not possess. Often in John Kershaw's life and ministry, a person would come to chapel out of curiosity, perhaps to a baptism or a funeral, and would be overwhelmed by a sense of God's presence and the holy solemnity of the occasion.

There was a saying in Scotland in days of prosperity: "A holy minister is a fearsome weapon in the sight of God." The same might be said of "a holy church." But what is it if there is little difference between the church and the world?

3. *The honour and glory of God.* May this ever be our standard, our desire and our prayer in the church of God. May we not deviate. The Lord deliver us from worldly conformity and from failing to stand when there is any deviation in faith or in practice. Israel suffered severely when Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire (Leviticus chapter 10). "This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified." Some are afraid of offending man, but not afraid of offending God.

"Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

The widow of one of our old ministers has kindly asked that a loving appeal should be made to our ministers. Many elderly people are hard of hearing and have difficulty in hearing some of our ministers. It would be very helpful if they could look up, speak clearly, and not drop their voices.

We remember when we first preached, an aged pastor wrote to us, saying, "The best sermon preached since the Day of Pentecost will not profit the people if they cannot hear it!"

This year marks the 175th anniversary of the first publication of the *Gospel Standard* in August 1835, and the Gospel Standard Trust is planning one or two publications to mark that event.

It is a wonderful mercy to be maintained so many years. We have a list of the dozens of Baptist magazines which were current in the nineteenth century, of which only one or two still appear today. When William Gadsby and his son John "launched the little vessel into the wide ocean," it was with many fears, yet trusting in the Lord and with sincere desires for His honour and glory and for the good of His people. We believe we have the same desires today, and would still contend for the same glorious truths as our forefathers.

Great has been the opposition to the truth and still is today. (We have here a magazine, September 2009, which describes what we believe as "damnable heresies.") We believe God will not fail to vindicate His own truth.

During the last year Mr. John Watts celebrated his 90th birthday; the *Gospel Standard* in recent years owes much to him. As far back as 1971, and before, he took a great interest in every aspect of the magazine's publication, and has consistently read the proofs month by month ever since (and still does at his advanced age). His help and encouragement have been remarkable.

It is in gratitude to God we look back over the past year, and depending on His help we venture into the unknown way.

We have long viewed a beauty in the promise which God gave to Moses: "Certainly I will be with thee." Recently, however, we have been impressed by the fact that it was graciously given to a man who dreaded what lay before him – especially having to confront Pharaoh. "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh," was not only the language of his lips but of his heart. And the promise was God's answer.

Many of you have trials, difficulties, problems, fears, greater than Pharaoh – in soul, body and circumstances. But God's promise counterbalances them all: "I will be with thee." We have to say, "What more *can* He say than to you He has said?"

And then Almighty God confirms it with a *certainly*. But surely, all God's words are sure and certain, are they not? The Almighty condescends to speak in this way for the comfort of His fearful people. "*Certainly* I will be with thee" – the one certainty in the unknown way. We are reminded of Hebrews chapter 6: no need for Almighty God, who speaks and cannot lie, to confirm His word with an oath! But the mercy and the condescension: "Men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things [God's promise and God's oath], in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

In wishing our readers the Lord's blessing in the New Year, we conclude with the words of William Gadsby, our founder (though he did not include the verse in his own selection):

"With wondering eyes we view the year that's past;
The present year, perhaps, may be our last;
Dear Lord, uphold us by Thy power and love,
And fix and keep our hearts on things above."

Yours for the truth's sake.

The Editor

B.A. Ramsbottom

SURE FOUNDATIONS

Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton, on May 31st, 2009

Text: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11. 3).

When David wrote this little psalm, the foundations of society, the foundations of decency, the foundations of justice in Israel were all being destroyed. King Saul was destroying them. There was no justice, no righteousness in the land, and David knew it and he was suffering because of it. The foundations were being destroyed, and what should he do? He tells us there were plenty of people who were telling him what he ought to do. “How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?” In other words, David, run away from it all. And not only people, but Satan and David’s own unbelieving heart. David, the foundations are being destroyed. You have not got any hope in Israel. You are not going to do any good. There is no fairness; there is no justice; the king is dealing unrighteously. His one aim in life is to kill you. David, what are you going to do when all these foundations are being destroyed?

If you want David’s answer, you can go home this afternoon and sit down and read right through the Book of Psalms, the Psalms of David. Do not forget, David did not sit down like William Wordsworth in beautiful Dove Cottage to write his Psalms. He did it with this terrible, black background, the foundations being destroyed. So if you read through the psalm, David tells us a few things he was going to do. I just mention two. “I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.” He saw his God as the God of providence who was performing all things, however strange they seem, and He was performing all things for His own glory and for David’s good. That was one thing that David was going to do when the foundations were being destroyed: lift up his eyes to that God, the performing God, the One of whom we sing:

“Sing the sweet promise of His grace,
And the performing God.”

And the other prayer: “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee: yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.” These were two of David’s answers to this question, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” But really he does give an immediate answer in the following verse. He says, “The Lord’s throne is in heaven.” If we really believed that, it would be our answer, David’s answer. “The Lord’s throne is in heaven.” He is almighty; He is in

control; He sits on the throne; He is there for ever. And it is a throne of grace where sinners are welcome. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Well, David knew the answer.

Let us leave David. What about us? You do not need me to tell you that in England at present one thing we are seeing is the foundations being destroyed – the foundations of decency, the foundations of truth, honesty, the foundations of morality. The Sabbath is no longer honoured. The ten commandments are no longer regarded. There is the greed, dishonesty, injustice in high places in Parliament. "Truth is fallen in the street." Years ago there were certain things in our country you could rely on – good things, steadfast things, reliable things – but one by one they seem to be going. The constant attack on Christianity, the pushing and pressing of evolution, the things that are happening in the schools, the homosexuality, which used to be an imprisonable offence, the lack of decency, the sexual immorality – the foundations in England are being destroyed. Then you come to religion. Whoever would have thought that the church of John Knox, the church of Samuel Rutherford, would have appointed a homosexual minister? And when you think of some of the things our archbishop believes and contends for, the lowering of standards, the departures from truth, the denial of God's holy Word, the perversion of the gospel, all we can say surely is this: that the foundations are being destroyed. It is a sad day. The foundations are being destroyed.

Now what can God's people do? Well, mercifully there are many things that they can do. They can still pray. They can still seek to walk in the holy fear of God in tenderness of conscience, in obedience to the Lord's Word, still seeking to honour Him, to worship Him, to glorify Him. They can still know that God is in control, that He binds the floods from overflowing, that He has set a bound which they cannot pass over, that He will have the last word, that He will triumph, that God's cause will triumph in the end. They can still continue in His fear to seek to preach and hear and worship and distribute God's Word, which for ever is settled in heaven, whatever men on earth may say. The foundations are being destroyed; what can the righteous do? They can listen to God's Word: "Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." Beloved friends, these are some of the things that we are called to *do*, some of the things that God's people can *do*, as enabled by the Spirit of God when the very foundations of society and goodness and morality and justice and equity and everything else in the world and in the professing church of God are being destroyed.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" But I want to come to the vital point, the blessed point here this morning.

When all these foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do? Well, they can still know, still believe, still hold fast that there are some foundations that never will be destroyed, that never can be destroyed. And beloved friends, that is your mercy and mine this morning, these blessed foundations revealed in the gospel that can never be destroyed, that will still stand when earth itself sinks in ruins. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” But blessed be God for those foundations that never can be destroyed.

With the Lord’s help, these are the things I want to speak to you about this morning, because there is all this dark, terrible, awful background surrounding us wherever we look, wherever we go. These foundations. Well, perhaps first of all you might ask the question: We thought there was only one foundation, and this speaks of *foundations*, foundations in the plural. Surely there is only one. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” This, of course, is the foundation of the gospel, the foundation of salvation and the foundation of hope. Now as I understand it, when the Word of God speaks of foundations, there is that one blessed foundation, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but then there are all these other glorious things which are bound up with Christ, and these are so many foundations.

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” So Almighty God says, “Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.” That is the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages, the foundation on which the church of God is built. That is a wonderful word – we have to keep going back to it – at Cæsarea Philippi where the Lord Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Upon this Rock” – the Rock Christ Jesus – “Upon this Rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Whatever other foundations are being destroyed, this foundation can never be destroyed. It is a wonderful thing if you and I by faith are found building our hope upon this sure foundation laid for sinners in Sion. If our hope is built on Christ, then our hope can never be destroyed, let alone the foundation never being destroyed. But this wonderful foundation, this sure foundation, Christ Himself the Son of God incarnate, that foundation that will stand when time shall be no more, that will stand in the swellings of Jordan. That is your mercy and mine if we are on it.

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” But then *foundations*, all these precious things that are bound up with the Person of the Saviour Himself as the Rock foundation. *The love of Christ to sinners* – that is a foundation that can never be destroyed. Satan cannot destroy it, and all your own unbelief and the wanderings of your heart and your backsliding can never destroy it. “Having loved His

own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” Now there is a foundation there. You cannot get beyond it, you cannot sink beneath it, the love of Christ to sinners. If ever there was an assault and an attempt to destroy it, it was as the Saviour approached the cross and the conflict He had and the assaults of Satan.

“It were an easy part
For Him the cross to fly;
But love to sinners fills His heart,
And makes Him choose to die.”

Now that is it. It can never be destroyed and it is a good foundation. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” And then *the covenant of grace*, the covenant made between Christ and His Father, an everlasting covenant, “ordered in all things, and sure.” The whole plan of salvation, the Lord’s purpose binding up His people, determined to bring them to heaven, and that covenant confirmed by the oath of God, and that covenant sealed by the blood of Christ. The covenant of grace can never be destroyed. I hope some of you can feel it. I hope some of you young people who fear the Lord might know covenant realities and covenant certainties in this day when everything else is uncertain and sinking and being destroyed.

Well, we have David here. He is a youngish man, but when we come right to the end, David still has these burdens and trials and temptations and sorrows. He is a dying man now, and he looks around in his kingdom and he sees things being destroyed, and he looks back in his own life and O the destruction there has been there! What about his family? What about that evil Amnon and Absalom and the others? Everything seems to be wrong, but there is a covenant of grace made between the Father and His dear Son which still stands and can never be destroyed. “Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation.” David is on sure ground, solid ground there.

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Blessed be God for these foundations that cannot be destroyed! *The mercy of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. We have it again and again. It is the most oft-repeated text in the whole Bible, from everlasting to everlasting: “His mercy endureth for ever.” David had a terrible thing happen to him. He fell into that dreadful sin of adultery and he was brought to feel the guilt of it on his conscience. What about his hope and his religion and his profession? It all seemed to be on the brink of destruction. “Have mercy upon me, O God.” There is still something there that is not destroyed. And when you feel your sin and fresh-

contracted guilt on your conscience, your faults and failures, remember this. There is one thing that has not been destroyed and it never can be destroyed: the mercy of Jesus. There is a lot of good divinity in hymn 11: "Thy mercy, in Jesus, exempts me from hell." "Have mercy upon me, O God," says David. "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." And that prayer was answered, and it was on the ground of mercy alone.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do." *The name of Jesus*. Our hymnwriter says,

"Sure ground, and sure foundation too,
We find in Jesus' name."

It can never be destroyed, but it is an all-prevailing plea in prayer. You are in trouble, spiritually, your sin, temptation, or what have you to do, bewilderment, or ill health, or the unknown way, or trouble. It is as if everything is being moved, everything is uncertain, everything is being destroyed. The name of Jesus will always be an all-prevailing plea. Hold it fast. Whatever else you lose, do not lose your claim here, that in your darkest moment you still have the sinner's all-prevailing plea that has never yet failed and it never will: the name of Jesus, for Jesus' sake.

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" *The Saviour's precious, sin-atonement blood*, the "fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness," where "sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains." That can never be destroyed. Why, when John had a glimpse of the exalted Saviour in heaven, how did he see Him? "A Lamb as it had been slain." The atonement can never be destroyed. It can never be obliterated from the gospel. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Precious blood!

"Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more."

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" *The righteousness of Jesus*. It is an everlasting righteousness. It is reckoned to the account of God's people as if it belonged to them. It is put on them as a beautiful dress. They did not buy it, purchase it, deserve it, work it out, make it. It was completely outside themselves, and it is put on them. Though the robes of your profession may be defiled and often will be, and at last you will need to wash those robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, Christ's righteousness once applied is always on. It cannot be destroyed. Satan cannot destroy it; all your wretched unbelief and sin cannot. You know what it is:

“No age can change its glorious hue;
The robe of Christ is ever new.”

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” *The intercession of the Lord Jesus*. He died, He rose again, He ascended, and this can never be destroyed. “This Man, because He continueth ever.” Those priests under the law were destroyed by death. Their priesthood was destroyed; their priesthood came to an end. “But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” There is an all-sufficiency in an exalted Saviour that can never be destroyed. There is a throne of grace on which He sits that can never be destroyed. There is grace there to help in time of need which can never be destroyed.

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” There is *the everlasting kingship of the Lord Jesus at God’s right hand*, exalted as a Prince and as a Saviour, King of kings and Lord of lords. “He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” And that throne can never be destroyed, and that everlasting dominion can never be destroyed. Now in the great day, the exalted Saviour will have every enemy beneath His feet.

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” Well, this morning I have just been able to hint on a few of these glorious foundations. I do like to speak on these sure and certain, definite things; in this dying, changing world, these precious things that can never die, that can never change. I do hope it has touched a few hearts this morning, at least some of you, for “unto you therefore which believe He is precious.” That is the mark of being a true believer. “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious.”

But just two or three words personally in closing. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” God is sovereign in dealing with His people. It is very difficult to lay down a standard – God is sovereign – but usually when the new birth takes place, in the beginning of a work of grace all your old foundations are destroyed, and that is painful work. In a sense you have to walk this out, feeling what it is for foundations to be destroyed, your self-righteousness, your taking-it-for-granted, your thinking that there is plenty of time, knowing that other people are thinking well of you. So you might go on and on. When the Lord makes your case solemn and eternity solemn, you must die and stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and you are a sinner, then all your foundations vanish and sink and are destroyed and you cannot find them. They are swept away as a refuge of lies. You are left without a foundation, and then you know what it is to “embrace the Rock for want of a shelter,” to see such a sweet attraction in the Lord and

Saviour Jesus Christ, this sure foundation where sinners like you, brought by the Spirit of God “trust their whole salvation there, nor shall they suffer shame.” I remember how I walked this out:

“Every prop will, first or last,
Sink or fail, but Jesus Christ;
On this sure foundation stone
Let me build and rest alone.”

And then just the other thing before closing: times in your life when you become dark and feelingly dead and dry and lifeless and tempted, or perhaps on the other hand so many unexpected sorrows and difficulties and problems, it seems you are going back into this again. O is everything being destroyed? And where do you come to then?

“Though waves and storms go o’er my head,
Though strength, and health, and friends be gone,
Though joys be withered all and dead,
And every comfort be withdrawn,
Steadfast on this my soul relies,
Redeeming mercy never dies.

“Fixed on this ground will I remain.”

And blessed be God for those foundations that cannot be destroyed.

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

THE LORD’S DAY

From Heaven Taken by Storm by Thomas Watson (c.1620-1686)

The sixth duty wherein we must offer violence to ourselves is the religious sanctifying of the Lord’s day. That there should be a day of holy rest dedicated to God, appears from the institution: “Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.” Our Christian Sabbath comes in the room of the Jewish Sabbath: it is called “the Lord’s day” (Rev. 1. 10) from Christ the Author of it. Our Sabbath is altered by Christ’s own appointment. He arose this day out of the grave, and appeared on it often to His disciples to intimate to them (saith Athanasius) that He transferred the Sabbath to the Lord’s day. And Augustine saith that by Christ’s rising on the first day of the week, it was consecrated to be the Christian Sabbath in remembrance of His resurrection.

This day was anciently called *dies lucis*, the day of light, as Junius observes. The other days of the week would be dark, were it not for the shining of the “Sun of Righteousness” on this day. This day hath been called by the ancients, *regina dierum*, the queen of days. And Hierom prefers this day above all solemn festivals. The primitive church had this

day in high veneration; it was a great badge of their religion, for when the question was asked, Keepest thou the Sabbath? the answer was made, I am a Christian, and dare not omit the celebration of the Lord's day.

What great cause have we thankfully to remember this day! As the benefit of Israel's deliverance from the Babylonish captivity was so great that it drowned the remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt (Jer. 16. 14), so the benefit of our deliverance from Satan's captivity, and the rising of Christ from finishing the glorious work of our redemption was so famous, that in respect of it His other benefits receive as it were a diminution. Great was the work of creation, but greater the work of redemption. It cost more to redeem us than make us. In the one there was only the speaking a word (Psa. 148. 5), in the other the shedding of blood (Heb. 9. 22). The creation was the work of God's fingers (Psa. 8. 3), the redemption the work of His arm (Luke 1. 51). In the creation God gave us ourselves; in the redemption He gave us Himself. So that the Sabbath, putting us in mind of our redemption, ought to be observed with the highest devotion. Herein we must offer holy violence to ourselves.

When this blessed day approacheth, we should labour that as the day is sanctified, so our hearts may be sanctified.

We must on this day rest from all the works of our calling. As Abraham, when he went to sacrifice, left his servant and ass at the bottom of the hill (Gen. 22. 5), so when we are to worship God this day, we must leave all secular business behind. And as Joseph, when he would speak with his brethren, thrust out the Egyptians, so when we would have converse with God this day, we must thrust out all earthly employments. Though works of necessity may be done and works of charity (for God will have mercy, and not sacrifice), yet in other cases we must cease from all worldly negotiations. It is observable concerning Mary Magdalene that she refused to anoint Christ's dead body on the Sabbath day (Luke 23. 56). She had before prepared her ointment, but came not to the sepulchre till the Sabbath was past. She rested that day from civil work, though it were a commendable and glorious work, the anointing of Christ's dead body.

When this blessed day approacheth, we must lift up our hearts in thankfulness to God that He hath put another price into our hand for the gaining of heavenly wisdom. These are our spiritual harvest days. Now the wind of God's Spirit blows upon the sails of our affections and we may be much furthered on in our heavenly voyage. Christian, lift up thy heart to God in thankfulness that He hath given thee another golden season, and be sure thou improve it [use it profitably]; it may be the last. Seasons of grace are not like the tide; if a man misseth one tide, he may have another.

This day approaching, we must in the morning dress and fit our souls for the receiving of the Word. The people of Israel must wash their garments before the law was delivered to them. Our hearts must be washed by prayer and repentance, the oracles of God being to be delivered to us.

And being met together, we must set ourselves as in the presence of God with seriousness and delight to hear God's sacred Word. Take heed of distractions which fly-blow our duties.

We must labour to be bettered by every Sabbath: where the Lord lays out cost, He looks for fruit. Fresh anointings of God are to be thirsted after, and new cubits to be added to our spiritual stature. We must not be like the salamander, which lives in the fire but is never the hotter. Christians should on these days aspire after communion with God, and endeavour to have the teaching of His Spirit and clearer discoveries of His love in Christ. In short, we should do on a Sabbath as Moses: he ascended the mount that he might have a sight of God.

We must dedicate the whole day to God. Under the law a single sacrifice was appointed for other days of the week, but two lambs were to be offered upon the Sabbath. All this day must be spent with God; He must have worship in public, and when we come home, He must have family worship. Many leave all their religion at church (as I have seen some do their Bibles), not hallowing God's name in their own houses. "Will a man rob God?" (Mal. 3. 8). When men pretend to worship God in the temple, but cut Him short of family and closet-duties on a Sabbath, this is to rob God, and steal a part of His day from Him.

Good reason we should consecrate the whole Sabbath to God, and give Him double devotion, for God doubles His blessings upon us this day. As the manna did rain twice as much on the sixth day as any of the other days, so the manna of spiritual blessings falls twice as much on the Sabbath day as any other.

We must rejoice in this day, as being a day wherein we enjoy much of God's presence. "Abraham saw My day and rejoiced" (John 8. 56); so when we see a Sabbath day coming, we should rejoice. The Protestants in France [the Huguenots] called their church paradise, because there they met with God. The Jews called the Sabbath the desire of days. Thou shalt "call the Sabbath a delight" (Isa. 58. 13). This we should look upon as the best day, as the queen of days, crowned with a blessing. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psa. 118. 24). He hath made all the days, but hath sanctified this. We should look upon this day as a spiritual mart for our souls, wherein we have holy commerce and traffic with God. This day of rest is the beginning of an eternal rest. This day God sets open the "pool of Bethesda" in which those waters flow that refresh the broken in

heart. And shall not we call this day a delight? The Jews on the Sabbath laid aside their sackcloth and mourning.

This is in a right manner to sanctify a duty [i.e. a religious observance], and it is a duty wherein Christians must excite and offer violence to themselves.

Above all others, how well doth it become those into whose hands God hath put the power of magistracy, to show forth holy violence in causing the Lord's day to be strictly observed? What a rare pattern hath Nehemiah set all good magistrates. "In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves ... and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals" (Neh. 13. 15). "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?" (verse 17). How dare ye infringe the command, and make a false entry upon God's freehold? My lord, your proclamation for the pious observation of the Sabbath and your punitive acts upon some offenders, have given a public testimony of your zeal for this day. The keeping up the honour of the Sabbath will much keep up your magisterial honour.*

GOD'S MATCHLESS CONDESCENSION

Introductory remarks by Ralph Erskine (1685-1752) on "Thus saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands command ye Me" (Isa. 45. 11).

They that truly seek Jesus who was crucified have liberty and allowance to seek anything that is agreeable to the will of God and that is promised in the new covenant. The ground of this liberty and freedom that God allows His people is the righteousness of Christ, which is the ground of justification before God. God is so well-pleased for this righteousness's sake, that all who lay hold upon it are allowed the greatest freedom with God, such as this: "Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands command ye Me."

From the beginning to the 9th verse of this chapter, we have an historical account of God's delivering Israel from their captivity by the hand of Cyrus, an eminent type of Christ, our great and glorious Deliverer. From the 9th verse and downward to the text, we have God asserting His sovereign authority over all the rational world, and

* This book was dedicated to the then Lord Mayor of London.

thereupon challenging their submission to Him, and also claiming employment at their hand, such as is spoken of in this verse.

We may therein observe two things:

1. The employment that God challenges. And,
2. The authority by which He doth so.

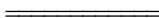
1. We have here the employment which God challengeth: it is wonderful employment. "Ask Me, command ye Me. Ask Me things to come": consult My Word, My prophets and their prophecies, with reference to these things; for, "Things to come (so far as they are revealed) belong to us, and to our children." And *command ye Me*; I present Myself, as it were, at your service; and you are allowed by faith and prayer to use such freedom and liberty as if I were at your command. Here is, indeed, a wonderful thing: the great God commanding us to command Him!

Again, the matter about which the employment here is challenged is concerning His sons and the works of His hands: His church, His children, which are the special works of His hand, and wherein He is more concerned than anything else in all the world. It is as if He had said, If anything trouble you concerning yourselves, or any other of My children, directly or indirectly, so as you are puzzled and diffculted therewith, then come and put the question to Me, and I will satisfy you; and if you would have anything done for you or any of My children, come and put it upon Me, and put Me to it, as confidently as if you could command Me.

I know some read this text with an interrogation, as carrying on the proof in verses 9th and 10th, as if the meaning were, Are you so bold as to ask Me concerning things to come? Or, dare you be so impudent as to command Me concerning the works of My hands? Will you prescribe to Me? But with the current of interpreters, we take the words in the former sense, as our translators also have done, *viz.*, God's calling here for employment at His people's hand. Though God doth not allow us to strive with Him by sin and unbelief, yet now He here tells us how we may wrestle with Him by faith and prayer for all things for which He said He would be enquired of by the house of Israel.

2. We have the authority by which this employment is challenged: "Thus saith the Lord, the holy One of Israel and his Maker." He challenges this employment; He calleth us to this freedom by His own lawful authority:

- i. As He is the sovereign Lord, the great JEHOVAH.
- ii. As He is the holy One of Israel, our covenanted God. Yea,
- iii. As He is our Maker, who made us and not we ourselves.



THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

By Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacker (1796-1868). Krummacker wrote at a time when German rationalism was beginning to affect the pulpit in its denial of the atonement.

You know the words of John in his first Epistle 1. 7: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." Observe, these are the words of John, which so many of you suppose you are better able to understand than those of the writer of the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians and Hebrews. But probably they may this day open a private protest against you!

The world refuses to know anything of the blood of Christ. It only requires to be mentioned, and many a one makes a face as if he had heard something intolerable. Even the hateful epithet, which is wont to be applied to our evangelical doctrine, testifies of deeply-rooted repugnance to the blood of the Lamb. Discourses and hymns which treat of that blood are rejected with irritated feelings as the productions of mysticism. Thus Christ crucified is still counted as the offscouring of all things, and will continue to be so, till the last despiser of His blood walks the path of destruction. For assuredly, he who cannot endure His blood is accursed. "The preaching of the cross," says the apostle, "is foolishness unto them that perish."

Thousands again in the present day profess a certain kind of religion, but the blood is wanting in it. This deficiency is a sufficient testimony that theirs is a false religion, and that, minutely inspected, it is only enmity against Christ. "But," say you, "I believe in the divine dignity of Christ; I believe in His supernatural mission; I believe in the reality of His miracles." And yet all this does not constitute you Christians. The delight in and the love for His blood is one of the primary and most essential features in the physiognomy of a true disciple of Jesus, and where this feature is wanting, whatever will may be there. We may have an individual before us in Christian attire, but the man himself is no Christian.

The blood of the Lamb is the central point of the whole of the Christian religion. It is in this blood that the temple of the New Testament is founded. Take away the blood, and such a temple no longer exists. Deny its power, and you deny the whole of salvation by Christ. Say, what colour is it which shines the brightest through the whole of Scripture? In what colour did the first promise glitter with which God rejoiced the first sinners in paradise? In what colour did Abel wait upon the Lord when he brought Him the acceptable sacrifice? What colour is the predominating one in which God brings forth significant types to view, and institutes sublime ordinances? What colour rescued the

children of Israel in Egypt from the murderous sword of the destroying angel? In what colour did the Lord clothe the emblematical figures and ceremonies of the tabernacle? In what colour glittered, in sacred days, the ark it contained and the altars? In what colour did the people, bending in the dust, listen to the absolution of the high priest? What colour was borne by almost all the predictions of the holy seers concerning Him who was to come? In what colour swims the gospel of the Old Testament – the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah? And tell me with what colour is the New Testament imbued? What colour did the apostles choose for their uniform and their favourite badge? What colour gleamed upon the standards which they carried amongst the heathen? And even those with the palm-branches before the throne of the Lamb, in what colour did they wash their clothes? Do you know? O how can you be ignorant of it! It is the colour which is still the most beneficial to the eye of the humbled sinner, the most consolatory and the dearest to his heart. Not white, nor blue, nor green – although even these possess a pleasing signification – but *red* is the colour. It is the colour of blood.

O what a song of praise pervades the world to the blood of the Lamb! What a song of praise from the beginning to this hour! For the space of four thousand years, it rushed along in the tone of *desire*. During the last two thousand years, it resounds in notes of joy. At one time, it is the exulting hymn of rescued sinners, who at the sight of the blood were divested of all their troubles. At another, it is the sorely-pressed warrior's song of hope, who looking up from the surrounding darkness to the blood, no longer doubts of a successful result. It is again the song of peace of the bitterly assaulted, who under the buffetings of a messenger of Satan at their side, suddenly find in the blood the most complete alleviation for their hearts. It is also the triumphant song of the departing righteous, who behold death, sin, hell and Satan lying vanquished at their feet, because they know that the threshold of their hearts is reddened with that blood. At another time it is the festive hymn of wearied and sorely-tormented souls, who after long fatigue, find a resting-place in this blood. Many things in the world may be praised more loudly and pompously than this blood, but nothing was ever yet praised more ardently, profoundly, or with more blissful hearts, than the blood of the Lamb.

I have no need to tell you what the Scriptures understand by the blood of Christ. They understand by it His blood-shedding; Christ's sufferings and death, so far as they were mediatorial; His enduring the punishment in our stead; His bleeding sacrifice by which He satisfied for us the righteousness of the divine Judge. And certainly, salvation is contained in it, and the life of the poor sinner flows out of it. Let him dye his banner red, his cockade be red, and red the feather in his hat. For

the document of his nobility and his passport are red, and whatever he is that is great, he is so in the blood.

But how is it with the efficacy of this blood? Our relation with reference to it decides our eternal fate. Having an interest in this blood, or having none, implies being either eternally saved or eternally lost. What does John say? "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Does he say, "*Helps* to make us clean"? No, it cleanses us. "Encourages us to cleanse ourselves"? No, the blood itself cleanses us. "Cleanses us from delighting in sin"? Not so, but the blood cleanses us from sin itself. "Yes, from the sin of spiritual drowsiness and slothfulness!" No, only use your eyes: "from all sin." "The blood"? Yes, the blood.

You would gladly think that Christ's example makes us clean. Look, the Apostle John is of a different opinion. You preach that Christ's doctrine accomplishes it. It is His blood which does it, says John. You say, "The imitation of Christ"? No, His blood, His blood. "The zeal for amendment," say you, "according to the precept and example of Christ." O how little savour have you yet of the true nature of the Christian religion! But John himself also says, "that the Spirit purifies from sin!" Yes, but that is quite another affair. That is not the question here; here the question is concerning the blood, and it is to this blood you all must confess, whether believers or unbelievers, whether you are sprinkled with this blood, or trample it under foot – it is to the blood that the power is here unequivocally ascribed to cleanse, and that entirely and from all sin.

Cleanses from all sin! It is impossible to express how this sounds in the ears of him who has recognised in the true light what sin is, and that he is a sinner. With what a craving appetite does he fall upon such a passage, like a panting hart rushes to a bubbling spring, and like a famished sheep, which finds in the sandy desert a verdant pasture; no one can imagine it who has not been himself in the situation of the panting hart and the famished sheep when finding water and pasture. Many amongst you, probably, read the words, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin"; but what have they from them but the mere dead letter? Such passages shine first in the dark; but then they are stars, festival-tapers, lamps which point out the home of peace.

But how is it to be understood that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin? Simply according to the obvious sense, and as a child would understand the passage. He for whom the blood of the Lord flowed is accounted sinless before God. His sins are no longer imputed to him, because they have received in Christ their just recompense. See, my friends, here is the point, in reference to which many of our hearers are not satisfied with us. According to their wish,

we ought not to say so much concerning the power of the blood of Christ. Here, say they, we ought to walk softly, that is, detract from the gospel; here we ought not to use such strong expressions as we are wont to do; that is, obscure the brightness of the Christian religion where it shines the most brilliantly. Here it is desired that we replace the consolations of the gospel with a variety of conditions and objections; but this would be to degrade and curtail the merits of the Surety. Here, for instance, we ought to preach that the blood of the Lamb absolves us from those sins of which the individual has previously obtained the mastery, so that they no longer live in him – that is, we ought to turn our backs upon Christ and His mediatorial work.

What strange ideas are these! No, my friends, though we might never become true friends with each other during the whole of our lives, and though you were to continue to go about as long as a breath is left in you with the Pharisaic complaint, “The man goes too far,” and though your displeasure against us were, in the end, to vent itself in burning rage; nay, even if the children of the devil, who make this great and sacred matter a covering for their wickedness, were to spring up amongst us like mushrooms, since some such characters are already to be met with, yet in this affair we cannot accede to your wishes. We *cannot*. No, never. We shall continue to trumpet forth in the most powerful manner the efficacy of the blood of Christ; and even though we might occasionally duly succeed in doing so, yet we should always bear about the feeling with us that we had spoken much too poorly and faintly on the subject.

It remains true that there is no condemnation to those for whom the blood of the Lamb was shed, as Paul says. Such a one, as the Lord Himself testifies, is clean throughout. His life lies in the sight of God, in the lustre of the most perfect blamelessness and beauty, in whatever disguise, covering and even leprous scales, it may still appear in the eyes of men. And has the blood of Christ such efficacy? Most assuredly. The dying thief ascends from the elevation of his well-deserved gibbet immediately into the triumphal car of the King of kings, because he experiences the efficacy of that blood. Mary Magdalene, whose company was shunned by decent people, and that justly, because that blood was shed on the cross for her, stands more unblameable before God than those moral people who condemned her, and that with reason.

“But this is horrible!” Horrible? No, it is sweet and precious above everything. “But then everyone may say, ‘O, the blood of Christ has atoned for everything!’” Everyone? No, you are under a mistake. He that is still in alliance with sin cannot say so, and if he does, the devil has blinded him. He who does not find within him the law of the Spirit warring against the law in his members has no claim to the consolation;

and if he improperly applies it to himself, he makes himself worthy of two-fold damnation. Those for whom Christ shed His blood receive Christ's Spirit also, in order that they may separate themselves, by a sacred protest, from the sin that is within them, and that they may acquire a relish for God and the things of God, and may anathematize and execrate from the bottom of their souls everything that appertains to the kingdom of darkness. The dominion of sin over them is at an end, and whenever it may seem to reign over them, it only reigns like a hated robber who takes them by surprise, and not like a legitimate and voluntarily chosen prince, to whom they willingly and lovingly devote themselves. Their Prince is Christ; Him they are resolved to serve. Sin is a marauder, a foreign oppressor, against whom they would gladly elevate walls and barriers.

Such are the people for whom the consolation of the blood of Christ is intended. They are no saints in themselves, but continue sinners in their own esteem; they are, however, real lovers of the saints, and protestants, in thought and deed, against the devil and all his filthiness.

Now these people trust that they are clean in the sight of God, and that justly. But must not, from such a consciousness, a carnal carelessness necessarily arise? On the contrary, my friends. This blood likewise cleanses the heart and purifies the conscience. If anything that is sinful again presents itself, either in their hearts or lives, do you imagine that they only quickly say to themselves, "O the blood has atoned also for this!" Such is not the case. Sin does not suffer itself to be expunged from the conscience by such a mere thought. The Spirit of truth, which is in the people, does not admit of it. It can only be accomplished by the blood of Christ, not by means of an operation of the memory, but by being apprehended in living faith. This faith, however, is not always at our command, and thus, even in the case of a converted person, a renewed act of unfaithfulness may be succeeded by conflicts of which the world has no idea. He to whom great faith is given also possesses much peace. He who is always able immediately to lay hold on the blood of the Lamb, goes on his way in uninterrupted tranquillity, and is fully justified in doing so; for whether we believe it or forget it, the blood of Christ has, once for all, blotted out our sins, and the more confidently the individual is able to believe this, the less need has he to be anxious about his sanctification.

I thought it advisable to express myself, for once, more fully upon this important subject, and rejoice in having found the opportunity for it.

He that loves Jesus Christ most is most like unto God.

Owen

ANSWERS TO PRAYER

During his Editorship, J.C. Philpot often dealt with questions sent to him. The following is one of them.

QUESTION

Dear Sir, Feeling assured you take pleasure in comforting the Lord's feeble ones, the dear Lord enabling you so to do, emboldens me to request you would favour a feeble one with a few remarks in your publication upon prayer; not as to the nature of prayer, but what may be taken as evidences that prayer is answered, as my mind has been much perplexed about it these last few days.

The case is this. Speaking with a dear brother the other day of having made request to God and of its having come to pass as I requested, I said I thought this was an answer to prayer; but this brother replied, "It might occur so, and yet not be in answer to prayer." After retiring to rest, I cried, "Lord, how are we to know that Thou hearest and answerest us?" I felt great distress of soul. It seemed as though someone was whispering in one ear, "It may occur so, and yet not be an answer to prayer," and as though someone was whispering in the other, "Of what use is it for you to pray? It is of no use for you to pray, you get no answer to your prayers." I felt as though I must sink under these suggestions, and in anguish of soul I cried, "The lion roars and threatens to devour; but, Lord, I look to Thee."

I have been, I hope I may say, led to make what some people would think trifling things a matter of prayer; but we are exhorted to "acknowledge Him in all our ways." I have, as I thought, received some signal answers to prayer, and with gratitude have said, "O Lord, I know Thou art a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God." But now I say it might be so, and yet not in answer to prayer! I think the psalmist says, "I know that Thou hearest me," but how are we to know?

If you should think my request not worth notice, I hope you will throw a mantle of love over it, knowing that if the Lord withdraw His face and the enemy is allowed to distress the soul, he will make that appear dark, distressing and mysterious, which at other times would be plain and easy to be understood. As one of old said, "We are not ignorant of his devices." May the dear Lord bless your labours.

S.S.

ANSWER

It often happens that we get wounded in the house of our friends, and sometimes we almost get rightly served by looking too much to man and too little to the Lord. This seems to have been the case with our correspondent who, by consulting a brother instead of consulting the Lord, only laid himself open to a blow in a very tender quarter.

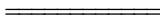
It is hard to form a judgment upon a one-sided statement of a case, and therefore there might be circumstances not mentioned by our dear correspondent which might make the answer obtained from "a dear brother" less objectionable than it now appears. For as it stands at present, it is nothing less than the language of sheer infidelity, and carried out would cut to pieces every answer to prayer that God has given either in or out of the Scriptures.

There are but two ways whereby we can know that God hears our prayers at all.

1. The first is, by *an inward feeling, through a sense of access*, that our prayer has entered the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Though the prayer is not *then* fulfilled, and months or years may elapse before the answer comes, yet there is an inward testimony and a sweet assurance that the prayer is registered on high. Of this kind was the confidence of Hannah, who when she left the tabernacle at Shiloh was as certain that her prayer would be answered as if she held the infant Samuel in her arms.

2. The second testimony that our prayers are heard is *by receiving marked answers*; for if this be not a proof that prayer is heard, what other proof can we have?

We look, therefore, upon the reply which "the dear brother" gave to our correspondent to be nothing less than a word for Satan, and opening a door for infidelity, unbelief, and despair. Go on, S.S., committing your path to the Lord; acknowledge Him in all your ways, bless Him for every signal answer to prayer, and however highly you may esteem, and in some points rightly, "a dear brother," do not put him in the place of God, or suffer him to rob you of anything that, the Lord may have done for your soul.



If we are preferring any earthly object, of whatever kind, to Jesus Christ; if our affections are placed on any other being in opposition to Him; or if we are seeking our delight in any created thing as distinct from Him and independent of Him, we are neglecting His great salvation; yes, setting up idols in our hearts. We must love the adorable Saviour with a supreme affection; and we must love other objects only for His sake. Our temporal blessings must be enjoyed as flowing from Him; our friends and domestic comforts must be received as gifts coming to us through His redeeming grace. All we possess must be held at His disposal and with a view to that account which we must one day give. Thus Christ must be the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and ending, of all our desires and affections.

Thomas Reade

CHURCH TRIALS AND DELIVERANCES

From John Kershaw's autobiography

After I commenced my pastoral labours, the Word was much blessed, and for some months things went on tolerably well. In September of the same year (1817), Mr. Littlewood, the Baptist minister of whom I have before spoken, died [the minister at Town Meadows, Rochdale, the old Particular Baptist chapel]. Immediately after his death, Mr. Stephens of Manchester began to supply. They gave him a call, which he accepted. The cause at that time was very low; several matters combining together caused this declension, of which it is not necessary that I should speak in this memoir.

After Mr. Stephens came, the chapel began to fill, the pew-rents were doubled, the poor who had free sittings under their former minister were told that they must give them up or pay for them, such was the demand for seats. As might be expected, several of our congregation, who were prejudiced against me, "being a prophet in my own country," left and went to hear this new minister who was so much exalted, but not a member left us. Some of his hearers said we should have to shut up the chapel, as we never could carry on the cause – a poor weaver for their minister, with a family of small children, a heavy chapel debt, but few members, small congregation, and those mostly poor; while their chapel was free from debt, many of the congregation rich, a growing church, a learned, talented and influential minister. They no doubt thought those we had would leave us and flock to them, so that our chapel must inevitably be closed. Yea, the cry went forth that Hope Chapel was going to be sold.

Under the circumstances, our deacons at times began to have their fears and misgivings whether or not we should be able to stand our ground and meet all demands, and my unbelieving heart echoed these fears. O the sighs and groans and fears that were working in my mind, both day and night, and the great searchings of heart that I endured! I felt sure that I had not put myself into the work of the ministry; I had neither worldly influence nor human learning to carry me through. I had nothing to look to for success in the work but the almighty power of Him who had called me to it. For months together I was in great agony of soul, wrestling in earnest, fervent prayer and supplication for the power of the Holy Spirit to rest more abundantly upon me and the good Word of His grace in the souls of His people, that sinners might be converted and saints comforted and edified, and that the Lord would keep me in His fear, so that my conduct and conversation might be as becometh the gospel of Christ.

In the midst of these exercises and misgivings, I spoke of them to dear Mr. Niven [an old, godly church member – a Scotsman].

His reply was, “Let us pray to the Lord to bless and prosper our friends in Town Meadows (the chapel in which Mr. Stephens preached), so far as they have the honour and glory of the Lord, the purity of His truth, and the peace and prosperity of Zion at heart; and if their chapel become so full that it will not hold them all, perhaps some that cannot get seats will come up to ours.”

I hope never to forget the earnest and solemn manner in which he spoke the following words:

“But whether the Lord will bless them or not must be left to Himself. This I know, that He will us; for I have had such a spirit of prayer given me for you as a minister, and for us as a church and people, and have felt so much of His power and presence with us in the means of grace, such answers likewise to prayer in reference to you and your ministry among us, that I know He will bless us in the midst of all the opposition we may have to meet with. What we have to do is to study to be quiet and mind our own business, pray for His presence and blessing to be with us, and leave our cause in His hands; and it will be made manifest that the Lord of Hosts is in our midst, and that to bless us.”

What he said was a great encouragement, coming as it did from the lips of such a gracious, God-fearing man; yet I did not feel as though my gracious Master had spoken them unto me, so that I still cried unto Him that He would give me some kind, assuring word that He would make bare His arm and command a greater blessing upon my labours. Though I was but a stripling in person [only in his twenties], and mean and poor in circumstances, He had given me zeal for His honour and glory, so that at times I was like a bottle ready to burst, there being nothing so near and dear to me as the Lord’s honour, and Zion’s peace and prosperity.

One day, walking alone, pondering these things over, the following words dropped into my soul: “For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16. 7). All the circumstances connected therewith came at once to my mind, how that Samuel was sent by the Lord to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be king, and he requested all his sons might be brought. When Eliab, the firstborn, appeared, he said, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him.” Eliab, it seems, was like Saul, tall and good looking, his countenance fresh and comely; but the Lord said unto Samuel, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth ... but the Lord looketh on the heart. Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the

Lord chosen this. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep." No doubt Jesse would be ready to say, "Surely it cannot be my son David, who is the youngest, and but a stripling, whom the Lord intends to be king over His people Israel!" As soon as Samuel heard the name of David, the spirit and the power of the Lord came upon him, assuring him that he was the Lord's anointed, and he said, "Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither." When he came, the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he."

From this circumstance I saw clearly that the Lord neither looked on outward circumstances nor human abilities, but at the heart; and to the joy of mine, I found it was indeed right with God. The great things the Lord had wrought for and by His servant David, his slaying Goliath, and subduing all his foes, were a great encouragement to me. I knew that young David's God was my God, that His ear was not heavy that He could not hear, nor His arm shortened that He could not save.

From this time I lost my fears that we should not be able to carry on the cause of God and truth at Hope Chapel. Many more encouraging portions were brought to my mind with great power; such as: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "More are they that be with us than they that be with them"; "With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles"; "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty"; "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God." What the Lord wrought by the poor, ignorant and unlearned fishermen, as recorded in Acts 4. 13, was also a great encouragement to me.

I had now faith to believe that His blessing would more abundantly attend my labours. The conclusion the apostles came to was powerfully impressed upon my mind: "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." Thanks to the Lord, this has been my practice during all the course of my ministry. The following portion was often upon my mind, and I was enabled to obey it: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

The Lord soon made it manifest that He was working with and by me, confirming the Word with signs following. In a while, some who had left came back, and settled down among us. A few who came before the church, in giving a reason of the hope within them with meekness and fear, spoke of the great prejudice they had felt against me because of my birth and low circumstances; but the power of the Lord so attended the

Word spoken by me to their souls, that as “the north wind driveth away rain,” so had the preached Word in the demonstration and power of the Spirit blown away all these fleshly feelings, and they confessed with tears the hard and bitter things they had felt and said against me. This greatly strengthened my hands, and was a great encouragement to the church.

Some of those who belonged to the other chapel, both from the church and congregation, began to meet with us; but what was more astonishing, the two old deacons who had been as pillars in the other church in the days of Mr. Littlewood, left the place, giving up the church books, moneys and all other affairs they held as deacons and members, and joined us, and several more of the members joined also.

On March 5th, 1820, I baptized ten persons, nine men and one woman, and the same day we received four from the other church, making an addition of fourteen to our number. This caused a great stir amongst the professors of religion. Whilst these things were working, like Manoah and his wife I was looking on with wonder and astonishment at what the Lord was doing amongst us.

THE ASCENDED SAVIOUR

By J.C. Philpot

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

The right hand of God means the right hand of power, of dominion, of authority and of acceptance. When our blessed Lord went back to the courts of bliss, and the gates of heaven lifted up their heads, and the everlasting doors were lifted up, and the King of glory went in, He sat down at once at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

But what did this place of pre-eminence imply? It certified to principalities and powers, and the whole bright and glorious throng of angelic hosts, that God had accepted His work and given Him for His reward that exalted place of power, of honour and of dignity. For remember this, that our gracious Lord went up to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God in His human nature. He did not go up to heaven as He came down from heaven only as the Son of God. He went up to heaven as the Son of man as well as the Son of God. He went up to heaven in a human nature united to the divine, and therefore entered the courts of bliss as the God-man, Immanuel, God with us. It is a point of great importance, and to be ever borne in mind by every spiritual worshipper, and by every true believer in the Son of God, that our

blessed Lord sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high in the same human body which He wore upon earth – glorified indeed beyond all thought or utterance, but the same pure, spotless, holy, and immortal humanity which He assumed in the womb of the virgin, and which He offered as a sacrifice upon the cross.

To this point the apostle would specially direct our thoughts, and bring it before us as the object and food of our faith (Rom. 8. 34). And what an object of faith it is, for, as viewing Jesus at the right hand of God, we see there a Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; we see an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; we see a Brother, a Friend, a Husband enthroned in glory, there ever living, ever reigning, ever ruling, until God shall have put all enemies under His feet.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Manuscript of Isobel Hood; booklet; 25 pages; price £2 including postage; published by Dr. Matthew J. Hyde, and obtainable from him at 5 Hawthorn, Appledore, Ashford, Kent, TN26 2AH.

Isobel Hood lived from 1734 to 1810. The manuscript was written at the request of her pastor, Mr. Ronald Bayne, minister of the “Little Kirk,” Elgin, Scotland, from 1788 to 1800. She, having profited under his ministry, had written several letters to him, but as she had low views of herself, they were written anonymously. “He was struck by the gospel, the knowledge and the quality of the spiritual experience contained in these notes and enquired after the author.” When he found her, he presented her with a blank paper book in which to write some of her experiences.

The manuscript is written in the form of a letter addressed to her pastor. She tells how her spiritual exercise began when at fifteen years of age her minister, Mr. Gordon at Speymouth, preached from Amos 9. 9: “For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.” This followed a tragedy when she with others were returning from the fair and the boat crossing the River Spey was caught in a whirlpool. Several persons were drowned, she herself being taken from the water unconscious. Mr. Gordon said very solemnly, “It may be that some of you that are about me may be sifted out of all things that are comfortable to you in the world.” This commenced a long law-work with conviction of sin. Her deliverance came many years later, after hearing Mr. Bayne preach a communion sermon from Romans 8. 32. The “all things” spoken of were made mostly effective, but she says “she could not apply it to herself.”

One Monday morning she awoke between 3 and 4 a.m., and the Lord came with that personal application. She says, “It was one of the strongest manifestations of redeeming love and pardoning mercy that I ever received.” She further says, “I had a complaint of the short continuance of this wonderful sight;

but I think if it had been continued long in the strength it came with, soul and body could not long have subsisted together.

This little book is well worth reading with the prayerful desire, "Be this religion mine."

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

Spurgeon's Practical Wisdom, or Plain Advice for Plain People; hardback; 317 pages; price £16; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We are most interested to learn what kind of reception this book will receive. There is certainly nothing quite like it.

C.H. Spurgeon wrote under the pseudonym of "John Ploughman," a wise old country farm worker. The book consists of over sixty chapters and is not theological, hardly religious – but moral. It contains much old-fashioned "common sense." The author deals with all kinds of issues – drink, debt, laziness, cruelty, temptation, gossip, and all manner of things. The book was immensely popular, sold in thousands, and is believed to have had a very good influence. Certainly "John Ploughman" does not flatter but comes right to the point.

There are lots of terse, telling sentences:

"If the devil catches a man idling, he will set him to work, find him tools, and before long pay his wage."

"When a man has a particularly empty head, he generally sets up for a great judge, especially in religion."

"A friend to everybody is often a friend to nobody."

"When you see a man with a great deal of religion displayed in his shop window, you may depend on it that he keeps a very small stock within."

"We cannot keep thieves from looking in at our windows, but if we open our doors to them, and receive them joyfully, we are as bad as they."

"If my master's old dog was as sleepy as the bishops are, he would get shot or drowned, for he wouldn't be worth the amount of dog tax."

The whole style is very lively, but it is clear that John Ploughman is living in Victorian times.

Our own feeling is that readers will be almost equally divided. Some will think the book a waste of time; others will love it and be fascinated by it.

This is certainly far different from Banner of Truth's usual run of books!

When Christians Suffer, by Thomas Case; small paperback in the Pocket Puritan series; 128 pages; price £3.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We must say we eagerly looked forward to reading this little book – for two reasons especially:

1. We were delighted with the last publication in this series which we reviewed last month, describing it as "a little gem." (James Fraser: *Am I a Christian?*)

2. We have found Thomas Case's writings exceedingly profitable, especially his *Mount Pisgah*, from which we published a number of extracts in the *Gospel Standard*, which the godly found very acceptable.

We have to confess we were saddened. This delightful book has been marred by Scripture quotations being altered to a modern version. For this there can be no excuse. Whatever justification modern writers may think they have for a modern version, it is completely unacceptable that the 1611 version (or the Geneva) of the Puritans should be altered. We have always highly praised the work of The Banner of Truth in republishing the godly authors of the past, and do sincerely hope this work will not be spoiled by the use of different scriptural versions.

Apart from that, we can wholly recommend *When Christians Suffer*. Thomas Case (a leading member of the Westminster Assembly) lived from 1598 to 1682. He knew much of suffering himself, being imprisoned for the truth's sake, and so could feelingly write on the subject "why Christians suffer."

As an example we include his point that Christians must suffer "rightly to estimate the sufferings of Jesus Christ":

"In our prosperity we pass by the cross carelessly. At best we do but shake our heads a little. The reading of the story stirs up some compassion for Him, but it is quickly gone. Then God pinches our flesh with some sore affliction, filling our bones with pain, setting us on fire with a burning fever, letting our feet be hurt in stocks, and then iron enters our souls. Let us be destitute, afflicted, tormented, then happily we sit down and look upon Him whom we have pierced and begin to say within ourselves, Are the chips of the cross so heavy? What must have been the full cross itself that my Redeemer bore? Is the wrath of man so piercing? Is the buffeting of men so grievous? Is a burning fever so hot? Is a chain so heavy, a prison so loathsome, the sentence and execution of death so dreadful? O what was it for Christ to endure all the contradiction of sinners against Himself, the rage of the devil, and the wrath of God!

"Blessed be God my prison is not hell, my burnings are not unquenchable flames, my cup is not filled with wrath! Blessed be God for Jesus Christ through whom I am delivered from the wrath to come! Christ by His experience came to perfectly understand what His poor members suffer, so we by the remainders of His cross in some measure come to understand the sufferings of Christ."

The Ulster Awakening by John Weir; paperback; 262 pages; price £7.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This book is an account of the 1859 religious revival in Ireland. John Weir, an Irish Presbyterian minister, wrote the book in 1860 to defend the Ulster Awakening against the attacks of a sceptical press. Much of the book consists of eye-witness accounts of events.

We approach the subject of revivals with caution. That is not because we doubt for one moment that God (as stated in the Preface) "in the exercise of that sovereignty which belongs to Him, may act occasionally in a more extraordinary and remarkable way, turning multitudes at once, and perhaps suddenly, from darkness to light, in particular places and congregations." Our caution, rather, is in attempting to discern, especially at a distance of time, what is the true, gracious operation of the Holy Spirit, and what is little more than "bodily exercise" and fleshly excitement.

The awakening began in the parish of Connor, Ulster, and is generally referred to as the 1859 Revival. As far as can be ascertained, the origins of this

Revival can be traced back a little earlier to September 1857, remarkably the same month and year as the Second Evangelical Awakening that swept through America. The general scene is described for us: "From that time onward meetings for praise, prayer, reading of the Scriptures, and exhortation, were held every night, and frequently at mid-day, in kitchens, barns, school-houses, churches, fields, wayside and hedgeside, while secret and family prayer became very general." Sometimes we find whole families stricken with deep conviction of sin, sometimes whole congregations (at Ahoghill not less than 700 from one congregation alone) – but sometimes one alone:

"Behold this mocker, how he is smitten. He is aged 18, a waif on society, a wild Arab. He never seriously attended a divine service. He was a mocker and a blasphemer, and delighted to mimic the awakened. On that never-to-be-forgotten Sabbath, the 22nd of May last, when God's Spirit was so copiously being poured out on us, he stationed himself near the entrance to the church, and there, in the language of grossest obscenity, he reviled, abused and cursed the passing people. After some time he shouted 'Ha, ha! The devil will get hold of you today.' Long before the separation of the assembled worshippers, that wicked lad was struck to the ground, as with lightning. He was prostrated in the very scene of his iniquity. Some supposed he was dead, but the visitation was in mercy, not in judgment. His agony reminded us of the torments of hell. 'Lord save me – I perish.' We felt that a brand had been plucked from the burning."

How did we feel in reading these many dozen amazing accounts? First, we felt there was no attempt to "get up" a revival. We could not help but contrast the work here with the East Anglia Revival of 1921. Second, there was something in the accounts that rang true, and was heart-warming. Third, it seems that those ministers and elders involved in the work, and who commented on it, were sober-minded, judicious men. Fourth, the author has limited himself to a simple narrative of facts as he observed them or they were reported to him.

We were impressed with the report given in 1859 to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland which takes up much of chapter 9. The report shrank from "assigning any human effort ... in bringing about this blessed result."

We have one minor criticism. We were disappointed that the eye-witness accounts and reports are set in a much smaller type-face, making it difficult for those with poor eyesight to read. The book is very reasonably priced.

T.H.W.Scott, Harpenden

It is not our custom to recommend or review books apart from those sent to us with a request from the Publishers. However, there are two books we feel we must recommend to our readers because they are so profitable:

1. *Day by Day with the English Puritans* (Hendrickson Publishers).
2. *Lectures on the Book of Job*, by the Scottish Covenanter, James Durham.

To live in sin and yet to believe the forgiveness of sin is utterly impossible.
Owen

“THOU KNOWEST”

(Jeremiah 15. 15)

“Thou knowest,” Lord, the weariness and sorrow
 Of the sad heart that comes to Thee for rest;
 Cares of today and burdens of tomorrow,
 Blessings implored and sins to be confessed.
 I come before Thee at Thy gracious word,
 And lay them at Thy feet – “Thou knowest,” Lord.

“Thou knowest” all the past – how long and blindly
 On the dark mountains the lost wanderer strayed;
 How the Good Shepherd followed, and how kindly
 He bore it home, upon His shoulders laid,
 And healed the bleeding wounds and soothed the pain,
 And brought back life, and hope, and strength again.

“Thou knowest” all the present – each temptation,
 Each toilsome duty, each foreboding fear;
 All to myself assigned of tribulation,
 Or to beloved ones, than self more dear;
 All pensive memories as I journey on,
 Longings for banished smiles and voices gone.

“Thou knowest” all the future – gleams of gladness,
 By stormy clouds too quickly overcast;
 Hopes of sweet fellowship and parting sadness,
 And the dark river to be crossed at last.
 O what could confidence and hope afford
 To tread that path but this – “Thou knowest, Lord”?

“Thou knowest” not alone as God, all-knowing –
 As Man our mortal weakness Thou hast proved;
 On earth, with purest sympathies o’erflowing,
 A Saviour, Thou hast wept, and Thou hast loved.
 And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,
 And find a hiding-place, a rest, a home.

Therefore I come, Thy gentle call obeying,
 And lay my sins and sorrows at Thy feet;
 An everlasting strength my weakness staying,
 Clothed in Thy robe of righteousness complete.
 Then, rising and refreshed, I leave Thy throne,
 And follow on to know as I am known.

H.L.L. *The Sower*, 1882

It is part of true Christian wisdom, of living faith, of real humility of mind,
 of submission to the will of God, to be content to believe what we cannot see.

J. C. Philpot

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
FEBRUARY 2010

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

THE PURITAN FAMILY

Quite recently we were asked to give an address on “The Puritan Family” and the lessons we can learn today. We were very encouraged, not only by the large attendance, but by the interest shown, and especially by the deep impression that was made of how far short we come today.

Puritan religion touched everything! Truly there was a desire to “bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” There were no deeper theologians or experimental preachers than the Puritan pastors, but even if they were discoursing on the doctrine of predestination, they would apply it to the way in which husbands treat their wives. Dr. Owen bluntly stated that it does not matter how many sermons you listen to if your neighbours do not see a difference in your lives.

It has truly been stated:

“Every area of life came under the influence of God and the guidance of His Word.

“Every task, whether professional or manual, was done to the glory of God and with an eye to His will.

“Every relationship, business or personal, was regulated by spiritual principles.

“In a word, the great business of godliness dominated the believer’s ambitions and called for all his energies.” (*The Genius of Puritanism*: Lewis.)

The Family

It was love that reigned – love to Christ, love between husband and wife, love to the children. Nothing could be more false than the popular view of the Puritan as harsh and sour-faced, a “killjoy.” True, there was seriousness and strictness that is sadly lacking today, but it was with a loving desire to honour the Lord and walk in obedience to His Word.

Christian marriage was regarded as a precious thing, to use a Puritan expression, the “sugar that sweetens all duties.” One Puritan writer stated:

“Before man had any other calling, he was called to be a husband. First, man must choose his love, and then he must love his choice. The man and wife are partners, like the two oars in a boat.”

While the Puritans scripturally insisted on the husband as the head of the house, there were not brow-beaten wives, but wives lovingly trusted by the husbands and given much responsibility in running the home.

Bringing up children

This was firm, very firm, but in love. Special emphasis was laid on the need for a godly example to be set by the parents. “Holiness begins at home.”

Idleness was abominated, and children were taught to be industrious and prepare for their “calling.” (This was the favourite word: not work, or a job, or a profession, but a “calling.”)

Above all the prayerful desire was for the children’s salvation, and great concern for it. There was a wish to “establish God’s glorious kingdom in the home.”

Education

It is more difficult to speak here. There was no national system of education. There were ancient grammar schools and dames’ schools, and the valuable Dissenting academies (more for the older), whilst the nobility would obviously have private tutors. However, there were many among the poor still illiterate. The conditions of the seventeenth century (the Civil War, persecution of Dissenters, poverty, etc), obviously did not help.

Nevertheless there was a strong desire for education – above all else that children should be able to read the Scriptures for themselves. All this was in humble dependence on the Spirit of God.

The Puritans were great believers in catechising, using for the most part the Westminster Catechism. Interestingly, this has continued in Scotland and in Holland, but though William Gadsby did bring out his own catechism, for the most part there has been no tradition of catechising in Strict Baptist congregations.

Everything was based on Scripture. When learning the alphabet, there was a rhyme which began:

A – In Adam’s Fall we sinned all; and ended:

Z – Zacchaeus, he did climb the tree, the Lord to see.

The well-known Philip Doddridge, as a child, was very much influenced by the Dutch tiles by the fireplace depicting Bible scenes, from which his mother taught him the truths of the Word of God.

Family worship

Great emphasis was placed on family worship. It was not just the reading of a chapter and prayer, but considerable time was devoted to it. A Psalm would be sung. A short exposition would be given. Questions would be asked – to children and servants (if any). The morning

devotions would be repeated in the evening with perhaps more time given.

Nothing was allowed to interfere. The things of God must be first. Dr. Watts recalled that if any visitor or tradesman arrived at their home when he was a boy, and family worship was taking place, there would be no interruption. "The master is at prayer," would be the answer to the visitor.

We are sure that in descriptions of family worship* there must have been broad generalisation, and from family to family there *must* have been differences. We cannot avoid asking the question: how did they find the time? The answer seems to be that the practice was to get up very early, four or five o'clock at the latest.

The Sabbath

The Sabbath day was the great day of the week, "the queen of days," "the market day of souls." Contrary to the popular caricature of Puritanism, it was a day of great joy, eagerly looked forward to.

Really, thoughts of the Sabbath began on the Saturday evening. Everything was to be ready before the Sabbath, and the Saturday evening would be spent quietly.

When the Sabbath arrived, more time than during the week was spent in family worship, but the important thing was the visits to the house of God to hear the Word preached. All children would be taken (and servants also, if any). With the recent republication of so many precious Puritan sermons, we are left in no doubt concerning the style and content of what they heard.

Great emphasis was laid on keeping the Sabbath day holy – not just attendance for worship, but the *whole* day. On returning home, the conversation was expected to be on the service of the Lord's house. (No vain conversation was permitted on the Lord's day.) The children would be asked to repeat the points of the sermon; they would be asked questions, and be encouraged to ask questions themselves.

These things were not done in a legal spirit, or with the belief that all this could make the children "little Christians," but with prayer, and with a belief in the vital necessity of the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration.

How humbled we are in considering the Puritan family! The Puritans have been described as "God's giants," and it seems clear that there was more real godliness during the Puritan period [roughly the late 1500s to the late 1600s] than at almost any other time in English history. But they themselves were very conscious of sin and deplorable failure. In this sad, latter day, in the words of the poet, "The world is too much with us."

* Matthew Henry gives a detailed account of family worship in his biography of his father.

If one text can summarise Puritan religion, and the Puritan family, it is: “Seek *ye first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” The things of God had *to come first*. Even in the smallest details of family life, the desire was that the Lord Jesus “in all things should have the preeminence,” and that He should be honoured.

THE BANQUETING HOUSE

*Sermon preached by Jesse Delves at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham,
London, on November 1st, 1970*

Text: “He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love” (Song 2. 4).

This blessed, sacred revelation of divine truth that we have in this Song is only known by the living in Zion. The precious gospel that is under different figures here has no meaning to those who are strangers and foreigners, and who have no concern for their souls’ eternal redemption. But I believe there are many of the Lord’s dear people, who read this sacred Song, and feel distressed by what they read because (as they may feel) they are out of the secret altogether; while at the same time they are *not* out of the secret altogether. If they are distressed by reason of their personal feelings, that does not mark their everlasting destiny.

I believe many, and I suppose all of us more or less who know something of the glorious gospel, have read this sacred Song and have perceived something of its beauty. We perceive a line of teaching, we realise it sets forth that blessed union subsisting between the Lord Jesus Christ and His dear people, and that in His sight they are all fair and without spot as His mystical body. Yet we may say, “O if I could but feel this for *myself*; I know it is very blessed, but I feel my heart to be as a barren wilderness and a waste-howling desert, and I feel as far removed from it as one well can be.” There are others who, at least on occasions when the presence of the Lord is felt in their hearts, can read this precious Song with a holy joy, and feel they are incorporated in it; and of their Beloved they can say that He is “as the apple tree among the trees of the wood,” especially when they are favoured to sit down under His shadow with great delight, and receive of the sweet fruit of His bitter sufferings.

Here the church describes an experience. She says, “He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.” Surely no experience could be more precious than this, for this appears to indicate a time when the love of Christ is shed abroad in a poor sinner’s heart and

when He becomes in their view as the Chiefest among ten thousand, and beyond all comparison.

“He brought me to the banqueting house.” Now there may be some here who feel to be a long way from a banqueting house, but the church here in this Song was not *always* in the banqueting house, for we read in chapter 1.7: “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 by the flocks of Thy companions?” She was not in the banqueting house just then, but she soon came or was brought to it. At that precise moment we may say she felt at a sad distance *from* her Lord. “For why should I be as one that is veiled” (*margin* – and very expressive), that is one that may feel to be under a cloud, the skies hidden, veiled. The Lord gave this particular sheep, one of the flock, some excellent counsel and direction: “If thou know not, O thou fairest among women.” Although she felt to be under a veil and although she was as one that had turned aside, yet the Lord continues, “Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents.” Her Beloved did not say, “Stay there. I will come to you where you are.” No, He said to her, “Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock.” This is often the Lord’s way of dealing with His people, but sometimes He does come to them in their state of desolation and desertion, He comes to them, He comes down like rain upon this parched, mown grass. Sometimes He invites them to come to Him, as we read Matthew 11. 28.

Now here she is in a very different case; she is not like one who turned aside by the flocks of her Lord’s companions – no, she is in the banqueting house. This is the same character, you know, but now we see her, that is the church as we may view this, brought to the banqueting house. What are we to understand by the banqueting house? Some good men say it means this or that, or something else as though they hardly knew, but I can say this, that the banqueting house is that place into which the Lord brings His people, for it is said that, “He brought me to the banqueting house.” She did not get herself there by her own inherent strength or energy, so to speak, but He brought her in. May we not say that it pleased His blessed Majesty to lift that veil from her so that she could no longer say, “Why should I be as one that turneth aside?” He lifts the veil, changes her language; He brings her to the banqueting house.

This banqueting house, then, in a spiritual sense is that place to which the Lord brings His people, where He spreads a divine repast, spreads the table with a feast of fat things, bread and wine, gospel bread and wine, the best wine on the lees well refined. He spreads the table and feeds the flock in the banqueting house. This is not necessarily a

building in a material aspect, but it is just that place where the Lord has sweet communion with His redeemed children. It is where as in the first chapter it is said, "The King hath brought me into His chambers." That is the banqueting house. If we connect it with the verse preceding we may say, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." She was in the banqueting house. One would desire that even this day it might please the Lord to bring us into the banqueting house.

The banqueting house may have several interpretations. If we take the *holy Scriptures* as a figure, we may say that they are a banqueting house, that is to say when the Lord in a particular sense blesses the sacred truths they contain to the souls of His dear people. A mere, formal reading of the Holy Scriptures will not constitute them a banqueting house, but when they *read us*, and as we read the Lord blesses our souls in the reading, when we can say as good Jeremiah, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart," then we are in the banqueting house. I am sure this is a point of blessed truth, because I believe the Lord has brought *me* once or twice into the banqueting house of His blessed Word so that I have felt it was as much as I could bear. There have been just one or two occasions when the Word has been sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, but this is not every day.

I believe sometimes the Lord makes His *precious gospel* a banqueting house when the power of it is felt in a poor sinner's heart. I am sure He does, for this gospel is said to be the power of God unto salvation. "The gospel of *your* salvation." O but when you feel the sweet light of the blessed gospel fill your heart, then it is as we have read this morning in Isaiah 60. 1: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Nothing can be sweeter to the taste of a hungry soul than the blessed gospel; but it does need some application to us, and this is where we need in a particular way the Holy Spirit's gracious influence to make it life and power in our souls. If when you are reading, as has sometimes been the case, you get a sight of Christ, then you are in the banqueting house. He brings you in, He makes that gospel life and power in your soul, and you are soon in the banqueting house.

I believe that sometimes the Lord is pleased to make the *ordinances of His house* a banqueting house, a place where the living flock are fed. This banqueting house is a feeding place, and some of us have known something of this in our earlier days when we were lively in these things. The house of God was like a banqueting house and we could say, "With joy we hasten to the place," because we have found the Lord there. I know these are favoured occasions, but the church was not always in the

banqueting house. She knew something of her own defilement and corruption. "I am black as the tents of Kedar," was her confession; but this banqueting house consists in that blessed provision the Lord has made for His people when He blesses it to them, as it is said: "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread." You will soon be in the banqueting house when His sweet love is shed abroad in your heart, if such a word should come to you as that the prophet Jeremiah felt when the Lord said to him, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." When the sweet rays of the love of heaven shine into your heart a little, then you are in the banqueting house.

It does not matter so much where you are; it is whether the Lord is *with you* where you are. Many of the Lord's dear people I know have had a spiritual feast when they have been alone, and when they have been in plenty of trouble too. Trouble and affliction never shut the door of the Lord's mercy; often they are a means of opening it. He has brought many a poor, troubled, afflicted one into the banqueting house. Many a child of God has found a hospital to be as a banqueting house when the Lord has been there.

"He brought me to the banqueting house," so that she could say, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons." *You* can say this when you are in the banqueting house. She says, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." "My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land." She was in the banqueting house.

Do you know anything about this banqueting house? It may be that some would have to say they are feeling just the opposite to being in a banqueting house, but the Lord can bring you in. He brought the dying thief to the banqueting house when He said to him, "To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." What kind of people are these that the Lord brings into the banqueting house? They are just those people that He has eternally appointed to save, appointed not to wrath but to obtain salvation through His sufferings, death and resurrection. They are just those poor and needy ones of whom we read that He shall arise for their help. "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord."

These are the very characters: a poor person, one that is poor in spirit, a humbled one that has been brought to His dear feet, stripped of all fancied meetness, realising his own poverty which consists not in what he does but what he lacks or feels to lack. These are the very characters that the Lord brings to the banqueting house, for in the

banqueting house He provides for them just what they feel to lack. They are the poor and needy ones; they are those of whom it is said that they hunger and thirst after righteousness, as the psalmist did when he said, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" He brings these into the banqueting house. He spreads the table for *hungry* people, not those that are self satisfied. He brings to the banqueting house those poor people who are brought to say feelingly, "Give me Christ, or else I die." These are so suitable for the banqueting house, these hungry people who need food and thirsty people who need drink. These are the characters that He brings into the banqueting house. "He brought me in." It is said here, "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

"He brought me to the banqueting house." These people are in the first place brought out of the world, out of darkness, death and sin, for that is what this world is to the Lord's living people. They have to realise that there is no food for their never-dying souls in the world; the world is as a bubble, all is vanity and vexation of spirit; but He brings them to the banqueting house. These people are brought out of the world in their soul's experience so as to feel that they can find no satisfaction for their never-dying souls short of a revealed Christ. When that blessed revelation comes, then they are in the banqueting house. He brought them in. In some cases it has been a long time before they are brought to the banqueting house, but even so He preserves that spiritual life in their souls. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." In other cases He is pleased to reveal His love and grace early and bring them into the banqueting house. In this way, as in chapter 1, the church is drawn in, not driven in. This was her prayer: "Draw me, we will run after Thee." She was drawn by the cords of a Man and the bands of love to the banqueting house.

"He brought me in ... and His banner over me was love." There was a banner then, or we may say an ensign or standard raised, lifted up. This is a banner that covers a poor sinner when the Lord blesses his soul and sets him free, and when that sweet love of heaven is shed abroad there. This is a *banner of love*. In the Scriptures a banner indicates a victory over an enemy; this standard or ensign is lifted up as a signal of victory. The banner here may indicate a victory because the Lord Jesus Christ has gained the victory over an enemy; this standard or ensign is lifted up as a signal of victory. The banner here may indicate a victory because the Lord Jesus Christ has gained the victory over sin, death and hell for all His dear people as the Captain of their salvation. When He brings us into the banqueting house, we know the victory is gained for

us. Every foe that has assailed us is as dead when we are in the banqueting house.

Now this banner, dear friends, "is spread o'er every saint, and thus supported who shall faint?" Here particularly this is a banner of love in the sense that the love of Christ is a banner that covers all things that the Lord has done for His people in their everlasting redemption. This banner of love was over them in His eternal decrees in the covenant of grace, for it was love that moved Him to appoint a people that should inhabit glory and that should be redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was an act of love to us in that the Father gave Him, as we read, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It was love in the heart of Christ that moved Him to come, endure and suffer, bleed and die as He did to bring His poor, guilty people to this banqueting house. How true it is as one says,

"O love of unexampled kind!
That leaves all thought so far behind;
Where length, and breadth, and depth, and height
Are lost to my astonished sight."

O but it is when you come feelingly into that verse that you are in the banqueting house.

This banqueting house can be set forth as relating to the *Lord's supper*, because in the emblems of bread and wine are set forth His terrible sufferings. The broken bread is an emblem of His broken body, and the wine of His shed blood. This ordinance can be as a figure of the banqueting house of the blessed gospel. When as we partake thereof, we are favoured to feel, though it may not be often, in the *sweetness* of it, that He suffered, bled and died to save our souls, that He shed His most precious blood to wash our sins away, then we feel that we are in the banqueting house. It is, dear friends, the personal application of the emblems to our souls, it is receiving spiritually the substance, that makes us feel we are in the banqueting house.

O what a mercy of mercies is this! Why did not the Lord leave us to go our own way to our own destruction? O how can it ever be, dear friends, that such as you and I can ever be of those that He shall account His jewels in that great day, that we shall be part of that church He appointed to constitute His blessed, mystical body, to bring us into that union which can never be dissolved. It is all of His grace absolutely, not some part grace and some part self. It is all of His mercy and grace as it is said,

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in;

Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

If divine grace has laid hold of us, brought us into a gracious, prayerful concern, brought us to watch and pray, emptied of all self-righteousness and fancied meetness, to fall at His blessed feet, we shall never perish in our sins; there is no way to hell that way. O may the Lord visit us this day and grant us a taste by faith of that living bread, give us to feel something of the efficacy of that most precious blood, then we shall be in the banqueting house. Amen.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

From John Flavel (1628-1691)

O how indispensable is the knowledge of Christ, to all that do address themselves to God!

It is fundamental to all comforts. All the comforts of believers are streams from this fountain. Jesus Christ is the very Object matter of a believer's joy. "Our rejoicing is in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3. 3). Take away the knowledge of Christ, and a Christian is the most sad and melancholy creature in the world. Again, let Christ but manifest Himself and dart the beams of His light into their souls, it will make them kiss the stakes, sing in flames, and shout in the pangs of death, as men that divide the spoil.

This knowledge is fundamental to the eternal happiness of souls. As we can perform no duty, enjoy no comfort, so neither can we be saved without it. "This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John 17. 3). And if it be life eternal to know Christ, then it is eternal damnation to be ignorant of Christ. As *Christ* is the *door* that opens heaven, so *knowledge* is the *key* that opens Christ. The excellent gifts, and renowned parts of the moral heathens, though they purchased to them great esteem and honour among men, yet left them in a state of perdition, because of this great defect, they were ignorant of Christ (1 Cor. 1. 21). Thus you see how fundamental the knowledge of Christ is, essentially necessary to all the graces, duties, comforts and happiness of souls.

The knowledge of Christ is profound and large; all other sciences are but shadows; this is a boundless, bottomless ocean; no creature hath a line long enough to fathom the depth of it; there is height, length, depth and breadth ascribed to it (Eph. 3. 18). Yea, it passeth knowledge. There is "a manifold wisdom of God" in Christ (Eph. 3. 10). It is of many sorts and forms, of many folds and plates. It is indeed simple, pure

and unmixed with anything but itself, yet it is manifold in degrees, kinds and administrations. Though something of Christ be unfolded in one age, and something in another, yet eternity itself cannot fully unfold Him. "I see something," said Luther, "which blessed Austin [Augustine of Hippo] saw not, and those that come after me will see that which I see not." It is in the studying of Christ, as in the planting of a new discovered country; at first men sit down by the seaside, upon the skirts and borders of the land, and there they dwell, but by degrees they search farther and farther into the heart of the country. Ah, the best of us are yet but upon the borders of this vast continent!

The study of Jesus Christ is the most noble subject that ever a soul spent itself upon; those that rack and torture their brains upon other studies, like children, weary themselves at a low game; the eagle plays at the sun itself. The angels study this doctrine, and stoop down to look into this deep abyss. What are the truths discovered in Christ, but the very secrets that from eternity lay hid in the bosom of God? (Eph. 3. 8, 9). God's heart is opened to men in Christ (John 1. 18). This makes the gospel such a glorious dispensation, because Christ is so gloriously revealed therein (2 Cor. 3. 9), and the studying of Christ in the gospel stamps such a heavenly glory upon the contemplating soul (ver. 18).

It is the most sweet and comfortable knowledge. To be studying Jesus Christ, what is it but to be digging among all the veins and springs of comfort? And the deeper you dig, the more do these springs flow upon you. How are hearts ravished with the discoveries of Christ in the gospel? What ecstasies, meltings, transports, do gracious souls meet there? Doubtless, Philip's ecstasy (John 1. 45), "We have found Jesus," was far beyond that of Archimedes [who cried, "Eureka! I have found it!" after a great discovery]. A believer could sit from morning to night to hear discourses of Christ. "His mouth is most sweet" (Song 5. 16).

It is truly awakening to reflect how far a person may go in the circumstantial and externals of religion, and yet be entirely destitute of the life of God in the soul. The holy Scriptures abound with declarations to this effect, which prove the deceitfulness of the human heart and the danger of resting in mere outward forms and orthodox opinions. Thus Job describes the character of the hypocrite: "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? ... Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?" – evidently implying that, not having the root of the matter in him, though he had gained the applause of men for his seeming piety, he would soon grow weary of the service of God.

Thomas Reade

ASKING THE LORD QUESTIONS

From Ralph Erskine on Isaiah 45. 11

1. The Lord allows us to come to Him and ask Him, Where He dwells? As in John 1. 38: “Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?” This is a question that concerns His sons, His children; for their language many times is, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” (Job 23. 3). God complains of people that they do not ask this question: “None saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?” (Job 35. 10). “The priests said not, Where is the Lord?” (Jer. 2. 8). It is a question that the church proposeth, “Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flocks to rest at noon” (Song 1. 7). And the Lord answers the question, “If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents” (verse 8). And we find afterward, the church was in case to tell where He was, and where He feeds: “My Beloved ... feedeth among the lilies. Until the day break, and the shadows flee away” (Song 2. 16, 17). She is in case to tell where He dwelleth: “Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to Thy voice: cause me to hear it” (Song 8. 13).

2. He allows us to come to Him with such a question as that, not only, Where He is? but who He is? “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?” (Isa. 63. 1). This is a question also that concerns His sons, His children. They need further discoveries of His name and glory; they want to know more and more of Him, who He is. And He is ready to answer the question in this manner: “I am He that speaketh righteousness, mighty to save,” “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” “I am the resurrection and the life.” Many ways does He satisfy them with reference to this question; sometimes at a communion table He makes Himself known to them in the breaking of bread.

3. It is lawful to ask Him humbly, What hour of the night it is in Zion? saying, “Watchman, what of the night?” (Isa. 21. 11). We may go with it to the chief Watchman, that slumbers not, nor sleeps. It is a question that concerns His sons, His church and children, after a long night of sin and security, to know if it be not high time for people to be raised and awakened out of sleep and security, and to know if there be any hopes of the day dawning. The Lord answers this question by His watchmen, saying, “The morning cometh, and also the night: if you will enquire, enquire ye: return, come.” And this answer hath both a prediction and a direction in it. The prediction is, “The morning cometh, and also the night.” Both a bright morning of peace and comfort, and a black evening of crosses and calamities, may be expected in succession: after a morning of gospel light, we may prepare for an evening of

darkness. The direction is, "If ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come." Be inquisitive persons; go on in your enquiry: "Ask Me of things to come, concerning My sons," and be penitent believers: "Return, come." Repentance here required is a turning from sin to God, through Christ, by faith: "Return, come."

It is not time to delay; no time to trifle; the night is coming on, the night of trouble, the night of trial, the night of death. If it be asked, What hour of the night it is with us in Scotland? may it not be said, It is the dead hour of the night? O what dead hearts, dead frames, dead preaching and praying, dead Sabbaths and sacraments! Is it not a night of division, wherein the anger of the Lord hath divided us? A night of delusion, wherein the darkness of error abounds? Gospel truths are trodden down, and the gospel way of salvation little known, even by some that are teachers of others. Therefore,

4. We may come to God and ask Him this question: "O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst Thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" (Jer. 14. 8). And, as it is, verse 19, "Hast Thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast Thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us?" This is a question that concerneth His sons, when they are complaining before Him. Alas, wherefore is the Lord such a stranger to me, and to the land? Wherefore is He angry at the prayers of His people? And whence are these tokens of His anger? Now the Lord gives a suitable answer to this question when He says, "Behold, His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isa. 59. 1, 2).

5. He allows us to come to Him with another question: "Lord ... by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small?" (Amos 7. 2). This is a question that concerns His sons, and the works of His hands, especially when His work seems to be brought under any decay: "By whom shall Jacob arise?" And He will answer the question by saying, "The Lord will have mercy on Jacob" (Isa. 14. 1). And, "The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God" (Isa. 10. 21); that a "Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob" (Isa. 59. 20; Rom. 11. 26). "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help" (Hos. 13. 9). It is only by the God of Jacob that Jacob shall arise.

6. He allows us to come to Him with such a question as that, and to ask Him, When will He come? As in Psalm 101. 2, "O when wilt Thou come unto me?" Why tarry the wheels of His chariot? Why so long? This is a question also that concerns His sons, and the work of His

hands. They are oftentimes solicitous to know when He will come, but the Lord's answer to the question is, as in Habakkuk 2. 3, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." God hath bound Himself to accomplish His promises, but not to our time of it; therefore we are to wait upon a promising God. Again,

7. He allows us to put to Him such a question as that: "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" (Psa. 85. 6). This is a question that concerns His sons and children under their lamentable decays. And His answer to such a question may be expected to this purpose: "I will be as the dew unto Israel" (Hos. 14. 5). They that dwell under His shadow, they shall return, and revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and shoot forth their roots as Lebanon; or, as it is, chapter 6. 2, "After two days He will revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight." By virtue of Christ's resurrection shall dead and dry bones be revived.

8. He allows us to come to Him with such a question as that: "How long, Lord? wilt Thou hide Thyself for ever? shall Thy wrath burn like fire?" (Psa. 89. 46). And I have mine eye here upon the four *how longs* of the psalmist (Psa. 13. 1, 2). He allows them to come to Him with their *how longs*, and He is ready to satisfy the longing soul. His answer many times is like that of the angel spoken of (Zech. 1. 12, 13). The Lord answers with kind words, saying, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee" (Isa. 54. 7, 8).

9. It is a question of great concern He allows sinners to come to Him with, "O what shall I do to be saved?" And again, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9. 6). It concerns all His people to know what and how to do; and they may expect His answer, according to that promise, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left" (Isa. 30. 21). And when Christ says, "I am the Way," what should you do but come to Him and walk in Him? "This is the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent."

10. There is another question He allows them to put to Him, and that is, "Lord, what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" (Josh. 7. 9). It is said from verse 8, "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" O how will Thy name be dishonoured! What wilt Thou do for the honour of Thy great name?

When His people come by faith, and pose Him with a question to this purpose, what will be His answer? It is a question that concerns His

sons mightily; this is their great argument in pleading with God for any blessing, that He would do for His great name's sake; and His answer is, "I had pity for Mine holy name" (Ezek. 36. 21, 22). "Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake will I defer my anger" (Isa. 48. 9).

It is a great matter to get hold of God's name! We ought always to take hold of it; they that urge Him with His name may ask what they will. The Lord teaches His people to make His holy name their plea, saying, "Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do Thou it for Thy name's sake." They that learn the way of interesting the name of God in their favours, and who, if they want grace, are seeking it for His name's sake; and if they want more grace, are seeking it for His name's sake; and if they want pardon, are seeking it for His name's sake; O it is a promising thing! God would not let you lean upon His bosom in this manner if He had not loved you with an everlasting love. A hypocrite or legalist may fall about duties, and think thereupon that God loves him and is pleased with him; but if God loves you, He will stop your mouth (Rom. 3. 19), and make you, on your bended knees, to know and acknowledge that there is no reason for His love but in His own bosom; nay, that there is all reason against it; and so plead only for His own name and glory's sake; and then you build upon a rock higher than all the powers of darkness, when your heart rests here.

Being solidly persuaded of this, that if God will glorify His name in saving you, none will be so much beholden to free grace, making the glory of His great name your plea, your hope, your resting place. This is a sign that you are lying in the lap of God's love. What will He not do for His name? This obliges Him to work for His own sake, Ezekiel 20, compare verses 6, 14, 22, 24. He cannot work against Himself.

In a word, you may go through all you can find in the Bible that the children of God can ask in faith concerning His sons and the work of His hands, and may humbly put them to Him, and whatever answer you can find in the Bible to them, that is God's answer to you that ask Him duly.

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He doth not say *with* whom I am well pleased, but *in* whom I am well pleased; that is, in whom I am well pleased with you.

Tobias Crisp

When Christ's soul expired, and His body was interred, both soul and body were still united to the second Person as much as ever.

John Flavel

MOSES' CHOICE

From Thomas Manton (1620-1677) on Hebrews 11.

In this chapter you have a short chronicle of the worthies of God, and in this constellation Moses shines forth as a star of the first magnitude. The apostle had spoken first of that faith by which he was saved by his parents, and now he comes to speak of that faith by which he saved himself, and here is one instance of it: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."

I. His principle – "By faith." His faith was fixed, partly upon the eternal recompenses: he had never left the delights of the court if he had not looked for greater blessings. And partly on the particular promises made to God's people, for he believed that the seed of Abraham should be blessed; though now they were very miserable and oppressed with hard servitude and bondage, yet he knew the promises of God to Abraham, and this faith urged him hereunto.

II. Here is his carriage. Where observe:

1. The season of it: "When he was come to years"; when he was grown great. The same is observed, "When Moses was grown, he went out to his brethren," and he was then forty years old (Ex. 2. 11); and "When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel" (Acts 7. 23). He had visited his brethren before, for his original was not unknown to him, but now he comes to visit them – that is, to take share and lot with them, to visit them as their guide, that he might lead them out of Egypt, and this he did when he was full forty years of age.

Some say, when he was a child he cast the crown that was put upon his head to the ground. Josephus reports of him that he trampled upon it, which was looked upon by the Egyptians as an ill omen. But if that be fabulous, the Holy Ghost takes no notice of his childish actions, but what he did "when he came to years."

Now this circumstance is put down to show that Moses was of discretion to judge; it was not out of childish ignorance, he knew what he did, for he had forty years' experience of this course of life. And partly to excuse the errors of his childhood; those errors are not reckoned upon, if afterwards amended; as Paul said, "When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child" (1 Cor. 13. 11). Partly to show that as soon as he was ripe for business he did delay no longer, when he was of full age and strength. And partly to show that he grew in the gifts and graces of the Spirit, as well as in years; as Christ "increased in wisdom and stature" (Luke 2. 52). Moses, when he was come of years, was another manner of person than Moses a child.

2. The act of self-denial – “He refused to be called.” He would not so much as be called so, a pert and open profession: and this not by compulsion; he was not cast out or disowned, but he refused. He might have held the honour of this adoption still, if it had so liked him; but he would rather be called an Hebrew than Pharaoh’s grandchild. This was the language of his heart, not so much of his words. We do not read he made a formal renunciation of his kindred; but indeed he left the court, and joined himself to God’s people.

3. Here is the greatness of the temptation; what would he not be called? – “The son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” Pharaoh bore full sway at that time in Egypt, and the condition of the worst Egyptian was better than of the best Israelite. Yet even then he would not be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; he would not yield to an honour so high, so great. His daughter was Thermutis, Josephus tells us; that Pharaoh had no other child, and she no other heir; so probably he might have succeeded in the throne; and that when he was gone to the Israelites, that Pharaoh should say, I intended to make this child partaker of the kingdom. If this be uncertain, there is enough in what the Holy Ghost sets down to make it a glorious instance of faith. Thus I have opened the words.

For the vindication of the act. You will say, Why would Moses do this? Or what great business was there in this? Joseph had faith as well as Moses, and he did not leave the court, but lived there till he died. I answer, Their conditions were not alike, nor their occasions alike. God raised up Joseph to feed His people in Egypt, therefore his abode in the court was necessary under kings that favoured them; but Moses was called, not to feed His people in Egypt, but to lead them out of Egypt, and the king of Egypt was now become their enemy, and kept them under bitter bondage. To remain in an idolatrous court of a pagan prince is one thing, but to remain in a persecuting court, where he must be accessory to their persecutions, is another thing. However, this is notable too, that Joseph, though he retained his honour to his death, yet he was willing that his family should take his lot with the people of God.

Objection: But Moses’ act might seem ingratitude or folly. It was not ingratitude to his foster-mother; it was not any silly discontent or unworthy incivility to her, who had compassion on him, to save him when he was ready to perish, and had manifested singular love to him and special care of him in his education and advancement. But it was a free and noble act of his divine and sanctified soul whereby he, being illuminated from heaven, did by faith see the baseness, uncertainty and danger of a great estate, of honour, wealth and power; and upon this account alone he was willing to part with them for better delights and greater good, and that he might be faithful to God and His people.

All relations must give way to the conscience of our duty to God. God's right is the first, and our greatest relation is to Him. Therefore, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14. 26). God hath done more for us than any other hath done, therefore our obligation is the greater. Our Lord Christ, when they taxed Him for want of respect to His earthly parents, said, "Wist ye not, that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2. 49). There is a higher authority and a higher relation which must take place, and all other relations must give way to it.

But then would not this seem folly, for to do as Moses did, who had an opportunity of saving himself and his own stake, or of soliciting the good of the people of Israel at the court of Pharaoh? I answer, An opportunity to do good is to be valued, yet when it cannot be lawfully enjoyed, we must prefer God's command even before not only our safety, but those seeming opportunities we have of doing good to others, and expect a supply from His providence, for God is not tied to means.

Now this was the case here. Moses would continue no longer there without sin; for it is said, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin" (verse 25). The contentments of that estate he now had were called "the pleasures of sin," either because those delights began to be snares, to besot his mind and so keep him from a sense of his brethren's afflictions, or by the contagion of example he might be ready to be entangled in them; or God would no longer dispense with his living without ordinances, or out of the communion of His people; or from the impulse that was upon his heart, which was very great, he being now fit for business, and to tarry longer were to delay his obedience to the divine calling; or else, as the court was then constituted, Moses could no longer live there without being used as an instrument to oppress his own countrymen. Whether this or that were the reason, the Holy Ghost calleth the advantages of his former life "the pleasures of sin"; and then it was high time for him to remove.

Having explained the words, and also vindicated this act from exception, let me now restore it to its true glory, commendation and honour. Certainly this was a very great instance of self-denial, and highly conduceable to check the affectation of natural greatness.

I. The more advisedly a good work is done, the more commendable. He knew what he did; it was not a rash and childish act, for he was grown up. For a child to prefer an apple before a pearl, it is according to his childish judgment; but the Holy Ghost says he was come to years. An advised obedience is acceptable to God, not headstrong

resolutions. Therefore when he was grown, when he had maturity of judgment and could weigh things in his mind, *then* he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.”

II. The greater the temptation, the more self-denial. To bear a frown is nothing, to bear a scoff is nothing, to be kept low and bare is nothing; but here is a principality despised, that he might join himself to a contemptible, oppressed people. And here all temptations came abreast, and assault him at once; there was a complication of them, honours, pleasures and treasures. Here are honours, “to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” In the next verse we read of pleasures, which are called “the pleasures of sin,” for the reasons before-mentioned; and then for treasures, “He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt” (verse 26). Now these things, honours, treasures and pleasures, usually besot or corrupt the judgment, so that we cannot see what is good in theory, cannot discern true good from false. They obstruct our resolution, withdraw our minds, and charm us that we cannot follow God’s call, nor obey Him in the things He hath given us to do.

But Moses had all these at once: the honour of being called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, a great office that brought him in great plenty – the treasures of Egypt were in a great measure at his dispose – and here were the pleasures of sin. How hard is it for us to part with a small estate! We find it a hard matter to suffer a little disgrace, and to leave a petty interest for Christ’s sake. As the apostles spoke to Christ, “We have forsaken all, and followed Thee” (Mat. 19. 27). What did they forsake? A great all! a net, a fisher-boat, but yet they speak magnificently of it; but Moses refused the honours, pleasures and treasures of Egypt.

III. The more thorough the self-denial the better. He left the court of Pharaoh and all his honours there, and openly professed himself to be a Hebrew. There was not only an inward dislike of the Egyptian idolatry and practices, and an inward approbation of the worship of God that was kept up among His people, and of spiritual privileges, but here was an open profession: “He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter”

IV. The purer the principle, the better the action. It was not discontent or any sullen and vexing humour that put him upon this resolution, but faith. The principle much varies the action: it is said, “The Lord weigheth the spirits” (Prov. 16. 2). God doth not look to the bulk and matter of the action only but to the spirit, with what heart, upon what principle, with what aim it is done. Now here was a pure spirit.

Possibly others may have done somewhat like. We read in ecclesiastical story of Diocletian, a bitter persecutor, that left his empire, but it was out of discontent. He had set himself against Christ, and his

discontent chiefly rose from this – he was resolved to root out the Christians, but they grew upon his hand, and though the persecution was very bitter and grievous at that time, yet he could not root them out, and therefore through very discontent at the disappointment he left his empire. But Moses did all this upon a holy and gracious consideration; it was from the influence of his faith, because he was convinced of the good estate of God’s people, though afflicted; he could see glory and happiness at the end, therefore it is said, “By faith he refused,” &c. Affectation of privacy and quiet, or natural stoutness, or a politic retreat, differ from self-denial.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

From J.C. Philpot’s “Answers to Questions”

QUESTION

We read in Ephesians 4. 3 these words: “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Would you, or your correspondents, be kind enough to give me your ideas on what that unity is, and what it is to keep it?

ANSWER

“The unity of the Spirit” signifies that secret bond of divine union which knits together all the living members of Christ’s mystical body, not only to Him as their risen Head, but to each other also by virtue of the same indwelling Spirit.

It is, therefore, not a mere unity of opinion, of church membership, of outward profession, or any mere external bond; for all these may subsist in the highest degree, and yet there be no spiritual union. The word translated “unity” means literally “oneness,” and therefore implies that oneness of faith, hope and love which pervades every member of the mystical body. It is, therefore, called “the oneness of the Spirit,” that is, that oneness of heart and soul, love and affection, of which the Holy Ghost is the sole and immediate Author.

This oneness of Spirit is, so to speak, kept together and maintained in its place by “the bond of peace,” which is wrapped round it. All strife and contention tend to break this oneness of Spirit; but when “the bond of peace” is twined round it, it is not only preserved from outward assaults, but like the blood within the artery, or like the marrow within the spine, is free to move and act. As therefore this “oneness of spirit” can only be maintained in living exercise as surrounded by “the bond of peace,” the apostle bids us to endeavour “to keep” it within this bond. It is in itself a thing so tender, and yet so essential to the comfort of the

church, that we should never, so to speak, take that bond off which preserves it uninjured.

By "peace," therefore, we may understand not only peace of conscience, peace with God through the atoning blood of the Lamb, but peace also with the brethren. In other words, a quiet, peaceable, affectionate and loving spirit manifested to the people of God, and especially to those with whom we are brought into church fellowship, is indispensable to the lively maintenance of spiritual union. It is true that spiritual union, once felt, can never be utterly lost, but it may be sadly weakened.

Next then to our own soul's peace and establishment in the truths of the gospel, next to our own union with Christ as sensibly realised and spiritually maintained, should we seek to keep up oneness of spirit with the saints of God; and so far as we aim at this by showing a quiet, peaceable and affectionate spirit, do we fulfil the apostolic injunction, and "endeavour," for we cannot always or often succeed, "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

GRACIOUS ADVICE TO A TROUBLED SOUL

This excellent letter appears in Wise Counsel: John Newton's Letters to John Ryland, recently published by The Banner of Truth Trust. We hope to review and recommend this next month.

Dear Sir,

You ask me in your letter, "What should one do when one finds oneself always still, quiet and stupid, except in the pulpit; is made useful there, but cannot get either comfort or sorrow out of it, or but very rarely?" You describe a case which my own experience has made very familiar to me. I shall take the occasion to offer you a few miscellaneous thoughts upon the subject of a believer's frames; and I send them to you, not by the post, but from the press, because I apprehend the exercise you speak of is not peculiar to you or to me, but is in a greater or lesser degree the burden of all who are spiritually minded and duly attentive to what passes in their own hearts, whether they are in the ministry or not.

As you intimate that you are in the main favoured with liberty and usefulness in the pulpit, give me leave to ask you what you would do if you did not find yourself occasionally poor, insufficient and, as you express it, stupid, at other times? Are you aware of what might be the possible, the probable, the almost certain consequences, if you always found your spirit enlarged, and your frames lively and comfortable? Would you not be in great danger of being puffed up with spiritual pride? Would you not be less sensible of your absolute dependence upon the

power of Christ, and of your continual need of His blood, pardon and intercession? Would you not be quite at a loss to speak suitably and feelingly to the case of many gracious souls who are groaning under those effects of a depraved nature, from which, upon that supposition, you would be exempted? How could you speak properly upon the deceitfulness of the heart if you did not feel the deceitfulness of your own, or adapt yourself to the changing experiences through which your hearers pass, if you yourself were always alike, or nearly so? Or how could you speak pertinently of the inward warfare, the contrary principles of flesh and spirit fighting one against another, if your own spiritual desires were always vigorous and successful, and met with little opposition or control?

The Apostle Paul, though favoured with a singular eminency in grace, felt at times that he had no sufficiency in himself so much as to think a good thought; and he saw there was a danger of his being exalted above measure (2 Cor. 12. 7), if the Lord had not wisely and graciously tempered his dispensations to prevent it. By “being exalted above measure,” perhaps there may be a reference not only to his spirit, lest he should think more highly of himself than he ought, but likewise to his preaching lest, not having the same causes of complaint and humiliation in common with others, he should shoot over the heads of his hearers, confine himself chiefly to speak of such comforts and privileges as he himself enjoyed, and have little to say for the refreshment of those who were discouraged and cast down by a continual conflict with indwelling sin.

The angel who appeared to Cornelius did not preach the gospel to him, but directed him to send for Peter (Acts 10. 1-31). For though the glory and grace of the Saviour seems a fitter subject for an angel’s powers than for the poor, stammering tongues of sinful men, yet an angel could not preach experimentally, nor describe the warfare between grace and sin from his own feelings. And if we could suppose a minister as full of comforts and as free from failings as an angel, though he would be a good and happy man, I cannot conceive that he would be a good or useful preacher, for he would not know how to sympathise with the weak and afflicted of the flock, or to comfort them under their difficulties with the consolations wherewith he himself, in similar circumstances, had been comforted of God (2 Cor. 1. 3, 4). It belongs to your calling of God as a minister that you should have a taste of the various spiritual trials which are incident to the Lord’s people, that thereby you may possess the tongue of the learned, and know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary; and it is likewise needful to keep you perpetually attentive to that important admonition, “Without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15. 5).

Thus much considering you as a minister. But we may extend the subject so as to make it applicable to believers in general. I would observe, therefore, that it is a sign of a sad declension if one who has tasted that the Lord is gracious should be capable of being fully satisfied with anything short of the light of His countenance, which is better than life. A resting in notions of gospel truth, or in the recollection of past comforts, without a continual thirst for fresh communications from the fountain of life is, I am afraid, the canker which eats away the beauty and fruitfulness of many professors in the present day, and which, if it does not prove them to be absolutely dead, is at least a sufficient evidence that they are lamentably sick. But if we are conscious of the *desire*; if we seek it carefully in the use of all appointed means; if we willingly allow ourselves in nothing which has a known tendency to grieve the Spirit of God, and to damp our sense of divine things; then, if the Lord is pleased to keep us short of those comforts which He has taught us to prize and, instead of lively sensations of joy and praise, we feel a languor and deadness of spirit, provided we do indeed feel it, and are humbled for it, we have no need to give way to despondency or excessive sorrow. Still the foundation of our hope and the ground of our abiding joys is the same. And the heart may be as really alive to God, and grace as truly in exercise when we walk in comparative darkness and see little light, as when the frame of our spirits is more comfortable. Neither the reality nor the measure of grace can be properly estimated by the degree of our sensible comforts.

The great question is, How we are practically influenced by the Word of God, as the ground of our hope, and as the governing rule of our tempers and conversation? The apostle exhorts believers to rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4. 4). He well knew that they were exposed to trials and temptations, and to much trouble from an evil heart of unbelief, and he prevents the objections we might be ready to make by adding, "And again I say, Rejoice," as if he had said, "I speak upon mature consideration. I call upon you to rejoice, not at some times only, but at all times. Not only when upon the mount, but when in the valley. Not only when you conquer, but while you are fighting. Not only when the Lord shines upon you, but when He seems to hide His face."

When He enables you to do all things, you are no better in yourselves than you were before. And when you feel you can do nothing, you are no worse. Your experiences will vary, but His love and promises are always unchangeable. Though our desires of comfort, and what we call lively frames, cannot be too importunate [persistent, pressing] while they are regulated by a due submission to His will, yet they may be inordinate for want of such submission. Sinful principles may, and too often do, mix with and defile our best desires. I have often

detected the two vile abominations self-will and self-righteousness insinuating themselves into this concern. Like Satan, who works by them, they can occasionally assume the appearance of an angel of light. I have felt an impatience in my spirit, utterly unsuitable to my state as a sinner and a beggar, and to my profession of yielding myself and all my concerns to the Lord's disposal. He has mercifully convinced me that I labour under a complication of disorders, summed up in the word *sin*.

He has graciously revealed Himself to me as the infallible Physician, and has enabled me, as such, to commit myself to Him, and to expect my cure from His hand alone. Yet how often, instead of thankfully accepting His prescriptions, have I foolishly and presumptuously ventured to prescribe to Him, and to point out how I would have Him deal with me! How often have I thought something was necessary which He saw best to deny, and that I could have done better without those dispensations which His wisdom appointed to work for my good (Rom. 8. 28)! He is God, and not man, or else He would have been weary of me, and left me to my own management long ago.

How inconsistent to acknowledge that I am blind, to entreat Him to lead me, and yet to want to choose my own way in the same breath! I have limited the Holy One of Israel and not considered that He magnifies His wisdom and grace in working by contraries, and bringing good out of seeming evil. It has cost me something to bring me to confess that He is wiser than I, but I trust, through His blessing, I have not suffered wholly in vain. My sensible comforts have not been great: the proofs I have had of the evils of my sinful nature, my incapacity and aversion to good, have neither been few nor small; but by these unpromising means I hope He has made His grace and salvation precious to my soul, and in some measure weaned me from leaning to my own understanding.

Again, self-righteousness has had a considerable hand in dictating many of my desires for an increase of comfort and spiritual strength. I have wanted some stock of my own. I have been wearied of being so perpetually beholden to Him, necessitated to come to Him always in the same strain, as a poor, miserable sinner. I could have liked to have done something for myself in common [in ordinary, everyday situations], and to have depended upon Him chiefly upon extraordinary occasions. I have found, indeed, that I could do nothing without His assistance, nor anything even with it, but what I have reason to be ashamed of. If this had only humbled me and led me to rejoice in His all-sufficiency, it would have been well. But it has often had a different effect, to make me sullen, angry and discontented, as if it was not best and most desirable that He should have all the glory of His own work, and I should have nothing to boast of, but that in the Lord I have righteousness and strength. I am now learning to glory only in my infirmities that the

power of Christ may rest upon me; to be content to be nothing that He may be All in all. But I find this a hard lesson; and when I seem to have made some proficiency, a slight turn in my spirit throws me back, and I have to begin all again.

There is an inseparable connection between causes and effects. There can be no effect without a cause, no active cause without a proportionable effect. Now indwelling sin is an active cause, and therefore, while it remains in our nature, it will produce effects according to its strength. Why then should I be surprised that, if the Lord suspends His influence for a moment, in that moment sin will discover itself? Why should I wonder that I can feel no lively exercise of grace, no power to raise my heart to God, any farther than He is pleased to work in me mightily; any more than wonder that I do not find fire in the bottom of a well, or that it should not be day when the sun is withdrawn from the earth? Humbled I ought to be, to find I am so totally depraved, but not discouraged, since Jesus is appointed to me of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption; and since I find that, in the midst of all this darkness and deadness, He keeps alive the principle of grace which He has implanted in my heart.

As to Mr. Rutherford's expression which you mention, that "there is no temptation like being without temptation," I allow it in a qualified sense. That is, it is better of the two to suffer from Satan's fiery darts than to be lulled asleep and drawn into a careless security by his more subtle, though less perceptible devices, so as to grow indifferent to the means of grace, and sink into a worldly spirit. Or, like the church of Laodicea, to imagine ourselves rich, and increased in goods, and that we have need of nothing (Rev. 3. 14-22). But I am persuaded this is not your case; the deadness you complain of, and which is a burden you groan under, is a very different thing. And I advise you to be cautious how you indulge a desire to be exercised with Satan's temptations, as supposing they would be conducive to make you more spiritual, or would of course open you a way to greater consolations. If you have such a desire, I may say to you, in our Lord's words, "Ye know not what ye ask" (Matt. 20. 22). He who knows our weakness and the power of our adversary has graciously directed us to pray that we enter not into temptation (Matt. 26. 41).

Have you considered what the enemy can do, if he is permitted to come in like a flood? (Isa. 59. 19). In one hour he could raise such a storm as would put you to your wit's end. He could bring such a dark cloud over your mind, as would blot out all remembrance of your past comforts, or at least prevent you from deriving the least support from them. He could not only fight against your peace, but shake the very foundations of your hope and bring you to question, not only your

interest in the promises, but even to doubt of the most important and fundamental truths upon which your hopes have been built. Be thankful, therefore, if the Lord restrains his malice. A young sailor is often impatient of a short calm, but the experienced mariner, who has been often tossed with tempests and upon the point of perishing, will seldom wish for a storm. In a word, let us patiently wait upon the Lord, and be content to follow as He leads, and He will surely do us good.

I am, &c.

John Newton

April 1773

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF CHRIST

Part of a letter by Ruth Bryan, 1850

O ... for a steady, undiverted look of our Beloved! How do the contrarieties of the wilderness, working upon this corrupt flesh, seem to come between us and Him! In our experience there is an eclipse of His brightness who is our beauty; though still through all He loves, "and hates to put away." Praise Him, my poor, unstable soul, that He changes not (Mal. 3. 6), and therefore I am not consumed. Ah no, divine love prevents the consuming of its object in any other fire than its own, but in those fires is only a making meet to be more absorbed in its inexpressible blissfulness. This poor heart has had many a tossing lately, but it feels the security of love which, amidst all, does ensure and assure that the union is eternal, and that no things of time shall dis sever it.

"My everlasting song is this,
Jesus is mine, and I am His."

Many of His dealings I do not understand, and I often feel myself a poor, weary pilgrim, but His love and His bosom are the home of my new heart, and there it reposes in safety, while the tempest howls around and the storm beats upon the outer man. I do not mean you to think I have been in great trials, but I have had many little contrarieties in the path, and much exercise of soul.

I am more and more convinced the way upward is one of tribulation, and the high heads and trifling hearts of most professors look as if they were not in it. But honestly we say,

"Above their highest mirth,
Our saddest hours we prize;
For though our cup seems filled with gall,
There's something secret sweetens all."

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE

It was from a full heart that William Gadsby wrote, "My every need He richly will supply." And how abundantly he proved this during his early years at Manchester!

During the first year (June 28th, 1806) another baby was born, the first boy – making a total now of four children. The little boy was named Ebenezer. William Gadsby wrote:

"We quickly agreed upon the lad's name:
'Ebenezer,' we'll call him; for unto this day,
Jehovah, the I AM, has prospered our way.
May the Lord make us grateful, and fill us with praise
To Him who is faithful, abounding with grace."

His prayer was:

"May the lad and his mother, and sisters likewise,
With their unworthy father, obtain the rich prize."

Two more sons were to complete the family – the well-known John (born 1808) and William (born 1811).

It is said that troubles seldom come alone, and William Gadsby was to prove this. Apart from the severe opposition of his enemies, there were providential difficulties. Times were hard, bread was dear, and with his little family Gadsby found it hard to make ends meet as his income did not support his family. He had been much better off before leaving Hinckley. His enemies felt sure he would be starved out.

To make things even worse he had the burglars. This, though, he felt he deserved – having gone to bed in a bad humour without praying with his family. But, as he said, he "hobbled on."

His congregation, also, were proving things hard and, in addition, the chapel was in debt and also giving way at one end. A house had to be built to hold it up (in which he and his young family lived). "We were a poor set," said Gadsby.

In the end he felt he must call his church together. His suggestions alarmed them. He would go back to his old trade as a hosier; he did not wish to be a burden to his church, but he and his family could not live. This plan was hastily rejected and a decision made that his salary must be equal to the least of those who were in business. From then on to the end of his days, money was never mentioned. Perhaps it can be said here that it is believed that throughout his pastorate, he regularly gave away towards half of his salary to the poor. This was a point he always strongly contended for: that if the Lord touched a man's heart, He would also touch his pocket.

Yet despite the hardness of the times, many were the helps that William Gadsby received in providence. A most interesting incident,

which took place very soon after he came to Manchester, will illustrate this.

When he gave up business, he still owed a few sums of money. One day one of his creditors unexpectedly arrived, demanding £20 (the equivalent of roughly £1,000 today!) – which William Gadsby did not have. So he promised to pay him on the following Monday – how, he did not know. Immediately he visited several who were in debt to him, but no money was forthcoming. Then he tried a number of friends, requesting a loan of £20, but with no success. Pointedly he remarked, “All of them could sympathise with me a deal better than lend me anything. If a man wants to know how many friends he has, he had better try to borrow some money!”

Further attempts proved equally futile, and Friday came with seemingly no hope of paying back the £20. William Gadsby quaintly says: “Twenty pounds seemed written on everything – on the ceiling, on the walls, in the fire, on the dinner plates, on the faces of my wife and children. I was really miserable.” Above all he was concerned for the honour and glory of God; but how could he fulfil his promise and pay the £20? Psalm 73 seemed the most suitable portion for his case.

Unable to sleep, unable to eat, unable to read, he derived little comfort from his wife: “You have often talked and preached about the power of faith. I think you now need some yourself.” (William Gadsby commented wryly, “She rose from her chair, and went rattling amongst her pots and kettles. ‘My wife,’ I said to myself, ‘is a good Christian woman; but she thinks works are the best evidence of faith.’”) Really Mrs. Gadsby was bitterly grieved because none of their friends would lend them anything.

“Three times to preach on the Sunday and no text – £20 to pay on the Monday and no money. What was I to do? For a long time I sat with my face buried in my hands; and then I fell on my knees, and I believe I said, ‘Lord, help me,’ a hundred times; for I could say nothing else.”

And the Lord did help him – in a remarkable way.

The Lord’s day text, of course, could be no other than “Lord, help me.” In the morning he felt much liberty in preaching. One of his illustrations was that of a deacon who was executor for two orphan children; but he was tempted to use the money himself; this preyed on his mind, and he began to drink; he lost his peace of mind, his character was ruined, and he died with the reputation of a rogue. The sermon was nowhere near finished at midday, so William Gadsby continued with the text in the afternoon, and then again in the evening. “I could have preached from ‘Lord, help me’ all week,” he said.

At the close of the evening service, a young man was waiting at the bottom of the pulpit steps. Ushered into the vestry, he told his little tale.

His mother had died leaving him all her money – except £5 for a poor old woman and £20 for her pastor, Mr. Gadsby. The £5 had been paid but – “Thinking no one knew, I resolved never to give you the £20. But while you were talking about the roguish executor this morning, I felt thunderstruck. I have now brought you the £20. Here it is. Do take it, and forgive me.”

It was now William Gadsby’s turn to be “thunderstruck.” As the twenty golden sovereigns were placed in his hand, he trembled all over. Hastening home, he spread the money out before his wife, and praised his God: “He has heard my prayer, and helped me, and I will trust Him as long as I live.”

William Gadsby’s final comment was: “When that little prayer, ‘Lord, help me,’ comes from the heart of one of God’s children in distress, neither men, devils nor angels can tell its power. It has brought me thousands of blessings, besides the £20.”

This interesting story has again and again been published in tract form, usually with the title: THE LITTLE PRAYER: “LORD, HELP ME.” (In 1883 the Book Mission, sending Christian literature to the army and navy, published 50,000 copies.)

About the same time William Gadsby had another remarkable proof of the promise, “My God shall supply all your need.” From his early days he went to preach in London once each year. After only a short time in London, he received a sad letter from his wife. The last shilling had been spent. But at that moment Gadsby had no money available himself.

Not a word was spoken to anyone, but in dependence the letter was spread before the Lord. Calling at a house the same day on his way to preach, he was told that a few young people had been so blessed under his preaching that they wished to make a present to his wife. So they presented him with nine £1 notes. The very same night, a minister at the house where he was staying handed him two £1 notes. So Mrs. Gadsby soon received the money she needed.

“When the Lord’s people have need,
His goodness will find out a way.”

On another occasion when they were in great need, all the money they had at home was a guinea (£1.05), and William Gadsby had to leave home to preach. The money was in one of his pockets and, just before he left, Mrs. Gadsby insisted on him changing his clothes – and, of course, the money was left behind.

So that night there he was, away from home, with nothing – when whom should he meet but a man who had once said he would have blown his brains out – “but it was a pity to be hanged for blowing the brains out

of such a villain!” Anyway, the same man presented him with a guinea. “This was spoil taken in the day of battle,” remarked Gadsby. “It shows there is nothing too hard for the Lord.” In this William Gadsby saw a special display of the Lord’s mercy and kindness; He knew that Mrs. Gadsby needed a guinea at home, and that her husband needed a guinea away from home – and He kindly supplied both.

From the biography of William Gadsby, published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

BOOK REVIEWS

Voices from the Past; Puritan Devotional Readings, edited by Richard Rushing; hardback; 418 pages; price £16.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This magazine has always delighted in the old Puritan writers. Successive Editors, such as J.C. Philpot, J.K. Popham and J.H. Gosden loved them – especially Dr. Owen and Dr. Goodwin.

During the barren spiritual years of the first half of the twentieth century, it was the *Gospel Standard*, almost alone, that still published these writings. Taking a random example (1935), we find there extracts from Bunyan, Flavel, Goodwin, Gurnall, Owen and Traill, along with Rutherford and Leighton.

The renewed interest in the Puritans during the past fifty years has, therefore, been most pleasing to us. The Banner of Truth Trust has done a truly magnificent work in republishing so many Puritan works, and continues with this today.

This new book *Voices from the Past* consists of a passage taken from the Puritans for every day of the year. The Editor, Richard Rushing, writes: “How thrilling it has been for me to read the Puritans on the glory and attributes of God, divine providence, fellowship with God, holiness of life and the mortification of indwelling sin, heavenly mindedness, prayer, evangelistic zeal, and trust in the Lord during times of affliction! At every turn these truths are eloquently taught and faithfully applied.” The Publishers write: “This book is sent forth with the prayer that it will open a door to the vast stores of treasure to be found in the writings of the Puritans.”

As is well known, this magazine is strongly committed to using the Authorized Version alone; so we are sad to see that the Editor of *Voices from the Past* has altered Scripture quotations to a modern version. Whatever modern writers may do, there can be no excuse for altering the wording in the Scripture verses as they appear in the original works. In fact, in places this does not seem even sensible. David Clarkson is giving a beautiful explanation of what “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. 4. 15) means, but the words do not appear in the text. The Scripture quotation itself is changed to “sympathise with our weaknesses.”

Though feeling compelled, sadly, to say all this, *Voices from the Past* is a superb collection of very graciously-written pieces which are exceedingly

profitable. Though we do not like the “flies in the ointment” (Eccl. 10. 1), we have to say with J.C. Philpot, when he complained of flies in the ointment in some of the Scottish worthies, yet there is such a sweet savour in the ointment.

Sermons on Genesis: Chapters 1-11, by John Calvin; hardback; 887 pages; price £20; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This volume contains forty-nine sermons preached at Geneva on most week days during the period September 4th, 1559 to January 23rd, 1560. They were delivered in sixteenth century French and this is the first translation into English. It would appear that John Calvin preached from his Hebrew Bible, translating it as he spoke. The Scripture texts used in the translation are appropriately the Authorised Version, with a few minor alterations to suit Calvin’s translation of the Hebrew. Occasionally the marginal reading is used; sometimes when referring to mankind *you* is used instead of *thou* and in the sermon on Genesis 2. 7-15 the text reads, “Now the Lord God formed man of the mud of the ground....”

It seems superfluous to give any introductory remarks on John Calvin or his theology. The translation was done in South Carolina, U.S.A.; therefore some of the idioms used reflect the usage in that country. The sermons are both expository and experimental. Sin is treated as a dreadful affront to Almighty God, whose creation work was of such kindness and condescension to mankind. The style is reverent and easy to read.

Your reviewer feels the Banner of Truth has done this country a great service in issuing this publication. We wish it a wide readership with God’s blessing upon the truths contained in it.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

GOD’S ATTRIBUTES GLORIFIED AT CALVARY

Pure, from the bosom of eternal Love,
 Jehovah gave His well-belovèd Son,
 That men on Him believing might have life;
 And with design as pure the Son came down
 To serve and suffer in the sinner’s stead.
 The cross explains the state of man with God:
 The cross reveals the mind of God to man.
 There Mercy, Truth, and Righteousness, with Peace,
 Met in one pure embrace. The whole of God
 Was manifested in that awful scene
 Brighter than heaven had seen Him shine before;
 Stronger than human intellect could bear;
 And yet so plain that man must read it – Love.

Never did Truth Divine so fair appear,
 As when she told, with her impartial voice,
 The Lord of life, that He behoved to die;
 Because she found Him in the sinner’s place,
 And read the names of sinners on His heart.

Never did Justice on her brow a frown
 Wear so majestic, nor a heart so firm
 Display, to punish with impartial hand
 Sin where she found it, as when, through the soul
 Of man's Redeemer, her avenging sword
 She plunged vindictive; till each vital stream
 Was dry, and life before her dreadful face
 Fled from its sinless dwelling.

Never did Mercy so divinely shine,
 As when on Calvary she sat enthroned,
 While Judgment placed the sceptre in her hand,
 And smiled in crimson robes! Never before,

Nor since, was Goodness so benign displayed,
 As when to save vile, intellectual worms
 From hell's dark realms, the Prince of intellect*
 Himself endured God's wrath; and with His blood
 Quenched the devouring flames: through His own heart
 Thus opening an amazing avenue
 For sinners numberless to pass from death
 To life immortal, and immortal bliss.

Never did Love Eternal, though immense,
 To such mysterious depths descend before,
 Or rise to such sublime, unbounded heights;
 Sinking beneath the gloomy caves of death,
 To drown the sins and purify the souls,
 Howe'er depraved, of all who trust His grace;
 Rising beyond the everlasting hills,
 To fix the subjects of Redeeming Grace
 Secure among the highest sons of bliss!

Joseph Swain (1761-1796)

The difference between the office of the law and the gospel keepeth all
 Christian doctrines in their true and proper place.

Martin Luther

Labour to be displeased with thyself, and labour to feel that thou standest
 in need of every drop of the blood of Christ to heal and cleanse thee.

William Perkins

In all favours, think not of them so much as of God's mercy and love in
 Christ which sweetens them.

Sibbes

* It is unclear what Joseph Swain meant here.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MARCH 2010

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

A MAN OF SORROWS

*Sermon preached by Mr. G.D. Buss at Old Baptist Chapel,
Chippenham on April 13th, 2008*

Text: “A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53. 3).

Of whom is God’s servant, the prophet Isaiah, speaking? This was a question asked of Philip by the Ethiopian in the midst of a desert. He had been reading this remarkable chapter. His heart had been strangely moved. And yet there remained a deep, deep question – of whom was the prophet speaking? Was it of himself? Was it his own path? Was it something he was passing through himself, which he put down, as it were, to relieve the anxiety and pressure of the depths he was in? Or was he speaking with the voice of prophecy concerning some other man?

Well, we know the answer – at least, the Word of God tells us. And some of us here know the answer, we hope, a little, by divine revelation, that the Man in our text is none other than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He bears many names. Even in this chapter, you will notice some of the names He bears. He is spoken of as the “Arm of the Lord,” “a tender Plant,” “a Root out of a dry ground,” “a Lamb” and “a Servant.” These are some of the names He bears. And every name He bears has a respect to the blessed office He sustains on behalf of His dear people as their Saviour.

But what a wonderful name we have here before us this morning! A name just suited to the church of God on earth. You say, “Is there another church of God?” No, not in one sense. There is only one church. But there are two parts of that church, divided by the river of death. There is what we call, the “church militant” – that is the church on the battleground, the church still wrestling, as good Rutherford said:

“I’ve wrestled on towards heaven,
’Gainst storm and wind and tide.”

I judge it is to those that this word is especially applicable this morning. And there is the church triumphant, of whom you have been singing (477). They are beyond sorrows, and they are beyond grief. They behold face to face this One of whom it was said while here below: “a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” They can still see in the body of that dear One on whom they gaze with ineffable delight, marks

of those sorrows. We read that when John saw Him by revelation in the Isle of Patmos, it was “a Lamb as it had been slain.” In other words, there were the marks of suffering.

One of the delights of heaven is for the redeemed to gaze on the actual hands of the Saviour; to see the wounds; to see those once-pierced holy hands and feet; to see the riven mark in His side; to see that dear head which once was crowned with thorns, now crowned with glory. That is their delight; that is their joy, this morning. This very hour, as we seek in our poor, limited way to remember Him who was the “Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” they, in the fulness of joy, the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, behold Him face to face. But, as the good hymnwriter put it:

“They’ve gone in endless bliss to dwell,
And I am left below,
To struggle with the powers of hell,
Till Jesus bids me go.”

Of course, he is speaking about the dear people of God. They are the ones who value this title, this name.

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer’s ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.”

Here is a name especially suited to sorrowing people, grief-stricken people. And friends, the Man who while here below knew the sorrows and knew the grief has not forgotten His sorrows nor forgotten His grief – He is not so taken up now with His glory and joy and rightful place at the right hand of His Father as to forget His sorrowing people here below. We read in the Book of Exodus concerning God’s ancient people: “I know their sorrows.” This blessed One still knows the sorrows of His church here below; He still understands them. When Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the church of Christ – slaying some, haling others to prison, exiling others – the Lord Jesus spoke to that erring man and said: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” I pause here for a moment; just think for a minute – when you speak and deal with a child of God, remember, there is One who feels for them. “Touch not Mine anointed,” the Word of God says, “and do My prophets no harm.” “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.” The Saviour feels for the oppressions of His people, for the burdens of His people. He feels for the weights they bear, the sorrows they endure. “A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.”

Now my thoughts this morning will be very simple, but I hope it will be a “word in season” to more than one here this morning, who in more

than one way have a sorrow, a disappointment, a loss, a discouragement, a perplexity, a hardness in the way, a crooked thing or a thing they find they cannot understand, and need grace to live with and to walk it out. Here is One who understands. You remember those two on the road to Emmaus. They were speaking, talking and reasoning with each other, when the Lord Jesus Christ drew near. He said, "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" They were communing with each other. But friends, when *He* began to commune with them, what a difference! Then their sorrows were met; their needs were dealt with; their sore was bound up. And that's what I hope, this morning, that it may be God's will so to do; that He who alone can communicate out of His loving heart to sorrowing hearts the Balm of Gilead – the sweet balsam of the gospel – may do so to sorrowing, grief-stricken hearts here this morning. "A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

First of all: "a Man." In saying that, neither the prophet, nor I the poor preacher here this morning, deny His Godhead. He was God before He was Man. He *is* the eternal Son of the eternal Father, not by office, for that is His blessed nature. He is, by nature, the Son of the eternal God. And as I have reminded you more than once, as one good man put it so plainly: "He is what He has been and ever will be; but He became what He was not for sinners like me." He became "a Man of sorrows" for the sake of sinners.

What is it that lies at the root of every sorrow this world has ever known, and every sorrow that is in this congregation this morning, from whatever quarter it has come? Right at the root of that sorrow lies that word "sin." There would have been no sorrow had there been no sin. Do remember that. It is a wonderful thing when you can see by God's grace that the connection is a sanctified one. It is not sanctified to everybody. You go to the hospital wards, and into the streets of this land in which we live, and see the sorrow and degradation wrought by sin. We have not a stone, or even a pebble, or even a speck of dust to throw at those who are Godless and Christless. It is very evident that much, perhaps most, of the sorrow on the face of this earth is not sanctified. But one of the clearest marks of being a child of God is sanctified sorrow. That is when sorrow does us good; teaches what we would not have seen otherwise; gives a spirit to us that we would not otherwise have possessed; a sorrow that does not leave us as it found us; a sorrow on which we may look back, like the bitter waters of Marah, and say, "the waters were made sweet."

But this dear Man in our text is the God-Man. He became a Man. That is, He took into union with His divine Person a complete human nature, body and soul. Why did He do it? That He might experience in

His own Person the sorrows of His church. O what love! As good William Gadsby puts it in hymn 514: "O what matchless condescension!" Think of it: that He who lay in the bosom of His Father from all eternity should stoop and unite to Himself a body, finite like our own; and that He should unite in such a way, that within that body He would dwell in a holy tabernacle, a temple here below; and for this very reason: to enter into the sorrows of His people.

"A Man of sorrows" – One who willingly, lovingly took a cup of sorrow into His hand to drink. Here is One who Himself, in His holy humanity, needed strengthening in Gethsemane. And do you think He will rebuke you, and cast a stone at you, who feel to need strengthening this morning? We sang in that beautiful hymn that we opened the service with this morning:

"A fulness resides in Jesus our Head,
And ever abides to answer our need."

"Ever" – this morning – April 13th, 2008 – it abides to answer the need of His sorrowing, grieving, burdened, oppressed, disappointed, discouraged, perplexed people who are on the battleground. "A Man of sorrows."

But then we must say this: a sinless Man. O never, never, *never* lose sight of that! In your sorrows, and in my sorrows, there is rebellion, unbelief, impatience, ungracious questionings, covetousness – O the things that rise up in sorrow! "Other people's paths," you say, "are easier than mine; no one is as tried as I am." So says our poor, wretched, fickle nature, doesn't it? Our Saviour had no such sin in His holy Person. He was always submissive to His Father's will, always ready and willing to obey. No sinful petulance or impatience; no rash thoughts, words or actions; no shirking the cross; no shunning the reproach; no reproachful thoughts of His heavenly Father. No; and blessed be God, *that* is the spirit that He imparts to His dear people from time to time in their sorrows, enabling them to be patient, humble, submissive, quiet and graciously confident, believing "that what He does is ever best."

"He never takes away our all –
Himself He gives us still."

O poor, sorrowing ones! I know there are a good many sorrows here this morning. Some are known, but there are a great number hidden. You would be surprised at the sorrows in this house of prayer, if you really knew; if each living soul were to unbosom all their sorrows you would be amazed. But there is One who knows. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." He knows their frame; He knows their sorrows; He knows the cup

He has put in their hand to drink; He knows what strength they need; He knows what conflict they feel. He knows that their old nature would get out of the way and run away from it, but He knows also that they will persevere. Why? "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." "He will keep the feet of His saints." This "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," He says, "Holy Father ... those that Thou gavest Me I have kept." I have kept them. And He *still* keeps them.

Do you feel you are going to be lost in your sorrow? Do you feel you are going to make shipwreck of faith, in your sorrow? Do you feel, somehow, that your faith is dried up in your sorrow? I was speaking to a dear man of God, one of our ministers, only a few days ago. He said, "My faith has gone." Well, dear friends, it had not gone, and it has not gone. But there are times when God's people feel it has gone. Indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples on one occasion, "How is it that ye have no faith?" And, "Where is your faith?" But what did He say about Peter? Poor, sorrowing one – here is the answer to your trouble this morning: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." "A Man of sorrows" who yet prays for His people with blessed authority; who pleads for that burdened, bruised reed; that smoking flax; that one who has perhaps come to chapel this morning, feelingly for the last time: "Lord, this is my last venture. If I don't get a crumb this morning, I feel I can never come again." He feels for that very one; He understands the path they are in, because He is "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Now what were His sorrows? What was the great sorrow of the Saviour? You might be surprised when I say what it was, but some will not be. The great sorrow of the dear Son of God in our nature was sin. You say, "Sin? You have told us He had no sin. You have told us He is a sinless One." Dear friends, it was His *people's* sins that were His sorrow. When the full weight of that sinful burden was laid on His holy shoulders; when that word we read of in Corinthians was fulfilled: "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin"; who can tell what sorrows filled His holy heart! To think that the people He had loved with an everlasting love should have been such rebels, such despisers, such rejecters, so full of the world, so easily tempted, so depraved, so lost in Adam. O to think what His holy heart endured as He felt and knew and realised the full weight that the law justly had against them! This was His sorrow.

And now, sinner – listen. Were your sins there? Did He weep, did He groan, did He grieve under your sins? The prophet said He did, speaking of himself: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." There is no greater joy than for a poor sinner to be led to

realise the relationship between the Saviour's sorrows and his sins. And though He did sorrow over the sins of the world in one sense (it was a grief to see the fallen world around Him), it was the sins of His people that grieved Him the most. O to know that our sins were in that vast, intolerable load! If not, if He has not borne them away, sinner; if He has not put them away, they are sorrows you must bear to all eternity. O friend, do – O I beseech you, by the mercies of God, this morning hour – look well to your soul! Are you seeking a place in the heart of this "Man of sorrows"? Is it your exercise and your desire that you could hear Him say, "All this was done for you"? Would your heart leap with joy today, or are you unconcerned about it? Are your sins so much of your nature (and they are, and mine too) that you do not want to part with them? In essence you are really saying, "I want nothing to do with this sorrowing Saviour." "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger." Remember that word: "fierce anger," sinner. *Remember it.* "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." With vengeance against the sins of His dear people, He paid in the Person of His dear Son. But O, those who live and die without faith in a precious Christ, without repentance over their sin – that vengeance they will endure to all eternity.

We have recently lost two dear friends very suddenly, both of whom we have good confidence to believe they are on the right side of our text this morning. Had the Lord taken you or I at the early morning hour in our sleep, how would it have been? Where would your soul be, had the Lord taken your soul yesterday morning as He took our dear friend's soul? Would it have been a blood-washed soul? Would it have been a ransomed soul? Would it have been one who had a place in these sorrows? Or would it have been a careless, indifferent one, suddenly plunged into that darkness which has no relief, that pit out of which there is no deliverance; those sorrows of which there is no assuaging?

Be sure of this – our Saviour has not come down for nothing. If God did not hate sin as He does, our Saviour would never have suffered as He did. And,

"Ye who think of sin but lightly,
Nor suppose the evil great,
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate."

I tell you, the law of Mount Sinai will make a sinner tremble – and it should do; would to God we trembled more under God's holy law – but it is the gospel, it is Calvary, it is a crucified Saviour that gets to the root of the matter. That is where sin is seen so exceedingly sinful, and that is where the true cost and weight of it is understood. "A Man of sorrows."

The second deep, deep sorrow I will mention is the terrible opposition the dear Saviour endured from this dying world. Just think for a moment of some of the things He had to endure. He, who only ever did good; He, who harmed no one, was spat upon. He was scourged until the blood ran down His holy back. Thorns – not just tiny thorns (godly scholars tell us that the thorns that made up the crown of the Saviour were probably six inches long), wreathed in cruelty in the heart of the Roman soldiers, were pressed on His holy head till streams of blood ran down His holy face, that visage marred more than any man's. He was smitten upon the face. He was led out, carrying His own cross, amidst a railing, jeering mob. He was crucified between two thieves, and even there not spared the spite of this world. They jeered, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." O dear friends, what the world did to the Saviour! And if you are the Saviour's, remember, the world will do, in its measure, the same to you as well. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you." If that is your sorrow this morning, here is One who understands your sorrow. Here is One who can assuage it and pour His balm into it. He knows; He has been there before.

But then, what about His saints? What did they do to Him? Loving Peter – what did you do to Him? He denied Him with oaths and curses, three times over, with lies and anger. Is this one for whom the Saviour was to bleed and die? Yes. What did loving John do? He fled at the first sign of battle. They all did. Dear friends, His saints have nothing to boast of, have they? Those of us who have made a profession of His dear name – O what sorrows has the Saviour had, as it were, as He has seen the profession, the poor profession, the weak profession, the fickle profession, the erratic profession of His dear name by His followers! We have spoken when we should not have spoken; we have not spoken when we ought to have spoken. "A Man of sorrows." We read, "The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." What did He do when He looked upon Peter? Peter knew the Lord knew all about what he had said, and what he was thinking, and what he was doing. But what did Peter see in the face of his Saviour? "Reproach hath broken My heart" – *that's* what he saw. Sinner, saint, O how culpable we are, every one of us here this morning, in one way or another! We have added to His sorrows. "A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Have you met a blow from a sinner or a saint this week? Well, here is One who understands: "A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

But that was not the end of it, was it? Not only were there those intolerable physical sufferings – nails through His holy feet and hands, and a spear in His side, and the thorns on His holy head – but there was the deepest of all His sorrows. What was that? His heavenly Father hid

His face. In those dark, dark hours, when that unnatural eclipse surrounded the whole earth, there was a most solemn eclipse in the heart and soul and mind of the Saviour when His own dear Father hid His face. There was no feeling smile; no loving communications felt. It was utter, utter, utter desolation, the deepest loneliness one has ever felt on the face of this earth, or ever will know. It was a place so lonely, so desolate, that only He, who is incarnate God, could have been in such a place and come out of it. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Is this your sorrow this morning? In your little measure you are in the same place. The reason God's face was hidden from His Son was because of our sin – *that's* why. And why has He hidden His face from you? Is it your sin? Is it your backsliding? Is it your wandering? Or is it something else? Is it the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, that you too might know just a little – just a drop compared with the ocean of wrath He drank – of what sin cost the Saviour in whom your hope is?

"Sinner, thou hast done the deed;
Thou hast made the Saviour bleed!
Justice drew its sword on Me!
Pierced My heart to pass by thee!"

This is the gospel; this is the very essence of it. "He hath made Him to be sin for us," says the apostle, "who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

And then, dear friends: "A Man of sorrows." He knew what loneliness was. He knew what real tears were. He knew what bereavement was. And though, in one sense, He never experienced infectious afflictions that you and I know (His body was incorruptible, in that sense – no seeds of affliction within it) yet, friends, how He entered into the sorrows of His afflicted people! O the burdens of the sick, the lame, the blind, the halt, the leper, the man with palsy, and even more, of those guilty sinners needing mercy! "A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

It is those who are acquainted with grief who understand those who are grief-stricken. If you have not been in a path, you do not understand it in quite the same way. Afar off, you might think you do. But when you are in that path of grief, then you can understand another in it. You are a real "companion in tribulation" then, aren't you? Perhaps you say, "I've got no companions in my tribulation, this morning." You have. You have the "Man of sorrows;" the One who is "acquainted with grief." You *have* got a Companion, with a capital "C."

"A Friend there is, your voices join,
Ye saints, to praise His name,
Whose truth and kindness are divine,
Whose love's a constant flame.

“And if our dearest comforts fall
 Before His sovereign will,
 He never takes away our all –
 Himself He gives us still.”

“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” This is the “Man of sorrows.” “But,” you say, “He is in glory now.” Yes, He is. But He has not forgotten His dear people. He has not forsaken them. Behind that dark cloud of sorrow and grief this morning, this dear, dear Saviour smiles. He smiles with everlasting love upon His church here below:

“Forget thee I will not, I cannot; thy name
 Engraved on My heart does for ever remain;
 The palms of My hands while I look on I see
 The wounds I received when suffering for thee.”

“He wept, He bled, He died for you;
 What more, ye saints, could Jesus do?”

Amen.

VERY PERSONAL QUESTIONS

From Ralph Erskine on Isaiah 45. 11.

Would you ask, “O what is to become of a poor creature that is sensible of great guiltiness, and is oppressed with the sense thereof, and apprehensive of the great wrath of God upon the account of his great sins and innumerable provocations, and dare not so much as think that God will have mercy on him?” Alas! what is to become of such an one? God’s answer is, “I, even I, am He that blotteth out your iniquities and your transgressions, for Mine own name’s sake; I will be merciful to your unrighteousness; your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more.”

Again, do you ask, “What will become of a poor soul, sensible of its great and gross ignorance, saying, I have been brought to God’s school, and He hath been at much pains with me; and yet I am grossly ignorant of God and the things of God, and blind like a mole?” God’s answer is, “I will teach you to profit. They shall be all taught of God.” Let such a soul plead that promise, “It is written in the prophets, They shall all be taught of God: whosoever, therefore, hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to the Son.”

Would you ask, “What will become of a poor soul that sees its infinite distance from God, and fears it shall never be brought near unto Him?” O! His answer is, That Jesus Christ hath brought down the

middle wall of partition betwixt God and you, and by His death, "The veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom," that you may have boldness to enter into the holiest by His blood.

Would you ask, "What will become of a poor sinner, crossed with the power of sin, and of indwelling corruption, so as he fears hell will be his portion?" God's answer is, "I will subdue your iniquities. Sin shall not have dominion over you." Let such believe and embrace the promise of divine mercy through Christ: the promise of the Spirit, for sanctification, and take God's Word for it, and they are safe.

Would you ask, "Alas! what will become of a poor soul that is destitute of all good things, that finds its want of God, and Christ, and holiness, and want of everything that is good; and made up of wants, both temporal and spiritual?" Why, His answer is, "The young lion shall want, and suffer hunger; but they that fear the Lord, shall want no good thing." But O there is something in that word, say you, that cuts off my relation to such a promise; it is conditional to these who fear the Lord, and I am none of these. But I advise you, whenever you find such a promise, take hold of it as your own; and if you find a want of the condition, take hold of Christ for the condition, and take Him and the promise both, and there will be no fear.

Would you ask again, "What will become of a poor, impotent creature that hath no ability to perform any duty or resist any temptation?" God's answer is that "He will give power to the faint; and to them that hath no might, He increaseth strength. My grace is sufficient for you; My strength shall be perfected in your weakness." Rest on His word, and it shall be well with you.

Do you ask again, "What will become of a poor, tempted soul? The fiery darts of Satan are flying about my ears, and I am not in case to resist the darts of the enemy." The answer that God gives is, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Therefore, O rest on His word, and there is no fear of you!

Again, do you ask, "What will become of a poor, deserted creature? I find God hiding His face; I have not met with Him at this occasion; the Lord hides; He is far from me. What will become of such an one?" God's answer is, "Though weeping endureth for a night, joy shall come in the morning." I cannot stand on all these, so as to cite every chapter and verse, but all that know the Scripture will know Scripture language when they hear it.

Again, do you ask, "What will become of such a poor, afflicted one as I am, surrounded with waves on all hands, or inward and outward troubles? O what will become of me?" God's answer is, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy

stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires," &c. (Isa. 54. 11). Precious things are there promised, and if you depend upon a promising God, your tribulation will end in a kingdom: "Through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But would you ask this question, "O what is to become of one that finds such a power of sin taking place, as that he fears he will be a castaway, and become just a reproach to the way of the Lord?" God's answer is, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, that I will not turn away from you, to do you good; I will put my fear into your hearts, and ye shall not depart from Me."

O, say you, "What will become of one that is terrified at the king of terrors? What will become of me at death?" What is God's answer? "O death, I will be thy plague! O grave, I will be thy destruction! I will ransom thee from the power of the grave. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. Death shall be swallowed up in victory." Just rest upon His Word, and there will be no fear.

Again, would you ask, "What will become of one that is black like hell, that hath just the blackness of the devil upon him, and that is all deformed and defiled with the smoke of the bottomless pit?" O, a poor soul sighing and asking such a question, What does God say to it? He says, "Though thou hast lien among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver; and her feathers with yellow gold: I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness; and from all your idols will I cleanse you."

Would you ask, "What will become of one that hath no will to come to Christ, but finds a power of enmity and ill-will prevailing?" Why, if your enmity be your disease that you would have healed, God's answer is, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." It is good to see your own enmity. Others think they love Christ well enough, who are yet in the gall of bitterness.

Would you ask, "What will become of one whose heart is the most hardened heart in all the world; harder than a stone, so as nothing can break it, nothing can touch or affect it?" God's answer is, "That He is able, out of these very stones, to raise up children to Abraham. I will take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh." O take Him at His word, and His word shall take effect upon you.

Well, are these your questions? and are you satisfied with God's answers? Have you any other sort of questions to ask?

Do you ask, "What will become of such and such a wicked man, that is an enemy to the cause of God, and to the King of Zion?" Why, what says God of the wicked? His answer is, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." What says He of those who go on in their sin? Why, He saith, "He will wound the head

of the wicked, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.”

Do you ask, “What will become of the enemies of Zion, the church’s adversaries?” Why, God’s answer is, “The enemies of the Lord shall become as the fat of rams; they shall consume into smoke, they shall consume away.”

Again, would you ask the question, “What will become of Zion itself, the city of our solemnities? What will become of the work of God, His witnessing work, covenanting work among the hands of professed friends, and of reformation work, when the glorious beauty thereof is as a fading flower in a day of snares, temptations and divisions, and dividing questions, among them?” O where shall we expect an answer, but just from that God who says, “That He hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it”; even this, that He is the Founder, and will be the Builder, and who says, “When He appears in His glory, He will build up Zion.” We may rest upon what He hath said, that “The hand of Zerubbabel that hath laid the foundation, His hand also must finish it.”

Time would fail me to propose all the questions that God condescends to answer in His Word.

OUR GOD FOR EVER

From Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

God is *a safe portion, a secure portion*. He is a portion that none can rob or wrong you of; He is a portion that none can touch or take from you; He is a portion that none can cheat or spoil you of. God is such a portion, that no friend, no foe, no man, no enemy, no devil can ever rob a Christian of. O Christians, God is so yours in Christ, and so yours by covenant, and so yours by promise, and so yours by purchase, and so yours by conquest, and so yours by donation, and so yours by marriage union and communion, and so yours by the earnest of the Spirit, and so yours by the feelings and witnessings of the Spirit, that no power or policy on earth can ever finger your portion, or cheat or rob you of your portion. “For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death” (Psa. 48. 14).

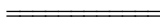
He is not only our God for the present, nor will He be only our God for a short time longer. O no, but He will be our God for ever and ever. If God be once thy portion, He will be for ever thy portion. It must be a power that must overmatch the power of God, and a strength that must be above the strength of God, that must rob or spoil a Christian of his

portion; but who is there that is stronger than God? Is the clay stronger than the potter, or the stubble than the flame, or weakness than strength? Yea, is not the very weakness of God stronger than man? and who then shall ever be able to take away a Christian's portion from him? (Rom. 9; 1 Cor. 1. 25, 10. 22).

But now a man may be easily deprived of his earthly portion. How many have been deprived of their earthly portions by storms at sea, and others by force and violence, and others by fraud and deceit, and others by hideous lying and hellish swearing? Many have lost their earthly portions by treachery, knavery, perjury, subtilty, robbery, &c. Some play away their earthly portions, and others with Esau fool away their earthly portions, and not a few, with the prodigal, sin away their earthly portions. Ahab's fingers itched to be a-fingering of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21. 1-5). A man can no sooner come to enjoy an earthly portion, but other men's fingers itch to be a-fingering of his portion, as daily experience doth sufficiently evidence.

But God is a portion that the fire cannot burn, and the floods cannot drown, and the thief cannot steal, and the enemy cannot sequester, and the soldier cannot plunder a Christian of. A man may take away my gold from me, but he cannot take away my God from me. The Chaldeans and the Sabeans could take away Job's estate from him, but they could not take away Job's God from him (Job 1). And the Amalekites burnt Ziklag, and robbed David of his substance and of his wives, but they could not rob him of his God (1 Sam. 30). And those persecutors in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the Hebrews plundered the saints of their goods, but they could not plunder them of their God.

Till weakness can make a breach upon strength, impotency upon omnipotency, the pitcher upon the potter, and the crawling worm upon the Lord of hosts, a saint's portion is safe and secure. It is true, sickness and disease may take away my health and my strength from me, and death may take away my friends and my relations from me, and enemies may take away my estate, my liberty, my life from me; but none of all these can take away my God from me.



The jewel of assurance is best kept in the cabinet of a humble heart.

Thomas Watson

Without faith we are not fit to desire mercy; without humility we are not fit to receive it; without affection we are not fit to value it; without sincerity we are not fit to improve it.

Stephen Charnock

COME, YE BLESSED

From The Reign of Grace by Abraham Booth (1734-1806)

Another thing which will add to the blessedness of saints at that day is their public acquittal by Jesus the Judge, when standing before His tribunal. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him!" Infinitely grand and awfully amiable He now appears. Innumerable angels attend His approach and pour around His chariot. The brightness of ten thousand suns is lost in the blaze of His glory and in the lustre of His countenance.

Behold! a great white throne is erected, clear as light and fiery as flame. The Judge, inflexibly just and immensely glorious, ascends the tribunal, and before His presence the heavens and the earth flee away. Those innumerable millions of rational creatures that people the universe are now assembled. The books are opened. Myriads of adoring seraphs and countless multitudes of anxious spectators await the grand result. The wicked, with trembling hands and throbbing hearts, with horror in their aspect and damnation in view, would be glad to lose their being; but the righteous are bold and intrepid, for the Judge is their Friend and their Saviour. The righteousness in which they appear was performed by Him. The plea which they make He cannot reject. For it is the blood which He shed to atone for their sins, and the promise He made to comfort their souls, under the expectation of this important event.

They there stand, not to have any fresh indictment brought against them, nor to have anything laid to their charge by Satan, or the law, or justice; but to be honourably acquitted in the presence of angels and of the whole assembled world. The sentence of justification, long before pronounced in the court of heaven and in the court of conscience, at the time of their conversion, is now recognised in the most solemn and public manner. The works of faith and labours of love performed by them in the time of their pilgrimage here below toward their needy fellow-Christians are now produced by the omniscient Judge, as fruits and evidences of their union with Him, of their faith in Him, and of their love to Him. The nature and quality of their works, the principle from which they proceed, and the end for which they were done, together with the character of those that were benefited by them, will afford sufficient evidence to whom the performers of them belong. These expressions of love and fruits of holiness being remembered by Christ, though forgotten by the saints, He will avow them for His own; He will number them among His jewels; He will confess them before His Father and all the holy angels.

Then shall their characters, which in the time of their sojourning here below were aspersed with every foul reproach, be fully vindicated

to their everlasting honour and to the eternal confusion of all their adversaries. For, with a smile of divine complacency, the Judge will say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Reviving words! Having long desired to be near the Lord, they are invited to come, and to be with Him for ever. Now the painful fears which they once had are eternally removed, for they are pronounced "blessed of the Father," by a voice which the whole assembled world shall hear. They were all poor in spirit, and the generality of them poor in temporals; how agreeably, then, must they be surprised to hear that they are called to possess a kingdom; called to inherit it, as princes of the blood royal, who are born to thrones and crowns! Lost they will be in pleasing astonishment, to find that before they had a being, or the foundations of the world were laid, the eternal God had prepared this kingdom for them; and every reflection upon the way in which they came to possess it must heighten their amazement and joy. Then shall they be admitted, in their whole persons, into the fulness of bliss, into a nearer and more perfect fruition of God than they ever before enjoyed.

Their blessedness thus heightened shall be eternal. It is eternity stamped on their enjoyments that gives them their infinite worth. For could they, who are so high in bliss, be apprehensive of an end of their happiness, however remote, "that ghastly thought would drink up all their joy." But their inheritance is unalienable, their crown unfading, and their kingdom everlasting. Jehovah himself is *their light*, and the Most High *their glory*. Yes, the infinite God is their portion, and their exceeding *great reward*. Their felicity, therefore, is permanent as the divine perfections they adore and enjoy, and made certain to their own comprehensive minds beyond the possibility of a doubt.

This makes their state supremely glorious. This constitutes it heaven indeed. Nay, what if the limits of their capacities should be for ever enlarging, and for ever receiving greater measures of glory? For the Deity is an infinite source of blessedness, and finite vessels may be forever expanding, and forever filling, in that ocean of all-sufficiency. What an amazing state of ever-growing pleasure! and what an astonishing scale of bliss! Jehovah shall open inexhaustible stores of blessings, as yet unknown to angels, and feast their souls with joys that are ever new. Nothing equal to this can be conceived by mortals; nothing superior can be enjoyed by mere creatures.

Yet this – hear it, O ye nations! and listen, ye isles from afar! while the millions of beatified saints dwell on the stupendous truth! – this is the *end* of the victorious reign of grace. Grace reigned in the eternal counsels, when contriving the way to this glorious end. Grace reigned in providing the means and in bestowing the blessings that were

necessary to its accomplishment. Grace reigned to the complete execution of the noble, the astonishing design, from first to last. Surely, then, reigning grace should have the unrivalled honour of all the blessings enjoyed by believers on earth, or by saints in light. Yes, and it shall have the glory, in all the churches of Christ below, and in all the triumphant hosts above. For when the last stone of the spiritual temple shall be laid, it will be “with shoutings,” GRACE, GRACE UNTO IT!

THE BLOOD AND THE WATER
JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION
From J.C. Philpot's "Answers to Enquiries"

QUESTION

Being a constant reader of the *Standard*, and I hope not without spiritual instruction, consolation and edification, I take the liberty of calling your attention to 1 John 5. 6 (“This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth”), humbly begging the favour of a few remarks in the *Standard*, which I hope, under the teaching and blessing of God the Spirit, may comfort and strengthen some of the household of faith.

ANSWER

John here evidently refers to what his own eyes saw as Jesus hung on the cross. “But one of the soldiers pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water” (John 19. 34). He therefore declares in the passage before us, “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth” (1 John 5. 6).

“*Water*” here, as elsewhere, signifies that which washes and purifies from defilement, and especially “the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.” We read, therefore, that “Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5. 26, 27). The Apostle Paul in these words is speaking not of the work of Christ in redemption, but in sanctification, “the washing of water by the Word,” and this corresponds with the Lord’s own words: “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15. 3) and again, “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth” (John 17. 17).

Thus Christ “came by water,” to regenerate and renew, to sanctify and cleanse His church. So says the apostle, “But ye are washed, but ye

are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6. 11). This is being "born of water and of the Spirit," without which no man can see or enter into the kingdom of God (John 3. 5). And it is the fulfilment of the ancient promise, "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" (Ezek. 36. 25). It is to do all this by virtue of His holy life and death, by His sufferings, resurrection and intercession, that Jesus Christ is said to come by water.

But the blessed Redeemer "came not by water only"! He came to *redeem* as well as regenerate, to wash in His blood as well as cleanse by sanctifying grace. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 1. 5; 7. 14). Therefore holy John says, "He came not by water only." Something more than water, something distinct from and prior to the washing of regeneration (Titus 3. 5) was needed to save the church from her sins. The Son of God, therefore, came by *blood*, that precious blood which "cleanseth from all sin."

In order clearly to understand the apostle's peculiar and powerful language here, we must see that his object is most positively to insist that redemption and regeneration necessarily and unalterably go together, and must not be separated; that those whom Christ regenerates He redeemed, and those whom He redeemed He regenerates; that He did not come to wash and sanctify by His grace those whom He left under the curse of the law and the guilt of sin; nor to save by His blood from the punishment of their sins those whom He would never regenerate by His Spirit. In His day, as in ours, heretics and erroneous men laboured to separate these two vital blessings. "Christ came by water only," say the self-righteous, and those who feel no need of atoning blood. "A holy life is the main thing. His life and death are our example, and if we are holy and do the things which are right, we shall be saved." Such, whether open or secret Socinians, allow the water, but slight the blood. Others again, of an Antinomian turn, exalt the blood, but slight the water. "If Christ died for you," say they, "you will be saved, let your life be what it may. What is all this talk about a godly life, a tender conscience, and walking in the ordinances of the Lord's house? What do they mean by all this legal stuff? If I am redeemed, that is enough."

But out of the *same* pierced side came both blood and water; blood to redeem, water to regenerate; blood for justification (Rom. 5. 9), water for sanctification; blood to cleanse from guilt, water to wash from filth; blood to give a title to heaven, water to produce a meetness for heaven (Col. 1. 12); blood to purge the conscience (Heb. 9. 14), water to shed the love of God abroad in the heart. Thus Moses, the typical mediator,

washed Aaron and his sons with water, and sprinkled them with blood when he consecrated them as priests unto God (Lev. 8. 6, 30.) And so Jesus, the true Mediator, in consecrating His people “a royal priesthood,” redeemed them by His blood, and washed them, in the time appointed, by His regenerating grace.

Nay more, holy John would show by these striking words that from the same cross, from the same pierced side of Jesus, at the same moment, though in two separate streams, came sanctification as well as redemption; that not only does His precious blood atone for sin, but that His dying love supplies motives and strength to all godliness; that pardon and peace, salvation from the guilt of sin and deliverance from the power of sin, are linked together; that at the foot of the cross, from the heart of Jesus, the stream of sanctification flows; that true repentance comes from looking to Him whom we have pierced; and that as the blood of His heart sufficed for full atonement, so the water of His heart suffices for full sanctification.

We feel that we have expressed our views and feelings but feebly and imperfectly. We close, therefore, with a verse which seems to embody the whole truth in a short compass:

“This fountain so dear, He’ll freely impart;
 Unlocked by the spear, it gushed from His heart,
 With blood and with water; the first to atone,
 To cleanse us the latter; the fountain’s but one.”

THE DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

*An address given by Jesse Delves at the Lord’s table at Ebenezer
 Chapel, Clapham, London, on May 4th, 1947*

Dear Members,

It is my duty and privilege as pastor of this church to give this evening the right hand of fellowship to our young friend and brother who has cast in his lot with us. He has, as you are all aware, given his testimony before this church, and has been baptized according to the Scripture commandment for believers who feel thus constrained to walk in His ways, and has thereby, as I said on Wednesday, avouched the Lord this day to be his God (Deut. 26. 17). And what a solemn consideration this is – and yet what a mercy to be rightly and graciously brought to it!

And now it is my pleasure to give him, according to our order, the right hand of fellowship, whereby we as a church receive him as a partner; he becomes one of us and one with us. There will be equal right to the privileges and ordinances of this church, and we shall have mutual duties and obligations to observe with respect to him and he to us.

It behoves us in this new relationship, and in the relationship in which we stand to each other, to walk together in the spirit and grace of the gospel of Christ; and in respect of our brother in particular as being now received, he does voluntarily bring himself under an obligation to observe the rules and order of the church, and if he is enabled to watch and pray, and to wait on God for growth in grace and knowledge and understanding in difficult things and to walk among us in the gospel, that will be a joy to us, and will thereby strengthen our hands.

It has struck me that there are other things in this: as, for instance, in respect of each member or each one of us, there is need for the grace of humility in a right way that each esteem other better than himself; a spirit of humility as before the Lord – that is a teachable spirit; the grace to wait on Him who giveth more grace; to esteem and respect the elders of the church; and also for patience and forbearance, for he will realise that no perfection is to be found, even in a gospel church, no perfection in the flesh. Especially is this true of the pastor; therefore he will need patience and forbearance.

Perhaps sometimes he will not get on, he will not be able to hear. Then he will need patience and grace to take those matters to the Lord. And sympathy with the afflicted. As he may be enabled, I trust that in a spirit of love, conscious of his need of grace, he will be helped, as others, to visit those who are sick as a member, and occasionally to read and pray with our older friends, or sick members, and thus discharge a duty or obligation that more or less devolves upon us all according to our opportunities, to myself in particular, but to each one as opportunity may be given. And above all this, to walk with a single eye to the honour and glory of God, that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in him and he in that. Ever to avoid all collusions [confederations?] or any who should foster the spirit of contention.

This I say, not so much with respect to present days, but I speak to you members as your pastor. I will not always be here, or I may not be here for long, and possibly these younger men may in years to come, if they are spared and maintained here, have responsibilities pertaining to the pulpit and the standing of the church fall upon them, in a manner that does not apply at the present time. We do not know what may come to us or what changes may come to this church. Therefore, as I am before you now, in all solemnity I appeal with respect to our brother and to you all that you will ever seek, especially the younger members in view of the fact that the elders may be taken, that they will seek to hold fast the profession that they have been taught and maintain the honour and dignity of the pulpit and keep it clean and be preserved from any false charity. That may seem perhaps very confusing [hard?] to flesh and blood to keep separate and to walk the narrow path and to hold fast the

doctrines of grace. I make this statement because none of us knows how soon changes may come; we continually hear voices; one and another is brought down, one and another are taken in different parts, and they are all like voices.

May we have grace to watch and pray, and may it please God to preserve this little sanctuary and this church clean in His fear. I am painfully conscious of my unworthiness of the position that I hold, but I do desire to maintain the honour of Christ and that gospel which I hope and believe He has made precious to me. And here we are, a church, a number of members – fifty-nine I think altogether living. O may we be helped to walk in humility and grace.

And now may the Lord bless our brother. He is young, and may be exposed to many dangers. We believe he has come in the tender fear of the Lord. May that be preserved in him and may he be our joy and rejoicing in days to come. And in respect of all that he may need, I have thought of this word: “He giveth more grace.” And now we receive him, and we receive him in love, believing that the Lord has had mercy upon him, and I trust that he may never have cause to regret this step or we have cause to regret it concerning him. O may the Lord look upon us and glorify His name in our midst.

GADSBY’S DEEP CONCERN FOR THE SUFFERING

It has been falsely and unkindly stated that the “High Calvinists” had little or no concern for their fellow-men around them. No one showed deeper concern for the suffering masses than William Gadsby – so that he was greatly admired and even loved by those who did not believe his doctrines. Is there any minister who has Gadsby’s influence today?

It may seem strange that it was especially in the latter part of his life that William Gadsby ventured more and more into the political arena. The reason for this is not far to seek – the formation of the Manchester Anti-Corn Law Association in September 1838 in the York Hotel, to be followed, also in Manchester, by the Anti-Corn Law League in the next year. The purpose of the League was simple: the abolition of the Corn Laws which forbade the importation of foreign wheat into England until the price of English wheat was 80 shillings a quarter – thus keeping bread dear, and having a demoralising effect on the poorer classes. Thus was launched one of the most intensive campaigns of political agitation of the 19th century – and Gadsby enthusiastically joined it. First, though affecting the whole of Britain, this was essentially a Manchester movement. “The League is Manchester,” wrote Richard Cobden, the

leader, along with John Bright, of nearby Rochdale. So the events were taking place on Gadsby's doorstep. But more important, Gadsby had always felt very strong sympathy for the poor and the oppressed, and was only too glad to use his influence (which was now considerable) on their behalf. This is why he ventured into politics. In a word, as he himself said, "I know what poverty is, for I have been so poor as to feel grateful for twopence."

It was because he saw the Corn Laws as the epitome of aristocratic abuses that Gadsby became an active adherent of the Anti-Corn Law League. It was for him a theological issue; it concerned the honour and glory of God. "The whole of his arguments," was the comment after one Anti-Corn Law sermon, "were based upon Scripture." "He is an old and trusted friend of the rights of the people," commented one of the League's journalists, "and we are glad to see him lending the weight of his example in the cause of cheap bread."

This is why he received such a rapturous reception when he spoke at the remarkable meeting held in the Town Hall in December 1839. No meeting held in the Town Hall had ever been more numerous, and not only was the Hall packed but it was an unruly gathering. The right-wing *Chronicle* said "a senseless and unreasoning mob"! It seems incredible that any Christian minister could hold the attention of such a meeting for the length of three-quarters of an hour, speaking with all the moral indignation of an Old Testament prophet. Yet such was the respect in which Gadsby, now an aging man, was held in the town where he had preached for so long. It is clear that he "occupied a very warm place in the affections of the people."

This "great borough meeting," held on December 19th, 1839, was certainly stormy. The *Manchester Guardian and Times* gave a graphic account. Mark Philips, M.P., was met with mingled hisses and cheers – from Tories and Chartists. C.J.S. Walker, a county magistrate, said little but merely moved the resolution. Hugh Hornby Burley was heckled with cries of "Peterloo!" when he stood up to speak, and was not able to proceed.

"The Rev. Wm. Gadsby on presenting himself to second the resolution was received with much applause." To the delight of the audience, alluding to the black cap he always wore, he said he had come to pass the death sentence on the Corn Laws. Speaking not as a politician, but "one who, I trust, has been taught to preach God's Word," he stated that they were "directly opposed to the Word of God." He desired to be found among that number who can stand the scrutiny of God Himself, having an honest conscience.

As he proceeded he was greeted with cheers and applause, not least when, referring to Genesis 1. 29, he declared, "That is God's corn law!"

Most strongly did he speak against the landlords who say, "No, the labouring, the industrious people of England shall not partake of the fruit of the earth, if we can help it, for we are determined to keep the greatest part of the labour for ourselves." (Further cheers.)

In this vein Gadsby continued, interrupted by "immense cheers," "very long cheers," etc. When he apologised for detaining them so long, there were cries of "Go on!"

At the end he said he must "come to my old standard, the Book of God. I have got none other to stand on." He then read Proverbs 11. 26, adding, "I consider the Corn Laws degrading to every principle of humanity, and insulting to God and man." He then read Job 35. 9; Exodus 3. 7, 8; and Proverbs 14. 31, and soon afterwards sat down to "loud applause."

The great Cobden, the next speaker, on rising declared, "After the address you have heard from Mr. Gadsby I can scarcely venture to bring down your thoughts."

Not all God's people, even in William Gadsby's lifetime, thought it right for him to become so involved in political events. John Gadsby was aware of this when, in describing his father's political involvement, he wrote: "We will offend some of Mr. G's friends who could not agree with him in the part he took in the political world." With Gadsby himself, his conscience was clear; he could not look on the depths of human suffering, and merely stand by.

One interesting sideline of the Anti-Corn Law League is that John Gadsby became the League's printer.

Almost unbelievably, in those days of great political excitement and agitation, John Gadsby used the back page of the Anti-Corn Law League circulars profitably. So the circular that gave an account of the great meeting just described also advertised Tiptaft's *Fifteen Reasons for Resigning* his living in the Establishment; J.C. Philpot's *Secession from the Church of England Defended*; Gadsby's *Nature and Design of the Marriage Union*, and his *Sermon on the Glory of God's Grace*; and "a portrait of Mr. Gadsby 8vo. size, beautifully engraved on steel by Mr. Freedman." Above all John Gadsby used the back page of the Anti-Corn Law League circulars to recommend the *Gospel Standard* "in which are advocated and set forth, experimentally and doctrinally, the glories and great truths of God in His Trinity of Persons, His discriminating grace, everlasting love and predestinating favour."

The Gadsbys certainly did not believe in hiding their light under a bushel. With them the things of God always had to come first.

From the biography of William Gadsby published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications.

GEMS FROM JOHN NEWTON

Taken from the new book Wise Counsel, recommended on page 88

If we cut out our own crosses we shall find them heavier than His.

Both wind and weather are at the Lord's command, and He can turn the storm into a calm in a moment. We may therefore safely and confidently leave the government upon His shoulders.

He that walketh humbly walketh surely.

Experience will teach you not to expect that every blossom will prove fruit.

I can sometimes talk loud and look big in the pulpit, but how different a creature am I behind the scenes! Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord.

The Lord can do without the best of us.

If God has a controversy with us, I can expect no other than that wisdom should be hidden from the wise.

Surely when the Lord crosses our wishes it is always in mercy, and because we short-sighted creatures often know not what we ask, nor what would be the consequences if our desires were granted.

Where we are mistaken, a denial is a mercy.

To lay down rules precisely to which all must conform, and to treat all enquiring souls in the same way, is as wrong as it would be in a physician to attempt to cure all his patients who may have the same general disorder (a fever for instance) with one and the same prescription. A skilful man would probably find so many differences in their cases, that he would not treat any two of them exactly alike.

I hope your soul prospers. That is, I hope you are less and less in your own eyes and that your heart is more and more impressed with a sense of the glory and grace of our Lord.

How miserable a portion would the best this life can afford be, without the knowledge of a Saviour!

The skill of the Pilot is best evidenced in a storm, so is the Lord's wisdom and faithfulness towards His children, and so is the sincerity of their hearts towards Him.

To those who feel their own weakness, grace is all-sufficient.

Go whither you have often gone in trouble, and ask counsel of the Lord, and He will direct you.

The Lord is all-sufficient. He can make the hard easy and the bitter sweet, and He does.

I believe the Lord's Word, that He will guide those who simply wait upon Him for direction.

I compose my mind by considering all hearts and all things as instruments of Him who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will, and makes all subservient to the fulfilling it.

Sin, my friend, is the great evil. Let us preach against sin, let us cry to the Lord for mercy, let us point to Jesus as the only refuge from the storm, and let us leave the rest to them who know better.

They who live the life will doubtless die the death of the righteous.

To see Him as He is, and to be like Him! This is worth dying for, and worth living for, till He shall say, "Come up hither."

BOOK REVIEWS

Wise Counsel: John Newton's Letters to John Ryland Jr.; hardback; 412 pages; price £16.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We must confess that we are fascinated with this book. Eighty-three letters by John Newton – and all but ten of them have lain in obscurity in the two hundred years since they were written! What a mercy that they have been found!

John Newton was twenty-five years older than John Ryland, but took a great interest in him and had a great love for him. Ryland (1753-1825) became the Particular Baptist minister at Northampton, and is best known to our readers as the author of "Sovereign Ruler of the skies." The first letter was written in 1771 and the last in 1803, four years before Newton's death. Olney, where Newton was a minister in the Church of England, was not far from Northampton – so the friends had frequent opportunities of meeting till Newton was called to St. Mary Woolnoth in London in 1779. There are no letters from Ryland to Newton in existence.

John Newton, of course, is noted as a letter writer, the great letter writer of the Evangelical Revival. These letters touch on a variety of subjects, as well as essentially spiritual ones: the slave trade; immunisation for smallpox; the American War of Independence; the colonisation of Australia; the Particular Baptist mission to India – and then John Ryland's disappointment in love; his search for a wife; his bereavement.

For those interested in the church of God in the eighteenth century, the letters are most illuminating. Most of the well-known names appear from time

to time: John Adams, Berridge, Abraham Booth, Carey, Cowper, Fawcett, Fuller, Grimshaw, Robert Hall, Haweis, Hervey, Rowland Hill, the Countess of Huntingdon; William Huntington, Medley, Romaine, Thomas Scott, Stennett, John Thornton, Toplady, Venn, and, of course, Wilberforce and the Wesleys – all contemporaries!

There is even a mention of Joseph Pickup (page 271), whom Newton heard profitably when at Liverpool. Exactly who he was does not appear clear in the book, but he was Joseph Piccop (died 1772), the pastor at Bacup after David Crossley, and who lived near the village of Goodshawfold.

As *all* the letters are printed (not the usual *selection* of letters), some are much more profitable or much more interesting than others. One or two are outstanding (we published one such last month), but there are hidden gems here and there all the way through. We are glad that the little day-to-day details have not been edited out (as in many Victorian books). The book is further enriched by extracts from both Newton's and Ryland's diaries.

Wise Counsel is superbly edited by Grant Gordon, who has shown a deep and loving interest, and has spent years in preparing the book. Every person named and every event referred to is identified and explained in a footnote. There is a good introduction and a good conclusion. There is even a heretofore unpublished portrait of John Newton (looking much stouter than in the well-known pictures).

It is well known that over the years John Ryland's views changed – for want of better words from “high Calvinism” to “low Calvinism.” We do not always agree with Newton's comments or advice. Over Ryland's conflict with William Huntington, Newton obviously has only heard one side. The Editor, we think, overemphasises Newton's sympathy with Ryland's views. His first letter is *not* disagreeing with Gill and Brine, but suggesting that Ryland is only young, too dogmatic, and a little harsh.

Similarly, Newton writes highly of Fuller, but it is in regard to Andrew Fuller's defence of the Godhead of Christ against the unitarianism of Joseph Priestly.

It is very clear that Ryland's father, the renowned preacher John Collett Ryland (1723-1792), disapproved of his son's change of opinion. Concerning his son and Andrew Fuller he wrote:

“The devil threw out an empty barrel for them to roll about, while they ought to have been drinking the wine of the kingdom” (page 254). Even Newton wrote to the younger Ryland (page 215): “Beware of pushing points, in which your views are altered to the extreme, by dwelling too constantly upon them. We are very prone to this; as though the danger from the enemy were only on one side.” He was cautious about Andrew Fuller's views (page 217). The Editor obviously favours Ryland's change of opinion.

When Ryland was appointed Principal of the Baptist College at Bristol, Newton makes it very clear that he is worried about the over-emphasis on learning:

“I am not without apprehensions that academical learning may, in time, have such effects among the Baptists as it has already had among some other denominations, and open the door to scepticism. Learning, like riches, may add to usefulness, when sanctified. But, like riches, it exposes to snares and

temptations; it is hard to have it without trusting in it" (page 243). Yet Newton was a classical scholar himself.

We found the book hard to put down and were sad when we came to the end.

We include a few of Newton's "gems" on page 87.

A Father's Gift, by Kenneth B. Wingate; paperback; 200 pages; price £7; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

In many ways this is a lovely book, written by a lawyer in the U.S.A. for his own children.

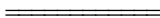
The author tells us how it came to be written. One Christmas day the whole family were having a lovely time together. But the solemn thought came over him that something was missing. Taking a solitary walk in the woods, he poured out his heart: "Lord, what is the best gift I can give my children?" The answer came: "Write them a book on life's most important lessons." Searching the Scriptures, he found all he needed to say in the Book of Proverbs. So the sub-title is: "Lessons from Proverbs."

So there are nineteen chapters altogether – on such subjects as Wealth, Self-Control, Husband and Father, Wife and Mother, Pride, Health, Guidance, Sexual Purity, Friends, Words, Wickedness and Evil. Excellent advice is given. Great reverence is shown for the things of God.

There are numerous quotations from the Book of Proverbs – though we are afraid we have to repeat our problem, sadly not from the Authorized Version.

The Five Points of Calvinism, by William Parks; paperback; 111 pages, price £2.90, post free; published by Berith Publications and obtainable from the Huntingtonian Press, 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 4EB.

We are very interested to learn that The Huntingtonian Press has obtained the remaining stock of this book, and there are no plans for a reprint. "Parks on the Five Points" was one of the three books always recommended to young people concerned about the Calvinist/Arminian controversy (the others being Christopher Ness: *Antidote Against Arminianism*, and Elisha Coles: *God's Sovereignty*.)



Paul so constantly warned the churches to whom he wrote against false profession and receiving the grace of God in vain. He speaks of those who hold the truth, but who hold it in unrighteousness. The Epistles of Peter, John and Jude are full of warnings against false teachers, antichrists and deceivers. The charges to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation most awfully show the danger of declension, of leaving our first love, of becoming lukewarm and, consequently, loathsome to an infinitely holy God. Many, it is to be feared, have the reputation of being spiritually alive, whose souls, in the sight of God, are dead to all the vital influences of the Holy Spirit.

Thomas Reade

OBITUARY

Harold Stephen Payne, member of the church at Shoreham, passed away on October 8th, 2009, aged 89.

He was born on May 9th, 1920, at Henfield, Sussex, of godly parents. His mother was a member at Galeed, Brighton, father at Henfield, and later (1928) transferred to Galeed.

Harold was the sixth in a family of seven sons. His parents were poor. They often saw the Lord's hand in providing necessary things.

They moved to Brighton in 1930, so then attended Galeed. The boys sat up in the gallery.

Harold left the grammar school at the age of sixteen, and after a time obtained work at Brighton town hall, and worked in local government all his working life (apart from six years in the army during the war).

In September 1940, Harold was called up for army service, and was sent to Farnborough, Hampshire, and met another soldier who attended one of our chapels. They went together to Aldershot chapel to attend a week night service, and were subsequently entertained by my parents. This proved to be of the Lord's appointing, and Harold and I were married in June 1945, following which he was in India for twelve months. When he was discharged from the army (1946), we went to live in Brighton and he returned to the local government work.

In 1954 we felt led to attend Shoreham chapel, and continued to do so until 1980, when after retiring we moved to Haywards Heath to be near our daughter and family.

When it became possible to send Bibles and children's books to Russia, we consequently had letters from there. Harold was able to teach himself to read Russian and so was enabled to translate the letters.

During a gradually-increasing nervous tension, Harold was unable to attend chapel for a few years towards the end of his life.

In 2009, he was poorly with shingles in his head and left eye. This improved and he felt better, but then he had a fall while repairing the garden gate. He appeared to be only bruised, but gradually had difficulty in swallowing, etc.

In August it was felt best for us to enter Bethesda, and six weeks later Harold was taken to be with the Lord he loved.

The following is his own writing (written in October 1994):

The sincere desire when making these notes is that, on that solemn occasion especially [this was written for the minister who would officiate at his funeral] *all* that is said may be to the praise, honour and glory of the Lord, and that nothing be said concerning this poor and needy sinner which shall detract from this.

When considering the pathway in which the Lord has led me, the scripture much upon my mind is, "As for God, His way is perfect: the Word of the Lord is tried" (Psa. 18. 30), for I believe I have proved the truth of this word on many occasions in various circumstances.

In His great mercy, the Lord favoured me with godly parents who brought me up to go to chapel from infancy. The services, however, meant little or nothing to me until I was sixteen years of age, when I heard Mr. J.K. Popham preach at Galeed, Brighton, from, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after

this the judgment" (Heb. 9. 27). I came away from that service feeling myself to be a wretched, condemned sinner before a holy, just and pure God. This text, together with two hymns, which I believe were sung at that service,

"Pause my soul! and ask the question,
Art *thou* ready to meet God?"

and,

"When Thou, my righteous Judge shalt come,
To take Thy ransomed people home,
Shall I among them stand?"

followed me wherever I went. [He chose, "Pause my soul" for his funeral.] I could not free myself from these great questions and I truly felt I was not ready to meet God. No words can possibly express the experience of a soul when struck down in this way. I felt to be a companion with the lepers who cried out, "Unclean, unclean," and my sin was such a load to me that I felt unfit to be in the company of other people. Although the weight of my sin was at times so great that I felt I should be crushed under it, and many, many cries for mercy were pressed out of my heart, it pleased the Lord to keep me waiting upon Him for over eighteen years before He favoured me with the blessed and sweet experience of the knowledge of the forgiveness of my sin and I was able to use the words, "My Father" – words which I longed to use for many years, but which I felt I could never use unless the Lord gave them to me.

The first promise which I believe the Lord gave me was, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. 33. 25). This was when I was about nineteen or twenty years of age, and I have proved the Lord has been faithful in fulfilling His word. I have, however, also proved that those to whom such a promise is given feel their utter weakness and continually have to cry to the Lord for that strength which He alone can give, both spiritually and naturally.

For several years before 1955 the pathway had been one of many and very heavy trials, but the Lord gave daily strength and brought us safely through. These years of trial were, however, a time of preparation for the greatest blessing which a soul can receive here below – the forgiveness of sin. We were at Aldershot in February 1955, when Mr. Styles preached from the text, "*But* He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I *shall* come forth as gold" (Job 23. 10). He spoke particularly about the two words "But" and "shall," and I believe the Lord spoke right into my soul that day as His servant was enabled to trace out the pathway by which the Lord had led me as he spoke of the word "but" linking the text with the verses preceding it. I hoped the second part of the text referred to the trials prior to that date, but also felt that this word might be a preparation for some heavy trial to come. This proved to be the case, for the next few years brought trial upon trial, the weight of which was almost too great to bear, but the greater the trial the more clearly the word "shall" appeared to shine and often faith seemed able to cling to just that one word "shall."

In all this very heavy pathway the Lord continued to fulfil His word: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," and also showed how "His way is perfect" in balancing the trials through which we are called upon to pass, for I have often felt that had one of the trials of the latter part of the 1950s been added to the trials of the earlier years of the 1950s, I must have been completely crushed under the weight of them; also, in the midst of all these years of bitter and heavy trials (in

1955) was the Lord's appointed time to bless me with the greatest blessing I have received, the forgiveness of all my sin and about three months of almost unbroken communion with Him. Surely this proves "His way is perfect."

During the week following the Sunday at Aldershot in February 1955, these words were much upon my mind: "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4. 29), and I felt it to be very confirming when Mr. Caleb Stevens preached from these words the next Sunday.

The Lord was graciously pleased to favour me with much of His sweet presence following the service at Aldershot in February 1955, and especially at the beginning of May that year that "peace which passeth *all* understanding" was felt in my soul to such a degree that I wondered whether the dear Lord was about to take me home.

Although I felt I had been greatly blessed at Aldershot, I desired of the Lord that He would give to me a word, that I might have His word that my sin was forgiven. He was pleased to grant this desire in May of that year when, on three different occasions while walking to the office, I heard His sweet voice very clearly speaking to my soul. Firstly, the word was, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod. 12. 13). I felt it to be a great mercy to have this word, but still felt constrained to seek for a word regarding my sins being forgiven. A few days later these words were sweetly applied: "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven" (Luke 7. 47). What a depth I felt there was in those words: "which are many," for I felt the Lord was indicating that He knew I had so many, many sins to be forgiven and yet He had forgiven them all. Truly I felt the Lord had graciously answered my desire concerning having a direct word from Himself regarding the forgiveness of my sin, but I proved He is able to bless more than we ask or think. Shortly after this, I had almost reached the office and was crossing the road just outside the office when the Lord spoke with such power again that for a second or two I stopped in the middle of the road. The word spoken was: "It is your Father's good pleasure" (Luke 12. 32), and then the two words, "your Father" were repeated. For many years prior to that time I had longed to be able to say "my Father," but felt unable to do so. How sweet it is to hear the Lord's authority to use those sacred words!

I have also proved that, "As for God, His way is perfect" not only in the words given and how suitable they are to a particular case, but also the order in which they are given. Firstly, "When I see the blood" for we read in Hebrews 9. 22 that "without shedding of blood is no remission." Secondly, blood having been shed, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven" and thirdly, the experience of the forgiveness of sin is followed by that sweet revelation: "your Father."

During the latter part of 1955, it seemed as though every word I felt I had received from the Lord was being tried, and I proved "the word of the Lord is tried." It seemed as though Satan was permitted to call into question every word I hoped I had received by using that little, but terrible, word "IF." But, again we prove that the Lord's way is perfect, for during that trial I believe I was led to read Matthew chapter 4 where it is recorded that Satan was permitted to tempt even the Lord Jesus with that terrible word "IF." How sweet and humbling it was to feel that the Lord Jesus had passed that way before! It was during this trial, when every word seemed to be tried, that I could see the wisdom, love and perfection of the Lord's way in causing me to carry the load of unforgiven sin for over eighteen years, for the one thing which Satan could not call into question was that I had felt that weight for all those years and I had also felt that burden

removed. As, naturally, when one carried a very heavy burden which at times may seem to be crushing them, one must know when that burden is removed, so spiritually this is so.

One thought which marred the peace experienced in 1955 was that I had not been baptized, although I had longed for many years to take this step, but there were difficulties and hindrances in the way which seemed to be insurmountable and indeed would have been had not the Lord dealt with them. His appointed time came in 1964 when I was clearly shown, indeed commanded, that I should go forward and follow the Lord Jesus through the waters of baptism.

The exercise regarding baptism increased greatly following the sudden death by drowning of my brother-in-law, George Tingley, in July 1964. From that time the words, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without?" (Gen. 24. 31) were very powerfully in my heart and I felt them to be a word regarding joining the church, but I also felt they were too great and too blessed for such a one as myself and so I desired the Lord to confirm them through the ministry of our pastor at Shoreham. Each time our pastor opened the Bible at the services during the months following that time, I watched to see if he would open in Genesis, but was disappointed for the Lord was to confirm it from another portion of Scripture.

On October 25th, 1964, our pastor, Mr. Steere, spoke from, "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward" (Exod. 14. 15). I felt the power of this word, but turned from it as I had not received the confirmation of the word in Genesis which I felt I needed. I had, however, once again to prove, "My thoughts are not your thoughts" (Isa. 55. 8). The following day our daughter, Brenda, told us she had written to our pastor following that service to apply for membership of the church at Shoreham. Words cannot describe the effect of this on me, for I was condemned by the words "that *they* go forward," and the knowledge that our daughter was going forward while I had not been willing to do so. The following week was almost unbearable, for I felt I could not then go forward on the strength of that word, otherwise I would be in danger of going only because I could not bear the thought of being left behind while Brenda went forward; also I felt the Lord withdraw Himself and felt "all my cries He shutteth out." A little hope was, however, felt towards the end of that week from the words, "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. 3. 7) and, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psa. 30. 5).

The following Sunday I believe the cry in my heart as I went to the morning service was, "Lord, I am willing; make me obedient," and that service proved to be one when I heard the voice of the Lord so clearly and so commanding as I have never heard on other occasions. It was solemn indeed. Our pastor had difficulty in reading Deuteronomy chapter 30 as he felt it was being used for someone present and I trembled so much as he read that chapter that my wife said afterwards she could feel me trembling as I sat beside her.

This chapter first refers to a returning to the Lord which I felt was a link with the word, "Return unto Me ..." which had been with me prior to that service. Our pastor's text was verses 9 and 10, speaking more particularly from verse 10: "If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep His commandments," and especially "the voice of the Lord."

Verses 11 to 14 of that chapter clearly referred to the word I had been waiting for the Lord to confirm through our pastor (although this was not the way

in which I thought the Lord would do it), and also the text of the previous Sunday: "Speak unto the children of Israel that *they* go forward," for these verses read, "For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

The remainder of the chapter was a definite command to me to follow the Lord through the waters of baptism, setting out the pathway I should experience if I did so and also if I did not. Verse 19 was particularly solemn to me: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." I saw in this verse that I could plead no excuse if I did not take that step, that there was a definite command to "choose life" and that not only would my own spiritual life be affected, but my daughter's also.

The words "this day" occur often in that chapter and so I wrote to my pastor that afternoon and put the letter through his letterbox when on the way to the evening service. During that service he said the words, "Thou shalt be willing in the day of My power" had been following him for several days and he could not understand why. I felt this to be a confirmation to me as he did not then know I had written to him and also these words had been with me for about nine years regarding taking this step.

Our pastor baptized Brenda and myself on December 3rd, 1964, and received us into the church at Shoreham the following Sunday.

Although over the years I have been favoured with occasions when the Lord has drawn near to me and blessed me, for some time prior to May 1994, I often felt much darkness in my soul and mourned over the hardness of my heart and many times feared and trembled as I considered the awful reality and solemnity of death, feeling so unprepared for this solemn change and yet realising increasingly how quickly that time is approaching. Once again I proved, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." The night in my soul was long and exceedingly dark at times and there was much weeping, but the morning dawned in Chippenham chapel on the Lord's day, May 15th, 1994, when the Lord filled my soul with holy joy and so sweetly and lovingly removed the fear of death from me. Mr. Gerald Buss preached on that occasion from, "I have a message from God unto thee" (Judges 3. 20). At the beginning of that sermon he spoke of a solemn message from God: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," which was the text under which I was convicted of sin when sixteen years of age. During the service I felt very unwell, but felt too weak to stand and go out of the chapel, and so remained seated. I believe this was overruled by the Lord for, had I felt able to walk out of the service I would have missed the latter part of the sermon which the Lord intended me to hear. Towards the end of the sermon, Mr. Buss spoke of the message from God when He calls His dear people home and this was indeed a message from God right into my soul so that, for a few moments, I wondered whether I would be taken to my heavenly home as I sat in that chapel, and the fear of death was completely removed. My whole soul leaped with holy joy in sweet anticipation of soon being with Him whom my soul loveth.

His widow

HEAVEN

"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood ... to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 1. 5, 6).

O how the thought that I shall know
The Man that suffered here below
To manifest His favour,
For me, and those whom most I love;
Or here, or with Himself above,
Does my delighted passions move
At that sweet word, for ever!

For ever to behold Him shine,
For evermore to call Him mine,
And see Him still before me!
For ever on His face to gaze,
And meet His full-assembled rays,
While all the Father He displays
To all the saints in glory!

Not all things else are half so dear
As His delightful presence here,
What must it be in heaven!
'Tis heaven on earth to hear Him say,
As now I journey, day by day,
"Poor sinner, cast thy fears away,
Thy sins are all forgiven."

But how must His celestial voice
Make my enraptured heart rejoice,
When I in glory hear Him;
While I, before the heavenly gate,
For everlasting entrance wait,
And Jesus, on His throne of state,
Invites me to come near Him!

Come in, thou blessèd, sit by Me,
With My own life I ransomed thee;
Come taste My perfect favour;
Come in, thou happy spirit, come,
Thou now shalt dwell with Me at home;
Ye blissful mansions, make him room,
For he must stay for ever.

When Jesus thus invites me in,
How will the heavenly hosts begin
To own their new relation;
Come in! come in! the blissful sound,
From every tongue will echo round,
Till all the crystal walls resound
With joy for my salvation.

Joseph Swain (1761-1796)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
APRIL 2010

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

**THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AND
THE GIFT OF ASSURANCE**

*Sermon preached by John E. Hazelton (1853-1924)
at Streatley Hall, London*

Text: "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 that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5. 13).

I find that I have preached from this verse before in this hall, but I have no recollection of the occasion, and as the words have been much on my mind during the past week, I make no apology for again bringing this verse before you. Sometimes I think ministers are hampered by the marks they make in their Bibles, and avoid preaching more than one sermon upon one verse. What can a poor mortal say in one sermon concerning any verse in God's holy Word? Let us then, seeking for grace from on high, speak upon the important subject here.

This letter, in common with all the Epistles of the New Testament, is addressed to believers, as the introduction of this verse declares: "These things have I written unto you that believe." Unless we bear in mind the fact that all the letters of the New Testament are addressed to believers, we fail to enter into their spiritual purport and drift. But whilst this is so, it by no means follows that God the Holy Spirit does not work through them in convincing poor sinners of sin and judgment, and in bringing broken and penitent souls into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Some of God's brightest saints, and many of those raised in the most marked manner from the ruins of the Fall, have been wrought upon by verses in these Epistles applied to their souls. Therefore I do not want anyone here to say, "If for believers only, then I need not listen to what the preacher is about to say." "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." Many, as they have read of the grace of the Lord as set forth in these Epistles, have longed to be numbered with the people of the living God.

Whilst each letter was written by a human penman, each was inspired by the Spirit of the living God, and therefore every letter of the New Testament is a letter from God the Holy Ghost to those to whom it is addressed. How many neglect their Lord's letters, although the letters of the New Testament reveal the purpose and the grace and salvation of

our Triune God! The letters of the New Testament constitute a copy of the will of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning His dear people. We can well understand the noble words of Martin Luther when he said, "I would not take all the world for one leaf of the Bible." O it is a mercy when the Bible is thus precious to us!

Now with regard to this first Epistle of John, in this verse and in the immediate context he is summing up that which he has previously been inspired to set forth, and he gives to us the great aim which he has in writing this letter: "that ye may know"; "that ye may *know*." There is in the writings of the Apostle John a directness, a simplicity, a wonderful freedom, and at the same time a profound depth. Why was this Epistle written? "That ye may know," and you will find that in the immediate context the word "know" is used six or seven times in the course of as many verses. "We *know* that we are of God"; "We *know* that the Son of God is come"; "We *know* Him that is true"; "We *know* that we have the petitions that we desire of Him."

Is the writer of this letter the writer also of the gospel that bears his name? What do you think when I read this to you from the Gospel of John? "Forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it" – O the simplicity and directness of it all! – "he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe" (John 19. 34, 35). What do you think of this too? "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." "That ye may know," not with a speculative knowledge, not with a knowledge that is merely intellectual, but that ye may know it in an experimental and practical way.

"That ye may know" – this is not simply faith, but faith realising, proving and sucking sweetness from the Son of God, from the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. In other words, the apostle was inspired to write this Epistle with a view to the assurance of the people of God that the Lord had done great things for them. Let us bless God for any degree of faith, for the least spark of faith constitutes that power which is described as the hand by which we embrace Christ; as the finger with which we touch Him; as the desire of the soul that reaches forth towards Him. Faith is essential to salvation; assurance is essential to satisfaction.

There are many of the Lord's people who possess faith, but who do not possess assurance; but the essential to salvation is a living and saving faith. Assurance is the ring which the Lord is pleased to put upon the finger of faith. Peter lost his assurance, and well he might, but he never lost his faith. Peter's faith was never lost. The Lord Himself said, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not" (or "die not out"). But he lost his assurance. And how did he find it again? In the way that God's

people always find assurance: through the condescending mercy of his Saviour in coming and communing with him. The Lord Jesus had a private interview with Peter after His resurrection, and what took place at that private interview assured Peter's faith. Then there was a third confirmation of his faith by the Sea of Galilee, when the Lord said to him three times, "Feed My lambs," "Feed My sheep," and again, "Feed My sheep."

So when we feel the power and sweetness of the Lord's presence, we cannot then doubt our interest in Him; we know, and go on our way rejoicing. Therefore, whilst I speak to you about assurance, I would not make it for a moment a word of condemnation to any of God's weak ones, but I pray that it may be a word of consolation to those who as yet tremble to say, "I know."

But how many there are, and some of whom we hope well, who just settle down in a profession of religion; from whom – am I speaking for myself? am I speaking for you? – from whom we hear in conversation so little that has the power and sweetness and unction of the name of Christ; dry, dull. Those in such a condition do not, as a rule, like to be disturbed; they do not like to hear the searching word. What is my need? The powerful witness of the Holy Spirit to my soul, creating within me that assurance which shall enable me to say, "I know." Faith is the gift of God, and it has a wide scope. The Lord give to you and to me not simply prayer-meeting faith – you know what I mean, dear friends. We love the prayer meetings, but the Lord give to us not simply prayer-meeting faith. Women here who know the Lord want kitchen faith; men here want business faith, workshop faith. "Lord, increase my faith," so that whether it be at the prayer meeting, in the parlour, the sick room or the workshop, I may have the powerful witness and say, "I know that I have passed from death unto life."

Now this is the great object which the apostle under the teaching of the Holy Spirit has in connection with our text, and in what goes before and comes after.

Let us speak for a little while first about the subject set forth in our text, *assurance*. Secondly and lastly, *the means of assurance* – the written Word. "These things have I written" – the written Word witnessed by the Holy Ghost: assurance and the means to assurance.

Is it not an important matter to seek continually to be assured of our salvation? The Apostle John desires that those to whom he wrote might know it in their own souls. "Believe on the name of the Son of God" is repeated in our text. "I have written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that knowing that you have eternal life, you may believe on the name of the Son of God." What does the repetition signify? That you may believe more abundantly, more deeply; that you may believe in

the kitchen and in the workshop, as well as when you come to the place where God's people meet together. It is a parallel word to that: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

My faith is indeed weak; it is a staggering faith often, but the Lord can make it strong and give assurance; and He sets forth the blessed lines upon which, in His sovereign love and mercy, He is pleased to work. John desires by the Holy Spirit that all who read this Epistle, who have been brought to believe on the name of the Son of God, may have a more personal application to their own souls of the truths of the everlasting gospel. We are, all of us, on our way – on our way somewhere. Every one of us here is a traveller, on our way, each one, either to heaven or to hell. Now if I am a believer, I am going to heaven, and how important it is to know it, to be well assured of it. You say, "It is presumption." It would be, if God had not set forth the blessed truth concerning it in His Word. But sometimes to say it is presumption is rather the utterance of unbelief. The apostle sets forth a well-established truth. The apostle was going to heaven, and he knew it; he loved the Lord, and he knew it; and he said, "My heart's desire for all of you is that you also that believe on the name of the Son of God may know that you have eternal life."

Now some of you weak ones (and who is not a weak, a little one?) – it is evident from the tenor of this word that there were some even in John's day who believed on the name of the Son of God, and yet did not know that they had eternal life – "I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Then it is possible to believe, and yet not know that we have eternal life; and John was desirous that this blessed knowledge should be inwrought in their minds and hearts by the Spirit of the living God.

Dear friends, it is no light thing to be a Christian; it is easy to talk about it; it is easy to write about it. "Is So-and-so a Christian?" "So-and-so has become a Christian." The phrase is heard on the right hand and on the left. What is it, as Hart sings, to be a Christian?

"Let us ask the important question
(Brethren, be not too secure),
What it is to be a Christian,
How we may our hearts assure?"

It is to be an anointed sinner, an anointed man or woman. Christ means "the Anointed," and a Christian means an anointed sinner, a set apart sinner, a called sinner. It is to take up the cross; it is to bear it; it is to mortify the old man with his deeds; it is to put off the old man. It is to put on the new man; it is to know the power of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, crucifying the world to you, and crucifying you unto the world. What is it to be a Christian? It is to know under divine power and

teaching the burden and the guilt of sin, and that under the condemning power of God's holy law you can find no salvation. A Christian – a called-out man! A Christian – a sensible sinner! A Christian – a man or woman who endures a conflict within and without all along the way!

Everything outside us is against us; the world, and the things that are seen. Our old nature is against us; the great adversary of souls is against us. That being the case, to continue a Christian we need daily supplies of grace and strength and consolation. And the strong consolation which God has set forth in our text this morning is to know that we have eternal life; if I know that, by the grace of God I shall win through. By the grace of God I shall battle on. By the grace of God, though faint, cast down by the inward conflict, and tormented by the outside things, I can say,

“Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.”

Here, then, is the importance of the knowledge of eternal life. Is there any encouragement to the child of God like this: to know that we have eternal life? “I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.”

Look for a moment, then. Here is one who believes on the name of the Son of God, and yet does not know that he has eternal life. What does the believing involve? There can be no believing without life, and where there is life it is eternal. God does not give one life to believe, and then confer eternal life subsequently. If I can say honestly, “I believe on the name of the Son of God,” I have life in my soul, and God put it there, and that is eternal life.

But what does the believing involve? A title to heaven, because the righteousness of Christ is there. It is a righteousness which is “unto all and upon all them that believe.” If I am at this moment believing in the name of the Son of God, I have Christ's name, work and Person as my title to the inheritance that is “incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” Hence, we started by saying that faith is essential to salvation; I can have no belief in the name of the Son of God without that faith which is connected with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“That ye may know that ye have eternal life.” Believing puts us in touch with our title. Eternal life is the capacity for receiving from the Lord our God. A dead sinner – that is, a sinner “dead in trespasses and sins” – has no title, experimentally so, and no capacity for the things of God, none whatever. I think I have related to you what I read once in the *Life of William Wilberforce*, a grand man, the great instrument in the emancipation of the slaves in the West Indies. On one occasion he took his friend, William Pitt, then Prime Minister of England (one of the

greatest), to hear one of the best of the evangelical ministers of his day. The minister laid the sinner low, and exalted a precious Christ high, to Wilberforce's great delight. After the service he asked Pitt what he thought of the sermon, and he replied, "I could not make out what the man was driving at." Apart from the conferment of a divine capacity – the new nature, eternal life – there can be no reception of the things of God.

"These things have I written unto you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." What is it? How does it commence? A sinner is laid low before Jesus Christ and Him crucified. What does the Apostle Paul say concerning his own experience of the ups and downs of the way, and of that which God had done for his soul? In the second Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter 4, we have this as a transcript of the apostle's experience: "We faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." O the mercy to have that faith which looks at the unseen! that faith which looks towards an unseen Saviour, which looks towards unseen things, and which, working in the heart, brings to us the knowledge that we have eternal life, so that our afflictions are esteemed to be but light afflictions which endure but for a moment. This assurance, then, of salvation is an unspeakable comfort; it is a divine encouragement, and it fills the soul with a holy and gracious confidence.

Again, to revert to the experience of the Apostle Paul, he says, "I am willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Why? He had the grace of assurance, and it is a sanctifying principle. When we are favoured with the assurance of faith, knowing that we have eternal life, all the terrors of the grave are gone; we are delivered from that bondage which comes through the fear of death; we have a blessed anticipation of glory; we gird up our loins and go forward in the way which the Lord is pleased to appoint.

But does not all this mean conflict? Joseph Hart sings concerning the temptation of our Lord,

"That impious IF he thus
At God incarnate threw,
No wonder if he cast at us,
And make us feel it too."

"If Thou be the Son of God" – the "impious if" that the devil cast at God incarnate; and Joseph Hart says, "If he cast that 'if' at incarnate God, do you suppose he will let you escape?" The devil seeks in every

possible way to hinder and destroy the assurance which the Apostle John by the Holy Ghost has in view when he says, "I desire ye may know." But when we are thus brought low, we do know again and again something of the experience of Christian in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, when his sword was knocked out of his hand, and he laid low before the Destroyer. Then said Apollyon, "I am sure of thee now," and Christian replied, stretching forth his hand – faith brought into exercise – "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7. 8). And with that he gave a deadly thrust at Apollyon, who spread his black wings and flew away.

Let us speak of *the means* which the Lord is pleased to use to give this assurance or knowledge that we have eternal life. The Apostle John very simply, clearly and directly expresses the means that are used, "These things have I written." O let us bless and praise God for the written Word, not one leaf of which Luther would part with for all the world. "These things have I written." You dear friends who are trembling, doubting, fearing, read this letter again and again; pray over it: "Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." This I know, that no living soul here this morning, trembling, doubting and fearing, will ever be satisfied, and can ever be satisfied, until sweetly assured in the sense of the apostle here. *Safe* you are as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; comfortable, happy, satisfied, strong, that you will be through the assurance which is spoken of here.

I know of no other part of God's Word which is so full of evidence as to the position and work of Christ in the soul as is this Epistle. One of the greatest proofs of eternal life is given when a sinner feels the plague of his own heart; when a sinner (pursuing a figure used by Solomon in his dedicatory prayer at the opening of the temple), when a sinner stretches forth his hand toward this holy place. Solomon said, "O Lord, whether that man be a stranger or a Jew, as he feels the plague of his own heart, and stretches forth his hand toward this holy place, then, Lord, hear, answer and forgive." And if you want God, if you know the plague of your own heart and are stretching forth your hand toward the Lord Jesus Christ, you have an indubitable evidence that you are a possessor of eternal life.

"But I am so unworthy; I have not sufficient depth of conviction; my repentance is not what I would have it."

"If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all."

You say you are so unworthy. Why! that just makes you suitable for Jesus Christ the Lord. That sense of unworthiness is, as it were, the

digging into your heart of God the Holy Ghost that into that hole He may let down His grace, love and mercy. In the temple and the tabernacle, mortice and tenon exactly fitted into one another, and God has made a mortice in your heart, when you say you are unworthy and sinful, which exactly fits the tenon of Christ's all-sufficiency.

"But," you say, "I am so unworthy; will Jesus receive me?" I answer that question, as I did I think, last Monday evening: Is His name *Jesus*? His very name of Jesus is the sign-manual that He will receive you. "Thou shalt call His name *Jesus*, for He shall save His people from their sins." Concerning conviction of sin, my experience is – I doubt not that many of you will confirm this – my experience is that my conviction of sin has been deeper at the foot of the cross than before I reached that place. Repentance! My repentance is so shallow! O but when we see the crucified Saviour, when He condescends to commune with us, when our Joseph says, "Draw near to Me," and falls upon our neck, and kisses us, then repentance deepens. O brethren and sisters, it is all at Calvary; deepening conviction, deepening repentance, blessed assurance! O Thou risen Saviour, draw us to Thyself, and the praise and the glory shall be Thine!

Here is another evidence in the first verse of this chapter: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

"What more can He say, than to you He hath said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"

Whosoever! That is wide enough, is it not? "Whosoever thirsts, let him come unto Me and drink." Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, that He who is called Jesus is the Christ, God's anointed Saviour? That is what "Christ" means; anointed by God the Father to be the Saviour of His people. Believing that, you believe that Jesus is the *Son of God*, because only He could be a Saviour for such an one as you. Then you are born of God and have received the anointing. So we have an anointed Saviour, and anointed sinners coming to Him as their Prophet, Priest and King. "The same anointing teacheth you of all things."

Here, then, stand the infallible Scriptures; here stands the inherent [inerrant?] Word of the living God. "These things have I written unto you." Take them not simply as John's words, but as the words of God the Holy Ghost. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write"; and the Spirit replied, "Yea" (Rev. 14. 13) – the Spirit's "Yea" to the writing. Now to have this blessed Book with these truths expressed in black and white is better than a vision that fades and dies. It is better than angels. Here you have the truth of the living God, not in visionary form, not by angelic messengers, but written by men under the Spirit's power. This same blessed Spirit attends this Word with divine power in

your heart and conscience, and so through the things that are written, the Word of God attended with divine power, we have this blessed testimony.

Once more. "Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5. 1). What is love? What is desire? It is an effect. If you love the brethren, that is an effect, and an effect cannot exist without a previous cause. And what is the previous cause of love to the brethren? God's love to you. Unless God loved you, and had shed abroad His love in your heart, according to the measure of His grace, you would not love. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous." Obedience is the test of love. Now I ask you in this respect, "Is your presence in this house of prayer – in other houses of prayer where God's people are wont to assemble – is it cheerful? Is it willing? Do you feel it to be a very hard matter to give up sinful, worldly amusements?" "His commandments are not grievous," and, "this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." Where your heart is, there will be your pleasure.

But I must stop. There are three Witnesses – you can follow all this out as you read them, to the strengthening of your faith and the bringing of that assurance which you desire. "There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one" (1 John 5. 8). Has the Spirit quickened, changed, illuminated you? Do you know aught – I know not a few of you do – do you know aught of His secret power? "The water and the blood" – water, Christ my sanctification, delivering me from the power of sin; "the blood" – Christ my justification, cleansing me from the guilt of sin. All this is of God's sovereign grace and mercy. The Lord give us then that sweet assurance of faith which is expressed by Susannah Harrison:

"My God! for I can call Thee mine,
My Father and my Friend!
Am I not Thine, for ever Thine?
To Thee my groans ascend."

I read the other day of a blind child who was in the arms of his father. The father put him into the arms of someone else, and said to the child, "You do not know who has hold of you; don't you feel frightened?" And the child replied, "I don't know, but you do, and I am not a bit frightened." O to have the sweet assurance that God is my Father, that Jesus Christ is my blessed Redeemer, that the Spirit of the living God is my Comforter and my Guide. "He brings the blind by a way that they knew not." Often we know not in the providence of God the next place on which we shall set our foot, but our Father knoweth all, and "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 that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” – that ye may believe more fully, more powerfully, more sweetly on the name of the Son of God. The Lord bless His Word for His name’s sake. Amen.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

From David Clarkson (1622-1686) on Ephesians 5. 2. He was joint pastor with Dr. Owen during the last year of the latter’s life.

Christ’s love made Him willing to suffer for us. And for us He has suffered all miseries that all our sins had deserved and cruelty could inflict. He who with one word caused the vast fabric of heaven and earth to start out of nothing, who was King of kings and Lord of lords, who had heaven for His throne and earth for His footstool, was, out of love to us, content to take upon Him the form of a servant, and to live in such a poor condition as He had not a cradle when born, nor a place to lay His head while He lived, nor a sepulchre to bury Him when He died. He who was the King of glory, the splendour of whose glory dazzled the eyes of seraphims, nay, whose glory is above the heavens, was, out of love to us, willing to be “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53. 3); to be accounted as “a worm, and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people” (Psa. 22. 6, 7). He who was adored by the glorious host of heaven, was the Object of their eternal praises, yea, and “counted it not robbery to be equal with God,” was, out of love to us, content to be “numbered amongst transgressors,” to be reviled and slandered as a wine-bibber, a glutton, a Sabbath-breaker, a blasphemer, a madman, and possessed with the devil.

He in whose presence was fulness of joy, and from whose smile spring rivers of pleasures, was, for love of us, willing to become “a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief,” yea, and it seems with nothing else; we never read that He laughed. He whose beauty was the glory of heaven, the brightness of His Father’s glory, the sight whereof transports those happy spirits that behold it into an eternal rapture, was, for love to us, by His suffering so disfigured as He seemed to have no form nor comeliness in Him, nor beauty that any should desire Him; “He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting” (Isa. 50. 6).

He in whose sight the heavens are not clean, who was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, was, out of love to us, content to “bear our sins in His body upon the tree,” to be “wounded for our transgressions,” and to have all our iniquities laid upon Him. This love made God, blessed for ever, willing to be made a curse, the glorious Redeemer of Israel to

be sold as a slave, and the Lord of life to die a base, accursed and cruel death.

And, which is above all, He who was His Father's love and delight, who was rejoicing before Him from eternity, and in whom alone His soul was well pleased, did, out of love to us, bear the unconceivable burden of His Father's wrath – that wrath which was the desert of all the sins of the elect, which would have sunk the whole world into hell, the weight whereof made His soul heavy unto the death, and was a far greater torture to Him than ever damned soul felt in hell (if we abstract sin and eternity from these torments), the burden whereof pressed from Him that stupendous, bloody sweat and made Him, in the anguish of His oppressed soul, cry out to heaven, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and cry out to earth, "O! have ye no regard, all ye that pass by? See if there be any sorrow like My sorrow, wherewith the Lord has afflicted Me in the day of His fierce wrath."

No, Lord, there was no sorrow like Thy sorrow, no love like Thy love. Was it not enough (dearest Saviour) that Thou didst condescend to pray, and sigh, and weep for us perishing wretches? Wilt Thou also bleed and die for us? Was it not enough that Thou wast hated, slandered, blasphemed, buffeted? but Thou wilt also be scourged, nailed, wounded, crucified. Was it not enough to feel the cruelty of man? Wilt Thou also undergo the wrath of God? Or if Thy love will count nothing a sufficient expression of itself, but parting with life, and shedding that precious blood, yet was it not enough to die once, to suffer one death? Wilt Thou die twice, and taste both first, and something of the second death, suffer the pains of death in soul and body?

O the transcendent love of Christ! Heaven and earth are astonished at it. What tongue can express it? What heart can conceive it? The tongues, the thoughts of men and angels are far below it. O the height, and depth, and breadth, and length, of the love of Christ! All the creation is nonplussed; our thoughts are swallowed up in this depth, and there must lie till glory elevate them, when we shall have no other employment but to praise, admire and adore this love of Christ.

When Demosthenes was asked, "What is the first, second and third qualification of an orator?" he is reported to have given the same answer to each: "Action." I may say the same of submission to the will of God in a Christian; it is the chief ornament of his profession and it includes the whole of it. It is the fairest fruit, and the surest criterion of true faith. In how many books and sermons is faith so confined to the business of acceptance with God, as if it had little else to do. But surely faith owns His hand, trusts His management, and yields to His disposal.

John Newton

THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED

By John E. Hazelton

“The Lord is risen indeed!” – there is not the shadow of the shade of a doubt about it. Jesus Christ, clothed in our nature, is in the heavens of God.

The chapter (Luke 24) opens thus: “Now upon the first day of the week.” That “first day of the week” was a day from the beginning to end of joyful surprises. There were never so many surprises on this earth as there were on that day. To Mary Magdalene in the garden our risen Lord first appeared, enquiring into the cause of her sorrow, and eliciting from her the enquiry, “Tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Here is Mary’s mistake, and here too is Mary’s love. O for love like that of Mary! One woman, weakly indeed, but possessing a love that could vaporise the heaviest burden and think the hardest labour light. She felt as if she could just – weak as she was – take it up in her arms and go on performing those offices which the dawn of the Sabbath prevented them from continuing, as recorded in a preceding chapter. All her difficulties were solved by one word, “Mary,” and her soul was filled with joyful surprise.

“Confirmed by one soft secret word,
We seek no further light;
But walk, depending on our Lord,
By faith, and not by sight.”

Then comes the second appearance, the second joyful surprise on that day to the little company of women – the advance company, if I may so speak, of the church of the living God. The words of our blessed Lord to that little band of women were, “All hail!” equivalent to “rejoice” – our risen Lord’s first word to His church. His first word to the woman: “Why weepest thou?” His first word to the little company representing His church: “Rejoice, for Christ is risen.” Then comes the interview with Cephas, or Peter, an interview so important, so special, so sacred, that the Apostle Paul, in that glorious fifteenth chapter of the first Letter to the Corinthians, adduces the interview with Cephas as the first of the infallible proofs by which he establishes the truth of the resurrection of our Lord. But no disclosure was permitted to be made of the sacred transactions between our Lord and poor, once-backsliding, blaspheming, erring Peter. O our mercy is that our secrets are locked up in the heart of Eternal Love! He shows us His secret, we give Him ours.

Then comes the appearance to the two travellers on the way to Emmaus. How beautifully nature and grace harmonised at this time! They travelled through the fresh, scented air. The palm trees were bursting into flower. In the spring of the year every leaf was sparkling

with delight. And the Lord joined Himself to them, opened up to them the Scriptures, turned their simple meal into – I do not much like the word, yet it conveys what I mean – He turned their simple meal into a sacrament of divine love, and vanished out of their sight. And then, pursuing their way to Jerusalem again, they met with the ten disciples (the word “twelve” simply refers to the disciples considered as a band). The first greeting which they received from them was, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.” I am sure that when they said that, if we could have seen Simon, it would have been as he sat with weeping eyes, and a heart full of love, for the Lord had kissed all his fears away.

Here then are five joyful surprises unfolded one after another on the first day of the week, and whilst they were saying to one another, “The Lord is risen,” He stood in their midst with the words, “Peace be unto you.” His body which had been dead was alive again; as Peter on the Day of Pentecost declared by the Holy Ghost, the cords, or pains, of death could not hold Him; it was impossible that He should remain in the grave. No grave could hold the body of the Lord Jesus Christ when the third morning dawned. No stone wall could shut it in; no iron bar could keep it out; it had been sown in weakness and raised in power; it had been sown a natural body and raised a spiritual body. But to show the complete identity between the risen and the crucified body of our Lord, He was pleased to condescend to take food in the presence of His disciples, to show that as a Man He had the capacity to assimilate food, although there was no necessity in Himself to partake of it. Food was not necessary after His resurrection to the Lord of life and glory to support life, but He took it to convince them and us that He who rose from the dead was no phantom, no apparition, but “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Then again, as certain proof that our Lord’s body before them was the same that they had seen upon the cross, and the same that had accompanied them during the three-and-a-half years of His ministry, His voice charmed their ears. “Grace is poured into His lips.” Most sweet and heavenly were the words that fell therefrom. They saw Him; the nail-prints were visible; His features were the same. Their eyes were holden from time to time for a season that they should not know Him, but when they looked upon Him they beheld the Lamb as it had been slain, and the signs of the Son of Man were visible in hands and feet and side. Hence the Apostle John in his first Letter says, “Which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life.” Our Lord possessed and possesses the substantial elements of a bodily frame. “Handle Me and see” – prove and test for yourselves.

Now what was the message which He sent on three separate occasions to His disciples? “Go to My brethren and tell them to meet Me in Galilee.” It was not, “Go and tell denying Peter, and dull Philip, and doubting Thomas, and cautious Nathanael, and timid Andrew, and John, who also was among the fugitives.” Not, “Go and tell these that I am risen from the dead and am going to call them to account,” but, “Go, tell My *brethren*.” Not one word of reproach or one word of rebuke in and of itself.

“Still He calls them brethren, friends;
And to all their wants attends.”

Our blessed Lord by His death had made a clean settlement with regard to sin, and on that blessed resurrection morning, with its five surprises, He came not to reproach, but to convey the message of peace and of blessing which constitutes the essence of the everlasting gospel.

THE SAVING MARK

*Prayer Meeting Address given at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
on March, 1st, 2010*

Reading: Ezekiel 9.

The prophet Ezekiel was one of the captives in Babylon during the seventy years' captivity. Some of his prophecies at the beginning were prophecies concerning the city of Jerusalem that was left behind. It seems clear that amongst those who were captives in Babylon there was a very godly remnant, but on the other hand, those who remained in Jerusalem, the evil, the wickedness seemed to be very great. So the prophet had one or two strange visions. In spirit he was carried back to the city of Jerusalem. In the chapter before this, he was shown two dreadful things: the idolatry, the wickedness, the sin, the things that were going on in Jerusalem, even amongst the ancient men, even amongst the priests, the rulers of the people. And then the chapter ended with the certainty of judgment coming on Jerusalem.

Beloved friends, we really have this right through the Old Testament: the sin, and God denounces the sin, and then God pronounces the punishment for sin. So at the beginning of this chapter you see divine judgment falling on the city of Jerusalem. You see six men coming forth with slaughtering weapons in their hands and they had to kill throughout Jerusalem, God's judgment for Jerusalem's wickedness. They had to go through the city – this is in Ezekiel's vision – slaying the people. But then he sees another man clothed in white linen with an inkhorn in his

hand, a vessel containing ink. It is very clear that this man in the white linen represents our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and before the slaughter could begin, the man with the inkhorn, the man clothed in linen, went throughout the city and put a saving mark on those that God was going to spare.

So the theme of the chapter is the blessedness of having the saving mark, and our concern tonight, whether we have that saving mark, and our prayer that that saving mark might be put on those who worship with us. Let us be clear, it is only the man in the white linen who can put the saving mark on a sinner. It must be Christ who does it. We cannot put it on ourselves. No-one else can do it. Only He can do it. He is the Saviour.

O but you see this saving mark! You say, what is it? I think you will find a clear explanation in one or two places. We go back and we go forward. So we go back to the Book of the Exodus when the slaughtering angel was going to go through the land of Egypt that night. But first of all there were certain houses and they had the saving mark put on them, and every house that had the saving mark was secure. None of the others were. You know what that saving mark was. It was *the blood of the lamb*. And beloved friends, that is the saving mark this evening, no other, no less, the saving mark, the blood of Christ and a personal interest in it.

There was a lamb, and the lamb had to be slain and the blood shed, but the blood had to be sprinkled with hyssop on the lintels and door posts of the house. It is that personal interest in the blood. It is that sheltering under the blood. It is that trusting in the blood. The blood of Christ was shed at Calvary. It still cleanses from all sin. But it is for you and me through the Holy Spirit to have a personal interest. You know what Joseph Hart says:

“Fly, then, awakened sinner, fly;
Your case admits no stay;
The fountain’s opened now for sin;
Come, wash your guilt away.”

May the Holy Spirit apply that. This is the saving mark, a personal interest in the blood of Christ.

Then we go forward to that well-known chapter, chapter 7 in the Book of the Revelation, the chapter that towards the end has the great question: “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? ... These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne.” But at the beginning of that chapter we have one-hundred-and forty-four thousand, twelve thousand from each tribe, which I take to be symbolical, a definite number known

to God who are His own beloved people. We read there about the wind blowing upon the earth. But the wind could not blow; it was not permitted to blow; it was kept from blowing until God had sealed in their foreheads the one-hundred-and forty-four thousand as His own.

So the saving mark, the blood of Christ, and that should be your great concern and mine, to possess that saving mark. You notice where it was placed. It was placed *on their foreheads*, which if words mean anything at all, means that everyone could see it. If I came into chapel tonight with a mark on my forehead, every one of you would have noticed it. We believe in the doctrine of justification, a sinner saved by the blood of Christ, justified through His righteousness alone. We are told that all those who are justified are sanctified, which means if you have the saving mark in your heart, you will have the saving mark on your forehead; the world will see that you are different, the world, even the world will see that you belong to Jesus. We have it in the last chapter of the Bible: "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." Now have you got the name of Christ written on your heart and have you got the name of Christ written on your forehead?

But then we are told their character, what kind of people were these who possess the saving mark. We are told that they sighed and cried because of the abominations done in the midst. They were different. God had made them different. They were separated from a wicked world. God had separated them. They were deeply concerned. They were made alive, because sighing is a mark of life. We have said it: if you went up to the cemetery now, you would not hear any sighing from the graves. If you went to the hospital, you would hear some sighing there – the difference between death and life. In another place in this prophecy, the question is asked, "Wherefore sighest thou?"

"And does thy heart for Jesus sigh,
And make its secret moan?
He understands a sigh divine" – do you believe it?
"He understands a sigh divine,
And hears the secret groan."

"That sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst." Things in the land, things in the church of God – these are a cause of concern. They are a praying people. Their sighs are ascending heavenwards in prayer. But also they are sighing and crying because of the abominations in their own hearts, because of their own sin and guilt and unworthiness.

And the end of it all: safety, the safety of those who sigh and cry, the safety of those who have the saving mark on their foreheads. A divine, eternal, covenant commandment: "Come not near any man upon

whom is the mark.” It will be like that in the last great day. It will be worse than the six men with the slaughtering weapons then, beloved friends. But our mercy to have an interest in that word: “Come not near any man upon whom is the mark.”

THE MINISTER’S FAITHFULNESS TO GOD’S WORD

*From Edward Marbury (d. 1655) on the opening words in Obadiah:
“Thus saith the Lord.”*

The minister. We are taught to exercise ourselves in the holy studies of the Word of God, that we may be able to divide the Word of God aright, that we may wisely understand the Word of God, to be able to minister the Word of God in due season.

The ignorant and unlearned man is no fit man for this employment; to such saith God: “Because thou hast refused knowledge, I will also refuse thee: thou shalt be no priest to Me” (Hos. 4. 6).

For why should any dare to intrude himself into this great service to teach others in the Word, seeing himself untaught? For the priest’s lips should preserve knowledge, and the people must seek the law at their mouth (Mal. 2. 7). Doth any man send a lame man of his errand, or put his message into the mouth of a dumb man? We are the Lord’s messengers. Doth any man set an unskilful man to build, that knoweth not how to use his tools? We are the Lord’s builders. Doth any man set an inexperienced man to take charge of his sheep? We are the Lord’s shepherds of His flock.

Jeroboam took the right way to destroy true religion and to set up idolatry: “He made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth” (1 Kings 13. 33, 34),

Surely such ministers, though they have the outward calling of the church, yet do they want the inward calling of God, and being darkness, they possess the place of light, and they are blind leaders of the blind, as Christ calleth them.

Two sorts of ministers are here excluded.

1. Those that know not what the Lord saith, and therefore use the holy calling of the ministry but as a means for their maintenance, without care or conscience of feeding the flock of Christ, and woe is to them because they preach not the gospel; they usurp the wool and milk of the flock, and have no right to the inheritance of God, that is, the tithes of the people.

2. Those who know not, understand not the Word of the Lord, yet trusting to their own natural parts, do boldly step up and usurp the chair of Moses, and are *imperitorum magistri*, teachers of the unlearned, before they have been *peritorum discipuli*, scholars of the learned. And these are the more dangerous of the two; better an unpreaching minister that readeth the Word of God distinctly than an ignorant preacher that presumeth *ex puris naturalibus*, from his pure naturals to deal with those things which are too high and deep for him.

Ministers are taught their great duty of faithfulness, of which the apostle saith, "Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4. 2).

He must say, "*Thus saith the Lord.*" That is, he must say,

1. *Quod dicit Dominus*, what the Lord saith is the truth.

2. *Omne quod dicit*, all that, all the truth.

3. *Quomodo dicit*, in the same manner, Thus.

1. For we may not go from our instructions to speak of ourselves anything, but we must first receive from the Lord, and then we must speak that. It was Nathan's error, when David did open to him his purpose for building of the Lord's house, that before he had understood the will of God therein, he encouraged him, saying, "Do all that is in thy heart," and therefore he was sent again to him to unsay it.

2. Neither may we suppress anything of that which is put into our mouths. The apostle saith, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4. 20). And Paul saith to the elders of Ephesus, "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20. 26, 27).

For surely, as God told Ezekiel, it is as much as our salvation is worth to leave any part of God's revealed will in Scripture untaught.

3. Neither may we change the manner of God's speakings; for there is a form of doctrine delivered to us, and there is a form of words. We must not only say *this*, but *thus* saith the Lord.

For so Peter admonisheth: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4. 11). Not mingling human fancies with divine doctrines; not mingling words of human wisdom with holy exhortations; not mingling our own spirit of contradiction with our confutations of the adversary; not mingling any of our own spirit of bitterness and passions with our just reprehensions of sin, drawing against Satan and sin no other sword but "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Thus shall we be "unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved" (2 Cor. 2. 15).

We shall meet with many discouragements in this our office, and we shall lose a great deal of labour; but so did our Master, it is His

complaint, though never any were so sufficient for this service as He was.

1. For His calling: "The Lord hath called Me from the womb; from the bowels of My mother hath He made mention of My name" (Isa. 49. 1).

2. For His fitting to that calling: "He hath made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid Me, and made Me a polished shaft" (verse 2). Yet He complaineth: "Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent My strength for nought, and in vain" (verse 4). Yet His comfort was: "Yet surely My judgment is with the Lord, and My work (or My reward) with My God."

QUESTIONS THE LORD ASKS

From Ralph Erskine on Isaiah 45. 11

I will tell you a question or two that God is asking His people; for as they ask Him, so He asks them, time about, as it were. He asks you, O doubting believer, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" What reason have you to doubt of My love and to doubt of My kindness? He asks you, O strong believer, "Who made thee to differ? By grace ye are what ye are." He asks you, O secure believer, "What, could you not watch with Me one hour? Is this your kindness to your Friend?" He asks you, O careless believer, "What do you more than others?" Should you not study to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect? "Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, to end in the flesh?"

He asks you, O untender believer, that takes not so much heed to your walk before the world as you ought, His question is, "Ought you not to walk in the fear of the Lord, because of the reproach of the heathen your enemies?" Will you cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme? Should not the love of Christ constrain you? He asks you, O dark believer, of little knowledge, "Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" Might you not by this time have been teachers, yet, "You need to be taught what are the first principles of the oracles of God?"

He asks you, O legal believer, that art seeking comfort in your duties more than in Christ, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" For much of this legal temper is even in the best, seeking comfort in their own duties, privileges, attainments, enlargements and experiences, more than in Christ. His question to you is, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Are you not married to Christ, and so your old husband, the law, is dead? We are become dead

to the law by the body of Christ, and married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7. 4). Should you not seek your comfort in your living Head and Husband, and in His righteousness?

Again, He asks you, O mourning believer, "Woman, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou?" Man, why weepest thou, whom seekest thou? Fear not ye, if ye be seeking Jesus who was crucified. He asks you, O inquisitive believer, "What is thy petition, and what is thy request? It shall be granted to the half of the kingdom, yea to the whole of the kingdom. Go tell Him what you are seeking, and seek His grace to answer His questions, as you would wish His condescension to answer yours.

REACHING HEAVENWARD

*A children's sermon preached by Joseph Jarvis at Grove Chapel,
Drayton Gardens, Chelsea, on February 19th, 1901*

Text: "Reaching forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3. 13).

You are all aware this is the first opportunity I have had to meet you on what I am sure is usually a happy occasion. Speaking for myself, I must say I certainly have been deeply interested in the proceedings of this evening, and have intensely enjoyed some portions of the Word which you have recited. I know not when more so, excepting only last Lord's day evening, when I read to my own dear people the second chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. This indeed was most delightful to me! What we have heard tonight has reminded me more than ever of the words of Job: "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23. 12). I have noticed the wide range of subjects embraced in the selection of the chapters and hymns. We have had doctrine, precept and experience. Sin also and God's remedy for sin has been treated of, and above all, Christ has been set before us in His mysterious incarnation, in His deep humiliation, and in His glorious exaltation. I must not omit to say how intensely I have enjoyed the hymns on Gethsemane. This subject is one of solemn delight to me at all times when favoured to enter into the spirit of it.

There is only one thing that makes one's heart anxious and somewhat unhappy, namely, the fear, dear children, that some of you who have recited these wonderful, *saving* truths may never know them *savingly*. I pray (and I am sure all your friends pray) that you *may* know them for yourselves and not merely for others. Your singing has been

very sweet. May you sing more sweetly still one day, and you will if you sing at all in eternity, but you must all be washed in the blood of the Lamb, otherwise eternal sighs instead of eternal songs await you.

I remember once giving an address (it was many miles from here) in which I repeated a portion of that hymn familiar to almost every child: "Around the throne of God in heaven, thousands of children stand," and asked for an answer to the enquiry of the second verse:

"What brought them to that world above,
That heaven so bright and fair?
Where all is peace and joy and love;
How came those children there?"

For some time no child seemed able to give the right answer. Then a dear, tiny girl arose and replied,

"Because the Saviour shed His blood
To wash away their sin;
Bathed in that pure and precious flood,
Behold them white and clean."

This answer pleased me very much, as I reflected that this little one understood to some extent the need of washing in the blood of Christ. Yes, dear children, there must be a real change wrought in us before we can enter heaven; we must become new creatures; our sins must be washed away by the blood of the Lamb before we can stand with the pure and faultless ones before God's throne.

The text upon which I wish to remark particularly you will find in the third chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, the thirteenth verse: "Reaching forth unto those things which are before." Some of you may think this text far too high for the reach of children, but I will show you presently why I have chosen it. Let me first remark that divine life must be implanted in your souls before you can copy the great Apostle Paul in reaching forth to the things of God. You can reach after the things of this world; you may "stretch your arms like seas, to grasp in all the shore," but can never stretch your arms heavenward till a miracle of grace be wrought.

Our mother Eve stretched forth her hand in an evil hour to take the forbidden fruit, and we have all followed her sinful example; therefore, we are *all* lost in the Fall, however bad we are, morally considered, or however good. This awful truth is very much set aside in our day, and I rejoice to hear you have had so much real truth taught you, and hope that the lessons you have learned, with God's blessing, will be of saving power to your souls.

I have sometimes thought that one might set forth the need of a real change of heart and the falsity of the present-day teaching by an anecdote

I once heard. You may think it a simple one, and perhaps too amusing, but it is not simply to amuse you that I relate it, because I do not believe in mere amusement in such matters. I listened to a good man once who devoted the greater portion of the time occupied by his address to moral teaching and pleasing anecdote, and then near to the close spoke well on spiritual things. Everything he inculcated ought to be practised by children, yet I could but feel we ought to come more directly to the root of the matter. I never knew mere moral teaching result in the salvation of even one soul, and it never will. On the other hand, solemn, spiritual truth God will bless. I know a young woman who when a little girl in our school at Greenwich was brought to God through the singing of the following hymn:

“If Jesus should come to our meeting today,
To call out the Christians by name,
O how we should listen to what He would say!
How solemn the moments would seem!

“He’d know who they were, for He searches the heart;
We could not the Saviour deceive;
O who are the ones that He’d call out apart? (I thought of this
when you were singing.)
And who are the ones He would leave?

“Yet Jesus is here, though His form is unseen,
His eye is on each of us now;
He knows who has truly sought pardon for sin,
And longs like the Saviour to grow.”

Yes, Jesus knows every sigh and cry, and will not despise even a child’s petition.

But the narrative is this. A farmer had an old horse that he wanted to get rid of, so he sent his son to a horse-dealer, who asked him if he had a horse in exchange for the old one that would suit his father. The man said he had not just then, but if he called that evening he would have one that would just suit. So the young man returned at night and took back a horse to his father which was supposed to be an exchange, and for which he had even paid £5. But his father, when he saw the horse, exclaimed, “Why, Tom, what do you mean by bringing back *our old horse* again?” It was really so; the son had been deceived. The horse-dealer had simply transformed the old nag by clipping his coat and by giving him drugs, which had made him lively and frolicsome. Now this is just what so many people attempt in religion. They, poor things, exchange open profanity for morality. They take great pains to make the outside clean, while the inside is still full of all uncleanness and corruption. To use a Scriptural expression, they put new wine into old

bottles – a new coat on the old man, or a new patch on the old garment, and thus make the rent worse. But be assured of this, “If any man be in Christ he is” – he must be – “a *new* creature.”

Now to the text, which suggests to me four things in particular. The first is to reach forth the hands of need; secondly, those of fear; thirdly, those of love; and fourthly, those of faith.

1. We have heard of a little girl in a hospital who was dangerously ill, and was to undergo a very serious operation. Her case was the worst in the children’s ward. The children talked over her sad condition. Perhaps they had attended Sunday schools and there learned of Jesus. However this may be, they decided the best thing to do was to take her painful case to the Lord Jesus, but their little childish minds did not understand how He would know one little child from all the rest. So they decided this little one was to lie with outstretched hands, so that the Lord might know which child it was that wanted His help so specially. So the little sufferer stretched forth her hands as agreed, and in the morning she was dead. We hope Jesus folded a little lamb in His dear bosom, and took her soul to glory. The little arms still stretched forth were cold in death.

But O how it would rejoice our hearts if you were all taught to stretch *the hands of spiritual need* towards the Lord Jesus; that you might all be like the prodigal in the far-off land when he came to himself. You know the first step back towards his father’s house was prompted by a sense of *need* – he began to be in want. We want you to be in want – *consciously* in want – of Christ’s pardon, in want of His mercy, in want of His soul-cleansing blood, in want of His love and His grace; then you will reach forth your hands of need toward Him.

2. But I pass on to the second point, that we may notice the reaching forth of the arms of *fear*. And how often we see this in nature! A little child in danger will cry out and throw up its arms to its parent, that it may be snatched from peril, and thus it is with souls who are awakened to their danger of eternal misery. Some people tell us that we ought not to teach the children to *fear* God; they say that God is *love*, but forget that He is pure and just and holy too. They say we ought not to speak about His justice. We do not find this teaching in the Bible. I am always glad when I find little ones, aye, and big ones too, stretching forth the arms of fear.

We read that “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with *fear*, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.” Bunyan’s pilgrim was moved with fear. He said he had learned that the city was to be burned with fire. This was what made him cry, “Life, life, eternal life!” and caused him to become deaf to all the entreaties of carnal neighbours. Though he knew not where to run, yet fear compelled him

to escape from the doomed city, and God directed him to Evangelist, who pointed him to the wicket-gate, which is Jesus; even He who hath said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Be assured, dear children, "The *fear* of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The Lord implant in your hearts this holy fear.

3. Thirdly, let us notice the reaching forth of the arms of *love*. This is an all-important matter. You know what God's Word says: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." I will give you a short anecdote in connection with this text. You have all heard of good Mr. Flavel. Well a person by the name of Short when fourteen years of age heard him preach from this text: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," that is, "Let him be accursed at" (or "in") "the coming of the Lord." That man went to America and lived to a very great age. Something like eighty-four years elapsed, and then God brought that sermon to his remembrance when in a field. The arrow found its way into his heart; he fell down and cried for mercy, and finally was brought to love the Lord Jesus. After which he lived fourteen years, testifying by a godly life to the power of divine grace.

I was struck with the solemn words that one of the children recited just now concerning the need of this love: "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not *charity*" – which is the Greek word for *love* – "it profiteth me nothing." On the other hand, how full of comfort is this truth:

"Love is the golden chain that binds
The happy souls above,
And he's an heir of heaven who finds
His bosom glow with love."

I shall never forget how at times as a child my bosom glowed with love to, and yearning after Christ in the singing of that beautiful hymn commencing:

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with Him then.
I wish that His hands had been placed on my head,
That His arm had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen His kind look when He said,
'Let the little ones come unto Me.'"

Do you, dear children, thus stretch forth your arms of affection after the Lord Jesus? If so, depend upon this – the arms of divine affection did before the world began encircle you.

4. Now for our fourth point (and with that I have done), which is the reaching forth of the arms of *faith* – “Reaching forth unto those things which are before.” Of course the apostle here alludes to the higher attainments of divine life, and to a greater knowledge of Christ, likewise to the glory of heaven beyond all; but I am using the words more as an accommodation.

I will first remind you that through the Fall faith has become a withered arm. If therefore we have true faith, we possess it only as the gift of God. I wonder how many of you have these arms of faith, and with them are longing to embrace faith’s only proper Object, the Saviour. I used to say with the poet,

“My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine,
While like a penitent I stand
And there confess my sin.”

What a mercy if you feel the same desire.

You remember the unbelief of Thomas. The passion of the divine Sufferer staggered him. The Gethsemane agonies and sorrows, the flagellations, the thorny crown mockery, and the ignominious death of the cross, blighted his hopes in Jesus as the King of Israel. He did not believe that his Lord had risen from the dead. Christ appeared to certain disciples, and they knew Him to be the Lord; and they communicated the glad news to Thomas, saying, “The Lord is risen indeed,” but he replied, “Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.” After some days the disciples assembled again, and this time Thomas was with them. The Lord came to this assembly also, and, knowing all things revolving in the heart of Thomas, prevented him speaking by thus addressing him: “Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing.” And Thomas, you know, then exclaimed, “My Lord and my God.”

O that you may be led to stretch forth the hand of faith like that, and find salvation in the wounds of Jesus. Then will you understand the record of another gospel concerning this revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which says, “Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.”

Without this hand of faith stretched out to the Son of God – the only Redeemer – children, dear children, you must eternally perish! How often I have thought of the Passover blood in the basin; while there it could not save the Israelites from the destroying angel. It had to be sprinkled upon the lintel and doorpost with the bunch of hyssop, which hyssop was a figure of faith which lays hold of salvation by Christ, and

thus, instrumentally, saves the soul from death. God give you faith and bless you all.

May He continue to bless your aged pastor [Alfred Brandon], your kind superintendent and teachers. May you, dear friends, be encouraged in the good work. Be not cast down when you see no signs of good; God's Word cannot return to Him void. You shall reap in due season if you faint not.

JUDGE NOT: TRY THE SPIRITS

From J.C. Philpot's "Answers to Enquiries"

QUESTION

Having had my mind much exercised of late respecting two passages of Scripture, I have thought I should like to hear what you might be led to say of them, so that if you deem it advisable and feel at liberty to write a few lines on them, I shall be gratified to read it in the *Gospel Standard*. One is in Matthew 7. 1: "Judge not, that ye be not judged"; the other 1 John 4. 1: "Try the spirits." They do not appear to harmonise. May the Lord give you understanding in all things, and enable us to ascribe all glory to Him.

ANSWER

We do not ourselves see any particular difficulty in harmonising the two passages quoted by our correspondent, but shall be pleased if the following thoughts may serve to reconcile a seeming contradiction, and to relieve him, or any of our readers similarly perplexed, from any difficulty on the subject.

When the Lord bids us to "judge not, that we be not judged," He would thereby restrain us from harsh, one-sided, uncharitable decisions, either in our hearts or by our lips, upon the words or conduct of Christian brethren. He does not forbid us calmly weighing matters in our own minds, but from pronouncing hasty and harsh decisions upon the cases and characters of God's people, when we have not sufficient means of coming to a right conclusion. To "try" and to "judge" are certainly distinct things. In earthly courts a cause may be tried, and yet not judged or decided upon for want of sufficient evidence, or because probabilities may weigh as much on one side as on the other. Paul bids us "prove all things," and to separate ourselves from all that walk disorderly. We are thus bidden to examine both men and things, and not only examine, but to act upon that examination, as we are told to "hold fast that which is good." But the same apostle reprehends harsh or faulty judgments, for he says, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own

master he standeth or falleth.” James also shows us in what sense we are to understand the Lord’s words, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?” (James 4. 11, 12).

But though the Lord most wisely and blessedly forbids those harsh, severe and uncharitable judgments, which have done so much to wound and distress the saints of God, have caused so much division between brethren, and sown so much disunion in churches, He does not tie us up from exercising a sound, righteous and spiritual judgment in divine matters. He therefore bids us by the pen of holy John “try the spirits whether they are of God.” He does not bid us judge men’s words or decide hastily on men’s actions, but to try, spiritually and experimentally, the spirits true or false, good or evil, from heaven or from beneath, which come abroad in the world, and blow either upon our own minds or upon the churches. These “spirits” we are to try by the Word of God, by our own experience, by the influence that they communicate, by the spirit which they breathe, by the good or evil which they convey, and by the general effect which they produce on our own mind or the minds of others.

Now surely these are two very distinct things, and may be easily reconciled without the least jar or contradiction. It is clearly one thing to be preserved from forming or expressing harsh or hasty judgments upon the actions of Christian friends (assuming that they are such as may bear a Christian interpretation) and trying humbly and prayerfully any spirit that comes abroad, and seeks to bring our own minds or the minds of others under its influence.

The former may be done under the influence of a legal spirit, be tainted with prejudice, or be pronounced with undue haste, and thus be contrary to the first elements, not only of Christian, but even of common equity. The latter is absolutely necessary to a Christian walk, and to a preservation from a thousand errors, delusions and evils. The first is, or may be, altogether contrary to the precepts and spirit of the gospel; the other is in full accordance with both. The first is a work of the flesh, and the fruit of a self-righteous, unhumbled, undiscerning, unexercised and ignorant heart. The other is a fruit of the gospel, springs from the teachings of the Spirit, and is essential to all comfortable and Christian walking. The first, often if not usually, springs from prejudice and enmity; the other flows from a spirit of love to the Lord, His Word and people.

Much more might be said to point out the clear distinction between these two things, but we trust we have said enough to show that the two

passages, so far from contradicting each other, are in full accordance not only with the letter, but the spirit of the gospel.

TIMES OF REFRESHING

An account of the wonderful blessings at Kirk of Shotts, on the road to Edinburgh, in 1630, accounted one of the greatest outpourings of the Spirit ever known in Scotland.

The account by John Gillies (1712-1796)

There was a great multitude of divers ranks, and from different corners of Scotland (many of them of eminent godliness) who attended that communion. By credible information conveyed through a few hands from persons who were Mr. Livingston's contemporaries, the following facts appear to be well attested as to the occasion of such an uncommon gathering of godly people, and their getting the assistance of several of the ministers who were most esteemed at that time.

As the Kirk of Shotts lies on the road from the west to Edinburgh, and is at a good distance from any convenient place of entertainment, some ladies of rank who had occasion to pass that way met at different times with civilities from the minister at his house, which was then situate where the public inn is now. Particularly once, when through some misfortune befalling their coach or chariot they were obliged to pass a night in the minister's house, they observed that besides its incommodious situation, it much needed to be repaired. They therefore used their interest to get a more convenient house built for the minister in another place.

After receiving so substantial favours, the minister waited on the ladies, and expressed his desire to know if anything was in his power that might testify his gratitude to them. They answered it would be very obliging to them if he would invite to assist at his communion certain ministers whom they named who were eminently instrumental in promoting practical religion. The report of this spreading far and near, multitudes of persons of different ranks attended there, so that for several days before the sacrament there was much time spent in social prayer.

It was not usual, it seems, in those times, to have any sermon on the Monday after dispensing the Lord's supper. But God had given so much of His gracious presence, and afforded His people so much communion with Himself on the foregoing days of that solemnity, that they knew not how to part without thanksgiving and praise. There had been, as was said before, a vast confluence of choice Christians, with several eminent ministers, from almost all the corners of the land that had been many of

them there together for several days before the sacrament, hearing sermon and joining together in larger or lesser companies in prayer, praise and spiritual conferences.

While their hearts were warm with the love of God, some expressing their desire of a sermon on the Monday were joined by others, and in a little the desire became very general. Mr. John Livingston, chaplain to the Countess of Wigtown (at that time only a preacher, not an ordained minister, and about seventeen [twenty-seven, in fact] years of age), was with very much ado prevailed on to think of giving the sermon. He had spent the night before in prayer and conference, but when he was alone in the fields about eight or nine in the morning, there came such a misgiving of heart upon him under a sense of unworthiness and unfitness to speak before so many aged and worthy ministers and so many eminent and experienced Christians that he was thinking to have stolen quite away, and was actually gone away to some distance, but when just about to lose sight of the Kirk of Shotts, these words "Was I ever a barren wilderness or a land of darkness?" were brought into his heart with such an overcoming power as constrained him to think it his duty to return and comply with the call to preach, which he accordingly did with good assistance for about an hour-and-a-half on the points he had meditated from that text Ezekiel 36. 25, 26: "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. A new heart also will I give you, 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."

As he was about to close, a heavy shower coming suddenly on which made the people hastily take to their cloaks and mantles, he began to speak to the following purpose. "If a few drops of rain from the clouds so discomposed them, how discomposed would they be, how full of horror and despair, if God should deal with them as they deserved; and thus He will deal with all the finally impenitent. That God might justly rain fire and brimstone upon them, as upon Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain. That the Son of God by tabernacling in our nature, and obeying and suffering in it, is the only refuge and covert from the storm of divine wrath due to us for sin. That His merits and mediation are the alone screen from that storm, and none but penitent believers shall have the benefit of that shelter." In these or some expressions to this purpose and many others, he was led on about an hour's time (after he had done with what he had premeditated) in a strain of exhortation and warning, with great enlargement and melting of heart.

The following particular instances are well attested, and if it were proper, some of the persons could be named. On that remarkable Monday, three of our young gentlemen in Glasgow had made an

appointment to go to Edinburgh to wait upon the public diversions there. They alighted at Shotts to take breakfast. One of their number proposed, as there was a young man to preach that day (Mr. Livingston, the lady Wigtown's chaplain), if the rest would agree, they might go and hear sermon, probably more out of curiosity than any other motive. And for the more expedition, they proposed to come away just at the end of the sermon, before the last prayer. But the power of God was so felt by them accompanying that sermon, that they could not come away till all was over.

When they returned to the public house to take their horses, they called for some drink before they mounted; but when the drink was set upon the table, they all looked to one another. None of them durst touch it till a blessing was asked, and as it was not their manner formerly to be careful about such things, one of them at last proposed, "I think we should ask a blessing to our drink." The other two readily agreed, and put it upon one of the company to do it, which he readily did. When they had done, they could not rise until they should return thanks. They went on their way more sober and sedate than they used to be, but none of them mentioned their inward concern one to another, only now and then they would have said, "Was it not a great sermon we heard?" another would have answered, "I never heard the like of it."

They went to Edinburgh, but instead of waiting upon diversions or company, they kept their rooms the most part of the time they were in town, which was only about two days, when they were all quite weary of Edinburgh, and proposed to return home. Upon the way home, they did not yet discover themselves to one another, and after they were some days in Glasgow, they kept their rooms very much and came seldom abroad. At last one of them made a visit to another, and made a discovery of what God had done for him at Shotts. The other frankly owned the concern that he was brought under at the same time. Both of them went to the third, who was in the same case, and they all three agreed directly to begin a fellowship meeting. They continued to have a practice suitable to their profession (so far as my informer heard), as long as they lived. And some of them lived to an advanced age, and were eminent and useful men in the place.

John Livingston's own two accounts

1. I must also mention that solemn communion at the Kirk of Shotts June 20th, 1630, at which time there was so convincing an appearance of God, and down-pouring of the Spirit, even in an extraordinary way, that did follow the ordinances, especially that sermon on the Monday, June 21st, with a strange, unusual motion on the hearers, who in a great multitude were there convened of divers ranks, that it was known, which I can speak on sure ground, near five hundred had at that

time a discernible change wrought on them, of whom most proved lively Christians afterwards. It was the sowing of a seed through Clydesdale, so as many of the most eminent Christians in that country could date either their conversion, or some remarkable confirmation in their case, from that day; and truly this was the more remarkable, that one, after much reluctance, by a special and unexpected providence, was called to preach that sermon on the Monday, which then was not usually practised; and that night before, by most of the Christians there, was spent in prayers, so that the Monday's work might be discerned as a convincing return of prayer.

2. The only day in all my life wherein I found most of the presence of God in preaching was on a Monday after the communion, preaching in the churchyard of Shotts, June 21st, 1630. The night before I had been in company with some Christians, who spent the night in prayer and conference. When I was alone in the fields about eight or nine o'clock in the morning, before we were to go to sermon, there came such a misgiving of spirit upon me, considering my unworthiness and weakness, and the multitude and expectation of the people, that I was consulting with myself to have stolen away somewhere and declined that day's preaching, but that I thought I durst not so far distrust God, and so went to sermon, and got good assistance about one hour and a half upon the points which I had meditated on Ezekiel 36. 25, 26. And in the end, offering to close with some words of exhortation, I was led on about an hour's time in a strain of exhortation and warning, with such liberty and melting of heart, as I never had the like in public all my lifetime.

Some little of that stamp remained on the Thursday after, when I preached in Kilmarnock, but the very Monday following, preaching in Irvine, I was so deserted that the points I had meditated and written, and which I had fully in my memory, I was not for my heart able to get them pronounced.

So it pleased the Lord to counterbalance His dealings, and to hide pride from man. This so discouraged me, that I was resolved for some time not to preach, at least not in Irvine, but Mr. David Dickson would not suffer me to go from thence till I preached the next Sabbath, to get (as he expressed it) amends of the devil. I stayed, and preached with some tolerable freedom.

Sin could not die unless Christ died; Christ could not die without being made sin; nor could He die, but sin must die with Him.

Elisha Coles

BOOK REVIEW

A Guide to Christian Living, by John Calvin; Gift Edition in the Pocket Puritans series; small book with soft leather back; 150 pages; price £10; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Yet another Calvin! Again this will be welcomed by lovers of the Reformer, and is specially produced so that it can be given as a lovely present.

When John Calvin began writing his famous *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he was thinking of a small book to set out the essentials of the Christian faith. Owing to the persecution of the French Protestants, it was felt necessary to develop it into a much larger book.

A Guide to Christian Living is a chapter from the *Institutes* that was originally entitled, "On the Christian Life." Even in the sixteenth century it was published as a separate work. It is now newly translated from the French edition of 1560.

The translator speaks of the book as "a clear, balanced set of directions and encouragements to all who desired to live according to the gospel." It is strong in theology, but equally strong in pastoral concern. It is emphasised that the author truly experienced the cost of being a true disciple of the Lord Jesus.

THE ATONEMENT

"Ye are come unto the blood." O wondrous words and true
 For every needy sinner who longs to feel it too;
 Who in his sad condition desires with longing eyes
 To *know* the blood that speaketh, "a better sacrifice"!

"Ye are come unto the blood." O wondrous truth and good!
 O safe and sure foundation, where all the saints have stood!
 O happy, holy shelter where God their souls can meet,
 And come in love to bless them, from off the mercy seat!

"Ye are come unto the blood." Lord, be it ours to feel
The blood has come to us to cleanse us and to heal,
 The precious blood of sprinkling which gives the conscience peace,
 And from our fears and bondage procures a full release.

M.P., March 1907

How consoling to a soul bowed down under a sense of guilt are the following promises: "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee ... Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live" (Ezek. 16. 6). Then comes the source of this mercy: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31. 3).

Thomas Reade

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MAY 2010

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

SEARCHING OUR WAYS

*J.K. Popham's farewell sermon preached at
Gower Street Memorial Chapel, London, on April 13th, 1935, at the
Annual Meeting of the Gospel Standard Societies*

Text: "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord" (Lamentations 3. 40).

I am disposed to say at the outset that if we as a congregation, if our churches as represented here are sensible of the real position in which we are standing, and grace be given to us to consider, we shall be able to look into the text with some understanding.

The Book of Lamentations is perhaps, if I may use the word, the most pathetic Book in the whole of Holy Scripture. Jeremiah wrote these mournful lines after the destruction of Jerusalem. He was burdened with the condition of the remnant. He mourned the state that they had been in in the siege; the famine, the pestilence, the extremes of poverty and distress; mothers eating their infants. Seeing all this, with his heart full of love to God and the remnant, Jeremiah composed these Lamentations. We could, if left, read the whole Book without any feeling of sorrow either for ourselves or the church of God, but if we have grace in exercise I believe we shall feel the mourning, the grief, the anguish in a measure which the prophet had with regard to the remnant.

I do not think that it will be disputed by any person who knows even a little of the state of the church of God today (and we a small body are a part of it) that it is in a very low condition. The prophet says, "Let us search and try our ways"; not, let us dwell only upon the condition we are in, but upon that which has procured and brought us unto it. We may say that we are sick without any particular enquiry as to what has brought the sickness. Let us search into this, the way we have walked, what has brought this state of things.

Let us search, first of all, *with respect to our exercises toward God Himself*. The first wrong movement, the first step in backsliding and bringing the anger of God upon the nation, the church of God then, was departing from Himself. If we depart from God, all the rest is easy to flesh and blood. If a sense of God, His claims on us, His holy Word to us in the Scripture, is lacking, I say the rest is easy to flesh and blood. I speak as to some wise men. You know, you would confess before God that you understand that point; that here and there in your life, in your

heart's life, you turned away from God, conscience became hardened, secret prayer became neglected, the Holy Scriptures were read perhaps only cursorily, you had little or no concern about your state as in the sight of God. Confident perhaps in regard of your past experience, the present favour of God was a matter of more or less indifference. Very solemn!

I know painfully to my shame what I have said to you. Once your heart turns from God, I repeat it, the rest is easy. You go to the services; if your feelings in any way be described you may be quite comfortable, not suspecting that your heart is hardened, and that you are in darkness. Search into this, look into this. Dear friends, God give us grace really to look narrowly into this first step to backsliding. It is not first of all indulging in some other evil, either public or private; it is first of all leaving God, departing from God. The rest follows as of course.

Search and try your ways *with regard to the ministry*. Have not our churches sunk into a kind of acceptance, with no exercise in respect of it, of the supply system? Who is seriously exercised about pastors? Are not our churches today realising without understanding it the breach of God's promise? "Ye shall know My breach of promise," said the Lord. The promise is this: "I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3. 15). Is it so with us? Little churches, or larger churches pastorless; are you exercised? Is there a secret labour?

Does that word "earnest" speak to you? Elijah prayed earnestly, and got what he prayed for. There may be in that word "earnest" something to which some of us are sad strangers. We have the ordinary reading of the Scriptures in the family, hearing it read in the services, and formal prayer. Some of us have to weep bitter tears over our heartless prayers. Heartless prayers; and if one should come to you in the Spirit of God and ask you about your prayers for pastors, what would you say? Churches, what would you say? Deacons, what would you say? Search and try this: do we want pastors? They are the gift of Christ.

In the Psalms we are told that He ascended on high, led captivity captive, and "received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them;" and by the Apostle Paul in the Ephesians this is repeated; after He ascended on high, He gave the gift of pastors and teachers, and that gift is for the "edifying of the body of Christ." Are we edified? How can we be edified if we lack that gift? If Christ has bound that gift up with edification, and that gift be not bestowed, how can we expect edification? So "that we henceforth be no more children" is a fruit of pastors feeding the churches with knowledge and understanding. Have we many pastors? God knows I put not these questions to you in hardness of heart.

Let us search and try our ways in the churches of God *with respect to our hearings*; what are they? Of course, all of you who have the life

of God in you would confess what is patent everywhere, namely, that there is no wonderful breaking forth of the mighty power of God among us. Few apparently are called; few apparently even living, exercised souls are brought forth into liberty. Bondage, hardness and legal fear for the most part are the complaints we hear in our churches. Why is it? Is there not a cause? Let us search and try our ways with respect to the absence of God as to mighty teaching, clear deliverances, making the Scriptures a living word in us, "for the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." The perfunctory hearing goes on; what application is there? We talk of sovereign grace; how much sovereignty and how much grace come into our hearts?

Let us search our consciences, my friends; are they exercised toward God in regard to hearing? The Lord would have us careful about hearing; He gives a caution in this important matter: "Take heed therefore how ye hear"; be careful of the *manner* of your hearing. Does need cause you to entreat the Lord to speak to you? Take heed to the *matter* you hear; the ear trieth words. The Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians, for they searched the Scriptures to gather whether what was preached was according to them. Does the preaching soothe or search you? Christ on many occasions said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear." Many disciples when they heard the solemn words which proceeded out of His mouth went back and walked no more with Him; in them was fulfilled the word by Isaiah and quoted by Him (Matt. 13. 14, 15).

Let us search and try our ways *with respect to answers to prayer*; do we get them? The reality of prayer, the acceptance of prayer with God is known by the result, that is to say, by answers. If we pray in the Holy Ghost, must not answers come? Jude speaks of this kind of "praying in the Holy Ghost." That word may try some of us. Why? Because there is perhaps often little or no life in prayer. This letter must be answered, that matter must be attended to, the shop must be looked after, the business must have all our attention; and these things may go on when we are on our knees. Who knows, who can fully express the gaddings of the spirit when one is on one's knees engaged in calling on the name of God?

Now if these things be wrong, and that they are you will not dispute, can we be surprised at what follows? You say, "God is not with me!" Do you ask yourselves and the Lord why? You say, "He has deserted me." Do you seek the reason from Him who searches the heart? You say, "I am dark and I am in bondage, and the things of time and sense occupy my soul now in a way they formerly did not." Let us search and try our ways in these solemn particulars. I know the difficulty of rightly attending to the things of time, the concerns of your families, and of your businesses, and so on, but there are times when God is so with His

people that they seek first His kingdom. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6. 33). The Lord graciously make our text a living word in our hearts; then only will it be useful to us.

Pastors, angels of our churches, how are matters with you? Yours is a solemn position and office. Are you watchful in it? Do you look carefully after your flocks? is their state a weighty concern with you? If any of the sheep be going astray are you troubled, and by prayer and in the ways open to you do you go after them? Or is there not reason in you to follow the text, that is, to be searching and trying your ways, and turning again to the Lord?

There are *deacons present*. In Holy Scripture there are certain qualifications set before you; one is, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience," which is the Lord Jesus Christ revealed and held in a conscience purified by His blood. Have you that qualification? What is the work of deacons? To administer carefully, affectionately and justly the money committed to them. The office arose out of the murmuring of the Grecian widows who thought the Hebrew widows had more attention paid to their needs than themselves (Acts 6. 1-6). You have here the recognised qualification, the infallible rule of Holy Scripture. Do you in secret come to this rule and lay your consciences and conduct by the rule?

There are *members of churches here*. Church membership, according to Scripture, is very solemn and responsible. The Word abounds with directions for our walk as members one toward another: "Walk in love," Christ's new commandment. Love will make us profitable members. Members of churches here, how do you walk as such? If a brother member offend, what course do you take? When occasion is given, do you follow the Lord's commandment given in Matthew 18. 15? If not, may grace be given to search and try your ways and turn again to the Lord in that matter.

If we try our ways rightly it is by a standard. All tests are by a standard. The only true and proper standard for the church of God and each member is His gospel. Israel broke away from the divine rule: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me"; she broke away from it and thus procured chastisement. The rule of the church is the same given by the Lord (1 Cor. 8. 6). Also, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13. 34). Do we mind those rules and endeavour to walk according to them? If we habitually neglect the new commandment, are untender to our brethren, entertain suspicions, look on our own things and not on the things of our fellow members, the great Head of the church, jealous for her, withdraws: "My Beloved had withdrawn Himself and was gone."

If this is our sad case we are in a spiritual condition represented in the Lamentations of Jeremiah. We are carried away into vanity, wrong ways, and strange, unspiritual, formal, dead worship. And the faithful and true Witness may threaten to remove our candlestick. I have not, for a long time, doubted that the Lord has gone away from us as to any powerful manifestations of His power and glory. But blessed be His name, He has reserved to Himself a remnant, a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and these shall walk with Him in white.

There is another word in the text to which I would draw your attention. "And turn again to the Lord." "Let us search and try our ways," a solemn business, a heart-breaking business when undertaken in the fear of God by the power of the Holy Ghost; a shaming business; you will be ashamed of yourself. I speak to some here who in heart are ashamed, and who though their faces may be dry, their spirits weep before God, and they are enabled by grace to confess their sins. The scripture then is on their side, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Again it is written, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28. 13).

"And turn again to the Lord." What, turn to Him whom you have vexed, against whom you have rebelled, to Him who now fights against you perhaps in your consciences, telling you of your sinfulness and of your backslidings; turn to Him whose justice you have disregarded, whose Word you have contemned, whose ways you have forsaken, to whose honour you have been indifferent; turn to Him? Yes, this is the gospel: good news. Listen to it, dear friends, as Hosea was inspired to speak of it: "O Israel, thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." You say, "Yes, Lord, I have." What then? "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips." Was ever grace like this? Could human or angelic imagination rise to this? No, God gives the word. He dictates the word. He reveals it to a sinner convinced of his backsliding, a minister reproved by the scripture, deacons convinced, confused by knowing that they have done what is not right, to poor churches He may say, "Take with you words." O angel of such a church, go to the Lord, confess your sins, do the first works; "Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place."

"Turn to the Lord." Is there a broken covenant? Turn to the covenant of grace which the Lord will not break, to the riches of grace, to the gift of love – Jesus Christ. Turn to that blessed One in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," by whom sin was ended, by whom reconciliation was made and everlasting righteousness

brought in. Turn to Him who says, "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity, repent and do the first works," and when you by the Holy Ghost turn to the Lord in that gracious way what do you say? One of the first and most insistent words you will be uttering is this, "Guilty, I am guilty," and you will feel that guiltiness under the gospel is worse to your conscience than guiltiness in unregeneracy. When you were dead in sin you did things ignorantly in unbelief, but since you have been quickened and taught of God and led by Him, what will you say? "That promise I disregarded, that precept I broke, that check in my conscience, as I hope by the Spirit, I disregarded." These convictions are very bitter, but they are God's way of restoring us. "Turn to the Lord." With Him is plenteous redemption; forgiveness that He may be feared. "With the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

Let us look a little at this turning. It is a great thing to turn. God never turns; He is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever; He never turns. He changes His dealings; He never changes His mind. "He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?" When a backsliding child of God turns, there are two things in it particularly to be noticed; first, you turn away from your backslidings. Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy. Perhaps you have said at times, "Lord, I do turn from them, I want to forsake them, I do not want to hold them, I would not nourish them, but Thou knowest I am weak and carnal," and in heart, in sincerity, there is in you really a turning away from known sin. That lust which you nourished, how you hate it; that pride in which you walked, how you loathe it; that rebellion you indulged, how you turn away from it with disgust against yourself, and that self-sufficiency.

O I could name many things out of my own heart! You know them, who are exercised; you turn from them as a man turns from a pestilence, as he would flee from a serpent, as he would get away as far as possible from a devil. He turns from himself, from his evil ways, ways which were not good in the sight of God; now they are evil in his own sight. Do I speak to any pastors? Do I speak to any deacons? Do I speak to representatives of churches? Are we hoping that God will lead us to this turning? You will never turn to God until by His grace you turn from yourself. William Gadsby has a petition in our hymnbook, "Out of self to Jesus lead," and you will find if the Lord is about to revive you, it will be by the beginning in your soul of this turning away from sin, from self.

In the next place, turning to God is the motion of faith; and that is to the Lord Jesus in whom is grace; grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. It is turning to the High Priest of our profession. A backslider does not think much of this Priest. He may name Him, of course; he may talk about Him in a light way, but O that is vastly different from the look of faith to this High Priest, when the sinner says,

"Lord, I have nothing to say about myself but guilty, polluted, wretched, abominable"; but faith says,

"Jesus, let Thy pitying eye
Call back a wandering sheep;
False to Thee, like Peter, I
Would fain, like Peter, weep."

Does this meet any of you? The look of faith to Christ in secret, walking about, engaged in business, lying on your bed, sitting at your table. The look of faith is cast on that blessed Saviour of sinners. You have not treated Him kindly, and I know one of the bitterest pangs of grief you can ever feel when you are turning again to Him is this, that you treated so basely that never-failing Friend, that blessed God of grace, that Prince of life, that High Priest of your profession.

I could enlarge here. It is an exquisite pain in the conscience when there is a real turning from self, from sin, to Jesus; and that may be a great word to one thus turning that was spoken to Joseph respecting the birth of that Saviour now nigh at hand: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins," and your faith looks to Him. What a Person to look on: Almighty God, the eternal Son of God incarnate, full of grace and truth. Faith will sometimes stretch out herself to Him, the Holy Ghost leading, you will stretch yourself out to Him and place a bad case before Him, confess innumerable transgressions and provocations, yet look to His atonement. Yea, and when you say, "I have not a word to say about myself but condemnation," you may say, "Pray Thou for me, put a word in for me, Thou adorable, ever-prevalent High Priest, Jesus Christ."

His priesthood is divine, marvellous, prevalent. A priest is one between parties, between parties who have a difference, and there is this Priest between them and almighty God, just and holy. You who know God, know that a sinner may not in his own person and name approach Jehovah: justice prevents it, holiness forbids it. Now the High Priest meets the case. "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

Therefore, says the Holy Spirit by Paul, "Let us come boldly." But that word "boldly" may stagger us sometimes. What, come boldly to Him we have offended? Boldly to Him we have provoked to be our enemy, to fight against us in His Word and our consciences? Yes, *faith stands on another ground*, is of another nature; faith has to do with divine things in Christ, particularly that that I am speaking about, His high-priestly office. He was a High Priest on the cross. On the cross He offered Himself without spot to God. O what a work He accomplished on the cross; what a heaven-filling word was that word, "It is finished!"

What a conscience-pacifying word is that word when spoken by the Spirit, "It is finished!" Finished your transgressions, finished your backslidings, so that God with whom is forgiveness that He may be feared, and plenteous redemption, says, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

"Turn again to the Lord" in *His glorious gospel*, a gospel which has in it a perfect righteousness. I have loved that word of Hart's,

"Righteousness to full perfection
Must be brought, lacking nought,
Fearless of rejection."

I have said to my friends at home more than once, "You must be perfect before you die or you will never go to heaven." How can that be? says one who is a sinner. In the Person and righteousness of Christ. "Accepted in the Beloved," standing perfect in Him. The gospel is full of promises which are "in Him Yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." That is a great word and a beautiful word, "Unto the glory of God by us." How can that be? says a despondent, weak, failing creature, yet a child of God. When the promise in any measure is fulfilled in you that is to the glory of God in you.

Turn again *to the precepts*. If you claim promises and love them you will not turn away from the precepts. I have heard men say the precept is as dear as the promise to a child of God. That may be true in experience as it is in the Scripture, for both are alike inspired and full of love and wisdom, but it is great faith and love that says the latter is as precious as the former. Precept? This, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." In the Ephesians the apostle has the same word with this little variation, "making melody in your heart to the Lord."

Another precept is, "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Pastors are to walk worthy of that vocation, feeding the flock, ruling the church. The pastor is the head of the church over which he presides. God has put him there. He is to take heed to the flock, the church of God, which Christ purchased with His own blood. Deacons are to walk according to precepts, not to lord it over God's heritage any more than a pastor, and members are to "be kindly affectioned one to another," "forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"; "receive ye one another, as Christ also received us"; receive weak ones not to doubtful disputations, leave wars of words and endless genealogies alone and seek edification. Contend only for the faith once delivered to the saints. Every joint in the spiritual body is to minister to his neighbour joint, so the apostle teaches in the Ephesians.

“The whole body,” he says, “is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth.”

Again he says to some, “Ye all are partakers of my grace.” How could they be? By the fruit of it; and what should a joint in the body say to his neighbour joint? One says, “The Lord has visited me, and blessed me, given me a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and I wish I might have communion with you;” and if the neighbour joint says, “I have had some token for good,” these two administer grace, each helps the other. “Turn again to the Lord.”

Turn again to Him next *with respect to the future*. What? “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.” Past delinquencies, backslidings, will make you afraid of presuming or leaning on your own arm. Lord, you say with Peter, the past time of my life does suffice me to have wrought the will of the Gentiles; now enable me to depend on Thyself. Enable me to walk in that holy scripture, “Trust in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Keep me. “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.” “Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.” Is that thy case?

Does a poor, trembling pastor go in secret and say, “I am carnally minded, I have not cared for the flock as I ought to have done. I have not walked in that scripture, ‘Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth’”? Does he pray, I cannot promise to behave better, but I would depend on Thy power, and Thy grace, and Thy love, and seek Thy teaching? Thus turn again to the Lord, O deacons. Turn again to the Lord, O churches. We are meeting again and again in twos and threes. Bless God that He has said He will be with them when they meet. Let us turn to Him as a little body of separate people.

Let us turn again to Him *with respect to doctrine*. I have quoted in this pulpit, and often at home, Luther’s word; it is a great aphorism, a wise saying, “Doctrine is heaven.” I repeat it; everything that we need is contained in the doctrine of Christ. I have heard ministers say, “We do not want doctrine; we want experience.” I say good experience can come only from good doctrine, opened, explained and applied by the Holy Ghost.

Turn again *to the Holy Scripture*; the blessed, infallible Word of the living God. Once you turned to it, then you left it. Then says He, “Turn again, ‘Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.’” Then as a sweet consequence: satisfying when our consciences feel the fulfilment of it, we praise the Lord, we “render the calves of our lips,” the very best that we have we express in thankful praises, in humble gratitude, in spiritual worship.

I may not have pleased many of you. I have much to grieve over about myself. May this be a great, a speaking word to and in us, "Let us search and try our ways"; search into the reasons of our present state; try our ways by the holy standard, the heavenly, blessed, infallible Scriptures, and "turn again to the Lord."

This is my last sermon to our churches as the Editor of the *Gospel Standard*. My last number will be in June, and I then retire from the position I have held for many years. I retire not without a pang, yet old age with its attendant infirmities compels me to take this step. I am no longer able for the work, no longer able to carry the responsibility, but I shall not, I hope, retire from concern for my brethren, concern for the churches of God. I trust I shall not be allowed to retire from a desire that the glory of God may again come to us, that He may revive His work in our midst, in the midst of wrath, which we deserve, that He may remember mercy.

One request I have to make of you, namely this, that you may try, the Lord helping you, to remember me in your prayers. I do not expect naturally to remain long in this life, and often of late I have asked the Lord to cut the days short and take me home. I am old, and when one has attained to more than 87 years, as I have, one cannot expect to be long in this life. God grant us grace to pray one for another. May He forgive what has been amiss in this service. Amen.

QUESTIONS WE SHOULD NOT ASK

A final extract from Ralph Erskine on Isaiah 45. 11

1. We are not to ask such a question as that: "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?" (Psa. 73. 11). Indeed, whenever you indulge yourselves in secret sins which you would not have the world to see, the language of your heart is, How does God know? But, He that made the eyes, shall He not see? He that gives man knowledge, shall He not know? Yea, His understanding is infinite. The Lord is the God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. He searcheth Jerusalem as with a lighted candle. Do not question His omniscieny, for as He sees in secret to reward openly them that fear Him, so He sees in secret to punish openly them that fear Him not.

2. We are not to ask Him such a question as that: "Who shall ascend to heaven to bring down Christ? or, who shall descend into the depths to bring up Christ?" (Rom. 10. 6, 7). We are discharged to say it in our hearts; and yet the heart is ready to say it when we are hearing the Word, and hearing Christ preached in it: O He is far away; He is in heaven; there is no winning to Him. Nay, but we are not to say so; for

He is nigh when His Word is nigh. "He is in this Word of faith which we preach." Now this Word, says the Holy Ghost, is even in our mouths, and in our hearts. The Word is in our mouths, and when we find it there we should eat it. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them" (Jer. 15. 16). And when the Word is in your mouth, Christ is there, and you should feed upon Him in the Word as well as in the sacrament. And as the Word is in your mouth, so it is in your heart that you may embrace Him. But,

3. We are not to ask such a question as that: "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Can He give us bread to eat? Can He provide flesh for His people?" (Psa. 78. 19). This is the question of unbelief, Can God provide supply for my temporal or spiritual necessities? Can He pardon such sins as mine? Can He subdue such corruptions as mine? Can He supply such wants as mine? "How can these things be?" O blasphemous unbelief! What cannot a God of infinite power do? This infidelity hath a mouth full of blasphemy. What answer gave God to this question to Israel? It is said, "The Lord heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel; because they believed not in God, and trusted not in His salvation."

4. We are not to ask such a question as that: "Wherefore have we fasted, and Thou hast not seen? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge?" (Isa. 58. 3). This is the language of the hypocrite and legalist, who hath an over-rating thought of all his duties: "Wherefore have we fasted, and Thou hast not seen? Wherefore have we prayed, and Thou hast not heard?" They challenge God of injustice, for not giving them what they think they merit. "I thank God," said the Pharisee, "that I am not as other men, no adulterer, no murderer, nor like this publican; I fast twice a week, I give alms of all that I possess." This was no prayer, but a proud boasting of what he had done for God, and what obligations he laid upon heaven. A poor believer is of another spirit; let him do never so much, he sees all his righteousness to be rotten rags, a menstruous cloth; my tears need to be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Again,

5. It is not safe to ask such a question as that: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" (John 21. 21). Some that are attached to a respect of persons in order to follow them may be ready to say, What will this man or that man do? What course will this minister or that minister take? What side will this or that man turn to, when debatable things cast up? But such a question is justly answered with another, such as Christ put to Peter in that place: "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." Take you the plain road of duty, without troubling yourself with what this or that man will do. Blessed are they that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Follow none but as they follow Christ.

6. We are not to ask Him such a question as that: "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet. 3. 4). This is the language of the graceless and profane, who would wish with all their hearts that Christ would never come again, and put the evil day far from them that they may take leave to indulge themselves in all manner of sin because sentence against evil works is not speedily executed. But know that Christ will come to judgment as certainly as if you just now beheld Him. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

7. We are not to ask such a question as that: "Who will shew us any good?" though there be many that say so (Psa. 4. 6). This is the question of the covetous worldling, and which Christ cautions His disciples against: "Say not, What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? Be careful for nothing; but cast all your care upon Him, who careth for you." But if you will fill your hearts with anxious cares and covetous questions to that purpose, "Who will shew us any good?" then see what answer you will make to that question that Christ asks you: "What shall a man profit, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

8. We are not to ask such a question as that: "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God?" (Matt. 8. 29). This is the language of the devil; and yet such devilish hearts are among us that say the same thing. Some say it more closely and hiddenly under the shadow of humility: What have I to do with Christ, that am so unworthy of Him? What have I to do with His blood, His righteousness and merit, His Spirit, His promise, His grace, His fulness? Is it for the like of me? Have I any concern or interest therein? Yes, you have to do with all these, and you are called to make use of them, unless you will rank yourselves with the devils to whom they were never preached.

Again, some say it more grossly and profanely: What have we to do with Christ? What have we to do with His ordinances? What have we to do with His sacraments? What have we to do with His Sabbaths? What have we to do with so many sermons? We are wearied to the heart with them, and we care not a fig for these things. "What a weariness is it?" "Take a carnal man," says one, "tie him to a post, and you may kill him with praying and preaching." We are not so foolish as to trouble ourselves about these things. What have we to do with them? Lord, pity such creatures, for they are as like the devil as they can look. "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God?"

There is no reason to be given for mercy but mercy.

Ralph Venning

THOUGHTS ON HEBREWS CHAPTER 6

From J.C. Philpot's "Answers to Enquiries"

QUESTION

Will you kindly give a few thoughts on the three first verses of the 6th chapter to the Hebrews?

ANSWER

The object of the apostle in these verses is to show that there is not to be a continual laying down of elementary principles in the ministry of the servants of God, but that there is a going on to a riper and fuller statement of divine truth. By the "principles of the doctrine of Christ" he means the ABC of Christianity – the first lessons which the gospel teaches. These he severally enumerates.

1. *Repentance from dead works*, which is the very foundation of the work of grace in the soul; for if there be no repentance, there certainly is no grace, and works of all kinds, good and bad, as seen in the light of the Spirit, are "dead works," because performed by a dead sinner, and as such are to be repented of as an abomination before God. But if a soul has been blessed with "repentance from dead works," it does not want that doctrine only or always preached, but wants to hear something about the gospel, the Person and work of Christ and the experience of believers.

2. *"Faith towards God."* This also is an elementary doctrine. We believe in God before we believe in Jesus Christ, as the Lord said to His disciples, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Faith in the law precedes faith in the gospel; we believe in God as a Judge before we believe in Christ as a Saviour. The doctrine, therefore, of "faith in God" is an elementary principle – milk for a babe, but not meat for a man.

3. *"Of the doctrine of baptisms."* This is a difficult expression, and we cannot speak very clearly and decidedly upon it, but we think the apostle is speaking here of Christian baptism and not, as the word might be rendered, "washings." For most certainly washings of the person or things are no part of Christian truth, and can have no place beside faith, repentance, resurrection and judgment. But baptism as an initiatory ordinance is clearly one of the elements of the doctrine of Christ, and one both preached and practised by the apostles, and attended to by the early converts.

But why he uses the plural "baptisms" for the singular "baptism" we cannot explain, unless he means the continual recurrence of them, as we might say, "There have been many baptisms lately at such or such a place." So he might say, "The doctrine of baptisms," not as if there were different kinds of baptisms, for we are expressly told that there is but "one baptism" (Eph. 4. 5), but meaning thereby the doctrine taught and

inculcated by the numerous baptisms which were continually taking place – viz., of the sufferings of Christ and of our being baptized into His death and resurrection.

4. “*The laying on of hands*” was practised in those days by the apostles (Acts 8. 17) as an emblem and a means of communicating the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

5. *The resurrection of the dead and of eternal punishment.* These two we put together, it not being necessary to explain them separately. That there would be a general resurrection of the just and the unjust, and an eternal judgment whereby the state of both would be ratified and fixed for all eternity, were both doctrines preached as a part of that elementary instruction laid before the first converts, and lie at the foundation of our most holy faith.

But as one is not to be always laying the foundation of a house, but go on to rear up the walls and lay on the roof, so the apostle expresses his desire and intention to leave ever laying these foundation principles and “going on to perfection,” that is, advance to set before them the truth in a riper and more matured form, such as the Person of Christ, His blood and righteousness, and such blessed truths as we find in all his epistles.

A LIFE OF OBEDIENCE

By Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

Weak saints mind their wages and blessings more than their work. Their wages, their blessings, are joy, peace, comfort, assurance, etc.; and their work is waiting on God, believing in God, walking with God, acting for God, etc. Now weak saints’ minds are more carried out, and taken up about their *wages*, about their blessings than they are about their *work*, as experience doth abundantly evidence. Ah, Christians, if you do not mind your wages more than your work, what means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen? (1 Sam. 15. 14). What mean those earnest and vehement cryings out and wrestlings for joy, peace, comfort and assurance, when the great work of believing, of waiting, and of walking with God is so much neglected and disregarded?

But now strong saints are more mindful of their *work* than they are of their *wages*. Lord, saith a strong saint, do but uphold me in a way of believing, in a way of working, in a way of holy walking, etc., and it shall be enough, though I should never have assurance, comfort, peace, joy till my dying day. If Thou wilt carry me forth so as Thou mayest have honour, though I have no comfort, so Thou mayest have glory, though I have no peace, I will bless Thee (Rom. 4. 18-20). I know, says such a soul, though a life of comfort be most pleasing to me, yet a life of

believing, abstracted from comfort, is most honourable to Thee, and therefore I will be silent before Thee. Lord, do but help me in my work, and take Thine own time to give me my wages, to give me comfort, joy, peace, assurance.

They are none of the best servants that mind their wages more than their work, nor they are none of the best Christians that mind their comforts and their incomes more than that homage and duty that they owe to God.

THE LORD'S EYES UPON HIS PEOPLE

*Brief notes of sermons preached by Mr. F. Foster
at Zoar Chapel, Norwich, on July 4th, 1962*

Afternoon

Text: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry" (Psa. 34. 15).

How do these people in the text come to be righteous? God says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "There is none righteous, no, not one." Therefore they must derive righteousness. From whom? The Lord Jesus Christ.

"In Him the Father never saw
The least transgression of His law."

Everyone joined to Him has His righteousness. This is how these people come under the watchful care of God.

But the question is: "Have I union, with the church's living Head?" How is this union experienced? In a threefold way.

1. In wholehearted desires, thus: "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee," or, "Give me Christ, or else I die." If He becomes the Object of our first desire, we shall be all out after Him; we shall want His presence.

2. It will be an affectionate union, and although there will be defects and weaknesses in our love, it will persist. If God sheds abroad His love in the heart it will live against everything.

3. It is a union of confidence. "He only is my salvation." Everything He has is theirs. He Himself is theirs. The cause of love is in Himself, which makes it limitless and unchangeable. Every poor sinner in union with Christ has Him as his bosom Partner, and is rooted in Him, deriving their comeliness and fitness from Him. These are the righteous of the text.

Upon such are the eyes of the Lord with unremitting watchfulness. On the secret seeker quickened by divine grace. Holy Ghost religion begins, and is mostly carried on, in secret, but always has an open result. If we have been in the world, we must come out, or perhaps have to be the odd one out in the family. We begin to pray and take God's Word about with us, perhaps take it to bed and read it when no-one else sees.

The Lord's eye is upon those righteous ones when they are in trouble. He may tarry as He did with Mary and Martha, but His eye was upon them all the while.

Evening

Text: "Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy" (Psa. 33. 18).

Here are some other characteristics of the righteous, those that fear Him. There are two kinds of fear. One is a slavish, loveless, legal fear; the other is gospel fear which proceeds from the gospel covenant. Those who possess this want God's presence, and pray with the psalmist, "Leave me not, neither forsake me." It is the rule of love. And the effect is to make them cleave and follow and serve in loving fear, not in legal, slavish fear. The only grief gospel fear feels is, "I cannot serve Thee as I would."

"Not by the terrors of a slave
Do they perform His will;
But with the noblest powers they have,
His sweet commands fulfil."

And "that hope in His mercy." Mercy essentially is something undeserved, and we can only receive it by God's good pleasure, not for our worth. Mercy is very precious to poor sinners because it bestows blessings on the undeserving. It is a living hope of which Christ is the life.

The text is prefigured with "Behold," something noteworthy of being considered and looked at. The eyes of the Lord are upon those who hope in His mercy and who lovingly fear Him. When the prodigal returned, we read that when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him. He did not see his father; he was too bowed down with sorrow and shame. But the father waits to be gracious. He did not reprove him; he ran to meet him and kissed him. We can be sure he could not do enough for this wonderful father who had forgiven and blessed him.

His eye is upon the backsliding children. He lets them go to a far country sometimes, but they have to come back to their Father. When the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, there was loving reproof in it and forgiveness. This broke Peter's heart to pieces. It brought self-loathing and renunciation, mixed with gratitude and love, to think his dear Lord

should still love him. Love flowed like a flood as Peter wept bitterly. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." What a mercy to be in love's hands! It was because Peter was His beloved son that the Lord gave him that loving look, that forgiving look.

His eye is upon His children in fiery trials and hot tribulations. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." The God of your hopes and mercies is in control of the refining and the purifying, the pruning and purging that is necessary. He always prunes at the right time although we do not always think so. Indeed, we never feel it is the right time for suffering. But it is to teach us to hug the cross, and all His chastisements are needful. "Most gladly," not reluctantly, said Paul, but "gladly will I glory in my infirmity."

"To His church, His joy, His treasure,
Every trial works for good."

All His dealings are in love, and He will never forsake the work of His own hands.

And lastly, His eye is upon them in the hour and article of death. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." He will be there, and what better attendant can we have? Death is birth, glory birth to a child of God, and all birth is preceded by travail as are the dying pangs of a child of God. In glory His eyes will never be off them. Amen.

THE SPIRITUAL SPRINGTIME

"For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song of Solomon 2. 11-13).

The great longing of the people of God in this dark and evil day is for a spiritual springtime both in the churches and in their own souls. "Wilt Thou not revive us again in the midst of the years that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" Three times in one week recently we heard Newton's beautiful hymn given out: "Lord, afford a spring to me."

In most beautiful language does the Word of God describe the coming of this springtime. Even as a piece of beautiful literature there is little to equal it. But we would remind our readers that though The Song of Solomon is written in poetical, allegorical language, there is nothing fanciful or unsubstantial about it. It is dealing with vital, eternal realities.

Only living creatures are affected by the passing seasons. The garden bench, the stone statue, the path know no difference. But what a difference where there are living plants! In winter, bare soil; in the springtime, something beginning to spring up. As in nature, so in grace. What a mercy that winter does not destroy the root! Joseph Hart writes,

“The rooted stock shall still remain;
Leaves may languish, fruit decrease,
But more shall grow again.”

How vital to have a religion with good roots!

Only Almighty God can bring this spiritual spring. In nature, all men’s inventions cannot bring an end to the cold, dark winter, or hasten on the warmer days of spring. We believe this is the meaning of the scripture in the Book of Job: “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades? or loose the bands of Orion?” Orion (or The Bear) is a group of stars seen in winter; the Pleiades a group that does not appear till spring. We cannot hasten the passing of the one or the coming of the other.

In the Song of Solomon it is the coming in love and mercy of the heavenly Bridegroom to His waiting bride that ushers in the spring. At the beginning of the chapter she is graciously comforted with His presence and His love. She sits down under His shadow with great delight (verse 3); He brings her into the banqueting house, and His banner over her is love (verse 4). But later He has withdrawn. There are mountains in between.

It is these big, dark mountains that are our concern: the mountains that come between; the mountains of sin and unbelief; and at times the mountains of sorrow and affliction. We want the Lord in mercy to come right where we are, to do everything for us (like the good Samaritan). “Behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.” It is an easy thing for Him to surmount the highest mountain. (Thus the comparison to the “roe or young hart,” which can climb where no human ever can and can leap over the widest gulfs.) The longing desire and cry of every living soul is, “O when wilt Thou come unto me?”

Unworthy, sinful, she waits for His appearance.

“We humbly for Thy coming wait,
Seeking to know Thee as Thou art;
We’d bow as sinners at Thy feet,
To bid Thee welcome to our heart.”

She does not wait in vain. At last He comes – standing behind the wall, looking forth at the windows, showing *Himself* through the lattice.

And that is what she longs for: *Himself*. The old divines used to speak of “the lattice of God’s Word and ordinances.” (In Solomon’s day there were not windows of glass, but criss-cross trellis work to keep out the wind and rain.) She has just a glimpse.

This is the only remedy. This is our prayerful desire for ourselves and for the church of God. It was the Saviour’s coming which ushered in the springtime (verses 11-13).

Many of God’s people at times find difficulty in understanding the meaning of the beautiful imagery of Solomon’s Song. We feel that the details should not in every case be pressed too closely. We would compare it to visitors entering a magnificent cathedral. Some can only see an inscription on the wall, or a tombstone at their feet; others are overwhelmed by the magnificence of the architecture.

Here we have the spiritual spring. But whatever the details may mean, we have *warmth* where everything was icy before. “Warm our cold hearts with heavenly heat,” is often the prayer of God’s people.

Here is *fruitfulness* where before everything was barren. “The flowers appear on the earth.” Christ’s presence and love, made known by the Holy Spirit, is the secret of this fruitfulness and a living union is known.

“Loving Bridegroom!
'Tis Thyself we want to know.”

But above all here is *life* instead of seeming death. The springtime is a time of resurrection as the buds begin to appear and there are green shoots here and there. We think of the glorious resurrection of the Son of God, He who is the Resurrection and the Life. We are also reminded of “the power of His resurrection,” and how it can be known and experienced. “Life, where all seemed death before.”

Yet we do not feel it wrong to consider some of the details.

“The time of the singing of birds is come.” Singing in Scripture is always connected with redemption. The first song, the song of Moses and Miriam on the banks of the Red Sea, the song of redemption; the last, the song of the redeemed in heaven: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.”

We remember years ago a dear, godly old lady at Liverpool. When abundantly blessed in her soul when young, she could not get quickly enough to see the old deacon. She kept asking the tram conductor, “Are we nearly there?” He said, “You must be going somewhere important!” She always said, “The time of the singing of birds had come.”

“The voice of the turtle [that is, the turtle dove] is heard in our land.” It was not heard in winter time. There was silence. But now in the church of God there are voices heard. We suppose the voice of a

turtle dove is not very pleasant or melodious; rather, mournful. When the springtime comes, there are new-born souls sighing for mercy: "God be merciful to me a sinner." But the heavenly Bridegroom replies: "Let Me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice."

"The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell." Grace is always tender; the love of Christ is tender; the fear of God is tender – whether we consider these "tender grapes" as new converts or as the fruits of the Spirit in the hearts of believers. So there is that exercise: "Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth" (chapter 7, verse 12).

Hear the whole conclusion: "Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away." Beautifully does John Berridge give faith's response:

"If Jesus kindly say,
And with a whispering word,
'Rise up, My love, and come away,'
I haste to meet my Lord."

These are real, blessed things. These we long and pray for. May the Lord in the riches of His mercy grant them to us.

We feel we can do no better than close with John Newton's prayer for the coming of this springtime.

"Lord, afford a spring to me!
Let me feel like what I see;
Ah! my winter has been long,
Chilled my hopes, and stopped my song!
Winter threatened to destroy
Faith, and love, and every joy;
If Thy life was in the root,
Still I could not yield Thee fruit.

"Speak, and by Thy gracious voice
Make my drooping soul rejoice;
O beloved Saviour, haste,
Tell me all the storms are past:
On Thy garden deign to smile,
Raise the plants, enrich the soil;
Soon Thy presence will restore
Life, to what seemed dead before."

Faith is a right pilgrim-grace; it travels with us to heaven, and when it sees us safe got within our Father's doors, it takes leave of us.

William Gurnall

THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM

By Enoch Feazey (1834-1906), written in 1885.

Mr. Feazey was later Editor of the Gospel Standard.

“Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Sam. 2. 30).

The people of God are agreed upon the fundamental points of our most holy faith; but upon the subject of believers’ baptism many of them differ. I have met with persons of whom I hope well who have spoken slightly of this ordinance and have treated the divine command of the adorable Redeemer as a thing of nought. It is no uncommon thing to hear persons say, “O I have never seen baptism, nor do I trouble myself about it.” By so doing they display their ignorance, and show that they do not understand the mind of the Spirit on the subject.

My chief aim and desire in thus writing is to encourage the weaklings in faith who are seeking to walk in the ordinances of God’s house. I have noticed how some persons try to shelter themselves under the mantle of those good men and highly-favoured servants of God, Huntington, Chamberlain, Irons, and others who were not Baptists. But would it not be far better to refer to the Word of God and search out what are the commands of the gracious Redeemer Himself? If the people of God were to read His Word more, and were led more earnestly by prayer and supplication to know the mind of the Spirit, there would not be such a desire manifested by some to break down the barriers and set up what is called open communion. Baptism and the Lord’s supper were most clearly given to the church of God by Christ Himself, and these ordinances were dear and sacred to God’s only-begotten Son, and are not to be spoken lightly of.

When it pleased God in His love and mercy to deliver my poor, sin-dyed soul from the power of evil and the curse of a broken law, by revealing His dear Son Jesus Christ to my heart as my Law-fulfiller, merciful High Priest and adorable Saviour and Redeemer, I was, as it were, swallowed up in this all-glorious Person. I talked to Him, and talked of Him, and felt myself to be a monument of His rich mercy and grace. I was enabled to claim Him as my Portion for ever, for He had so mercifully put away my sins by the sacrifice of Himself, and I felt Him to be the altogether lovely and the very Chiefest among ten thousand. For several months I lived in His embrace and talked of His goodness, and sang aloud of His grace and mercy; nor have I forgotten those refreshing tokens of His love to my soul to this day. While thus favoured to sit at His dear feet, listen to His sweet voice and feed upon His rich bounties, I was enabled to see such beauty in His divine Person that I was amazingly surprised that He should dwell with such a worm as I.

In those days my chief reading was in the New Testament, tracing out the life of the Redeemer from the manger to the cross of Calvary. The Word of God and the throne of grace were to me very sacred, and I felt I could not live without them. At this time I knew but little of the mind of the Spirit, and stood in great need of an Interpreter, one that could instruct me in the way that I should go. For this divine help I daily cried unto God, who heard me out of His holy hill, and directed me in numbers of instances to various parts of His Word, so that I am bound to say that the Lord alone was my Helper. I embraced every opportunity to read its blessed contents.

Once in particular I was struck with the solemn command the Lord Jesus gave to His disciples [concerning baptism], as recorded in Mark 16. 15, 16; but I needed the anointings of the Holy Ghost to show me the meaning of it. The Spirit of God was pleased to stir up my mind to meditation and prayer, and in this way I was led to consider the important subject of baptism. I felt such a springing up of divine love to the gracious Redeemer and to the commands He gave that I could have done anything for Him in return for the love and compassion He had shown in rescuing my poor, polluted soul from the confines of hell. In my simplicity I asked the Lord to show me what baptism meant.

Soon after this I was reading the remarkable account of Philip and the eunuch (Acts 8), when my mind became somewhat enlightened, and I was led to see that it was a being buried with Christ in baptism. I felt I could gladly have been baptized in the adorable name of the Holy Trinity, and like the eunuch, I could say, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" for in my heart I felt that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Some time after this I made the acquaintance of some friends who had sat under the late Mr. Irons [Joseph Irons of Camberwell], and I hoped they might instruct me in the deep things of God. But I had not known them long before they introduced the subject of baptism, and asked me if I had been baptized? I answered, "No." I went with them a few times to hear their minister, but though he preached the truth, my soul was not fed under his ministry. I had been accustomed to hear Tiptaft, Philpot, Godwin and others, whose preaching ransacked every corner and crevice of my heart, and I looked upon them as so many wise builders, who were able to build up my soul in the blessed and experimental truths of the gospel.

I now attended at Gower Street and sometimes at Zoar [London chapels]. One of my friends, above named, attacked me upon the subject of baptism, and went so far as to say that it was a mere shadow and meant nothing. He said that it was the baptism of the Holy Ghost that is so essential to know and experience, and that water baptism was not worth troubling about. He strongly advised me to think no more about

it, but to think more of the baptism of the Spirit, and lent me a book to read, written by his late pastor, Mr. Irons. I soon found in reading it Mr. I. was not a Baptist. This book, instead of instructing my mind, greatly confused it, and I resolved to try and think nothing more about water baptism.

One evening I read the words, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10. 47). I said to myself, "Water baptism is right, for God's most holy Word tells me so." I now discovered that I had done wrong in listening to man at all upon this important subject. Having received the Word with fresh light from heaven, and feeling an increase of divine faith in my soul, I began to search the New Testament, and I saw that baptism was an ordinance incumbent upon believers, not for salvation, but to be attended to in obedience to the blessed commands of the dear Redeemer, and as the fruit and effect of divine grace in the soul.

I had a most blessed opening-up of this subject to my mind in reading Matthew chapter 3, where we have an account of the Lord Jesus being baptized by John in Jordan. I was struck with the condescension of the Lord Jesus, and His great humility in coming to be baptized by John. Now see the effect these words had upon John; for we read, "John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" O what heavenly awe must have filled his soul, when no less a Person than the Son of God came to be baptized by him. "Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him."

As I read this account of Christ's baptism, I was lost in holy wonder, and the little word *us* was to me an important word, for I saw how Christ meant Himself and all His people, thus leaving an example that they should follow in the steps of Him who says, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." I saw that the baptism of the Lord Jesus in Jordan was pleasing to God the Father and the Holy Ghost, for, "coming up out of the water" (so He must have gone down) "the heavens were opened unto Him, 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, in whom I am well pleased." If heaven thus honoured the baptism of the Lord Jesus who is the very life of His church, does it not follow that in measure the same glory is at times manifested towards those who are united to Christ, and follow their Lord and Saviour through the watery grave? And thus the Scripture is fulfilled: "Them that honour Me I will honour."

I would say to all who love and fear God, "Be very careful what you say against baptism, for the example and commandment of Christ are against you." We have many instances of God's approbation and smile attending the followers of the Lord the Lamb in this despised ordinance.

The Lord helped me to look to Him alone for direction and instruction, and I felt an inward desire springing up in my heart to follow the dear Lord Jesus. When I was favoured with nearness to Him and liberty at the throne of grace, I asked the Lord to open up a way for me to be baptized, and I particularly asked Him not to permit me to put on Christ publicly in a light, careless and trifling manner, but in a sober and solemn frame of mind. I inwardly felt a willingness to walk humbly before God in those things that are pleasing in His sight, and I felt much solemnity and a kind of holy awe as the Spirit of truth opened up to my soul the spirituality of believers' baptism. If you say it does not matter whether you are baptized or not, are you not implying that the dear Redeemer spoke words to His church and people that had no meaning in them? Does it not follow that if we can ignore and set at nought such a gracious command from the lips of God's dear Son, we may on the same ground ignore and set at nought other commands, precepts and admonitions in God's Word?

I come now to the time when, through grace, I was led to put on Christ publicly. I could not rest until I had opened my mind on the subject to the minister who had been the highly-favoured instrument in the Lord's hands of preaching peace and pardon into my poor, sin-distressed soul, and delivering me from the power of sin and the curse of a broken law. O blessed time, O happy day, O sweet translation out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son! I shall never forget the sweet, peaceful calm that I felt in my breast as I left my home to follow the dear Lamb of God into the watery grave. Yea, to be buried with Him in baptism. Thus I approached the divine ordinance in a thoughtful and peaceful frame of mind, and with a secret desire that I might have the Lord's approbation and smile in my own soul.

I was much impressed during service with what I was about to attend to, and asked the Lord that I might have one more sweet testimony from Him that I was walking in obedience to His holy will. The clerk gave out hymn 428 (Gadsby's Selection) and it came with such power into my very soul that I hardly knew how to keep my seat, especially those two lines:

"Jesus says, 'Let each believer
Be baptized in My name.'"

I thought my poor soul must leap out of the body, and I inwardly said, "Lord, I *will* walk in Thy ways." O what a blessed testimony this was to my soul! What a sweet anointing from the Lord, enabling me to be buried with Him in baptism! Thus the good Lord heard and answered the cry of my soul, and gave me another sweet token of His love, and I went down into the water and was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The ceremony took place in the River Ouse, and there were a great many people to witness the solemn rite.

In the afternoon I sat down to the ordinance of the Lord's supper with His dear saints, and enjoyed the privilege much. If ever I felt that peace of God which passeth all understanding flowing into my heart like a river, I did that night when I laid me down to rest. The heavenly reward that is felt in the soul in keeping God's commands is never known, only as we by His Spirit do those things that are pleasing in His sight. I laid me down to rest upon my bed that memorable night, feeling the love, mercy and peace of God shed abroad in my heart, and gratitude flowing from my very soul to the God of all my mercies.

I soon fell asleep, and awoke about three o'clock in the morning, when these words came with much power and sweetness: "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo, the heavens were opened unto Him." I cannot describe what I felt from these words. I had the answer of a good conscience in what I had attended to, and when I went downstairs in the morning my friends told me that my countenance beamed with the love of God. This blessed visitation lasted many days, and I had nearly a week of feasting in His banqueting house. O what beauty, blessedness and harmony I saw in the Word of God, and the gratitude I felt that it had pleased God to put my poor soul amongst His dear children!

I would say then to those who may be desirous to become members of churches, that the right way into the church below is through water baptism, and the fitness must be from the work of faith and love in the soul. God will honour such in the ordinance and in His house. But to those who contend against it the Scripture is written, "They that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." May the Lord bless this feeble attempt to set forth His truth to the souls of His chosen family, and His name alone shall receive all the praise.

JOSEPH PAINTER: 1843-1926

I was born of godly parents on November 9th, 1843, in the village of Hankerton, Wilts. My father was a carrier and small farmer, and I was the youngest of nine children. My parents taught me that if I lived to be very old, and then died without repentance, I should go to hell and be punished for all my sins. This caused me many thoughts. I used to tremble when I heard the bell for a death, and resolved that I would be good. My dear mother used to take us all to chapel, and tell us if we were not good children, the Lord would know, and be very angry with us. I resolved that I would be good, if I lived to be a man. As I got older I got wicked and hardened; sometimes I swore and told lies, and after I got to bed at night, I used to cry about it, and promise to be better. I remember my sister teaching me two verses, beginning, "There is a

dreadful hell and everlasting chains,” and I feared at times I should die in my sleep and go to hell, for I felt even then I deserved it, as I could not be good.

When I was old enough, my father sent me on Sunday mornings with horse and trap to meet the pastor, Mr. Beard of Malmesbury. He would sometimes talk a little to me on the way. One Sunday I met him, he never spoke until just before getting out. Then he said, “Now Joe, I have been asking the Lord to put thee on the high horse when I am dead, and proclaim, ‘This is the man whom the King delighteth to honour.’” I told my mother, and said, “What did he mean, Mother?” She commenced to cry, and did not tell me. The next day I told my father. He said, “You may know some day, my boy; don’t ask me.” But I said, “Why did mother cry when I told her?” Many years after, I repeated the question. My father then told me that before I was born, he would quiet my mother by saying, “It may be a boy, and grow up to stand up in the name of the Lord, and preach the gospel when you and I are dead.” And she lived to see it come to pass, but she had to wait twenty-eight years before she saw any signs, and thirty-three before it came to pass. Then she would say, “How many times I prayed for that boy, and the Lord did not seem to notice my prayers, for the more I prayed, the further he went into sin.”

When I was about eighteen years old I left home, and lived in the world, and went after the pleasure of it. I became passionately fond of theatres and music halls, and was determined to go my own way. Now and then I felt a little remorse of conscience; then I would go to Gower Street chapel once or twice, but it was to no purpose. I found my nature was sinful, and became a lover of those things that were bad. In the midst of all my wickedness I always had a great respect for God’s people, and at times wished to be like them. I could not endure to hear anyone say anything against them.

After a few years, I returned home, as my father wanted me to manage the business. I went to chapel for a few Sundays, but it was too dull for me, so I took to going to church and learned to play the organ. During this time I became very fond of dancing and theatricals, comic song singing, balls and parties. Every now and then my conscience told me I was wrong, as I was sinning against light and knowledge, but that soon wore off, and all my good resolutions went for nothing, and I went further into sin. But prayer was made for me, with little signs of its being answered. I was as far from God as any poor sinner could go.

My father felt his time would be short on earth, and prayed much for the Lord to raise up someone to take his place. He had always cared for the ministers who came to Hankerton to preach, the dear old pastor having gone the way of all flesh. I remember in my boyhood days those

good old ministers coming, such as Warburton, Kershaw, Tiptaft, Key, Knill and many more. I was mixed up with everything that was God-dishonouring, but went to church on Sundays, and played the organ.

But God has a time for all He does; none can hasten it nor prevent it. One evening my father said to me, "I wish you would come to chapel tonight. We have a good man coming. Come, it won't hurt you." I replied, "Father, I know quite as much when I go into your chapel as when I come out. It is something I cannot understand." He replied, "No, my boy; I could not at one time. The Lord can give you an understanding heart." I said, "I cannot come tonight; I have to go to a rehearsal, but I will walk to the chapel gates with you."

We got to the chapel gate, when a flash of lightning came and a loud clap of thunder, and in a few moments very heavy rain. I ran into the chapel for shelter. My father saw me, and brought me a hymnbook. This annoyed me very much, as the people looked round. Mr. Knill was the preacher. When sermon time came, he said, "I have had some solemn words following me all day; I must read them for a text." He opened to Malachi 3. 18: "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." He commenced a most solemn discourse, pointing out the character that served Him not. He seemed to speak of all my thoughts, desires and practices. He said of one that should answer to this description, "What an awful end when death comes, if grace prevent not!" The cry of my soul was again and again, "What must I do?" I feared I should soon go to hell.

After service I got away quite by myself, and walked about my father's field, afraid to go indoors while my parents were up. I thought they would see what a vile sinner I was, and had been all my life long. I came from the field into the garden. I could not summon up courage to go indoors. I feared I should drop dead and be lost. I fell on my knees on the garden path, and implored the Lord for mercy. I think I slept but little, but I made many promises to God; if He would have mercy on my soul and pardon my sins, I would live a godly and consistent life ever afterwards.

How I got through the next two or three days before Sunday I know not. Had I been free, I believe I should have gone to chapel, but I had the organ to play. But I was not in a fit state to play, so I broke down more than once. After the service, I spoke with the choir. One young man who died in a year or two, said, "Tell me what is the matter with you. Are you going out of your mind?" I replied, "I don't know, but I believe we are all going to hell; we are only God-mockers. The man who preached to us will be drinking tomorrow; he gets drunk and swears, for

I have seen and heard him. This is my last Sunday here. I shall give it up from today. I have never received any pay for what I have done, and I can give it up at any time." My companion said, "Do not do it in a hurry; I have had many thoughts about giving up myself. If you leave, I shall come." I said, "I shall go to the Baptist chapel"; and seven of the choir left with me, and all attended the chapel afterwards; some became members. It caused great consternation among the church people of Hankerton.

My dear father was taken ill, and died after seven weeks' illness. This was the greatest trouble I had ever known. I felt certain he was taken to heaven, and now I began to value his prayers, and the greatest trouble was, he will never pray for me again; and my prayers I felt to be nothing. But I have been going to a throne of grace forty-nine years, sometimes with guilt on my conscience, sometimes heavy, providential troubles, sometimes afflictions, bereavements.

"But have been upheld till now,
Who could hold me up but Thou?"

Well, I lived with my dear mother, and carried on the business. We fetched the ministers from the station and entertained them, until my mother was dead and I was married, and left Hankerton. But I did not know the way of salvation. This I had been praying for for years. I used to be running here and there to anniversaries, and hearing such men as Warburton, Kershaw, Philpot, Vine and many others, but none seemed to show me the way of salvation, and I fancied it must be by something I must do myself. One day we expected Mr. Porter to preach; there was a crowded chapel, and he was late. One of the deacons said, "While we are waiting, we will sing a hymn. I am blind, but I can remember it, to give it out:

'Great God! from Thee there's nought concealed,
Thou see'st my inward frame;
To Thee I always stand revealed
Exactly as I am!

'Since I can hardly, therefore, bear
What in myself I see;
How vile and black must I appear,
Most holy God, to Thee!

'But since my Saviour stands between
In garments dyed in blood,
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God.

'Thus, though a sinner, I am safe;
He pleads before the throne

His life and death on my behalf,
And calls my sins His own.

‘What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine.’”

During the singing of this hymn, the scales dropped from my eyes. I could plainly see Jesus in the sinner’s place, and I wanted to sing,

“This is the way I long have sought,
And mourned because I found it not.”
(*To be concluded*)

Joseph Painter used to cycle miles, we believe on a tricycle, to fulfil his preaching engagements. The old people at Coventry remembered how, when young, they used to cycle out to meet him on the Saturday as he cycled toward Coventry.

Mr. Painter’s dying words were: “I want to see Jesus. I want to go to heaven.” This was his theme for days before his death – speaking of seeing Jesus. He had been a preacher for about forty years.

BOOK REVIEWS

Thirty Meditations for Pilgrims; booklet; 53 pages, price £1.50; published by The Sovereign Grace Union, and obtainable from 43 Warwick Road, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 8PQ.

We congratulate The Sovereign Grace Union on publishing this profitable booklet. It is something like a book of daily readings, yet different – containing for each day a text, one or two extracts from the old divines, a hymn or poem and sometimes a prayer.

There is a topic for each day: for instance, The Goodness of God; When Afflicted, Pray; Love for the Saviour: God’s Gospel Oath; Stand Fast and Fight – thirty altogether with “three possible alternatives” added.

The price is exceedingly reasonable.

A magazine has been commenced in the U.S.A. named *The Christian Gleaner*, which is sent free on request. It is described as “a magazine of spiritual and experimental accounts, letters, articles, occasional sermons, etc., from, some of the dear children of God of prior generations who have entered their heavenly rest, and from some of those yet alive upon the earth.” The outlook would appear to be the same as the *Gospel Standard*.

The present issue contains pieces from Dr. Hawker, Ruth Bryan, Dr. Gill, James Stevens of Carshalton, David Fenner, and some American writers we do not know.

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OBITUARY

Elizabeth Grace Nora Lee, member of the church at Bethel, South Chard, passed away in her sleep at home on April 12th, 2008, aged 77. On going to her room downstairs, early that morning, where latterly, not being able to climb the stairs, she slept alone, I found that her soul had been called home. "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh."

Betty, as she was affectionately known amongst family and friends, was born on December 23rd, 1930, the eldest of three children of the late Mr. L.W. Falkner, minister of the gospel for some sixty years. He was the pastor at Claygate, Surrey, where Betty was born, and later for two separate periods at Cave Adullam, Beeches Road, Blackheath, Birmingham. After a time as an itinerant minister, he was called to the pastorate at Leeds, where he passed away in January 1985 after only a few months in office.

At her birth, the doctor in attendance was in doubt as to whether both mother and baby could be saved. However, through God's mercy, both were brought safely through. Hence the reason for her second name, Grace.

We met when I was staying at Hove, Sussex, for a few days. This proved to be the beginning of some three years of courtship and, in the Lord's plan of things, almost fifty-four years of happy married life. During our courting days, Betty was questioned as to whether she thought I was rather too old for her, there being an age gap of several years between us. But the words, "This is the way, walk ye in it," followed her, as it were, visiting ministers often quoting them in their sermons.

Although my late wife was not the strongest physically, especially in her latter years, she was very strong in other ways, and was often a great help, encouragement and support to me and to our four children. In body throughout her life she "suffered in silence," and seldom spoke of her spiritual concerns and experiences either, but on a few occasions after I was baptized in 1971, she expressed regrets at not having come forward with me at that time. However, the time came when had she not spoken, the very stones would have cried out.

Betty came before the church at South Chard and was baptized, together with our daughter-in-law Elisabeth, by the pastor, Mr. J.C. Woodhouse, on April 23rd, 2005. On the morning of her baptizing she came to me and said that she had sweetly and powerfully had the words, "Called and chosen" spoken to her, and did I know if they were in the Bible, and if so, where? (Rev. 17. 14). This she felt was a seal to the step she was about to take.

At Christmas 2006, Betty was found to have cancer and had a major operation in January 2007, followed up with radiotherapy treatment later on. Towards the end of that year, she became increasingly unwell, and in February 2008 it was found that the cancer had returned and a course of chemotherapy, at intervals of three weeks, was prescribed. Only two sessions were administered before her call home.

Here I leave my own and take up her language as spoken before the church.

"The first thing I would like to say is that I love the Lord. I love His people, and I love His ways. The words that stay with me are, 'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the

wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no.'

"As you realise, I am at the latter end of my life now, and feel I would like to keep His commandments. I would not like to die not having given Him all the praise and glory due to Him. I feel He has been my God for many years now, and brought me through many trying and difficult situations.

"I well remember a very special time in 1974, about two years after my mother passed away. I was in hospital in a lot of pain when for a few moments I felt such a feeling of peace and His love towards me, and felt I could leave all my family completely in His hands. This was a feeling I had never had before or experienced since.

"Many little circumstances I could relate where He has been so gracious and merciful in answering many prayers. While I was in hospital waiting for an operation in 1994, I was sent home for six weeks because my blood pressure was too dangerously high for them to operate. When, after this period, I finally went into hospital to undergo the operation, we were all naturally very concerned. But God was good once again, and we had to return thanks for His goodness towards me."

[We moved to Tatworth to be near members of the family. We left Wiltshire with very mixed feelings, not wishing to leave the ministry of the pastor and the friends at Chippenham, but it seemed the wise thing to do. I now take up Betty's language again.]

"A few months after we came to Chard [Tatworth], Mr. Woodhouse preached from the words, 'How long halt ye between two opinions?' It made me think as to why I was halting so much, when the Lord had done such great things for me in the past.

"When our son-in-law Christopher, was baptized by Mr. Randalls recently [2005], the words included in his text were, 'Where are the nine?' This made me feel so guilty. A few weeks later, another special church meeting was announced and I thought, 'I shall have to go now.'

"Unbeknown to me at that time, I found out that it was for my daughter-in-law Elisabeth to come before the church; therefore we are both here together.

"While attending Chippenham chapel for over ten years, I found great profit for my soul under Mr. Buss's ministry, and often did not want to leave the chapel to go home in case I lost what I had just heard."

At a later date, Betty spoke of the following experiences.

She believed she was made to feel what an awful thing sin is when in her teenage years, and realised the need of a Saviour if she was ever going to reach heaven. There was a feeling that she had been led along very gradually by the different ways and experiences that had come into her life.

One very sweet moment, one Monday morning, was when going up the stairs at our Melksham home, those words dropped in: "I love thee well, My child." And she thought how wonderful it was that she might be His child! This was the morning after having a good day at Chippenham on the Sunday.

A few weeks before Christmas 2004 (a few months prior to her baptizing), when at the kitchen sink, the words, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven

thee," came to her very plainly. This too seemed very wonderful to her, a felt sinner, "who must for ever lie in hell, were not salvation free."

While witnessing the Lord's supper many times, she said the words, "All this was done for you," had meant a lot to her.

In the presence of many sorrowing relations and friends from far and near, the funeral service was held at South Chard Strict Baptist chapel, and was conducted by her pastor, Mr. J.C. Woodhouse, and at her request Mr. G.D. Buss of Chippenham. Her mortal remains were laid to rest by the same two ministers in Tatworth Cemetery on Wednesday, April 23rd, three years almost to the hour after she was baptized.

J.F.L

BE OF GOOD CHEER

(John 16. 33)

To Jesus, the Source of all comfort, I'll fly;
My Hope and my Refuge when troubles are nigh;
Though brimful of sorrow, yet why should I fear?
He smiles, and He whispers, "Peace; be of good cheer!"

How sweet is the promise, how sacred the song,
To sing in deep waters, while wading along!
Though trouble is promised to pilgrims while here,
We'll sing, "He hath conquered; let's be of good cheer!"

A measure of peace and a portion of woe
Is mixed in the cup of God's people below;
But O how it sweetens and lightens our care
When Jesus looks in, and says, "Be of good cheer!"

The peace that I feel at this moment I owe
To Him who hath borne all my sorrows and woe;
And soon all His children shall with Him appear;
He says, to encourage them, "Be of good cheer!"

My soul, still press onward, though tempted and tried;
Though worn out with care, still in Jesus confide;
Thy sighs and thy groans, thy songs and each tear,
Thy Jesus beholds, and says, "Be of good cheer!"

In great tribulation, to hear His sweet voice,
We can amongst all our afflictions rejoice;
Kind Saviour, then let us more frequently hear
Thy whisper that bids us to "be of good cheer."

Elizabeth Goody

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JUNE 2010

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

OUR FATHERS' GOD BE WITH US

*Sermon preached at Clifton Chapel on Friday evening,
April 9th, 2010, on the occasion of the Gospel Standard Society
Annual Meetings. This was also the 175th Anniversary of the
Gospel Standard magazine*

Text: "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers: let Him not leave us, nor forsake us" (1 Kings 8. 57).

This was a wonderful day in Israel. Seldom had God's people known a day like this before. That wonderful temple of Solomon's was now built, and it must have been a magnificent building, when you think of the precious wood that was used and everything garnished with precious stones and the gold and the silver. But Solomon had sufficient grace to know that more was needed than that. It was the Lord's presence. And of course the symbol of it was the ark of the covenant, and so that was the great moment when the ark of the covenant, in all its fulness representing Christ, was there carried into the temple. We are told that the place was so filled with the glory of God that the priests could hardly minister for the glory.

This was a wonderful day. You think of all the sacrifices that were offered, and yet it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could ever put away sin. But I wonder if some of the faithful Israelites had a little glimpse of Calvary, that precious blood that would for sin atone.

Then Solomon poured out his heart in prayer for Israel, and when he had finished, we are told that he stood and blessed all the congregation of Israel. But did you notice, he could not help but begin by blessing Israel's God? "Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto His people Israel." And if we are told that Solomon's prayer was ended, and of course it is the longest prayer in all the Bible, then he could not help but start praying again. The spirit of prayer was still with him. He is supposed to be blessing the people, but he is still blessing God and he is still praying to Him.

It seems the point here, beloved friends, was this. This was a wonderful day in Israel. But what about the future? What about the unknown way? The great point that he longed for and prayed for was the Lord's abiding presence, the Lord's abiding presence with the nation of Israel, and the Lord's abiding presence in the house of God. I think some

of us perhaps feel a little of the spirit of Solomon today. We long for that abiding presence of the Lord, that despite our sin and unworthiness and guilt, He will still be with us.

"The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." Really, Solomon was looking up and he was looking forward and he was also looking back, and he knew what God had been to Israel, the wonderful display of His mercy to Israel. He knew they did not deserve it then; he knew they did not deserve it now. But, "the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." Have you noticed in the Old Testament, so often they were reminded of what the Lord had done to His people and what He had done for His people, especially in times of need? And then that prayer that, as their need was the same now, or even greater, and as their God was the same, would He still appear for them.

"The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." Now I think you will notice that the time they specially looked back to was Israel coming out of Egypt, what the Lord had been then. Pharaoh was mighty, but Israel's God was mightier. Pharaoh said, No, but Israel's God said, Yes, and He brought them out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Solomon realised all this, and they still needed God to be the same to them now as He was then. Of course, that great trial, the banks of the Red Sea, Pharaoh pursuing them and the Red Sea before them, the mountains hemming them in on every side. "When thou canst no deliverance see." And Solomon knew and Israel knew what God had done then. "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." They could not fight; they did not need to fight. The Lord did it all. "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." When we come to the Red Sea place in our life, whether it is providential, whether it is spiritual, whether you are there tonight, whether Solomon was there that night, "when thou canst no deliverance see," "the Lord our God be with us," favour us with His gracious presence.

And of course they often thought of Israel's God's wonderful dealing with them all through the wilderness, the pillar of cloud and fire, the manna, the overthrow of their enemies, the smitten rock, the supply of every need, strength equal to their day. "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." And then again, Israel constantly remembered how they were brought safely at last into the Promised Land. That last great obstacle, Jordan in swelling at that time, and the Lord dividing Jordan and bringing them through. Then the overthrow of Jericho, and the Lord fighting with them, and those wonderful days when they possessed the Promised Land. Now Israel could never forget those things. They did not deserve them then, and they did not deserve them now, but they could never forget what the Lord in love and mercy had done, and they begged He would do it now.

Let me give you just one instance of this, the forty-fourth Psalm: "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How Thou didst drive out the heathen with Thy hand, and plantedst them; how Thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them." A remarkable word, that. I believe Solomon felt it at this time, what God had done for Israel in the past: "*Thy* right hand ... *Thine* arm ... the light of *Thy* countenance." And the reason: "Because Thou hadst a favour unto them."

Now there is a conclusion. Do you remember what it was, a present-day conclusion? "Thou art my King, O God." Thou wast their King; Thou wast their God; but Thou art ours, our King, our God. "Command deliverances for Jacob." There are two simple things there. It does not say *for Israel*. "For Jacob." That was Israel's name as a sinner, unworthy. "For Jacob." But then, not just deliver them. "Command deliverances for Jacob," which if words mean anything at all, beloved friends, means this: that God has only to speak and His people are delivered. Now some of you, I am sure, are longing for deliverance tonight, perhaps in providence, in your work, in your family, in your circumstances. The Lord has only to speak. "Command deliverances for Jacob." He speaks and the thing is done. It is an easy thing. You say, What about my soul and my sins and eternity, as I long for deliverance there? Does He only have to speak? Yes, He does, but it is on the ground of the atonement. It is on the ground of Calvary. It is on the ground of His finished work. So now He only has to speak, but there is that glorious *something* that had to come in between, an end made of sin, an everlasting righteousness brought in, the atonement made, the precious blood shed, and *then* the Lord Jesus to a longing, guilty, seeking soul, speaks pardon, peace, deliverance, and the thing is done. May He do it tonight. "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob."

"The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." Now today we meet in remembrance of the Lord's love and mercy to us in maintaining our magazine, the *Gospel Standard*, for the long period of 175 years, despite so much opposition from sin and Satan, and not just maintaining the ink and the paper of a magazine, but maintaining the glorious gospel of the grace of God amongst us. So we look back with gratitude tonight, and like Solomon we can see how in love and mercy the Lord has been with our fathers and we pray like the old hymn,

"God of our fathers, be the God
Of their succeeding race!"

“The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.” I would like to speak to you this evening on three or four aspects of this. First of all, we cannot help thinking of *our sinful nation*, because Solomon was praying for the nation of Israel here, and this is a time of crisis in English history. People are saying there never has been such a general election as this will be. The solemn thing is God’s judgments are abroad in the earth, and our nation of which we are part has badly sinned against the Lord. We have disobeyed His laws. We have dishonoured His holy Sabbath. We have rejected His Word. We have despised His gospel. We have reviled His beloved Son. But we look back and we can see that the Lord was with our fathers.

Of course, this is a vast subject, but we often think of things like the Spanish Armada. It was an impossibility, but the Lord was with our fathers and He answered the prayers of His people and He saved England. We can think of that terrible Gunpowder Plot. What would it have meant if the Protestant parliament had been destroyed? But the Lord brought it to light and was with our fathers. So you might go on. In recent times, those two last terrible wars, and despite all our sin, the Lord in mercy answered the prayers of His little remnant who sighed and cried because of the abominations done in the midst. Now may there be a looking back and may it encourage us. “God is the same to endless years.” We were unworthy then; we were sinful then. Sadly it seems we are more unworthy, more sinful now. But God is a God of mercy, and may our prayer be, “In the midst of deserved wrath, remember us in mercy,” because who knows what the Lord will not do in answer to the prayers of His people?

“The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.” We might just mention *our magazine* briefly in passing. How the Lord was with our fathers in the beginning and the carrying on and how He blessed the word.

“The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.” But perhaps especially this evening, *our churches*. Now wasn’t the Lord with our churches in days past? Do not be afraid of this. We have a very blessed history. We would not glory in the flesh, but may we not be ashamed of our heritage. When we think of those blessed days in the church of God in the days of Gadsby and Warburton and Kershaw! And do not limit it there. Go back to the 1600s, the founders under God such as Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffin and Benjamin Keach, and in those days the bitter sufferings they had, the imprisonment for the truth and some of them even unto death, and yet how the Lord was with them and honoured them and blessed them, and “The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.”

Now let me ask you a question. How would you answer this? In what way was God, Almighty God, with our fathers in our churches in

the past? One thing was this: *the Holy Spirit was very present to glorify the Saviour's name*, to bless the preaching of the everlasting gospel, to equip and anoint not one, but many eminent ministers in our midst, to use the Word, to seal it home with power, so many Holy Ghost conversions taking place, our chapels full, many openly professing the Lord's name, and many being sovereignly brought right out of the world, and the mighty power of the Holy Spirit known, so it could be said, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?"

"The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." They did not deserve it, and they knew it, and it was all on the ground of mercy, and they knew it, and it was entirely on the ground of grace, God's unmerited, free favour, and they knew it. And our hope is that as God is the same to endless years, "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." That wonderful word where the Lord says, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies," which of course means two things. If He returns, it must be solely on the ground of mercy, undeserved mercy, mercy in Jesus, and then if He does return, the wonders of His mercy in salvation will be displayed.

But I have often mentioned this: in my very early days of preaching, I preached to some who were members of the congregation of A.B. Taylor [1803-1887], and you think of the amazing blessing that that man had at Manchester – you could say almost equal with that of William Gadsby, his predecessor. I remember a dear old lady, well in her nineties, saying to me, Mr. Taylor did not preach any different sermons or any better sermons than you present-day ministers. O, but she said, if you had been there, the power that attended the Word! That is something we cannot give. Only the Lord can, but He is able to do it. "The Word of God is not bound." The simplest word attended with divine, almighty power will do the deed. "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." May some of you this evening take up this prayer in our midst and in the place where you worship.

"The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." Now there is another thing. That is, the Lord so dealt with His people in a past generation that *they lived solely for His honour and glory*. They were crucified to the world. The world did not mean anything to them. They just lived for the house of God. They walked humbly, they walked tenderly in His fear. Their affections were set on things above. They truly were pilgrims and strangers in this world. We say, "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers," because the world is too much with us. The world has crept in, and where there are not evil things, bad things, there is the carelessness and the indifference, there is the spirit of the world if not the world itself. Now the Lord deal with us in love and mercy. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall

shew forth My praise.” The Lord deal with us in love and mercy as He dealt with our fathers. Didn’t they honour and glorify the Lord in their lives? And we have no need to go back to the 1600s or even the days of Gadsby. You older ones remember them, don’t you? Your parents, your grandparents, and some of those godly ministers who used to preach, and the truth had been burned into their hearts, and they would die rather than give it up. And they lived to the honour and glory of God. Some of them were the silent pillars, the godly women. O the example! And the gracious men, and the world saw it. They were God’s workmanship, and the world knew it. Like some of our ancestors in Lancashire, those who walked over the moors between Rochdale and Haslingden. The local vicar used to point one of them out to his congregation. He said, “He does not come to church; he goes to chapel, but he puts us to shame. He is an example to us.”

“The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.” And then we think of *how faithful they were to the truth*. Well, going back a long way, some of them were even burned at the stake, and if you read their accounts, sometimes it seemed such a small thing. They could see the honour and glory of God, and that came first, and sweetly constrained by the love of Christ, knowing it in both its senses – the constraining that drew them and pulled them, the constraining that bound them and held them fast – they were faithful unto death and the Lord gave them a crown of life. There would not be any deviation concerning the truth. They did not say, We do not understand these things; these things do not matter. And so concerning the order in the churches and concerning their lives, and it was not in a hard way, and it was not in a legal way. It was for love’s sake.

“The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.” I just mention one other way in which the Lord in a special way was with our fathers, and that was *the wonderful way in which He upheld them and supported them*, because there was much poverty in the past. There were not the amenities, the facilities. Many of them had very hard lives in many different ways, but the Lord was with them, and the world could see that the Lord was with them, and they were kept praying. They were forced to the throne of grace, the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, and God heard and answered their prayers. God sent them answers of peace, and in a wonderful way God supplied their needs in providence when they hardly knew where the next penny was to come from, and God gave them strength equal to their day, and God sanctified their troubles.

Really, we might go on as you look back to former days, those days of blessing in England, and those days of blessing in our own churches. How evidently the Lord was present; how evidently the Lord was at work; how evidently the Lord blessed! But O that He might be with us

like that now! But ever remember, they did not deserve it then and we do not deserve it now. It was all of His mercy then; it is all of His mercy now. May there be the encouragement to pray. "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

"The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers." But there is Solomon speaking of Israel, then our own country in a time of need, our magazine, our churches. But *to come to it personally*. "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers: let Him not leave us, nor forsake us." Now God's people are brought to feel that they deserve that the Lord should leave them. Sometimes Satan tells them the Lord will leave them. And then their unbelieving hearts agree and think the Lord will leave them.

"Let Him not leave us, nor forsake us." Let us be clear, beloved friends, on one or two things. With a child of God, a sinner saved by grace, the Lord will never finally leave him nor forsake him, but with a church, the Lord does sometimes leave it and forsake it. And one very solemn thing seems to be clear: that when the Lord leaves a church, He never returns. Now the church may get very low in numbers and even in grace, but if the Lord is still with them, what a mercy! But when the Lord leaves a church, then He never returns. It is Ichabod, for the glory of the Lord is departed. You have it so solemnly set before us in the Book of Ezekiel, the gradual departure of the glory of God. First of all, it was there over the altar, and then it moved to the door. It was still in sight. But would any man pray between the porch and the altar and plead with the Lord not to leave His people? And then the glory moved from the door inside to the door outside and it seems that God's ancient people just did not realise it. At last the glory removed and it was over the top of the city, and it hovered about there. Would it return? And then at last it disappeared over the mountains and it was not seen again. That is what is happening in some of the churches today, you know. Let us be clear, the Lord sometimes leaves a church and leaves it finally. May we pray and may we wrestle that the glory may not depart from us.

Now with a child of God, a sinner saved by grace, God never finally leaves that one, never finally departs, but He does sometimes hide His face, and He does sometimes withdraw the sense of His gracious presence. Sometimes it is in His sovereignty. Sometimes it is to make us more dependent. Sometimes it is in chastening. O that cry, that urgent cry personally that the Lord Jesus in love and mercy will be with us, abide with us, do not leave us, do not forsake us. "Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them." O "let Him not leave us, nor forsake us." Some of those little children's hymns have a lot of good divinity and that one certainly does:

“Never leave me, nor forsake me,
 Ever be my Friend,
 For I need Thee from life’s dawning
 To its end.”

“Let Him not leave us, nor forsake us.” It is a prayer on the ground of God’s mercy. It is a prayer on the ground of His precious, sin-atoning blood. It is a prayer on the ground of His grace. “Let Him not leave us, nor forsake us.” Why, we have to pray this prayer because we need the Lord Jesus and because we cannot do without Him. We need Him day by day in our lives, in our homes, our families, our circumstances, our never-dying souls, our pilgrimage, our warfare, our temptations. “Let Him not leave us, nor forsake us.” We need Him to be with us to keep us, to keep us from falling, to keep us from dishonouring the Lord’s name. We need Him to be with us to give us strength equal to our day. “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” We need the Lord Jesus to be with us to go before us in the unknown way. “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him.” We need the Lord Jesus to be with us to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory, both in providence and in grace. O but we need the Lord Jesus to be with us to save our souls, to forgive our sins, to wash us in His precious, sin-atoning blood, to clothe us in His glorious righteousness. We need the Lord Jesus to be with us ever to intercede for us. We need Him to be with us to bless us, otherwise we know nothing of the blessing. And we need Him to fit us for heaven, to prepare us, to bring us safely through, and to land us safe at last.

“The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers: let Him not leave us, nor forsake us.” Well, we pray it for the country and for the church of God, and that is a good word, that closing word of Samuel: “The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.” That is a word of love and mercy and faithfulness. O but personally, is this your prayer, beloved friends: Let Him not leave me, nor forsake me? There is an answer to it, a gracious answer, a glorious answer, and, “’Tis expressed in words like these”: “Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” And that precious hymn that was made a blessing to our fathers and will be made a blessing to the end of time:

“The 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.”

O this prayer, may it be answered, may it be ours, may we take it home with us. “The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers: let Him not leave us nor forsake us.”

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY

*Report of the Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard
Aid and Poor Relief Society held on Friday, April 9th, 2010,
at Clifton, Bedfordshire*

PRAYER MEETING

Mr. F.A. Ince (Fitzwilliam) opened the meeting with prayer and then read John chapter 15 verses 1-17 and spoke from verse 9: "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love."

There are many foundation truths shown to us in the gospel, and which do truly belong to us, the church, the Lord's dear people. But here, dear friends, is a foundation truth, a most blessed and a glorious foundation truth. It is the love of God towards a guilty, ruined sinner, and the foundation of this truth is known and realised only through the blessed Speaker of this word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you." We shall never know the love of God, dear friends, unless we know it through the blessed Person of the dear Redeemer. This is the foundation truth. This is what the church is established upon, is raised upon. It is a Father's heavenly love to a sinful race and people. It is immeasurable love. It is unfathomable love. It is endless love. It is boundless love. O friends, we can know this love a little in the experience of it, in reigning grace in our souls a little of it, a little discovery of it, but we cannot put a measurement on it ourselves. No, dear friends. Why? Because this love came to sinners – the most undeserving of it, and it is our mercy today if any one of us can say one word in respect of the love of Jesus to our poor souls. It is a wonder of grace. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us."

"As the Father hath loved Me" – "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." I do believe that that is a word intended to express this truth. The work and the office of the dear Lord Jesus becoming Mediator for the church of God; this One that should come as the Mediator of the everlasting covenant to bring a sinful race and people into the love of God the Father.

And I see this word as I was brought to meditate upon it, the Lord Jesus being a Servant. And there are just three points – three truths which may bring us into the blessed word of the Lord Jesus Christ in the salvation of our souls. "Behold My Servant" – *My Servant* – "whom I uphold; Mine Elect" (Isa. 42. 1). O chosen, chosen before the foundation of the world, from all eternity. Chosen, His dearly beloved Son, but as Man, His Servant. He laid aside His glory, took upon Him the form of sinful flesh without sin, took upon Himself our nature, laid His glory beneath the form of flesh. My Servant chosen, and the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. The work was before Him. And

then, "I uphold." Yes. His heavenly Father preserved Him for the work as Man, as He came upon this earthly scene to fulfil His heavenly Father's will as Man "whom I uphold," whom I will sustain, whom I will preserve, whom I will help, and whose prayers I will hear and answer. "Whom I uphold" as Man. We know that many scorned Him and mocked Him, derided Him, hated Him. "Whom I uphold." Many times they sought to take His life, not till the appointed time. "Whom I uphold" for the work of salvation.

Then this truth: the work that He came to do. "And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel" (Isa. 49. 6). What does this show to us, dear friends? To raise up, to restore. Why, friends? They were ruined in the Fall. Desolation was upon them. Destruction was upon them. The ruin of the Fall was in them. They were doomed. That is where you were. That is where we are by nature. To raise them up. To restore them. This word "preserved of Israel," the marginal rendering of that word is this: "or desolations." What a mercy it is to know and to feel that by and through the Spirit of our God!

But another word – I thought I would look in Young's concordance and see what this word *preserved* means. It means kept. It means reserved. It means watched over. Yes, isn't that a wonderful mercy, dear friends! In the days of our unregeneracy, wasn't that the truth with us? Have we not come into the experience of this? He watched over us because He would show His mercy and grace to us. Yes. He watched over the prodigal son. Look at the awful state of that man. Look at the life that he lived. He was to be made sensible of it, and so, friends, will each and every one of the dear Lord's people. They will be made sensible of the corruption of their hearts.

And then, "I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles." O the Gentiles – why? They were in darkness. They were in sin. They were in ignorance. But O the mercy, friends, that came to God's elect. And then this is the work of Jesus, "that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth." This day, to the end of the earth, to the end of time. "My salvation." May there be many souls today brought into the blessedness of this salvation in Jesus. How was this salvation to be worked out? How was Jesus going to undertake this salvation? "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53. 11).

Friends, we come to the cross of Christ. This is the salvation of the church. It is not what we have done, what we have deserved. It is what Jesus came to do for perishing sinners! He is the glory of our God, that dear Man upon Calvary's tree, in the room and the place of a sinner.

“God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Isn’t that a wonderful truth – “while we were yet sinners”? He went forth to the cross, dear friends, to procure our salvation while we were still in our sins. Why, it is the wonderment of love, isn’t it?

In John chapter 10, the Lord Jesus spoke a wonderful word. It may be overlooked by some of us sometimes, but in verse 17 He says, “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life.” Ah, this is the blessing of the truth of the words of our text, that His Father loved Him. It was the salvation of the church. It was to these disciples that the Lord was speaking, but it was for the church, a type of the church today. And then, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends.” Ye were enemies. What a mercy it is to be a friend of Jesus!

But I want to speak of the remainder of these words in a particular way. I thought about the remainder of the words of this text, “Continue ye in My love.” Friends, once we have known the love of Jesus, once we have been blessed with the pardon and forgiveness of our sins, our poor souls will adore, will bless and praise His name. The wonderment of His grace towards us, and this influence of His love will help us to “continue ye in My love.”

On the latter part of the verse, “Continue ye in My love,” Mr. Ince spoke at some length on the gospel ministry. After speaking of how the preacher speaks of sin and forgiveness he commented on the following scriptures:

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4. 1).

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (verse 2).

“But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience” (2 Cor. 6. 4).

“By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned” (verse 6).

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13. 7).

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account” (verse 17).

Mr. Ince then spoke of this word as it applies to God’s people: “Continue ye in My love” – walking in love and union, brought together by the cross of Christ. He spoke of the word:

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3. 12-14).

His closing word was:

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Cor. 13. 11).

Hymns 643, 535 and 1014 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. P.J. Cottingham (Pastor, Staplehurst), Mr. J.B. Hart (Rotherfield), Mr. A. Collins (Lamberhurst), Mr. D.E. Cornford (Heathfield), and Mr. J.L. Rosier (Pastor, Blackboys and Horam). Mr. Ince closed with prayer and the benediction.

AFTERNOON MEETING

After the singing of hymn 366, the Chairman of the Society, Mr. G.D. Buss, called on Mr. J.F. Ashby (Pastor, East Peckham) to seek the Lord's blessing on the meeting.

The Chairman then read Malachi chapter 3.

CHAIRMAN: I will direct your thoughts to a clause you will find in the first verse: "And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple." The prophet Malachi had the honour, if we may put it like that, of being the last of the Old Testament prophets, and when the fourth chapter closes, as it does in verse 6, between that verse and the first verse recorded in Matthew chapter 1, there is was a period of some four hundred years of silence as far as further revelation in the things of God was concerned. Yet as this chapter of the Old Testament closed, the Lord left a promise with them. In the eyes of the church no doubt it seemed that the Lord waited long to fulfil it. The truth was there: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple."

Of course, to every discerning mind this afternoon there is no doubt of whom Malachi was speaking. In the former part of the verse he is speaking of John the Baptist, the one who prepared the way, but the One whom the church was seeking was Christ. They had waited long for Him. They had yet to wait four hundred years longer for Him. But here was a promise for them to plead, a promise from Him of whom we read in Isaiah's prophecy: My Word "shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Now, if God gives a word, though He may delay to fulfil it, one thing is absolutely certain: He will never fail to fulfil every iota, every part of every word that He ever speaks. So here was a word for the church to rest upon in a day of darkness, a day of waiting, a day

no doubt of despondency, a day no doubt of much discouragement, but here was a ray of light, shall we say, an anchor for their soul. "The Lord, whom ye seek, *shall*" – not might, not may be – "*shall* suddenly come to His temple."

As I thought about these words, just very briefly there is more than one way of looking at it. First of all, there is that wonderful promise concerning the coming of the Saviour to the temple of His body, that temple formed miraculously in the womb of the virgin by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, in which He dwelt in His ministry here below, verily God and verily Man. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." That temple eclipsed all the other temples that had ever been built. Even Solomon's temple had not a vestige of glory compared with Immanuel, God with us, God incarnate. Within that holy temple of His body, as in no other temple, the holy law of God was satisfied in all its demands, all its commands. Of that temple, God the Father on two occasions expressly gave His approbation: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In that holy body, that holy temple, what agonies were endured there, what oceans of sorrow as He drank those cups of wrath that His church should have drunk, which they deserved to drink to all eternity! He drank it to its very dregs and as Murray M'Cheyne, that good minister, was reputed to have said, "It was filled with wrath up to its very brim; He drank it to its dregs, but wiped it clean and then filled it with love." There is the blessing. How thankful a child of God should be that He came to His temple. Had He never done that, there would not have been a gospel to be preached.

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,"

that He came to His temple and though His holy soul left that temple for a short time while His holy body lay in the tomb, now at the right hand of the Father in that same body bearing the marks of His suffering and death, He sits "a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins." There is the gospel we love, that we long to know more of, but hope many of us here this afternoon can say we are not altogether strangers to.

Secondly, He "shall suddenly come to His temple." Friends, that is also how He comes to the people of God because He comes to make their bodies His temple. We read of it in 1 Corinthians. Paul describes very aptly and very solemnly the state of a sinner before grace reaches his heart. Listen to these solemn words that we read: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor

abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” And so Paul goes on to say, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Dear friends, it is surely the longing desire of every living child of God that Christ will come to His temple, longer visits, more often. You say, Doesn’t He ever leave His people? Of course He does not, but often He hides Himself for wise purposes. Dark dispensations, times of temptation, times of difficulty, but He says, “I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”

Ever remember just as He came to the literal temple, He came with a scourge of small cords to drive out the buyers and the sellers. As we read in this very chapter, He comes with a humbling work, a stripping work. He will not be second to any. He must reign there; He must rule there; and He will, because the body of a child of God is the very temple of the Holy Ghost, a blessed privilege, but ever remember that solemn exhortation, “Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” “Quench not the Spirit.”

Thirdly, we need this dear One to come to the temple of His church in our day. This is what is needed, and is not that the cry of the dear people of God collectively? I like the prayer in Psalm 101: “When wilt Thou come unto me?” That is a personal cry, but it is also a collective cry. “When wilt Thou come unto me?” What do we read in the prophecy of Isaiah? “O that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence.” He “shall suddenly come to His temple.” He says He shall come. He loves His church so greatly that sooner or later He will break through the dark cloud, the most desolate experience. He cannot lose His church. He has loved them with an everlasting love and therefore with lovingkindness will He draw them.

Then finally, of course, He will suddenly come as we read in Hebrews chapter 9: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” You see, the Old Testament church was looking for Him and we, if we are alive unto God this afternoon, we should be looking for His returning. When our Lord said, “Surely I come quickly,” the answer from John was, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

May God add His blessing to those few remarks by way of meditation.

It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you to the Annual Meeting of the Gospel Standard Society. For many years, at my right hand Mr. Mercer has stood as your secretary and delivered his report, and during the past year he has handed over that responsibility, and we do acknowledge publicly the work he did on behalf of the Societies for so many years, and wish him the Lord's blessing as he stands back from that labour of love. It is now my privilege to welcome Mr. Christian as our new secretary and pray that the help given to the former secretary may be his as well; for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." It is with pleasure I ask Mr. Christian to introduce the report and accounts. (The published Report was not read; copies can be obtained from the Secretary.)

MR. CHRISTIAN: Mr. Chairman, subscribers and friends: These Annual Meetings remind us of the passing of time and the changes that come in our lives. Some who met with us in former years have now passed to glory. We know not how long our days will be spared. May we take comfort that our God is unchanging, unchangeable. As His Word says, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." The major change in the Society in the past year was the retirement of our Secretary, Mr. Henry Mercer. For over twenty years he carried this responsibility and we are very grateful to him for all the work he has done over the years. At the October Committee meeting, the members presented him with a leather-bound facsimile copy of the 1560 Geneva Bible, signed by all the Committee members. On a personal note, I would like to thank him for his help in the transitional period since October. I would also seek an interest in your prayers for all needed wisdom and grace as I take up the secretaryship.

One purpose of our Annual Meeting is to approve the accounts for the past year. You will see from the printed Report that there are three funds incorporated into the Society accounts. The largest of these is the Aid and Poor Relief Society which makes regular quarterly grants and occasional grants to those in need, and grants to some of our chapels to help pay for the ministry. During the year, expenditure exceeded income by £33,296. Legacies were much lower than in the previous year and we also saw a very large decrease of nearly £100,000 in investment income due to the low interest rates. The Committee does review different investment accounts to try and obtain the best return without taking undue risk, and recently moved a large sum to a fixed rate bond for one year. It is sometimes not realised that the rates for businesses are much lower than for personal investors.

The Gadsby Memorial Fund makes grants, mainly in December, and covers a wider range than the Aid and Poor Relief fund. Usually most of the income received during the year is distributed and during 2009 a small amount of the reserves was also used.

The third fund, the Magazine Fund, also showed a small deficit in 2009. The prices of the magazines are usually decided in July, and this does mean that an estimation of the likely exchange rate for overseas readers has to be made. The *Gospel Standard* will reach its 175th anniversary in August this year if the Lord will, and it is hoped to provide a facsimile copy of the August 1835 edition with the August magazine this year.

2009 saw the launch of a new magazine, *Perception*. This is edited by Mr. John Broome and is aimed at the sixteen to twenty-five years age group.

Initial orders for the first year were around 360, but this year have risen to over 420. We are very thankful for the Lord's help given to our Editors and pray that they may still be upheld in this constant labour and that the magazines will be made a blessing to young and old. The Committee feels a deep concern for the state of the churches and is conscious that there is in great measure a withdrawing of the Holy Spirit. We are thankful that He has not completely left us, but may we each be given grace to consider our ways and seek that there might be an outpouring on our churches. We remember the late Mr. Frank Gosden preaching at the Annual Meetings in London when his text was, "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." May that be our earnest prayer and may we be kept to the old paths like our godly forefathers. The world in general is always looking for new things, but may the church not imitate it and may we be given that wisdom to discern "the things that differ" in much of present-day religion.

In November last year, the Committee arranged a meeting of ministers for prayer for our churches, and if the Lord will, another meeting will be held here later in the year, on Saturday, November 20th. [This has now been changed to Saturday, November 13th]. Many of our ministers are advanced in years and we would remember those now unable to preach. We pray for each one who labours in the Lord's name and seek a blessing upon them. May the Lord of the harvest send forth yet more labourers into His vineyard.

No applications were received during the year for ministers to be added to the Gospel Standard list. We would be pleased to receive nominations from the churches for those whose ministry has been in power and the unction of the Holy Spirit and who are eligible according to our rules. The Committee does have many difficult things to deal with during the year and needs grace and wisdom to handle these matters rightly. We value the prayers of our friends and seek to do what is right in the sight of the Lord. We remember our ministers and churches overseas and we seek the Lord's blessing on them and also for Mr. John Rosier as he goes to preach, if the Lord will, at Grand Rapids, Sheboygan, Choteau and Nobleford in May, and also for Mr. Jabez Rutt as he goes to Choteau and Canada in September.

We would like to thank our friends here at Clifton for the use of the chapel today and for all those who help in any way, and especially Mr. Lawson for all he has done. Next year, Easter is later than usual and so our Annual Meeting in 2011 will be held, if the Lord will, on April 15th, which will be the week before Easter instead of the week after, as we would not be able to use the school because it opens immediately after Easter Monday.

We are always pleased to accept new subscribers to the Society.* Membership is open to members of Gospel Standard churches and regular attendees who agree with our Articles of Faith, and there are application forms in the porch or available from the Secretary.

In closing, we would give thanks for the mercies that we daily receive from the Lord, but especially those blessings that flow from Calvary.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Christian for his report, and asked if there were any subscribers who had any questions relating to the Annual Report and Accounts. Dr. M.J. Hyde (Tenterden) said that on the front cover of the Report,

* Recently we were interested to look through the list of our subscribers, but perplexed why so many of our loyal friends and supporters are not there.

Mr. Christian is listed as having resigned on April 30th, and also listed as a Funding Trustee, and asked who had been appointed in his place. The Chairman replied that the new Funding Trustee has not yet been appointed, but the Committee is in the process of appointing one.

The proposal to approve and adopt the Annual Report and Accounts was put to the meeting. It was proposed by Mr. E.A. Palmer (Fenstanton) and seconded by Mr. M.D. Ridout (Southampton) and carried *nem con*.

The Chairman then asked Mr. Christian to announce the result of the election of the four members who were put up for re-election. 254 ballot papers were sent out, of which 205 were returned. Each of the four members of the Committee who offered themselves for re-election received over 85% of the votes cast, and therefore Mr. Cottington, Mr. Field, Mr. Hyde and Mr. Ince are re-elected to serve for a further three years. Mr. Mercer, who was co-opted to serve on the Committee from October, also received over 85% of the votes cast and is therefore elected to serve for three years.

The Chairman said he had one or two announcements to make. First of all, greetings had been received from the friends in Australia and in the U.S.A and Canada. He read messages from Mr. Gordon Seymour in Australia and Mr. Gary Ten Broeke on behalf of the churches in America and Canada.

The Chairman then asked Mr. J.H. Cottington to express thanks on behalf of the re-elected members and the Committee.

MR. COTTINGTON: Dear subscribers and friends: we, the members of the Committee, appreciate your support. We value your prayers. It is our desire as we gather as a Committee that we might feel the power of the Holy Spirit to be known and felt amongst our churches once more. Brethren, pray for us.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Cottington, and then read a brief report from the Gospel Standard Library. There were just four points the Librarian wished to make.

First of all, the scanning of 175 rare articles from the bound volumes and tracts is completed and these are available at the Library.

A branch of the Gospel Standard Library has been established at Hope Chapel, Sheboygan, of about 1,500 books.

The Library is very grateful for four large and several appreciable donations last year, and is thankful that the financial position has improved, but if any friends felt able to give a regular donation, it would be very helpful and much appreciated. Gift Aid forms can be obtained from the Librarian.

Finally, the Library is very concerned about the storage of church records and where they are deposited when chapels closed. A good number have been sent to the Library in the past. A leaflet is being prepared concerning the storage of these records.

The Chairman then announced that the Gospel Standard Trust Annual General Meeting would take place, if the Lord will, at Matfield on May 15th. He said that Mr. Joseph Rutt had been expected to give the address, but that he had been taken ill during the week and now felt unable to give the address, so Mr. Jabez Rutt has been asked to give the address if the Lord will.

In closing the meeting, the Chairman mentioned that the collection in the evening would be for the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund.

Hymn 372 was then sung.

The 3rd Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda then followed (see later).

After hymn 683 was sung, Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom (Editor, *Gospel Standard*) addressed the Meeting.

History of the Gospel Standard Magazine

Mr. Chairman and beloved friends, It is with a sense of real gratitude to the Lord that this year we celebrate the 175th anniversary of our *Gospel Standard* magazine. According to Scripture, it is right that we should remember these things. There is a time for the gathering of stones together (Eccles. 3. 5), and it is with thanksgiving and humility and conscious of the Lord's undeserved mercy.

In several ways our *Gospel Standard* magazine has always been different from any other. Let me mention one or two. The first, obviously, is that it is now the oldest monthly religious magazine, also one of the tenth oldest magazines of any kind, the other nine being secular ones, with one stretching right back to the 1600s. Now over a hundred years ago there were almost a hundred Baptist magazines circulating in this country, not all at the same time, but at various times almost a hundred. Only a handful continue today. Most of them have been very long since forgotten. Who has heard of magazines like *The Pot of Manna*; *The Christian Breadbasket*; *Pearls from Golden Streams*? And yet, as John Gadsby said at the fiftieth anniversary of the *Gospel Standard*, no magazine ever had greater and more bitter opposition. Really, it has continued in greater or less measure to the present day. All we can say is, "What hath God wrought!" His wonderful mercy in maintaining our lot.

A second special thing about our *Gospel Standard* magazine is what has sprung from it. We would not be here today, any of us, apart from the introduction of the *Gospel Standard* 175 years ago. When you think what sprang from it, not just the magazine itself, but our Aid Society to help ministers, our Poor Relief Society to help those who are not ministers (the two now merged), and then the Gadsby Memorial Fund, our Bethesda Homes which have been so much blessed, and then our Trust, all privileged to bear the name "Gospel Standard." Really that is how it should be. It is the spirit in which the *Gospel Standard* was founded – shall we say, "For love's sake"? Love flowing from the Lord to unworthy sinners, love in return, love to the brethren. We think of the wonderful amount of blessing that God has bestowed on our worthy Societies over the years, and it was the spirit in which William Gadsby began our magazine. I think you all know the spirit of William Gadsby

from his beautiful hymns. But then there came a time, forty years after the start of the magazine, those godly men, Francis Covell of Croydon, Joseph Hatton of Redhill – was it possible to do something on a regular basis, according to the Spirit of Christ, to help the poor and the needy?

And then just to mention a third thing in which our *Gospel Standard* magazine has been special and that is this: it has always been a spiritual magazine, completely a spiritual magazine, entirely a spiritual magazine. If you notice at the top of every issue when the foundation texts are printed, this always comes first: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” That was the aim of the *Gospel Standard* when it was founded; that is the aim of the *Gospel Standard* still today, that there might be precious, Christ-exalting, God-honouring truths that will satisfy the longing desires of living souls, and in this, our magazine over the years has almost stood alone.

I remember some years ago a gentleman speaking to me. He was a consultant anaesthetist. He was not a Strict Baptist. He told me that every month he received a lot of magazines. I cannot remember exactly how many; it could have been up to twenty. But he said, “I always look forward to the *Gospel Standard* more than any other.” Very quickly he added, “There is such a lot you people believe I just do not agree with.” I said, “Why do you like our magazine the best?” “Well,” he said, “all the others interest my intellect. This is the only magazine that touches my heart.” Really, beloved friends, that is it. The great point, not just in the *Gospel Standard* magazine – shall we say in Gospel Standard religion – the insistence on the Holy Spirit’s teaching and a vital, personal, knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Well, the year 1835, when the *Gospel Standard* was founded, was a very different England from today. The Reform Bill had just been passed. There still was not any penny postage. The fastest way of travel, usually by horse, but with most people on foot, though the Manchester to Liverpool railway had just been opened. Queen Victoria had not yet become queen; her uncle William IV was still on the throne.

But there is a background to the beginning of the *Gospel Standard*. The ground had been prepared. There was a readership that God had prepared who were waiting for the *Gospel Standard* to appear. Now let me explain. At that time so many of the godly old Particular Baptist churches were beginning to become more general. The preaching was becoming more legal and dry and arid, and though in the letter the doctrines of Calvinism and free grace were still spoken of, there seemed to be something missing from what there had been in former days. There were many of the Lord’s living family scattered throughout England and they just were not really satisfied with the preaching that they could hear.

We can say of the *Gospel Standard* in the words of the Book of Job, “Though thy beginning was small.” John Gadsby quite dramatically

speaks of how it originated. He was in the presence of his well-known father, William Gadsby, who now for thirty years had been the honoured pastor at what was then called St George's Road Chapel, Manchester, and John Gadsby was a very energetic young printer, and as he said, in the full liberty and enthusiasm of the gospel. This is what John Gadsby wrote: "I suggested to my father that we ought to have a magazine of our own. He was quite startled and said, 'Jack' – he mostly called me Jack – 'Jack, you cannot afford it. You will lose money by it.' 'I quite expect so,' I replied, 'but that is of no consequence, for the Lord has given me a good business as you know. We ought to have a magazine.' He took time prayerfully to consider and then said, 'Well, if you begin, I will try and help you, and I hope our labours will not be in vain.'" Well, I think we know the answer to that today.

So on August 1st, 1835, from a little printing works, Newall's Buildings, Market Street, Manchester, a magazine, twenty-four pages, costing two pence, appeared. There were just five hundred copies. The next week the Manchester congregation took nearly all the five hundred, so John Gadsby printed another five hundred. And then the big London chapels heard of it – Zoar, Great Alie Street, and Gower Street – and so John Gadsby had to print another thousand, making two thousand in all. Soon they were gone. John Gadsby said, "With many fears, yet trusting in the Lord and with sincere desires for His honour and glory and the good of His people." That was the ground on which the *Gospel Standard* began and I believe it has been the same ground over the years and it is the same ground today.

Of course, there was quite a stir and quite a lot of interest. Just to give you two little anecdotes. Just south of Manchester in Cheshire there were two women who were dairy farmers, and the Lord had brought them into deep spiritual concern about their souls and eternity. They could not get on at the parish church. The only thing they could get on with was the read prayer which said, "God have mercy on us miserable sinners." One Saturday soon after the *Gospel Standard* appeared, they were up in the city of Manchester on their business and walking down Shudehill, where there were a lot of bookstalls, they were attracted by one or two magazines called the *Gospel Standard*, so they took the lot. Some of it they could not understand, but when they came to a piece by William Gadsby on how the Lord deals with the souls of His hungry people, they were thrilled and they went to the vicar and they thought the vicar would be thrilled, but the vicar was appalled; the vicar was angry. The next week they were back in Manchester, this time finding their way to John Gadsby's offices to tell him what blessing they had received.

Another anecdote. In another place south of Manchester, Wilmslow, lived a striking-looking man, tall, with only one eye, and the

only people he could meet with were Methodists, but he too was being led and taught by the Spirit of God: his unworthiness, salvation by grace alone, the need of a Saviour. He used to tell the Methodists, "If you are right, I am wrong, and if I am right, you are wrong." He, happening to be in Manchester, again stumbled on a copy of the *Gospel Standard*. When he read it, he was so pleased, he too the next week came up to Manchester again and bought as many *Gospel Standards* as were available from John Gadsby, and went home to Wilmslow and put a big notice up in his window: "*Gospel Standards* for sale." So we might say, "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed."

Now what about the future and the continuing? In the mysterious providence of God there were two things took place the very month after the *Gospel Standard* first appeared. Neither had any connection with the *Gospel Standard*; neither had any connection with one another. One was in Wiltshire; one was in Lancashire. In Lancashire, a young Scotsman, who had been excommunicated by his church in Preston for contending for the truth as we believe it and as he had been taught it, was baptized in Blackburn. In Wiltshire, a young clergyman who had just seceded from the Church of England was baptized at Allington by John Warburton. One was John M'Kenzie and one was J. C. Philpot. Of course, in a very short time those two men of much grace and varying abilities were joint editors of the *Gospel Standard* magazine until M'Kenzie's early and sad death.

So the *Gospel Standard* magazine increased until in a number of years there were 17,500 copies appearing each month. What of the prosperity, and shall I say, what of the continuing, even to this day, especially when we think of the awful amount of opposition? Well, I think old John Gadsby again came right to the point. "There was only one reason for it: God was on our side. It was in vain they tried to swallow us up. 'Fear not; I will be with thee,' was our encouragement."

Many, many things more might be said, but it is a long day today, it is a busy day, and I am reminded of how Paul's accuser in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 24. 4) said, "So that I be not further tedious." I just want to close like this. It is not just 175 years of a magazine, ink and paper, in my feelings this afternoon. It is the glorious gospel of the grace of God which was the foundation of the magazine, and which has always been the glory of the magazine, and which is the glory of the magazine today. "That in all things He might have the pre-eminence" – what we would call real Gospel Standard religion. You say, what is it? Salvation by grace alone, but O that insistence on the glorious Person of Christ, the sinner nothing, Christ everything, and the vital necessity of the Holy Spirit's teaching. I believe hundreds if not thousands have been blessed – I am not saying literally through the magazine, but through the glorious truths for which the magazine contends.

And if we were asked to summarise just in a little short sentence what is it we really love in the gospel and in the *Gospel Standard*? Well, I had an aunt – she was quite a simple soul; she never married, she died when she was only forty, and there was a headmaster in my native town when I was a little boy. He said, “Rhoda, I have never heard of such a complicated religion as you people have at your chapel.” She looked bewildered. She said, “There is nothing complicated in my religion.” She said, “My religion is this:

‘The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,
Is welcome to a Throne of Grace,
The Saviour’s blood to plead.’”

Now beloved friends, that is Gospel Standard religion, isn’t it? And surely that is the gospel which we love.

CHAIRMAN: We very warmly thank our Editor for his heart-warming address. The closing thought of the address, in particular, surely does summarise what every living child of God here this afternoon would say:

“The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,
Is welcome to the Throne of Grace,
The Saviour’s blood to plead.”

May the Lord bless the gospel among us and may the standard of the gospel not be compromised in any way.

Hymn 400 was sung, and the Meeting closed with prayer by the Chairman.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND 3rd ANNUAL MEETING

MR. H. MERCER (Chairman, Bethesda Fund): It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome the Bethesda subscribers and supporters to this the third Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund.

In reviewing the past year, we have great cause to be thankful that the work of Bethesda has continued and to record the Lord’s mercies to us in so many ways. We are very grateful to our many friends and supporters for their consistent interest in Bethesda, both prayerfully and financially. We also acknowledge the commitment and the high standard of care shown by our Managers and staff, without which our residents would not enjoy the comfort and support that they do. We are also very grateful to the many volunteers who support the Homes in various ways. Many very willingly give of their time to visit the residents in the Homes and to take the morning reading and prayer.

The Annual Report gives a comprehensive overview of Bethesda's objectives, structure and governance and shows how these objectives have been achieved. There is increasing regulation of our Homes and supervision by the Care Quality Commission seems bound to increase. We are more and more in need of wisdom from above and will seek to uphold the principles on which Bethesda was begun so many years ago. You will observe from the accounts that there was a deficit on the Homes account in excess of a quarter of a million pounds, and this of course reduces our reserves.

We look to the Lord to continue to provide for us all that is necessary for the proper running of the Homes, but above all to give us to know His presence with us and His blessing which maketh rich resting upon the residents.

The published Report of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund was not read. Copies can be obtained from the General Secretary (for address, see page xiv).

The Bethesda Secretary, Mr. T.H.W. Scott, spoke as follows:

MR. SCOTT: Mr. Chairman, subscribers and dear friends: I would first like to acknowledge the Lord's mercy to Bethesda through another year. In our families we daily thank the Lord for His goodness and His mercy towards us, and I feel it is right in the Bethesda family also to acknowledge that it is only through His mercy that we continue unto this day. This continuance is now for a period of sixty-five years. The prayer meetings held regularly in the Homes are a means of seeking the Lord's blessing on the work, and we do feel to have so much to be thankful for.

In presenting to you the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2009, I would like to draw your attention to just a few matters of particular significance. First, looking at the Statement of Financial Activities found on page 32 of the Report, you will notice that legacy income, the second item, was considerably higher than the previous year at £149,433. We are, of course, very thankful for this. It has, however, been more than offset by the dramatic fall in investment income, the third item, which was only one fifth of the total received the previous year. This is due to the universal fall in interest rates which have fallen from between 5 and 6% in some cases to less than 1%. We have re-arranged some of our investments during the year in an effort to secure more attractive rates of interest, consistent always with security. For the same reason, the grant received from our sister charity, the Piggott Charity, listed under incoming resources, this year has only been £1,000 compared with £5,800 in the previous year.

A summary of the financial results of each of the Homes is given on page 14, and of the Flatlets on page 15. As our Chairman has already said, each of the Homes has operated at a substantial deficit, which is of course a cause for concern. Costs continue to rise, many of them beyond our control. Employment costs during the year have risen by 5%, partly due to the increased cost of night-working, which has been increased following recent tribunal rulings. The most notable example of increasing costs is in electricity and gas supplied to the Homes which in the last five years has increased by an incredible 140%. However, we need to remember that employment costs completely eclipse all other areas of expenditure, now being 77% of all the costs in running the Homes.

The Committee decided that from the beginning of April the Bethesda fee would rise by 4.8% which will bring the basic fee up to £481 per week, with

higher rates for residents with higher care needs. Our charges do not reflect the full cost of the service provided as it now costs £560 per week for each of the residents in the Homes. However, as a charity, there are considerations other than purely commercial ones, and thanks to the generosity of our chapels and supporters, and in particular through legacy income, we are able to keep the fees at a modest level. There are additional pressures placed on us this year as most Local Authority Social Services departments have awarded zero increases in support for residents they fund. During 2009 we subsidised Local Authority fees by about £57,000 and this figure will almost certainly be higher in 2010.

Reference is made in the Annual Report to the ways in which we have tried to improve the Bethesda premises, so I do not need to comment on that, except perhaps to mention the successful enlargement of the dining room at the Harpenden Home. This was completed just in time for the Open Day and Service of Thanksgiving which was held in June to mark the fortieth anniversary of the opening of the Home. This was a very special occasion and we were blessed with a really lovely day, for which we were thankful, as we had hired a marquee for the day and it would have been quite difficult if the day had been wet. About two hundred visitors attended and Mr. Ramsbottom preached in the afternoon from John chapter 13: "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Turning now from the Annual Report, there are one or two other matters I would like briefly to comment on. As mentioned last year, our new regulatory body, the Care Quality Commission, has now become fully operational. As Bethesda is a provider of a regulated service, we shall have to register with the Commission some time between now and September during a period which will be allocated to us. From October 1st, the old standards under which we currently operate will cease to exist and we shall then need to sign a Declaration of Conformity to the new standards. The difference between the new standards and the old standards is that the new standards focus on outcomes rather than on systems and policies and procedures. Although the Care Quality Commission is our new regulatory body, our Homes are subject to many other inspections and visits from people such as the Environmental Health Officer, asbestos surveys, fire safety and electrical safety and so on. This does place a burden on our Home Managers and much is done behind the scenes which is not apparent to those visiting the Homes.

I do want to spend just a moment praising the staff who work so loyally for Bethesda. To work in a care home can be very tiring and at times emotionally draining. Sometimes at the end of the day, our staff wonder how many miles they have walked that day up and down the corridor, answering call bells and seeing to our residents' needs. When residents are dying, particularly loving care is given and whenever possible staff will sit with that resident, sometimes for hours at a time. At Harpenden in January there were three deaths in the Home in just over three weeks. That kind of situation can be very difficult, as it is easy to develop a kind of emotional detachment from the solemnity of death, and this is something we all need to fight against. Each death is like a personal bereavement to the staff who have looked after those residents, and have learned to love and respect them, often having cared for them for many years. Some here today have lost loved ones in the Homes in recent months. Of course, some residents have no relatives at all. They are completely alone, and to them the staff who look after them are like their relatives.

We are always pleased to hear of agreeable relationships developing between the residents. We heard recently of two residents who would frequently pass little notes to each other, and another resident who was quite blessed in hearing a resident singing to herself in her room. We were pleased also to hear of one resident who sat with another who was dying and was able to write down many of the things she said in her last hours, this resident having been conscious right to the last. We do feel this is what makes our Homes so special and the different atmosphere is frequently remarked on by health professionals and others visiting the Homes.

The number of subscribers to Bethesda has risen during the year and now stands at 235, and we do welcome all new subscribers. Some of our friends say, "We already contribute to Bethesda through chapel collections." This, of course, is true, and we are thankful for the generosity of so many people who contribute in this way, but the purpose of subscribers is not so much to raise revenue, but rather to have a body of people who tangibly identify with Bethesda as a charity, receive the Annual Report and vote at the Annual Meeting. There are forms here in the porch, so please do take one or ask for one if you would like to become a subscriber, particularly our younger friends. Many of our subscribers are now becoming elderly and we would love to have some of our younger friends to take a particular interest in Bethesda.

Each year we like to thank the many people who help Bethesda in so many ways. In giving our thanks it is not just repetition. We do sincerely thank everyone for their interest and support. We thank everyone who serves on the Home Committees. This year our friend Mrs. Ruth Wallis retired from the Harpenden Home Committee after eighteen years' service. [Mrs. Wallis passed away on May 14th.] We would also mention our departed friend Mr. Paul Topping, whom the Lord took to Himself three weeks ago, and who had served on the Brighton Home Committee for several years.

Finally, we would commend to you this Annual Report and the work of Bethesda. Some residents are very fearful when they first enter a Home, but in nearly every case within a matter of days they settle well. One of the remarks we hear frequently when we go round the Homes is, "Without Bethesda I do not know what I would have done." So may the Lord continue to be with us in the unknown future. There will be changes, but our endeavour is to uphold the aims of our founders. In 1951 Mr. S.F. Paul stated these admirably. He said that the desire was that the residents "might be favoured in their declining days or times of affliction to dwell with those who are like-minded with themselves, and to be cared for in a spiritual as well as a home-like atmosphere."

The Chairman thanked Mr. Scott for his Report and for all he has done for Bethesda during the last year. He asked if there were any questions, but there were none and it was proposed by Mr. J.H. Cottington (Blackboys) and seconded by Mr. J.L. Rosier (Pastor, Blackboys) that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund for 2009 be approved and adopted. This was carried *nem con*.

The Chairman then stated that the retiring members of Committee, Mr. F. Hayden and himself, had offered themselves for re-election. The Secretary announced that a total of 235 ballot papers were distributed to subscribers, of which 198 were returned. There were no spoil papers, so the number of valid

papers was 198. As a result of the voting, both members had been re-elected by a substantial majority, both members having received in excess of 80% of the votes cast. Both members had therefore been appointed to serve for a further period of three years.

The Chairman said that the Committee much appreciated the support of the subscribers and supporters and expressed gratitude for the confidence put in them to carry on the work of the Bethesda Fund as enabled by the Lord.

ADVICE TO A NEW PASTOR

*Written to Thomas Sinkinson when he accepted the
pastorate at Bedworth*

Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ,

Your kind favour came duly to hand, stating your resolve to go to Bedworth and take the pastorate of the church of Christ there. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Spirit rest upon that resolve; may the Eternal Three-in-One conduct you in all things pertaining to the church in an especial manner.

Brother, do nothing rashly; in all things ask direction of the Lord Jesus. He is the Head of the church. O that you may have a single eye to His glory! Some good men are fond of having what is called a bosom friend. My brother, the best bosom Friend ever I had is the Lord Jesus. He not only keeps secrets, but He helps one out of trouble, and also instructs a poor, ignorant fool how to act before His people, and also before the world. O that He may give you wisdom in all things!

Seek not hastily to gather the flock together. The dear Lord will bring them in His own time. Also the husbandman worketh, and he waiteth for the former and latter rain. May a spirit of humility be enjoyed by you, that others may see and follow so good a pattern. Be kind to all, learn to take insults in silence, carry your complaints to the Lord. Let the pulpit be the place where you tell your mind.

Eat and drink sparingly in the house of your friend. Let your own house be home indeed, the Bible be your companion, and the throne of grace your secret retreat where you may leave your sorrows and carry away blessings. Remember the eyes of the churches will be upon you. The eye of the world will be upon you. The eye of Satan will be upon you. O that the watchful eye of our God may be upon you for good, to comfort and to strengthen in all your labour! May God direct and bless.

Yours in the love of the truth for Christ's sake,

A.B. Taylor

Manchester, January 29th, 1866

JOSEPH PAINTER: 1843-1926

The experience of an old West Country preacher
(concluded from page 157)

But although the Lord had shown me how a poor sinner was saved, He had not shown me that I was saved with an everlasting salvation, and this became the ruling desire of my soul: "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." I went on in darkness for many months; sin was my greatest plague. I wanted mercy, and could by no means obtain it. I began to be astonished at my foolishness; I thought no one could be like me. O that I had not been born! I went to chapel, but seemed to come away as I went, no better for going, my mind filled with all manner of vain and foolish thoughts. I could by no means pray, and if I sought out a quiet place, the imaginations of my heart were evil. Every now and then I would set up a reformation, and read so many chapters a day, and for a little while seemed to be getting on well. Then some great temptation would beset me, and I fell, and all my religion gone.

I got desperate. We were living at Minety, but I still drove to Hankerton, four miles each way, morning and night. I wandered about on evenings, and was strongly tempted to stand on the railway and let the express train run over me. I was becoming tired of my life, cattle dying on the farm, and nothing but hell to look forward to. My case seemed desperate; what must I do? One evening I had planned to walk through the fields after dark, and stand on the line, and end everything. I started for the purpose; I had four fields to cross. Just as I heard the half-past seven express in the distance, and was getting over the stile, my wife put her hand on my shoulder, and said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I will come home." I have never told her to this day what she saved me from, but I went home feeling guilty of self-destruction, and had no sleep all night.

The next day was Sunday. I had made up my mind I would not go to chapel again. My wife was busy with the dairy, and as it got near chapel time and I did not get ready, she said, "Are you not going to chapel, and taking the little ones?" I replied, "I have been to chapel my last time." She commenced to cry, and said, "What shall I do with the children? If you are not going to chapel, where are you going?" I replied, "I am going for a walk in the fields." She said, "If you go out of my sight, I shall come." I walked half way across the home field; I was stopped; I cannot express my feelings, a voice said, "*What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?*" and then, "*Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of My hands.*" I felt to be entirely another person.

My first thoughts were of chapel; I wished to get there. It was too late to go to Hankerton, and I had passed by Minety chapel always before then; but now I was on my way there, trying to bless and praise God for

His kindness to me, for I had looked for hell – He brought me heaven. That chapel appeared to me to be one part of heaven. The late Mr. Eli Chappell was the preacher. He took for his text those words the Lord had a little while before sent to me from heaven. When he read them, I said to Him, “Now I know,

‘Thou wilt own my worthless name,
Before Thy Father’s face,
And in the new Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place.’”

I had love wrought in my soul for the Lord and His dear people, and was longing to follow Him in the ordinance of believers’ baptism. I told my wife about it. We both went before the church with several others, and were baptized and joined Minety church [Minety is a village in Wiltshire]. I then gave up driving sixteen miles every Sunday.

Ever since the Lord stopped me on that memorable evening while listening to Mr. Knill, I had commenced to read and study His Word. Ofttimes in my dreams I thought I had large congregations of people before me, and sometimes when alone in the day, I had portions of God’s Word upon my mind, and sometimes forgot myself and spoke aloud. One night I had a remarkable dream. I thought I was in a very isolated place, a strange, wild place, and only one path. I looked round, and saw one man behind me. I went slowly on; it seemed an hour before I looked round again; the man seemed to be just as far behind. I waited for him.

As he came to me, he said, “What a dreadful place this is! What do you think of it?” I replied, “I never thought to come into a place like this; considering everything, I think we are nearing the end of the world.” In a moment I heard a loud trumpet sound. I looked up and saw the elements all ablaze; I heard the screams of thousands of people, and saw the earth open to within a few yards of where we were standing. I saw the ungodly whirling down into the bottomless pit. The man said, “O how dreadful!” I said, “These are the nations of the earth that forgot God”; but he added, “If this should give way where we are standing!” I said, “It cannot; we are standing on Christ the eternal Rock. Do you feel any heat from all this fire?” He replied, “Not the slightest.” We watched for some time until the fires had ceased. Then I said, “I should have thought with all this fire everything would have been scorched up, all burnt to a cinder. Now look at those lovely, those happy groups of people; look at those lovely fountains. There is no end to the distance I can see.” He said, “I should think now you are satisfied.” I replied, “No, I am not; I won’t move from here until I have seen my Jesus.”

My wife spoke to me and awoke me. I said, “Why did you awake me? I should have seen the Lord.” This dream left a great impression on my mind; for weeks I could think of scarcely anything but eternity, and I felt I wanted to tell the people of the solemnity of living and dying.

I had only been baptized three weeks; the church had asked me to read sermons when there was no minister, and I had prayed at the prayer meetings before I was baptized. The next Sunday the minister did not come. Several of the members were away, and two or three ill. I had this morning service to myself, and no one to help me. I read a sermon of Mr. Philpot's; the text was, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." I told my wife of two or three members being ill and others being away, and that I should go out in the afternoon to see the sick friends. I said, "If I do not return, look me out a nice sermon out of that pile on the desk. Be sure to bring one, as I may have the service to myself." I saw her come into the chapel with the sermon in her hand, and felt comfortable about it.

The service went on until it came sermon time. She then handed me the sermon; it was the same I had read in the morning, when she was at home looking to the dairy. [Obviously, necessary work with the animals]. I thought I had better tell the people I would not read it, and said, "I will read another portion of God's Word." I opened to the 103rd Psalm. I can solemnly say I had not the least thought of speaking. I was all of a tremble and afraid of my own voice. I read to the words: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." In a moment the dreadful thought of eternity seized me. "I must tell the people." So I commenced to speak before I was rightly aware of it, and did not know how the time was gone when I sat down. I was afraid to look at anyone. The devil roared, "You have committed the unpardonable sin." The people begged me to speak every time, instead of reading, but I had no rest night or day in this next week. I promised the Lord I would never transgress like that again.

The next Sabbath no minister came; we held a prayer meeting in the morning. No one said anything about my speaking on the Sunday previous. When the service was over, the aged deacon stood up and said, "I am sorry I was not able to get here last Sunday evening, but I beg to announce that Mr. Painter will preach in the evening." I was too confused in my feelings to say anything. I felt determined, "But I am sure he won't," and told the poor old deacon so. His reply was, "Leave it with God."

The chapel was filled to overflowing – young men that never went anywhere, Congregationalists, Primitives, and some church people. They expected me to go in the pulpit. I felt most determined not to speak; I engaged in prayer and read the Word, and then the deacon stood up and said, "I announced this morning that Mr. Painter would preach. I am glad to see so many people present; now he will say something." I cried out to God, "Lord, what shall I do? What shall I say?" In a moment a most solemn feeling came over me, thoughts of eternity, and a voice said, "Say unto Zion, Thy God reigneth." This was my first text. I felt like

one standing between the living and the dead. I have a hope that the Lord blessed that service, and seven Primitive Methodists came to that chapel till the end of their days, and two young farmers came ever afterwards.

I have many times been astonished at the Lord's merciful dealings with such an unworthy wretch as I am. Forty years I have been labouring in His vineyard. I sometimes tell Him I shall be astonished if He owns me in the end, but that I shall be so disappointed if He does not, for I look forward to the time when I hope to see Him as He is and praise Him as I ought. I am daily asking the Lord to keep me alive in spiritual things and, if His will, to make me useful in His church while I am waiting for His time to come to call me away from time to eternity.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

From Thomas Manton (1620-1677) on the Lord's Prayer

O how hard a matter is it to rejoice in the gifts, and graces, and services of others, and be content with the dispensation, when God will cast us by as unworthy and use others for the glorifying of His name! Therefore that we may refer the choice of instruments to God, we need to go to Him and say, Lord, "Hallowed be Thy name"; do it which way and by whom Thou pleasest. We are troubled if others glorify God and not we, or more than we; if they be more holy, more useful, or more serious, self will not yield to this.

Now by putting up this prayer to God, we refer it to Him to choose the instrument whom He will employ. It was a commendable modesty and self-denial in John Baptist, which is described: "He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3. 30). When we are contented to be abased and obscured, provided Christ may be honoured and exalted; and be content with such a dispensation, though with our loss and decrease. Many are of a private station, and straitened in gifts, and can have no public instrumentality for God; now these need to pray, "Hallowed be Thy name," that they may rejoice when God useth others whom He hath furnished with greater abilities.

After prayerful consideration the Bethesda Fund Committee has appointed Mr. Adrian Topping of Haywards Heath to the post of General Manager from September 6th. There will be a period of transition during which Mr. Topping will assume more of the responsibilities at present carried out by Mr. Scott, who will remain as General Secretary until after the 2011 Annual General Meeting, if the Lord will.

BOOK REVIEWS

Contemplations on the God of Israel, by William Huntington; paperback; 183 pages; price \$8.44 plus postage; published by Gospel Mission, and obtainable from 316 1st NW, Box 318, Choteau, MT 59422, U.S.A., and also from the Christian Bookshop at Ossett.

Lovers of Huntington will warmly welcome this book. Really it is Huntington at his best: he is dealing with the best of subjects and this, not among his controversial writings but in gracious letters to a close friend.

Contemplations on the God of Israel consists of nineteen letters written to Jenkin Jenkins. Jenkins, who died aged 59 in 1810, was pastor at Jireh Chapel, Lewes, and almost certainly William Huntington's closest friend. He always referred to him as "the Welsh ambassador." The two are buried together outside the chapel at Lewes.

The subject of the book is exactly what the title implies – contemplations on each Person in the glorious Trinity. At the end of the final letter William Huntington writes: "Nor suffer the devil to confound thee by suggesting that you will displease one by addressing the other. Whatever is truly and properly God is the Object of divine worship. And that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, are truly, really and properly God is as clearly revealed in the Scriptures as that the Father is so. 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God our heavenly Father, and the communion of the Spirit of all grace, be with thee, and with all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth, both now and for evermore.'"

As the preface states: "This book is a complete refutation of many modern heresies and an effectual antidote to prevailing conceptions of the divine Being."

To those unfamiliar with Huntington, this is a good beginning.

This is a replica of the 1940 edition published by C.J. Farncombe and Sons. It is nicely produced, the print is clear, and the price most reasonable.

Simplicity in Preaching, by J.C. Ryle; 22 page pamphlet; price £1.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We can say Amen to what J.C. Ryle has to say about the importance of simplicity in preaching. And no one could say to him, "Physician, heal thyself!" for, though so learned, no preacher or writer has ever been more simple – short sentences and simple words.

Bishop Ryle emphasises that simplicity in speaking is not easy. It is usually through lack of understanding of the subject that a minister's sermon is complicated. The most profound truths can be expressed in the simplest of language. No one was more clear or simple than the Lord Jesus Himself.

Interestingly, Ryle felt strongly that it was advisable to have "points" in preaching, and to state them at the beginning. This has now become rare, though Gadsby, Warburton and Kershaw (though unlearned) always divided their sermons into points.

He also insists on the importance of illustrations. Of course, J.C. Philpot was a master in this. How he noticed that a congregation seemed to "come to life" and listen more intently when he illustrated a point! And in this he followed his Lord and Master.

It is remarkable to realise that the address forming the basis of this little work was delivered to a gathering of clergymen in St. Paul's Cathedral! Ryle's concluding remark was: "Above all, let us never forget that all the simplicity in the world is useless without prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit."

We did detect a tinge of episcopal superiority at times – referring to "the poor" and "the farm labourer" – but this does not detract from the real value of the pamphlet. J.C. Ryle makes one point, and he makes it well. We think it would be a good thing for every minister to read *Simplicity in Preaching*.

As J.H. Gosden once wrote: what a wonderful thing it would be if there was *one* bishop like J.C. Ryle in the Church of England today!

An interesting pamphlet and also copies of sermons preached have been published to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of Mr. Seth Mercer as pastor of the church at Grove Road Chapel, Eastbourne. We rejoice with our friend in the Lord's mercy in maintaining him all these years and wish him God's blessing now and in the unknown way.

See advertisement, page xiii.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL

No news can suit a ruined race
But sovereign, free, eternal grace;
No other gospel can impart
Joy, peace and comfort to the heart.

But those are tidings good indeed,
Which tell me Jesus deigned to bleed,
To vanquish Satan, cancel sin,
And bring eternal glory in.

The only gospel we can own
Sets Jesus Christ upon His throne;
Proclaims salvation full and free,
Obtained on Calvary's rugged tree.

The gospel is the news from heaven,
Of grace bestowed and sins forgiven –
Redeeming blood, electing love,
Of quickening grace and joys above.

Lord, write this gospel in my heart,
And in its blessings give me part;
Until I see my Saviour's face,
And sing, "I'm saved by gospel grace."

Joseph Irons (1785-1852)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JULY 2010

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

TO WHOM COMING

Sermon preached by Thomas Sinkinson

at Rehoboth Chapel, Lower Ford Street, Coventry, on June 2nd, 1870

Text: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious" (1 Pet. 2. 4).

If you know that blessed truth that the Apostle Paul gave utterance to: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief," happy are you. These are blessed tidings of the glorious gospel, the declaration that those who believe in the Son of God have the witness in themselves that "He is the true God, and eternal life," that He did accomplish the glorious work which the Father gave Him to do, and that He finished the work and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

Peter knew something of this experimentally. What do *you* know about it? Upon what does your religion stand? What sort of a foundation are you building upon? You must know what you are trusting to. If you are building on the sand it will not endure, but give way, and awful will be your fall. Some people are building on forms, some on their own obedience, attending to a round of duties, and think this is sufficient. But Paul emphatically declares to the church of God at Corinth, "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

If you have a religion of power, you know something about the Lord Jesus; you have been led to see there is something very beautiful in Him. If you have been brought to His blessed feet, and by faith have looked at Him and had a precious view of Him as your salvation; if you have been brought to feel your necessity, you did not teach yourself this. No; it was the Spirit of God taught you that. The Holy Ghost influenced your mind and led you in that direction, else you would never, never have felt your needy, undone state, your poverty, your sin, or felt yourself a sinner, a lost sinner. Well, as Mr. Hart says:

"A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost has made him so."

The chapter I read at the commencement of the service refers to this, that all must be brought to the place of the stopping of mouths, brought

to feel indwelling sin troubling, harassing and perplexing them, causing them to sigh and cry, day by day, on account of the evils they feel within, and brought to feel that they cannot do the things that they would. The Spirit of the Lord taught you that lesson. Now, mind, I do not mention these things in order to give a liberty or license to continue in sin that grace may abound. God forbid. But to show you how the Lord the Spirit convinces of sin and leads the soul to a conviction of his sinful state. Every child of God will feel sin at work in his members more and more as he advances on his journey through this wilderness, so that he will be led to prove he cannot do what he wants to do, and that the Canaanite dwells in the land.

Peter was led to prove that the religion that Jesus Christ gave to His own chosen was one of power, though at the onset he did not see things so clearly when the Lord first began with him and brought him to a knowledge of the truth. I do not think he saw the truth so clearly in his younger days as when he was tossed about, harassed, and plagued with sin, and brought to feel his weakness. You know more than you did a few years back. If you have been brought experimentally to know the fallacy, the unworthiness, the worthlessness of trusting to anything short of the Lord Jesus, you have been brought to trust in the Lord with all your heart, and cannot lean to your own understanding. Now there was a time when you thought about managing your own troubles. But the Lord has brought you to this, that you are quite satisfied in your mind of salvation matters that, if they are managed at all, they must be managed by Him who is the God of salvation to His people.

Peter says in his Epistle, and this was written to the elect of God, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables." He speaks thus to them by way of encouragement: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." He begins the second chapter thus: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

This is good advice. The apostle begins this chapter beautifully. He knew what a depraved heart man's was. He had proved its evil workings, and that all manner of evil was collected there. He knew that it was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; that envy, malice, revenge, evil speaking, back-biting, tattling, and all that sort of thing, if the child of God was left to the impulses of his own heart, would show themselves; that many times, if the Lord did not bring him up and hedge his way, to what lengths he might run. The apostle knew that these exhortations were necessary to the children of God. They need ballast.

Therefore he says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." There is, then, milk for babes and strong meat for those of riper years. Newborn babes have a desire for the sincere milk of the word, "the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." I do hope that some of you may be enabled by faith to drink of these breasts of consolation, so that you may feel strengthened.

Peter, in the latter part of this Epistle, says: "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

"The sincere milk of the Word," we believe to be God's truth, the declaration that God hath given of His Son. He hath given eternal life to His church and people, and this life is in His Son. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful." "The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Peter was enabled blessedly to set forth a precious Christ, His precious blood, and its preciousness to poor sinners. He had felt the preciousness of it in his own soul, and had been enabled to believe in Him for salvation; hence he says, "To you that believe, He is precious." "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Peter delighted to dwell upon these precious things. So do I, when the Lord the Spirit draws my heart to this precious gospel truth. I love to speak of them to poor sinners, to hold conversation with God's living ones in Jerusalem. When speaking of the preciousness of this glorious High Priest, when led to look at Him as our Prophet, Priest and King, our everlasting All, there is something so precious that it gladdens the heart of poor, sin-sick souls.

There is a vast deal of talk in our day about religion, but professors seem to know nothing about the precious blood, the precious promises, or the precious truths of God, cheering the hearts of God's tried ones. The Word of God's grace, how beautiful when the Lord applies the same! There are some people who say the Lord does not make the application; we must do that. If the Lord does not apply His Word, you may rest assured of this, you will never feel any power at all. If the Lord the Spirit does not open blind eyes, giving life and light to discover the Word of God, we shall never know it. Natural men do not know it; it is only those whom the Holy Spirit leads to understand the spirituality of God's Word that are enabled to suck, as it were, consolation from both promises, doctrines, ordinances and precepts of the Scriptures.

Those who came in the apostle's days are represented in the first chapter of this Epistle as elect. Do not startle at the words of the second verse of the first chapter: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." Elect means *chosen*, separated according to God's purpose, for a holy design and purpose. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." "To whom coming, as unto a living stone." These are the characters that are coming to this living stone. All that were brought to Christ were the characters referred to by Peter in this second verse. Jude also, in his Epistle, represents them as "sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."

Some people have the idea that they are elected when they believe; that God makes choice of them when they begin to pray and turn from their evil ways. If they try hard, sigh and pray, then they say the Lord will choose them. This is not Peter's doctrine. When he refers to the blessed doctrine of election, he means those characters that were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. He means that the Son of God was appointed by the Father to redeem these very characters and none else. So that it is the sheep He laid down His life for and none else. "He gave His life a ransom for many." He bought the church with His own blood and bare the iniquities of His own people. He ratifies and confirms this for His own sheep.

They are not all His sheep, or all His elect, who are in a profession. He laid down His life for the sheep only; not for the goats, but for the elect. It is a mercy if we are His elect. What a solemn thing if some of us should be left out of the number of His family! I believe many of God's people have many fears, and are much exercised on this point. Many times they feel as if they were not included in that number, that they are castaways, good for nothings, altogether deceived, and nothing but hypocrites after all. How poor sinners are tried on this point! Well, poor soul, though thou mayst be exercised on this point, in the exercises of thy mind much tried, so that only God and thyself know about it, He must decide it; you cannot. Dear Newton said:

"'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?"

There is so much in us that is contrary to what is good, so much unbelief, so many fears and doubts, so many risings up, and so many anxieties, cares and troubles about different things. You think, poor soul, that if you did love the Lord you would not be subject to such things as these. If these are thy feelings, if thou really feelest thy need of Christ

and desirest to love Him, thou art one of the characters. Surely thou wouldst not have been exercised and tried about the matter if the blessed Spirit had not convinced thee what a poor, needy one thou art.

Tried and perplexed in your mind, you feel in that state that you cannot draw any comfort to your poor heart, or do anything satisfactory to your mind, for sin is mixed with all you do. Still, after all, you have a desire after Christ. You do not like these things; they are a plague to you; you do not like to feel this anxiety of mind or these over-anxious cares. But you cannot help yourself; these things overtake you and come upon you unawares. You are thrown into circumstances over which you have no control. Things that you cannot decide bewilder you day by day. Now, what is such a poor thing to do if he has not a precious Christ to come to?

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone.” The promise is to those who are burdened, heavy-laden souls, who come to Him that He may give them rest. To you that are poor, restless, burdened, cast down and heavy-laden, there is rest in Jesus, and peace for the troubled conscience. “The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” Whither can a needy, sensible sinner go but to Christ? Mere professors can go in various directions; they can lean on any prop, or upon one another, and be satisfied. Not so the poor sensible sinner. What does *he* say? “To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone.” There is an attractive influence in the blessed Son of God. Nothing has a more powerful influence. There is no influence like the power of Jesus in drawing souls to Himself. So, if the Lord has given you to feel your need of that precious, powerful influence in your heart, you are one of those of whom it may be said, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone.”

The wise man said, “Draw me; we will run after Thee.” This is the description of the church of God. You feel your need of this drawing when you know by experience how sluggish you are, how incapable of moving, because of the heavy load of guilt on your conscience. The Lord knows all about it. He knows how the burden and the guilt of sin continually press upon your poor soul, causing you to go mourning continually before Him. A soul in this state groans out before the Lord upon account of the weight of his sin, when the chastening hand of the Lord is upon him. He cries out for the Lord to draw him. He knows very well that if God did not draw him he would not feel anything spiritual. It is only as the blessed Lord draws us that we are enabled to move towards Him.

I have some here tonight who have felt their need of this drawing; who find they are weak, dried, withered and barren if left for a little season; who have no relish at all for these things, only as the Holy Ghost

influences them, and who have no power until the Lord is pleased to draw them; then they run. When the Lord gives the word, power goes with it. Then we are enabled to approach His blessed Majesty in sweet confidence, walk in the light of His countenance and the smiles of His face, and have access to Him. Such is the effect of His love, we feel that here we could dwell for ever. This is a real, substantial joy; the soul is completely blessed, completely pardoned, and will be eternally happy. This is no phantom, dream or something imaginary. It is not a theory or something you learned from your father, mother or grandfather. No, no; the Holy Ghost taught you this. He lays judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet; the hail sweeps away every refuge of lies, and the waters overflow the hiding-places. We feel in a perishing and sinking condition, and see and feel ourselves to be completely lost. Then it is the Lord gives faith to enable us to draw nigh.

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone.” As many as were ordained to eternal life believed, and came to Him as their hiding-place. They came to Him as their eternal All, their Law-fulfiller, their Ark, their Refuge, their strong tower, their battle-axe, their weapon of war, their minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man. They are His willing subjects, that bow to His sceptre and follow Jesus in the way. He is a wonderful Teacher to us who are such dull scholars. However foolish we may be when the Lord takes us in hand, He not only teaches and instructs us, but He directs our steps and holds us up by His Spirit. Although we stagger first one way and then another, so that we cannot walk steadily, the Lord will not let us go; He will not leave us to the adversary. Yea, blessed be His ever-glorious name, how often have we seen Him take the prey from the mighty and deliver the lawful captive. Though there may be only two legs and a piece of an ear, yet the good Shepherd comes, asserts His power, rescues His sheep from the jaws of the devouring lion, and delivers His church, His chosen, His blood-bought family. He never leaves or forsakes them. “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone.” They *do* come, and *shall* come, for the Lord hath spoken the word. Wherever they are, the Lord will fetch them in due time. It is written: “Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth.” “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” (Psa. 110. 3; John 6. 37.)

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men.” This is a figurative expression. The foundation stone of the building of God is Christ. The building is erected on Christ, not upon

Peter, as the Papists would have us believe. Christ is the foundation God has laid in Zion, and he that believeth shall never be confounded. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." That is the living stone, the living Christ, the Christ of God. I hope God the Holy Ghost will give us faith tonight to look to Him. The Jews and Greeks rejected Him. They could not see anything desirable in His Person, as they were looking after carnal things. They were not built on the foundation-stone. These things were foolishness to them, and are to all except those who are lost, helpless and ruined, whom the Lord came to save.

When the Spirit enabled you to flee after Christ, what a blessed day for your soul. The Lord gave evidence that you were in the building, on the sure foundation, the Rock, the immovable foundation that cannot be overthrown, against which the gates of hell can never prevail. The enemy may concoct schemes, and will do so to the end of time. There may be Ecumenical Councils, Ritualism and a thousand other things to delude the people. But the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. They shall never interfere with the foundation, the living stone, a precious Christ, a complete Saviour for poor, lost, ruined, hell-deserving sinners.

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone." You are fearing He will not receive you, that what the devil has been telling you is all true, namely, that there is no mercy for you, that you had better give it all up and have done with it. You have been very much tried when you have seen your friends come to the chapel and say how comfortable they are. You think they never have any of those fears, while you are weak and distressed because when you come you get nothing. You come at times with that cry of Job: "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat! I would order my cause before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments." This is the characteristic of a child of God. He would believe, but he cannot, and he meets with so many hindrances in coming to a throne of grace.

We sometimes sing that hymn, "Up to the fields where angels lie." The finishing up of this hymn is very sweet. I have felt the sweetness of it many times:

"Great All in all, eternal King!
Let me but view Thy lovely face,
And all my powers shall bow and sing
Thy endless grandeur and Thy grace."

So it is with those poor souls who are tried and exercised in their minds. You have had tokens from the Lord and gracious visits from His heavenly hill. He has given you to taste some of His mercies and some of the joys of salvation. You who have fled to Him for refuge, have hid yourselves in the storm and tempest under the shadow of His almighty

wings. He has been a refuge to you in that day, and will be all the way through every trial. You may be put on short bitings, kept very close, and only have a bit now and then. These weaning times are very painful. The poor soul wants to suck at the breasts of consolation, but finds it very difficult to get at them. By these means God teaches His people knowledge and makes them to understand doctrine. This is done in order that they may cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and trust in the living God that made heaven and earth. Bless His holy name, He has not failed you in these times of trial, and He never will. Sometimes we fear He will. Is it not strange that we should get into this way and be so overcome, after the Lord has done so much for us? After all the mercies we have been made the subjects of, that we should sink down? This proves that no man can keep alive his own soul, and that none can keep his mind stayed upon God one moment. That poor woman cried, "Lord, help me!" And thy cry is, "Lord, save me. The waters come into my soul. I sink in deep waters, where there is no standing."

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men." Disallowed He was of men. Neither Jews nor Greeks would have Him. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." It is to them who are called, whether Jews or Greeks, the election of grace, who are brought in due time to flee from their sin, repent, and believe the gospel. This is the effect, not of free-will, or Arminian creature-sufficiency, but of God's power, grace and sovereign love to poor worms, helpless, undone creatures, whom He loved and died to save:

"How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed."

"Disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." The church of God is represented as stones in God's building. "Ye are God's building." He goes to the quarry of nature and gets out these stones at the appointed time. You may say you will not believe there is an appointed time. But *there is*. And when that time comes, it does not matter where the sinner may be, whether in the dancing-room, the theatre, or the drinking-house, at the appointed time God the Holy Ghost comes, convinces him of sin and makes him tremble. When I was a young man, I never trembled at any man. But when the Almighty took me in hand, He made me tremble from head to foot. It is of no use; down you must come into the dust of self-abasement when the Holy Ghost begins the work in your conscience. Your cry will be, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

"A *living* stone." I have not time to enter into particulars with regard to this important figure. Jesus Christ says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." Bless His dear name, He ever liveth to make intercession according to the will of God. Poor, tempest-tossed soul, Jesus is thy Advocate; He pleads thy cause and He pleads it well. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Are you a stone in the building? Have you believed on Jesus as the foundation of your hope? If you have, you know it, although you may be tried about it, and your mind very much perplexed. The Lord will not leave His people without witnesses. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself."

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." Coming means believing, looking to Him; having your eye directed straight to Him, the beloved Object of your faith; you a poor sinner, and He Jesus Christ the righteous, who stood in the law-place of His people. He satisfied the claims of divine justice, and fulfilled the law, so that His people are all justified in Him, through His perfect obedience to the holy law of God. His people stand justified in Him in the sight of a holy God. No other justification will do, only in and through Him who was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet without sin, pure and holy. *He* was made unto His people "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption."

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." I was preaching at a place this year, away from home, and met with a woman who would have me go to her house. I felt reluctant, but one of the deacons advised me to go to hear what she had to say. I went, and she began to tell me how she was exercised in her mind when the blessed Spirit first convinced her of sin. Her husband was a local preacher among the Unitarians, and not wishing to cause any disturbance in her family, she went with him to the meeting. The Lord convinced her of sin in such a way, and she was so distressed on the account of what she felt within that she did not know what to do. She really thought she should lose her reason. The people with whom she associated could see that something particular had taken place. The minister and people were very kind to her, but they came to the conclusion that she was going beside herself. Every means was tried to give her comfort, but all was ineffectual.

As a last resource she was recommended to a doctor who lived a little distance from the place. She did not tell me his name, but from what he said I should think he was a gracious man. She did not believe he could do her any good, but she had a daughter, a young girl, deaf. She

concluded to take her with her, thinking that if he could do the mother no good, he probably might prescribe something for the child. He looked at the mother, had some conversation with her, and then said, "Do you know anything about *the blood*? That is what you want, *the precious blood of Christ*." Singularly, on the Sunday following, she went to a chapel and the minister was led to enter into the precious foundation-stone laid for poor sinners. The Word was blessed, and she was enabled to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as the living stone. She had a glorious deliverance and was enabled to see that she had remission of sin through faith in Christ.

I do not think I ever met with a more decided character in my life. These things were quite a mystery to the Unitarian. He could not understand it, as he knew nothing about the precious blood. But that poor sinner who is made to feel his lost state and is brought to Christ, to find Him to be the only foundation, and that there is no other but a precious Christ sealed home upon the heart by the blessed Spirit, he will prize it.

May the Lord bless your souls with a hope in His mercy, that you may find tonight love and power running through your heart, enabling you to lean upon Him as your Refuge, and your All in all.

There are many crooked stones cut out of the quarry of nature; and when the straight edge is applied the crookedness is seen. Now the edge applied is perfectly straight and very accurate. When God applies this straight edge to the rugged stones that are hewn out of the quarry, what a discovery there is of the wretchedness, the unworthiness, the unsightliness of the stones. So the law of God, when applied by God the Holy Ghost to the sinner, discovers his crookedness, vileness and his utter deformity. The law maketh nothing perfect. It will not give righteousness; it only discovers the deformity when applied by the Spirit. It is the bringing in of a better hope that maketh perfect, the revelation of a precious Christ as a Refuge to the poor soul who feels his deformity.

I knew an old man, a sawyer by trade, who worked for an old Arminian. He once had a crooked piece to cut, and got his line stretched on the wood to strike it straight. The free-willer said, "What a beautiful thing it is to have a straight line to work by!" "Nay, master," said the man, "the line does not make the timber straight; it only discovers its crookedness." The poor Arminian thought the law of God, like the line, would make a man straight. There is no perfection, no holiness, no sanctification, no redemption, in the law. They are all in a precious Christ and nowhere else.

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." God sent His beloved Son, His bosom Friend, One set up with Him from all eternity. The Word was

made flesh; the eternal Son of God assumed our nature. "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." "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: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

"Chosen of God, and precious." If I had the power to give you life, I would draw you. But I cannot; I can only speak to you of the capability of Jesus and of the work He accomplished for His people. He must give eyes and work faith in the heart. It is God's gift. If ever you are led and brought to Him with a feeling heart, the Lord must bring you, and He will have all the glory. May He add His blessing. Amen.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

By Charles Ross, 1889, minister in the Free Church of Scotland

When our Lord said to His disciples, "Arise, let us go hence," they immediately left the supper-room, as we believe, passed in silence through the streets of Jerusalem, and soon found themselves in some secluded spot on the slopes of Mount Olivet leading to the valley of the Kedron. And there, surrounded by His little band of disciples, He sees a beautiful emblem of Himself: "I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman."

Jesus says, "I am the true Vine" – I Myself – not means and ordinances merely, but I Myself in My Person and work. When Jesus said, "I am the *true* Vine," we are naturally led to suppose that He here intends to contrast Himself with some other vine, which was not in His eyes the true one, but only an image of it. And when we ask what that external vine was which led Jesus thus to express Himself, those who maintain that they had not yet quitted the supper-room either decline to answer the question altogether, or else have recourse to various suppositions which are altogether forced and fanciful. But if it be admitted, as we think it ought to be, that Jesus and His disciples had ere this time left the supper-room, then the explanation becomes simple and easy and beautiful. "I," says the divine Redeemer, with the vines of Olivet before Him – "I am the true, the essential, spiritual Vine, of which that earthly one is but an image."

And if I were now asked wherein lies the precise point of resemblance between Christ and the vine, I would say it is in that

mysterious oneness, in consequence of which the life of the vine-stock becomes that of the branches. For just as it is the same life and sap that abides in the vine and in the branches, so it is the same life, which in its surpassing glory and fulness dwells in the God-Man Mediator, that is also in the weakest believer. It is the same Spirit, poured out upon the Head and received by Him without measure, that in measure is given to His people. And this is peculiar to the work of our salvation, as peculiar to it as is incarnation or substitution. I suppose that holiness, as to the substance of it, is the same in the holy angels as it is in Christians; yea, that it is the same in *the nature* of it in His people as it is in God Himself. But herein lies the peculiarity of the life of God's people that the God-Man is the spring of it; that it is His life-giving power that creates it at the first, that preserves it, and that causes it to grow from grace to grace, and from grace to glory. Hence arises a *peculiarly close dependence* of Christ's people upon Christ. And hence also their *blessed security* in having their life bound up with His: "Because I live," says He, "ye shall live also."

And while Jesus is thus "the true Vine" – the source of His people's spiritual life and fruitfulness – His Father is "the Husbandman," that is, the great Proprietor of the vineyard, and its Cultivator. The title of Husbandman is given to God as at once the Owner and the Vinedresser. He it is who possesses it and who watches over it with peculiar care. Jesus doubtless intends to impress upon them the value of this plant which God Himself tends and watches over with such care.

And the *manner* in which He *cultivates* the vine is thus referred to: "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away," etc. (verse 2). It is plainly implied in these words that there are *two* sets of branches in the vine – fruitful and fruitless ones. For just as in a fruit tree some branches may be fruitful while others are quite barren, according as there is a *vital connection* or *no vital connection* between the branches and the vine-stock, so the professing followers of Christ may be spiritually fruitful, or the reverse, according as they are spiritually and vitally united to Christ, or but externally and mechanically attached to Him. In drawing this twofold sketch, our Lord has evidently in view not only His disciples, but His future church; and He gives us plainly to understand that as in it there would be always some fruit-bearing Christians, because of His dwelling in them by His Spirit, so there would also be fruitless ones because, while externally united to Him, they would nevertheless be internally separated from Him. O with what earnestness, therefore, should each one of us enquire whether we are spiritually united to Christ, or simply artificially tied to Him by a bare profession of His name, or an outward adherence to His cause!

For see, in the second instance here, *how the divine Husbandman deals with these branches respectively*. The one – that which does not

bear fruit – *He takes away*, sometimes in the present life, either by prosperity or by adversity (Matt. 13. 21, 22). But whether in this life or not – whether He will do it by prosperity or by adversity here or not – there is a time coming that shall bring to the test every Christless professor. Yes, solemn truth! every fruitless branch the divine Husbandman shall remove from its place in the vineyard – in the hour of death and of judgment. For thus it is written: “Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15. 13).

But on the other hand, the fruitful branch “*He purgeth*” – cleanseth, or pruneth – stripping it, as the husbandman does, of what is rank and luxuriant, freeing it from those barren shoots and useless tendrils that absorb the sap and hinder real fruitfulness – a process often painful, but not the less needful and beneficial than in the natural husbandry. And various are *the ways* in which He does it – by the Word of His grace (verse 3), by the dealings of His providence, by afflictions and chastisements, and above all, by the effectual operation of His Spirit: “If ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

But whatever be the means, the *design* is the same, “that it may bring forth more fruit.” It is not to weaken or impair the principle of fruitfulness that He prunes, far less to destroy it; but it is to render it more fruitful. And yet we do not always see the reason of this; we sometimes marvel when we see the child of God subjected to the pruning-knife of the heavenly Husbandman. But here is the true explanation of it: His heavenly Father would have that child to become more and more fruitful, and therefore He takes His pruning-knife in hand, and strikes off what is hindering real growth. Ah, this is the reason why the most eminent saints have often been the most deeply tried; the great measure of their fruitfulness they acquired in the school of sanctified affliction.

Precious Bible, what a treasure! Blessed be the Lord, I can see that my acceptance and perseverance do not depend upon my frames or feelings, but upon the power, compassion, care and faithfulness of Him, who in the midst of all the changes to which we are exposed in this wilderness state, is unchangeably the same yesterday, today and forever. O what a horrid wretch was I when on board the *Harwich*, on the coast of Africa, and too long afterwards. Surely no one who did not finally perish was ever more apparently given up to a reprobate mind! I am a singular and striking proof that the atoning blood of Jesus can cleanse from the most enormous sins, that His grace can soften the hardest heart, subdue the most obstinate habits of evil, and that He is indeed able to save to the uttermost. Lord, I believe, O help me against my unbelief. I have been, yea to this day, I am a chief sinner, and yet I am permitted to preach the truth I once laboured to destroy.

John Newton

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

By Elisha Coles (c.1608-1688)

The first visible ensign of sovereignty was creation, or God's giving the world an actual existence in time according to His decree from everlasting; bringing that huge yet void and formless mass at first out of nothing; and then this glorious fabric out of that confusion; His hanging the earth upon nothing; His assigning to every sort of creatures such form and station, order, use and efficacy, and impressing on them such laws and instincts of nature as seemed Him good; but all in a regular subserviency to the good of the whole, which also was effected by His Word. What He would was done with that immediate suddenness, as if the things themselves had proceeded with His breath (Psa. 33. 9). The instant production of light (Gen. 1. 3, 9), the waters separating from the other elements, and gathering into a body, and their going up and down to the place He had founded for them (Psa. 104. 8), with many others, of which you have an index in the first chapter of Genesis, are witnesses of it; as also His so fixing this establishment that they continue this day according to that ordinance (Psa. 119. 91).

Consequent to this, as a second ensign of sovereignty, is that universal providence by which the creation is sustained, and all inferior causes guided to their designed end; and this notwithstanding all supposable accidents which might possibly happen to obstruct or divert them. And that the creatures have at times deviated from their first rules and settlement is no derogation to the doctrine of God's sovereignty, but rather an illustration of it, as showing that the creatures are still in His hand as clay in the potter's. Hence we find their innate propensions to be sometimes suspended, otherwhiles acted beyond, and at times again quite contrary to the law of nature; and this not casually, nor by the force of created powers, nor yet for any private or self-concern, but to serve some special and superior end, which their Lord had to be done. To instance a few:

1. Of creatures without life: as the windows of heaven opening, and the fountains of the great deep breaking up, notwithstanding the firmament above and the bounds beneath, to drown the world of ungodly men (Gen. 7. 11); the Red Sea dividing and standing up as a wall, to make way for His people's escape (Exod. 14. 22); the sun and moon standing still till they were avenged on their enemies (Josh. 10. 13); the stars to the same end fighting against Sisera (Judg. 5. 20); the sun going back in Ahaz's dial to help Hezekiah's faith (2 Kings 20. 11); the fiery furnace devouring those at a distance who cast in those holy confessors, and not so much as touching them that were cast into it (Dan. 3. 22, 27); the winds and the seas, which are such impetuous, and one would think,

even lawless creatures, they stir not, nor breathe, but to fulfil His Word (Psa. 148. 8; Mark 4. 39, 41).

2. Of living creatures that have not the use of reason: how readily they went by pairs into Noah's ark at God's appointment (Gen. 7. 9)! The frogs, lice and locusts, with what supernatural boldness did they assault and perplex the Egyptians, that the magicians themselves confessed the finger of God was in it (Exod. 8. 19); and as strangely withdrew when their work was done (verse 13)! Witnessed also by the dumb ass reproving the prophet's madness (2 Pet. 2. 16); the lion killing the seduced prophet for breaking God's command, yet not eating the carcass, nor tearing the ass (1 Kings 13. 26, 28); a ravenous bird bringing Elijah food in his solitary condition, (1 Kings 17. 6); the whale receiving Jonah, and at God's command casting him on dry land without harm (Jonah 1. 17; 2. 10); the lions also not hurting Daniel in their den, yet greedily devouring his accusers (Dan. 6. 22, 24). It must needs be a sovereign power which thus intends, restrains, inverts the course of nature at His will.

QUALIFICATION FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

From J.K. Popham's "Answers to Enquiries"

QUESTION

Has a church any warrant from the Word of God to set aside a person who has applied for membership on the ground, and that only, that he or she has not been brought into "gospel liberty"; in other words, has not yet been enabled to realise the full pardon of sins, although the person gives good proof of having passed from death unto life, and also of having been raised from the terrors of the law to a hope in His mercy?

ANSWER

It will be felt that whatever power a church possesses it possesses *under the Head*; and mercifully He has given directions for its guidance in receiving members. It is therefore vital to the well-being of a church to seek and follow those directions. They will be found in the Scripture definition of a believer, and of what is needful for salvation. Compare:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3. 16); "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came

upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2. 41-44); "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8. 37); "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days" (Acts 10. 44-48).

These passages plainly show what is the qualification for church membership: that it is not the realisation of the full pardon of sins, but *the possession of the Holy Ghost and faith in Christ*. Faith, with all other graces, is a fruit of the Spirit indwelling in the heart. It "cometh by hearing" some testimony of Christ, that He is the Son of God who should come, the promised Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. In very many instances believers are firmly fixed there before they attain to the full "knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins." And by this faith and other graces they are made manifest to other believers to be the children of God:

"That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.... He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3. 15, 18); "But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom. 4. 24); "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth Him also that is begotten of Him.... Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1 John 5. 1, 5); "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God have made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John 5. 10).

They hope in His mercy, fear Him, and love Him.* Sealing *follows* believing (Eph. 1. 13); it brings a believer to the full assurance of understanding: "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead" (Col. 2. 12); gives him a greater measure of peace, comfort and power, freer access, sweeter communion. But according to

* Psa. 33. 18; 147. 11; Job 28. 28; Prov. 8. 17; 1 John 4. 7, 8, 15.

Scripture it is not the *measure*, but the *possession* of the grace of God which qualifies a person for church membership. And therefore, however desirable it is that before making a public profession the Lord's people should know for themselves the pardon of their sins and receive a clear revelation of Christ, it appears that a church has not the right or power to refuse the ordinances and membership to those who desire them, in whom some of the works of faith are manifest.

WE LOOK FOR THE SAVIOUR

*Outlines of a sermon preached by Edward Carr
at Providence Chapel, Bath, on March 4th, 1917*

Text: "From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3. 20).

Do we? How many profess to and never do! Woe, woe unto them! Are we looking for the Saviour? not at nature, not at things around, not outwardly, no, but inwardly. God's people are. They are looking for One to come. Where shall we look for this Person? From heaven. The Word of God is very clear; the failure is, people do not look up. Let us by God's help look at it.

1. The waiting people; waiting, what for? The Lord from heaven.
2. The upward look. What is it?
3. The coming Saviour. I like that word "coming."

1. Who are the people described in verse 16, "Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing"? Yes; but you say there are very few. Never you mind how few, the point is, are you among them? These people are following the apostolic example, that they "may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless." These people are separated from all the rest, verse 20, "For our conversation is in heaven"; that signifies the course of life, for as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." These people do – in their families, in their businesses, for their conversation is in heaven, not on earth.

They are looking up to the things not seen, "for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Here is the upward look of faith, for faith looks up. It is waiting, watching; it is either one thing or the other – heaven or hell. Which is it with you? The truth is the same. God's people are diligently looking; they cannot be satisfied till Jesus comes.

Shall we know His voice? Yes, the sheep know the voice of the Shepherd. Then He must be near if we hear His voice, for if we hear a person's voice that person is near. God's people see His hand, and these are the people that are looking heavenwards. Why? Because Jesus is there. The women as they drew near to the grave of Jesus were seeking for Him, but they were seeking the living among the dead. We are looking for a living Christ.

2. There are two motives for the look – first, because we need Him; second, because we love Him. They need the gracious Saviour. Who? Those who are looking for Him. Are you? Jesus is coming; He is coming with a shout. Behold the Bridegroom cometh! There are so many in these days whose lights are going out. What is He coming for? To destroy the works of the devil. What will be the proof of His coming? The dead in Christ will rise first. Every eye eventually shall behold Him. What a voice His will be! Will you be among them who will hear it with solemn joy?

“But can I bear the piercing thought:
What if my name should be left out,
When Thou for them shalt call?”

What will happen to the living? Two things. Their bodies will be changed, and they will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Well now, what about the rejecters, and with them the lukewarm? Condemnation. “Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth.” That is what He, who is not only the Saviour but the Judge, will do in that great day.

3. The coming Saviour. God's people are looking for the Saviour, looking for these things of which we have been speaking. “If it were not so,” said the Saviour, “I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” He is the Resurrection and the Life.

What a separation it will be! What a mercy to have a desire to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!” Are you looking for His appearing, for the coming Saviour to save you finally and for ever? What a mercy to be saved from inward as well as outward sin. He can save the vilest sinner who feels his need.

Look up, Jesus is coming in the clouds. He comes now sometimes in cloudy dispensations, for the clouds are the dust of His feet. We are looking up for His return, “For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour.” The Lord add His blessing. Amen.



SAVING FAITH

This faith is not a mere assent
 To God's most holy Word;
 Much more than this is really meant
 By faith, the gift of God.

'Tis not a natural belief
 That Jesus lived and died;
 It is, with all my sin and grief,
 In Him alone to hide.

'Tis not of works, lest we should boast
 This saving gift to gain;
 'Tis wrought by God the Holy Ghost
 When we are born again.

'Tis not on all mankind bestowed,
 Though all by sin are wrecked;
 It is the sovereign gift of God,
 And sure to the elect.

Its Author and its Object too
 Is Jesus Christ the Lord;
 Faith owns Him as the Just and True,
 And rests upon His Word.

George Burrell

Watford

REMEMBERING OUR NATIONAL DELIVERANCE

September 3rd, 2009, marked the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War and more than ever some argue, "Well, it's so long ago, why remember the past?" or, "It's just for the elderly to think about." How uninformed and naive people can be! The fact that the events of the Second World War took place seventy years ago is one thing; the real issue is that the consequences of those events, being so profound, are still with us today. If the outcome of the war had been different, quite literally you would not be alive to read this article and I would never have been born to write it. We should regularly reflect on and remember the enormity of this truth. Present lives need to be set in the context of the past.

At first when war was declared nothing much happened, but within a few months France and Belgium fell to the Germans. The only port from which to evacuate the British Army was Dunkirk, where they were trapped against the sea. Our troops were encircled and the German army was proceeding to their annihilation. The position was so serious it was

estimated that perhaps only 20,000 men might be rescued. The whole root, core and brains of the British Army was about to perish. There was no human solution to this crisis; the end of the British way of life had come – or so it appeared.

When it became clear how serious the situation was, King George VI called for a National Day of Prayer to be held on May 26th. In a national broadcast he instructed the people of the United Kingdom to plead for divine intervention. Together with members of the Cabinet, the King attended Westminster Abbey, whilst literally millions of people across the British Isles flocked to churches to join in prayer seeking deliverance. Nothing like it had ever been seen before in our country or indeed in any country with people queuing to get into churches, pleading for help.

What happened next was the most miraculous and timely deliverance ever to occur in the history of our nation with two great phenomena following this National Day of Prayer. The first was a great storm which broke out over the area on May 28th hindering the murderous work of the German airforce, and the second was the great calm which settled on the English Channel, the like of which had not been seen for decades. This calm enabled an armada of boats to rescue no less than 335,000 men! Four years later, of course, this deliverance meant that Britain was able to provide a “launch pad” for the liberation of Europe. If the British army had been destroyed at Dunkirk, the United Kingdom would then have been occupied and the liberation of Europe would never have happened.

The violent storm and Channel calm immediately following this Day of Prayer made possible what people began to call “*the miracle of Dunkirk*.” Sunday, June 9th, was appointed as a Day of National Thanksgiving. There had been no human solution to this national crisis; it had been solved by divine intervention alone.

There were so many other instances of divine assistance at crucial moments in the war that in October 1942 Churchill was moved to comment: “I sometimes have a feeling of interference. I want to stress that I have a feeling sometimes that some Guiding Hand has interfered. I have a feeling that we have a Guardian because we have a great cause and we shall have that Guardian so long as we serve that cause faithfully.” Churchill stated that while we stood for a great “cause” we would have a “Guardian.” But what “causes” do we stand for today: greed, selfish ambition, immorality and unbelief? Such “causes” have no Guardian!

In Psalm 107. 34 we are told that the Lord turns a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. This is an apt description of the state of our country today. There are no human

solutions to the problems our nation faces; God will exalt and bless any nation or any society anywhere which stands for righteousness, truth, justice and peace. May we pray that the Lord will work widely in our land again, as Habakkuk did. "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy" (3.2).

Requested by Mr. J.K. Stehouwer
(taken from *Cheering Words*).

THOMAS SINKINSON: 1811-1875*

By A.B. Taylor, William Gadsby's successor at Manchester

Thomas Sinkinson, minister of the gospel and pastor of the church of Christ at Bedworth, Warwickshire, died on February 28th, 1875, aged 64.

Mr. Sinkinson was a native of Preston, Lancashire, and was born in 1811. He spent nineteen years an entire stranger to God, following those things which in after life he was ashamed of. It pleased God after a "prize dance," and pitched battle, to send an arrow of conviction into his conscience on the same night. He left the battle-field without his hat, and walked two miles in great distress, fearing death and destruction were close upon him.

Shortly afterwards he was invited to join the Wesleyans, and did so, among whom he became and continued a preacher for several years.

On one occasion he was holding forth on "Preston Marsh," inviting all, and offering Christ to all before him, when a voice from the congregation called out, "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." This voice of truth completely closed his mouth. He could not go on, and left the platform. "Where the word of a king is, there is power" (Ecc. 8. 4).

After this he was greatly exercised. not knowing what course to steer, and veered about strangely, visiting various denominations, and altogether unable to settle. In a solitary walk by the Ribble side, the words, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," strangely impressed his mind, and after long waiting and much anxiety,

* In childhood days we heard a lot about "Sinkinson of Bedworth." There were a number of Sinkinsons about in the chapels. Apparently Mr. Sinkinson had been an all-in wrestler, and was a fearsome sight in the pulpit, having double teeth all the way round. The power of his preaching must have been great. On one occasion in the pulpit at Haslingden, he pointed at a young man who was fighting against God's dealings, and shaking his fist cried, "If thou art as strong as a lion, the Lord will have the last word with thee!" The young man was brought down in helplessness to the Lord's feet.

he was induced to observe the ordinance of believers' baptism. In 1843 he was baptized in the River Ribble by Mr. Hervey, and joined a body of open communion professors. Here he began a second time to preach, and once a week in a Ragged School he addressed a congregation.

On one occasion he gave out a hymn:

“Preach and baptize in every land,
Adults and infants too.”

After reading the hymn, he said, “Though I have read this hymn, I do not believe it.” This caused a great rupture and confusion among the people. Such sayings and doings could scarcely be kept under a bushel. It was reported and again reported. From error he began to preach truth. And how pleasant when men grow up in the mysteries of the gospel! When they go back, how dreadful! It makes honest men dread, and question the point. When, after a profession of free grace principles, a man begins to “offer” Christ, or tell the dead to flee to Christ, the case is bad. Not so our dear, departed brother. “The memory of the just is blessed.”

In 1852 this was reported to several of the friends, members of the late dear John M’Kenzie, of the same town [first Editor of the *Standard*], whose ministry will not soon be forgotten. They went to see Mr. Sinkinson, J.S. Warburton of Wigan, still alive [1876], among the rest. They plainly asked him how he could stop and preach among people who hated God’s truth. Honest to his light, he said he thought he had God’s Word on his side. After a good deal of conversation, he seemed humbled and instructed, and ceased to reply, evidently convinced of the truth that had been laid before him. It appears our brother’s zeal had induced him to fit up and make very comfortable the Ragged School above named, where he preached.

The same friends went shortly to hear him there, and became more satisfied that the Lord the Spirit was leading him into the truth, and that though he had had little experience at that time, God’s Word was becoming his stand-point. A union of spirit sprang up between them that was never dissolved. The friend before named, being himself a supplying minister, took Mr. Sinkinson to several places with him, to see and to hear. This offended the Ragged School party, and was the means of his leaving them. Under the warm advice of his friend, who said, “Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate,” he replied, “I am turned out, and can go no more; and where to go I do not know.” His friend invited him to the prayer meeting that night, and from that time he settled down in the church of Christ at Preston, and was allowed to go out to supply amongst the churches, and was well received.

His acquaintance with God’s Word became more and more visible, and his dependence on the God of the Word was clearly manifest. All

the churches of truth valued much his services, for he grew in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The constitution of his mind was of high temperament. He would rush upon a beloved topic with a zeal peculiar to himself. No one who heard him could conclude he was not in earnest. His pulpit attitudes were not at all scientific, though well defined; and when in warmth of soul he opposed an enemy to the truth, the clenched fist seemed really to deal to the adversary a blow of destruction.

Amongst the churches he supplied, Bedworth was one. His ministry was well received, and the church concluded to give him a call. He accepted the invitation and became pastor. Many were the cogitations of his mind on the matter of the pastorate, matter enough to make a little volume. Our brother took the pastorate in January 1866, and laboured amongst them nine years. He was much esteemed by all, and dearly beloved by many to whom his ministry had been made a special blessing. And though there were ministerial troubles at Bedworth, as at other places, during his nine years' ministry, he always manifested a Christian spirit to all the brethren, walking humbly with his God and contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

During the last two years of his life he seemed to be in ill-health, and in January and February was laid aside for five weeks. February 14th, 1875, was his last appearance in that pulpit, when many said they should not hear his voice again. After the sermon, he wished them to sing hymn 320:

“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform,”

asking also for his favourite tune, quite contrary to his usual manner. He preached the following evening at Thornborough. His text was Philippians 3. 9: “And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Here ended our brother's ministerial labours. With great difficulty he was taken home on the following Friday, taking to his bed at once. Bronchitis had set in, which terminated his mortal life. He was often visited, and one of his deacons was often with him and asked him many things about faith and feeling. At one time he said:

“Though painful at present, 'twill cease before long,
And then O how pleasant the conqueror's song!”

When asked about a church trouble, he replied:

“No good in creatures can be found,
But may be found in Thee;

I must have all things and abound,
While God is God to me.”

At another time he said, “Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” To another friend staying with him, he said, “I have learned Job’s lesson well: ‘I would not live always.’” The friend replied, “Job also said, ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’” He replied, “Yes, yes. I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

He often sang the third and seventh verses of hymn 232: “His love in time past,” and “Since all that I meet shall work for my good.” Most earnestly did he pray for the peace of the church.

His family he left entirely in the Lord’s hand. His affliction was very painful, but not one murmur escaped his lips. His last articulation was:

“Range the sweet plains on the banks of the river,
And sing of salvation for ever and ever.”

While repeating the above lines, he stretched out his arms as if to embrace one and, with a sweet smile, remained for a time transfixed. Two hours more and he breathed his last, on Lord’s day morning, February 28th, 1875.

Thus died our brother in the Lord after a long struggle, leaving a dear wife and family to lament their loss. May God support them and guide the “flock of slaughter” our brother left in the wilderness.

Included after Mr. Taylor’s account:

“Death of Mr. Thomas Sinkinson. We regret to have to record the demise of Mr. Thomas Sinkinson, for nine years minister of the Zion Baptist Chapel, Bedworth, who died on February 28th, aged 64 years. The deceased was a native of Preston, Lancashire, where he preached for upwards of thirty-five years previous to coming to Bedworth. He was also instrumental in establishing a ragged school in that district. The funeral took place on the 4th instant, the remains of the deceased being interred in the family vault in the Baptist Burial Ground, Mr. Taylor of Manchester officiating. A large concourse of friends attended the funeral to show their respect for the deceased, among whom were Mr. Chandler (Accrington, Lancashire), Mr. Forster (Witham), and a large number of persons from Coventry, Attleborough, Nuneaton and various other places. The Sunday school teachers and children, the choir and a numerous congregation, completely filled the chapel, and the deepest sorrow was manifested by all present. The deceased was highly respected by all denominations in the town.” *Local Paper*.

Two well-known ministers were sent out to preach from Bedworth under Mr. Sinkinson’s ministry – Thomas Hull (later pastor at Hastings)

and William Smith (later pastor at Tunbridge Wells). Mr. Hull supplied this testimony to his old pastor:

My acquaintance with Mr. Sinkinson commenced when he first preached as a supply at Bedworth, September 1865, and I well remember my feeling of surprise at the great difference in his personal appearance from what I had previously conceived. But when he got into the pulpit he soon found a way into my heart and into the hearts of many others too. There was such a freshness, power and savour in his prayer and preaching, that the Word came like a heavenly rainfall into the souls of many of us who then heard him, and I felt, as he went on, such a union of heart with him in the things he uttered that I secretly desired, "Lord, give us that man!" And the more I was in his company, the stronger was the knitting of heart I felt to him. And I believe there was then formed between us a union of soul like that which existed between David and Jonathan; nor has the stroke of death, which for a time has separated us, destroyed it, for I love him still, and his name and memory to my heart are dear.

For several years I had constant opportunities of observing him in his ministry and walk, as we were favoured to walk and talk much together; and whatever faults his enemies may lay to his charge, while I do not attempt to prove he was a perfect man, I can testify he was a sincere, kindly, humble, loving, faithful, godly soul.

He used frequently to relate to me different things of a very interesting kind which occurred in his earlier experience when he was among the general professors, such as the man speaking from among the crowd when he was preaching at a camp-meeting among the Methodists. He has often said to me, "I have many times thought how I should like to meet with that man to ask him about his feeling when he called out that passage of God's Word. One thing I know, it was to me like a voice from heaven. It stopped me, and I could not go on again." And I remember his speaking of going to hear the late Mr. Gadsby, but I think the place was so full he could not get inside; and he said, after Mr. G. had been speaking for some time, a number of his (Mr. S.'s) old acquaintances came out in a rage, declaring Mr. G. was sending all the bad folks to heaven and the good ones to hell. The first time, I believe, he was favoured to hear that good man was once that he took for his text Deuteronomy 33. 24. Mr. S., not having then been brought to know and love the distinguishing doctrines of grace, said while Mr. G. was speaking of the children as being God's elect family, he felt such enmity against his teaching that he could have knocked him down, but when he came to the next part: "Let him be acceptable to his brethren," he said, "I could have taken him in my arms and kissed him, the word was so

sweet and precious to my heart.” And he once remarked, when we were talking of Mr. G., that he thought for soundness and clearness in the whole doctrines of divine truth, there had scarcely been his equal since the early ages of the gospel church.

I have many times heard him refer to the time when the Lord applied to his heart with divine power those words: “Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin,” and the sweet liberty, peace and joy which followed as the effect, giving him to prove the great difference between his trying to take the Word, and the Lord the Spirit applying the same.

In this way the Lord led him into, and grounded him experimentally in His truth, so that after being much tossed about among different kinds of professors, he was brought among the sect everywhere spoken against, and was certainly one well established and settled in the grace and truth of Christ above many.

He passed through many exercises concerning the step he was requested to take, to become pastor of the church at Bedworth. He felt a great love to and union with the people there from the first, but there were many things presented themselves in the way. These, however, the Lord removed, and he accepted the call. While supplying, previously to becoming the pastor, he on one occasion, after speaking of his exercises, just as he was leaving our house, opened the Bible at Proverbs 27. 27. And a short time before his death, when we were conversing together, he said, “I have had a great many troubles since then, but that word has held good through them all.”

He was naturally of a genial and confiding disposition, and proved to his sorrow that there is such a thing as being too free towards possessors as well as professors, and has often said,

“From sinner and from saint
I meet with many a blow.”

But he has passed beyond all that was a trouble to him here; nor will he ever again groan, as he often did while below, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And while the enemies of Christ may wish that the world was rid not only of him, but of all such, the lovers of Zion can but feel that the removal of such men as Mr. Sinkinson makes a void place in the church the Lord alone can fill. O that He may in mercy send forth labourers to supply the felt want.

The flock at Bedworth and many places beside greatly miss him, for his ministry was suited to a wide circle of the Lord’s tried family, being experimental, savoury and with power, laying the creature low and lifting Christ on high.

THE DEVIL'S WILES

By Edmund Calamy (1600-1666)

Sincere love is a grace without which all profession of religion is but gilded hypocrisy. Where love is, God dwells. But where it is not, the devil dwells. The more love, the more like to God we are, but the less of it, the more like the devil we become. Woeful experience shows that those who have great gifts and little or no love show more of the devil's nature than of God's, and act more like the devil than God....

Love is the sweetest flower in all the garden of God, but it is a flower which the devil cannot endure the smell of because he is not capable of it, and knows that where love dwells he must vanish. Therefore it is the devil's main design to destroy love, if possible, in all sorts and sects, and to root it up and banish it from the hearts of all. The devil is well content that we should pray, preach, read, hear sermons and make a fair show outwardly, provided that these activities do not spring from love, and tend not to increase love to God or others. But if he sees that love is the root and fruit of our service, then he goes cunningly and serpent-like to work, to make breaches in this wall, that he may get in and destroy this flower. He devises ways to divide people's judgments, to the end he may destroy this affection of love out of their hearts. If he does not prevail in this way, he will raise up jealousies to destroy love and charity, yes sometimes render the best of graces, the worst of vices.

BOOK REVIEWS

Some Scots Worthies, by J.R. Broome, 128 pages, price £4.50 plus 81p postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ, or from agents.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the birth of the Reformation in Scotland. It was a time of much suffering in the church of God, and this compact little book consists of brief biographies of thirteen "worthies" who suffered during this period for the truth's sake, some being burned at the stake, others died by hanging, and others, like John Knox and Samuel Rutherford, although escaping martyrdom, suffered intense persecution.

There is a short but very interesting historical preface, followed by graphic accounts of the lives and deaths of George Wishart (who died in 1546), and others, through to James Renwick (the last martyr) who died in 1688, aged only 26. Of James Renwick we read that, "in 1681, when still in his teens, he witnessed the execution of that faithful minister and martyr, Donald Cargill. He was struck by the way the Lord owned the faithfulness of His servants and the great steadfastness, faith and patience they were given in the hour of their death. Little did he realise at this time that his own death was to be similar in identical circumstances a few years later."

There are several coloured illustrations, including one of the ruins of Rutherford's old kirk at "fair Anwoth by the Solway," and another of the memorial erected around 1870 to mark the spot where the Lord's supper was administered to about 3,000 Covenanters in the open air in 1678.

The print of the book is very clear and easy to read, and we heartily recommend it, especially to our younger readers who might not be familiar with the history and sufferings of the Scottish "worthies" of former days.

J.A. Watts, Harpenden

Sermons of a Seceder, by William Tiptaft; hardback, with lovely coloured front; 222 pages; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ, or from agents.

William Tiptaft (1803-1864), close friend of J.C. Philpot, and fellow seceder from the Church of England, needs no introduction to our readers.

We were more impressed when we first read the life of Tiptaft than in reading any other biography. Here was a man who sacrificed *everything* for Jesus' sake. We have never read a life marked by more godliness. A man of some means as a minister in the established church, he came out "not knowing whither he went." He built the chapel at Abingdon at his own expense, literally over the years gave away his all to the poor, never took any payment for his services – till at length left with nothing, he was dependent on the kindness of the Lord's people.

The great point in William Tiptaft's preaching was that it was an awakening ministry. There was one occasion when a considerable number of people were talking together, when it emerged that each one was spiritually awakened under Tiptaft's preaching. There were many such, not only in Abingdon but in other places, notably Oakham. When J.C. Philpot became pastor of the churches at Oakham and Stamford, many testified that their spiritual beginnings were under Tiptaft's ministry.

Sermons of a Seceder consists of seventeen sermons (or parts of sermons). We are grateful to Mr. James North for gathering these together and preparing this well-edited book. Till recently only one or two of William Tiptaft's sermons have been known. One (which is included) is the famous sermon on, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." This was preached in the Great Church, Abingdon, on December 25th, 1829, before the mayor and corporation and a very large congregation. The simple statements of divine truth caused a commotion in the town of Abingdon. (This was while he was still a minister in the Church of England.) Various editions of this sermon have been printed.

There is also a farewell sermon, added in an appendix, which William Tiptaft preached when leaving his first charge at Stogumber in Somerset. This is added out of interest, for there is quite a bit of Arminianism in it as he had not yet fully been led into the doctrines of grace. Strangely (page 6) we are told this sermon is *not* included.

William Tiptaft's sermons are by no means orderly; he wanders from his text and does not really expound it. The sermons are marked by solemn and close dealings with the souls of the hearers, pointing out the difference between true

and false religion, and insisting on a vital, personal knowledge of the truth made known in the soul by the Holy Ghost.

On page 169 we could not altogether follow what was said about young Christians and about those who “depend wholly upon Christ.”

There is a really good, short biography of Tiptaft at the beginning, followed by five pages of “Reminiscences of Mr. William Tiptaft,” which were first published in 1875.

The book is beautifully produced.

Pastoral Ministry, by Richard Baxter; small paperback in the Pocket Puritan series; 128 pages; price £3.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Twice recently we have been asked if Baxter’s *The Saints Everlasting Rest* is a suitable book for reading. Our answer has been that, though Richard Baxter was very doubtful in some of his theology, this book along with *The Reformed Pastor* has usually been accepted as a Christian classic.

Pastoral Ministry consists of thirty-one daily readings from *The Reformed Pastor*; and there appears to be no trace of “Baxterianism” here. Written for ministers, these are close writings on the awful solemnity of the Christian ministry. (They could have been written by William Tiptaft himself.)

There is an excellent introduction to the book by Dr. James Packer, which very clearly points out Baxter’s faults and failings (as well as the dreadful sufferings he endured as a Puritan minister).

We are pleased that, following our concern about some recent Puritan publications, the Publishers make it clear that this (and the following work by Flavel) have just been “lightly edited.”

Facing Grief: Counsel for Mourners, by John Flavel; paperback; 122 pages; price £5; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

First published in 1674 as *A Token for Mourners*, for many years this was a well-known book in Christian homes, giving loving counsel to those in bereavement.

Written by an eminent Puritan, in the best Puritan style, by one who suffered severe bereavement in his own family, *Facing Grief* is an excellent book. No more needs to be said.

Just a small warning. In his last two short chapters, John Flavel is a little severe on those who seem swallowed up by their grief.

I Wish Someone Would Explain Hebrews to Me! by Stuart Olyott; large paperback; 198 pages; price £7.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

As a great admirer of Dr. Owen’s wonderful commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, we approached the book with some diffidence. However, we were pleasantly surprised. We believe this is the best of the modern commentaries that Banner of Truth has produced.

The author holds strong views on “eternal generation”; he is very clear on the real meaning of “for every man” in chapter 2; and he accepts the Pauline

authorship of the epistle. For many years Mr. Olyott has been esteemed in evangelical circles.

The style is slightly modern (different from Mr. Popham and Mr. Gosden) but there is nothing light or irreverent. There is, however, a strong emphasis (too much) on understanding the epistle with the mind, and then seeking with God's help to walk it out.

Very much to the fore are the warnings against apostasy and the need to endure to the end. There is no doubt that the author believes in the eternal security of the people of God, but to someone coming to the subject for the first time, this is not made abundantly clear.

The strong point of the commentary is the way Mr. Olyott explains the real meaning of the epistle, and especially the connection from chapter to chapter – which is often omitted, writers just dwelling on the verse before them. We feel gracious experience could have been insisted on more.

We once came across a work on the Hebrews entitled *The Preeminence of Christ*, and this is clearly Stuart Olyott's theme. He delights to point to the glories of the Lord Jesus.

Repentance, by John Colquhoun; paperback; 867 pages; price £6; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian Bookshops.

John Colquhoun was born at Luss, Dumbartonshire on January 1st, 1748, and was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Glasgow when 32 years old. He was inducted as minister at The New Church, South Leith, in 1781, which charge he held unto his death.

He held similar theological views to those of Edward Fisher as expressed in his book entitled *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, especially as amplified in the notes by Thomas Boston. The book under review was first published in 1826. The present edition is a reprint of the one published by The Banner of Truth in 1965 with the title *Evangelical Repentance*.

In 1947 Mr. J.H. Gosden, when reviewing a book entitled, *The Free Offer* by another John Colquhoun (not to be confused with our author) who was acting temporarily as Editor of the Free Presbyterian Magazine says, "The terms *offer* and *preach*, which to us mean things very different, seem to be used interchangeably." This may be accounted for as the origin of the word *offer* according to The Oxford Compact English Dictionary is stated to be from the Latin word *offerre* meaning bestow or present, which another dictionary interprets tender or present. If this is correct, it explains why the Puritans, who were well versed in Latin, used the word offer as synonymous with preaching, but of course is no excuse for those who use it today.

Sadly this term is used in this book, but apart from that it contains much precious truth presenting repentance as being either natural, legal or evangelical. The latter, which always follows conviction of sin and faith to believe God's Word (although not perceived by the sinner), being that true repentance referred to in the Scriptures. With the above proviso we recommend this book to our readers.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

Bible Numbers, by Alison Brown; very large paperback with colour illustrations; 32 pages; price £3.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This useful book for young children takes the numbers 1-12; for instance, *one* forbidden tree; *two* stone tables, etc. The scriptural truth is explained in each case. There are questions to answer, pictures to colour, objects to draw.

We feel this book could be very helpful to parents and children. Its subtitle is: "Introducing Little Children to Simple Bible Truths."

Rest in God, by Iain Murray; 40 page pamphlet; price £2; published by the Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We are very pleased that Iain Murray has taken up his able pen in defence of the Lord's day, the Christian Sabbath. The sub-title, "A Calamity in Contemporary Christianity," defines his opinion of those professing evangelicals who show no regard for Sabbath-keeping.

Mr. Murray clearly shows that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, given before the law, and gives answers (at some length) to those who contend it was only part of the ceremonial law. He also sets out the history of the Sabbath, and how those who have kept it have been honoured. Interestingly, the author believes in state control and legislation concerning the Lord's day (pages 32-33).

People have often observed that the great John Calvin did not keep the Sabbath. Mr. Murray explains that in his beginnings he did not, but as further light was given, and he moved further away from the errors of the Roman Catholic church, he *did* believe in Sabbath observance.

Two very interesting quotations are included:

"Remember this, that there are no Christians in all the world comparable to those, for the power of godliness and the heights of grace, holiness and communion with God, who are most strict, serious, studious and conscientious in sanctifying of the Lord's day" (Thomas Brooks).

"If I have ever seen anything in the ways and worship of God wherein the power of religion or godliness hath been expressed ... it hath been there and with them where and amongst whom the Lord's day hath been had in high esteem" (John Owen).

We believe Iain Murray's arguments are unanswerable. The little book is written in quite a scholarly way.

All who do not possess spiritual light are in a state of darkness, however bright and luminous their intellectual light may be. How frequently do we find men of science and deep research completely blinded with respect to the divine science of living to God! And, what is still more painful, how often do we meet with people, in this day of gospel light, who have very clear views of the truth; who are able to speak, not only fluently upon the mysteries of grace, but even to delight and edify those who hear them; and yet, who are themselves destitute of true humility, genuine love to the Saviour, and that spiritual-mindedness which is life and peace. Thus, however illuminated their understandings may be, they are, in the eye of a heart-searching God, in a state of spiritual blindness.

Thomas Reade

THE GREAT MYSTERY

Without dispute twixt bond and free,
Great is the gospel mystery;
How God in Christ was reconciled
To guilty man by sin defiled.

Shall seraphs try the same to prove?
'Tis buried in eternal love;
'Tis lost in this unfathomed sea,
And swallowed up, great God, in Thee.

Here the divine perfections meet,
Mercy and Truth each other greet;
Justice and Peace in Jesus see,
Unite in sacred harmony.

Great was the mystery of that grace
That chose, from Adam's fallen race,
Ten thousand thousand sons to praise
Its glories through eternal days.

By man came death, sin, hell and shame;
By man the resurrection came;
He bruised the subtle serpent's head,
And captive all his legions led.

Great was the mystery, truly great,
That hell's designs should hell defeat;
But here eternal wisdom shined,
For Satan wrought what God designed.

Great was the mystery of that love,
When Jesus left His throne above,
Exposed His life and precious blood
To bring rebellious man to God.

O deep abyss of love profound,
Too vast for angel-minds to sound;
To scan the same our thoughts are lost;
Hail, Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

John Kent (1766-1843)

It is my part to mourn over sin and the misery which sin causes, to be humbled for my own sins especially, to pray for peace, and to preach the gospel. Other things I leave to those who have more leisure and ability, and I leave the *whole* to Him who does all things well.

John Newton

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
AUGUST 2010

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

THE GOSPEL STANDARD, 1835

*From the life of William Gadsby, published by
Gospel Standard Trust Publications*

“Now go, *Standard*, go, and proclaim lovely Jesus,
Our most glorious Christ! from whom the rich stream
Of free-grace salvation, to help and to ease us,
Is constantly flowing! – be this thy choice theme.”

Edward Blackstock

One of the lasting memorials to William Gadsby is the *Gospel Standard* magazine which he founded in 1835. This is now accounted the oldest religious monthly still in existence, and indeed one of the ten oldest of all monthly magazines.

It might be thought strange that Gadsby, with his busy life, should ever have contemplated starting a magazine. But really he was pushed into it. His son John was now twenty-six years old – an energetic and successful printer, who described himself as “then in the full enjoyment of gospel liberty and equally full of zeal.”

At first Gadsby was startled at the suggestion that they should have a magazine of their own. His first reaction was that they could not afford it, but this did not seem to worry his son John. However, after prayerfully considering the matter, he agreed: “If you begin, I will try and help you, and I hope our labours will not be in vain.”

So on August 1st, 1835, a new little magazine of twenty-four pages, costing twopence, issued from an obscure printing works in Newall’s Buildings, Market Street, Manchester. The name given to it, the *Gospel Standard*, was “not because it was ever intended to be set up as a standard to measure by, but as a standard, or banner, unfurled for the gospel.”

It may be asked: what lay behind the idea of a new magazine? Were there no free grace magazines? John Gadsby’s answer was:

“There was at that time no periodical to advocate the sentiments which had been for years dear to my father, and which were becoming increasingly dear to me.... Dr. Owen’s works were lying dormant; Bishop Hall’s were known to few; and even Newton’s seemed forgotten.... It is true there was the *Gospel Magazine*, but that was Church of England, and the editor sometimes not very select in his

remarks on baptism. There was also the *Gospel Herald*, but that magazine was a most erroneous one ... originated by Mr. John Stevens, who was a pre-existerian, and who wrote so violently against my father on the law.”

So, as the opening words of the new *Standard* put it, “the little vessel was launched into the wide ocean” – with many fears yet trusting in the Lord and with sincere desires for His honour and glory and the good of His people, those who “sigh and groan and cry for mercy, pardoning mercy, justifying mercy, in the Person, blood and obedience of Christ, for nothing short of this will satisfy their hungry souls.”

Initially only 500 were printed, intended for the Manchester congregation and other friends of William Gadsby in Lancashire and Yorkshire. However, the Manchester congregation took almost the lot! So 500 more were printed. Then a demand came from the London chapels, Gower Street and Zoar, Great Alie Street, and other places – so a further 1,000 were printed.

The new magazine was received with much interest and affection and was soon circulating, with increased sales, throughout England. A people had been prepared – largely as the effect of Gadsby’s own preaching throughout the land, and that of men like Warburton and Kershaw – and like good ground were ready to receive the seed.

“True religion,” wrote John Gadsby, “had so greatly fallen that, though there might be some who preached the doctrines, there were few who preached them in an experimental way, with the dew and savour of the Holy Spirit. There was little or no distinction made between those who held the doctrines in their judgment merely and those who, having been condemned in their consciences as breakers of God’s holy law in thought, word and deed, lost and ruined apparently beyond hope, felt their need of those doctrines, and realised the soul-humbling and Christ-glorifying power of them in their hearts.”

William Gadsby himself wrote the opening address to the readers, and in uncompromising language declared the sacred truths on which the magazine was founded.

Interestingly, the new magazine was made profitable to some who had never heard the truth preached. Two sisters in Cheshire, who were dairy farmers, had been brought into deep concern about their souls. At the local parish church they found no help, though they could certainly join in the prayer book confession, “Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners.”

One Saturday, after selling their butter and eggs as usual at the Manchester market, going down Shudehill (near Gadsby’s chapel) they happened to see some magazines called the *Gospel Standard* on a bookstall. Wondering whatever “Gospel Standard” could mean, they

bought the lot and eagerly began to devour them as soon as they reached home. Some things they could not understand, but when they read William Gadsby's piece on "The Blessedness of the Hungry," their hearts leapt for joy.

The following Saturday they called at John Gadsby's printing works to tell him the whole story.

Very soon after a similar event took place. Twelve miles away from Manchester, at Wilmslow, lived a person described as "a tall, striking-looking man with only one eye." He worshipped with the Methodists, but being taught by God his great need as a sinner, he used to exclaim to them, "If you're right, then I'm wrong!"

Like the two sisters he also came each week to the Manchester market, and like them happened to pick up a *Gospel Standard*. He too went to John Gadsby's office to tell him that the little magazine had made things plain to him. Taking a few copies home, he caused quite a commotion by putting them up for sale in the window of his house. "So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed."

But there was opposition. And the magazine caused a stir. Fifty years later John Gadsby recalled:

"I think I may fearlessly say there never was in the whole world another magazine started which met with so much opposition as did the *Gospel Standard*. Arminians and Mongrel Calvinists of all grades were most furious against it, and the children of Ashdod were foremost in their assaults."

"But," he continued, "God was on our side, and it was in vain they tried to swallow us up. 'Fear not; I will be with thee,' was our encouragement, and I for one was never left to have the slightest doubt of our success."

Almost at the exact time when the *Gospel Standard* first appeared, two events, seemingly unconnected, took place two hundred miles apart. At Blackburn in Lancashire a young Scotsman, John M'Kenzie, was baptized. He had been excommunicated by the Independents for believing the doctrines of grace. At Allington in Wiltshire, Joseph Charles Philpot, a young clergyman who had just seceded from the Church of England, was baptized by John Warburton. The two had never heard of each other.

God's timing is perfect. The Gadsbys were able to enlist the help of these young men with the fledgling magazine. Both were able men. M'Kenzie, though only a travelling packman, like most Scots had received a good education. Even more so, J.C. Philpot had been a Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford.

William Gadsby soon relinquished all editorial responsibility, and M'Kenzie and Philpot acted as joint editors till M'Kenzie's early death

in 1849. Afterwards J.C. Philpot became sole editor till his own death twenty years later. During these years the increase in the circulation of the *Gospel Standard* was amazing, finding its way “to private soldier’s shivering in the Crimean trenches, or sweltering before the gates of Delhi; to lonely men living in shacks on the Ballarat gold-fields, or on remote Australian sheep-farms; to lovers of truth in the new American townships; while at home it was sold in ever-increasing numbers.” After some years there was a monthly circulation of 17,500.

It will be remembered that the famous C.H. Spurgeon stated that he learned his theology from an old cook whose only reading was the Bible and the *Gospel Standard*.

J.C. Philpot had the gracious ability to explain the deepest of spiritual and doctrinal truths in the simplest of language to a readership, many of whom were barely literate. It was during his editorship (after Gadsby’s death) that a storm broke, which had been brewing for years. A number of Strict Baptist ministers began to deny the doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ in His divine nature. This was, of course, a denial of the orthodox view enshrined in the great Christian creeds. The *Gospel Standard*, realising the vital importance of the issue, ably defended the orthodox doctrine, pointing out that the error not only assailed the Person of Christ but also the whole doctrine of the Trinity.

In the pages of the *Gospel Standard* ministers and churches were challenged to come out boldly on the side of truth. Those who did so and whose names appeared in the magazine became known as “Gospel Standard Strict Baptists” – though the name “Gadsbyite” stuck for a long time. As late as the 1960s, a worldly man from the Rossendale valley (where Gadsby had often preached) on hearing of the writer’s religious connections commented, “Why, you’re a Gadsbyite!”

* * *

As considerable mention has been made of William Gadsby’s son John, and his part in the commencement of the *Gospel Standard* magazine, perhaps this is the place to say something about this remarkable man. Printer, publisher, editor, author, traveller, lecturer – he was never a minister.

As a young printer, he went down to London to further his trade. He soon gained the reputation as the fastest compositor in London. Here he went into the ways of sin, though not without many qualms of conscience. It was the sudden death of his young wife that brought him into deep spiritual concern. He wrote, “I believe it was one of the happiest days of my father’s life when he first learned that my mind was exercised about eternal things.” He was much helped in London under the preaching of David Denham and Henry Fowler. Hearing Fowler on: “The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh

Him," he was sweetly encouraged to wait, and during the following week received what he wanted, the forgiveness of sin. Psalm 130, verse 4, was felt with power.

"My new Master had my whole heart, and with that whole heart I praised Him." "I felt in a moment that I was forgiven. My sins seemed gone for ever." "I felt quite ready to die, and thanked God for giving me the victory through Christ."

The delight which William Gadsby had in hearing all this can only be imagined. John had given him so much trouble as a boy. Once he fell from a load of hay and was almost crushed by the wagon wheels. Another time a woolpack fell on him in Piccadilly, Manchester, and stunned him. On another occasion he was afflicted in his left arm with scrofula, and the doctor said it must be amputated, but William Gadsby heard of a wonderful remedy in London, sent it for his son, and all the infection was removed. It must have been gratifying to him to think of all that his son had been brought through to tell the wonders of redeeming love.

Returning to Manchester, John Gadsby was baptized by his father on October 4th, 1835, at the age of 26. Nothing is recorded of this event.

John Gadsby was a most energetic, go-ahead man, ardent, enthusiastic. "He was all activity, all energy, all push, all tact. He had not a quiet bone in his body, and was only quiet when asleep," said Robert Moxon. Most of his life he was unwell, suffering from a severe chest complaint, at times vomiting blood. Partly because of this he travelled extensively abroad. It is difficult to follow all his journeys, but he was away for long periods in 1846-7, 1850-1, 1852-3, 1856, 1859-60 and in 1872 he visited the U.S.A. In 1888 he stated that he had visited Egypt nine times.

Much of his travelling was in Israel, following which he published two volumes of *My Wanderings*, relating what he saw to Scripture. These books at one time had immense popularity, and are still a wealth of information. The *Illustrated News of the World* remarked: "We are not surprised at the popularity of Mr. Gadsby's work; it is exactly the kind of work to please the majority of his countrymen." Many other books written by other authors were published by him, including his own father's works. He was also the printer for the Anti-Corn Law League and printed the first railway timetables ever printed after the Manchester-Liverpool railway opened in 1830.

He lectured on eastern manners and customs, occasionally for Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

J.H. Philpot (in *The Seceders*) remembered him "as a spare and very hirsute little man with an unkempt, grizzled beard and moustache, bright eyes and an engaging smile."

Despite persistent ill-health he lived to the age of 84, dying on October 12th, 1893. A wealthy man, warm-hearted, generous to a degree, it is only fair to mention that John Gadsby spoiled himself by his egotism. He certainly basked in his father's reputation.

* * *

As promised, a facsimile copy of the August 1835 *Gospel Standard*, the first issue, is included with our usual magazine this month. What a mercy to be maintained for 175 years! *The History of the Gospel Standard* magazine, which first appeared 25 years ago, is to be republished soon.

It is interesting to note the five original churches that were included: Allington, Blackburn, Macclesfield, Manchester and Rochdale. Allington, Manchester and Rochdale, so intimately connected with the ministry of Philpot, Gadsby and Kershaw, still continue. Sadly Blackburn (commenced in 1764) is now closed. Many well-known ministers came from that chapel, including A.B. Taylor of Manchester, John Forster of Witham, Ebenezer Littleton of Crowborough, and in more recent years Mr. Caton, Mr. Foster and Mr. Wolstenholme. In 1835 William Hatton (father of Joseph Hatton, one of our Editors) was pastor at Macclesfield, moving to Accrington the following year; but there has been no chapel at Macclesfield since the 1870s.

Remarkably the early issues of the *Gospel Standard* contained no sermons! Not many names of contributors were given. As far as we can ascertain, "A Soldier" in the first issue was William Gadsby himself as was "A Lover of Zion," whilst the Address was written by him and possibly the poem signed, "Delta, Manchester." The letter, "A Saint Indeed," was written by Ann Sturton whilst "The Ministry Not Without Trials" was by Tiptaft.

"Gleanings" consists of small extracts. We were rather surprised to see George Burder there, the Secretary of the London Missionary Society, who had just died. He was the author of our beautiful hymn 750: "Come ye that know and fear the Lord," and was a contemporary with William Gadsby during Gadsby's early Coventry days.

John Gadsby stated that no magazine had ever had such opposition as the *Standard* in its beginnings, and as we write, during the past two months three books or pamphlets have been published against us. We believe that as long as the *Gospel Standard* seeks only the honour and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, glories in the doctrines of free and sovereign grace, and has the same Spirit that moved William Gadsby, it cannot be overthrown. For 175 years the promise has been proved: "They shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee."

The gospel is an anvil that has broken many a hammer, and will break many hammers yet.

John Calvin

SALVATION BY GRACE

The substance of a sermon preached by William Gadsby in 1835

Text: “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 Tim. 1. 9).

Here we find salvation stated before calling by grace. And indeed, if we take a proper view of the subject, it was so in the mind and purpose of God. God the Father saved, or secured, the elect in Christ before the foundation of the world. Hence Jude says, “Sanctified by God the Father.” That is, set apart by God the Father as the people of His holy choice, and so made the special care and charge of Christ. “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” And though the elect fell with the rest of mankind in Adam the first, they never fell as considered in Christ; but as the Holy Ghost says by Jude, they were “preserved in Jesus Christ,” and in God’s own time they are called.

It is the believer’s blessedness that each glorious Person in the Godhead has a glorious hand in his salvation. God the Father saved, chose, sanctified, or set him apart in Christ before the world was. God the Son took humanity in union to His personal Godhead, and thus became incarnate, lived a holy life, suffered, bled, died a solemn death, rose again from the dead, ascended up on high, having led captivity captive, and is now exalted at the right hand of the Father, ever living to make intercession for him. Thus Christ has meritoriously saved the elect by His life, obedience, death, resurrection, exaltation and intercession. As it is written: “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” God? No. “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” Christ? No. “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.” Thus the blessed Redeemer “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,” and bless His precious name, He has been the destruction of death, hell and sin. The gloriously-blessed God-Man Mediator “gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” So that, before the world was, the church was saved purposedly by God the Father; in time, meritoriously by the God-Man Mediator, who now lives above to

make intercession for them; and in the day of God's power, they are saved manifestively and vitally, by the "washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Now not a particle of this is either for or according to our works, for it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us"; or, as our text has it, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, *not according to our works.*"

What an indescribable mercy it is that salvation is of the Lord; yea, that God Himself, as the God of Zion, is our salvation! Blessed, triumphant faith, under the sweet power and unction of God the Holy Ghost, can at times sweetly sing, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." This salvation contains a complete deliverance from every foe and soul-damning danger, and it is a complete salvation to every real good. We have all spiritual blessings in Christ, all bliss and blessedness secured in Him; for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. He is full of grace and truth, and of His fulness we receive, and grace for grace. All things are the real believer's, for he is Christ's, and Christ is God's; and as I said before, this glorious salvation is all of grace, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Now my text says, "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling." This call is the solemn, soul-quickening, heart-rending call of a holy God; not a mere call to hear the Word preached, nor to attend upon public means. Many are called to these things whom God never chose in Christ, but this is a holy calling from death to life, from darkness to light, from the power of sin and Satan to the living God. This call makes the sinner feel his own guilty and ruined condition as a sinner against a holy God. He is called to see sin in the light of God's countenance, to feel its awful plague, and to tremble before God on the account of it; and he is called to feel that his case is too desperate for him to help his own soul. The more he tries and toils, the deeper he sinks in a feeling sense of his own ruin and misery. *Help himself!* He finds he can as soon create a world as do it. Therefore, with heart-rending groans, he is called to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

But he is effectually called to feel and see the emptiness of creature goodness, and to thirst for the living God; nor will anything short of Christ and a full and free salvation by and in Him satisfy his quickened soul. Hope deferred often makes his heart sick, but still the divine power by which he is called keeps him to the point, and the issue shall prove that he is called to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, with His love, blood, sufferings and obedience, to hold sweet converse with Him, as his own Lord and Redeemer, and sweetly to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." For, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto

the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” All the blessings couched in this glorious, endearing character, God has called the real believer to the fellowship of, and in the Lord’s own time, he shall share in the sweet enjoyment of them.

O the wonders of God’s love to His people! Come, poor sin-oppressed, guilt-smitten, law-wrecked, world-despised, Satan-hunted, self-condemned, heart-tortured, self-loathing sinner, hope thou in the Lord; for with all thy fears and faintings, misgivings, staggerings, stumblings, sighings and groanings, by and by thy dear Lord will manifestively put His arms of everlasting love under thee, and say, “Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse, with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of the leopards. Thou hast ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, My sister, My spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!”

Thus the real Christian is called to be made partaker of Christ’s holiness and to hope in Him as the God of hope, yea, to believe in Him as the glorious Resurrection and the Life, and in the end feelingly to say, “O Lord, Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee.” He is called to receive a full and free pardon through the blood of the Lamb, and to feel the soul-cleansing efficacy of that blessed fountain. In a word, he is called to hope in Christ, believe in Christ, trust in Christ, glory in Christ, teem out all his complaints unto Christ, confess with abhorrence his vileness to Christ, and supplicate His throne for daily grace and mercy; to live for Christ, and to live to Christ, and to be daily concerned to honour and glorify Him in this world. Christ dwells in him, and he dwells in Christ, and they are manifestively one. Holiness is his delight and sin is his burden. His sweetest and most heavenly moments are when he can hold intercourse with God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, when the world drops its charms and God is All and in all. He is, in the Lord’s own time, called to feel that Christ has made him free, and he is free indeed; and with holy solemnity he exclaims, “What, then! Shall I sin that grace may abound? God forbid! Shall I sin because I am not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!” Thus he is called with a holy calling, by a holy God, to holy things, and at last he shall be called to heaven, when it shall be fully made manifest that he is called to a holy end.

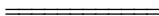
A few more struggles, poor, burdened believer, and thou shalt see all is well. Expect no good from corrupt nature. God has called thee to feel that in thy flesh dwells no good thing. Why look for the living in such a dead, corrupt mass? God help thee to flee to, rest upon and live

in Christ. Thou art called to be partaker of His holiness, not thy fleshly works, but to flee from them, and daily to twine round and hang upon Christ. There may thy soul be stayed, for in Him thou art complete, and nowhere else.

Well, this salvation and this holy calling are not according to our works, but according to God's purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Salvation in all its bearings is according to God's own purpose and grace, secured in Christ before time. Thanks be to God for that. All we feel and fear, all our sins and woes, all our darkness and deadness, loathsomeness and vileness, cannot alter God's purpose and grace, which is secured in Christ. Remember, poor, tried, tempted, tossed-about sinner, it is of God's grace, yea, God's purposed grace. Thy miseries tend to prove that this glorious salvation, this holy calling, are just what thou needest – just suited to thee; and it is God's own purpose to call thee to the sweet participation of them. They are thine by the solemn purpose and free-grace grant of a covenant God, and each glorious Person in the one undivided Jehovah takes pleasure in putting thee in possession of it.

The time will come when thy Lord will say to thee, "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." "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." The glorious marriage of the Lamb and His wife will very soon be consummated in everlasting bliss and blessedness; and "blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

That the Lord may, from day to day, be graciously pleased to grant to His saved, called children much of His presence and love, is my prayer.



The thirsty traveller sees a cistern at a distance, and labours hard to reach it; but when he comes with longing desire to quench his thirst, he finds it broken. Thus earth disappoints all who trust in its supplies. It is a broken cistern. I look for its refreshing streams, but find none. Where, then, must I turn? To the Fountain of living waters. Jesus is this Fountain of life and glory. To Him I would now hasten. In Him I shall ever find a never-failing stream of grace and comfort. He can delight and refresh my soul; and coming unto Him by faith, I shall never be disappointed.

Thomas Reade

THE WILDERNESS AND THE HIGHWAY

This appears to be a short exposition of Isaiah chapter 35 by William Gadsby (unless it is just the introduction to his text). Gadsby was not in the habit of commenting on the Scripture reading in the public service. Honouring it as the holy Word of God, he felt it should stand alone without human observations.

There is no class of persons who disbelieve God's Word more than God's children at times do; and strange as it may appear and criminal as it is, they frequently labour harder to make God a liar than they do to prove His Word true. They take their feeling sense of being such loathsome, hard-hearted, unbelieving sinners as a proof that God will have nothing to do with them; whereas if it were not for such poor, groaning, mourning souls, we should not know what to do with one part of the Bible.

Here (verse 1) God says, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad ... and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Now if there were no deserts, no wildernesses, what could we make of such a passage? But it is added, "It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing" (verse 2). Come, poor, barren desert; poor, waste wilderness; the promise is made, and it will assuredly be fulfilled. In the end thou shalt rejoice and see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God.

Your hands (of faith) may be so weak (verse 3) that you cannot lay hold of God's promises; your knees so feeble that you cannot bend them in sweet communion with God; your hearts so fearful that you are continually doubting and fearing God will have nothing to do with you, and cannot believe there is any blessing for you. But by and by waters shall break out in the wilderness and streams in the desert (verse 6). Then shall your blind eyes be opened and your deaf ears unstopped (verse 5); then shall you be healed of your lameness and shall leap as a hart and your dumb tongue sing.

"And the parched ground shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water" (verse 7).

"And a highway shall be there, and a way; and it shall be called The Way of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those" (verse 8). Now what does that mean – the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those? I will tell you. It does not say the unclean shall not *touch* it, but, shall not *pass over* it. So that the moment a poor, unclean sinner is brought by faith to put a single foot on this way, that moment he becomes clean. The way itself makes him clean, and therefore he passes over it, pure in the sight of God. And as this way makes clean all who come upon it, there shall be none of the lions of hell

there, nor the ravenous beasts of the world (verse 9); but the *redeemed* shall walk there.

“And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (verse 10).

GOSPEL BLESSINGS

Dear —,

I am glad to find that the Lord now and then affords you a few moments' sweet intercourse with Himself. This is one of the greatest blessings we can enjoy. The comforts of this life are great blessings, but to enjoy the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God, our Portion and our eternal All, is a blessing indeed.

O my dear friend, what an indescribable mercy it is for such poor sinners as we to be raised up to the sweet enjoyment of Christ! This is entering blessedly into the solemn truth contained in that portion of the Word of God: “The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail” (Isa. 51. 14). You know, my dear friend, what it is to be in the pit, and to be there in bonds too; and through matchless grace you can truly say, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings” (Psa. 40. 2).

But you must not expect all fair weather, and always to walk in a smooth path. Had we no storms, we should not so highly prize the glorious Hiding-place; if we had no dark moments, we should not understand what it was for the Lord to make darkness light before us; and had we no rough places and crooked things in our path, we should be at a loss to know experimentally what it was for the Lord to make crooked things straight and rough places plain. But our Lord has promised to do all these things for us, and not forsake us.

Sometimes we shall be beset without and within, and go mourning because of the oppression of our enemies, and their weapons will be like swords in our bones, as though they were determined to cut in pieces and destroy all our hope, and then laugh us to scorn, saying, “Where is now thy God?” Thus they treated David, but the Lord graciously propped up his hope, and enabled him to say, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (Psa. 42. 11).

I know well that “hope deferred maketh the heart sick,” but this is a blessed truth that however long hope may be deferred, and however

sick the child of God may be in consequence, true hope shall never be defeated, and in the Lord's own time He will appear and crown hope with divine confidence, for "hope maketh not ashamed."

William Gadsby

Manchester, February 20th, 1835

THE WONDROUS CROSS

By J.K. Popham, 1918

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6. 14).

The cross, as Paul uses the word in this verse, expresses the love, the compassion, the mercy, the justice, the honour of God in the highest possible manner. O happy sinner who knows that experimentally! It fits *sinner*s; the righteous despise it. What is there in it for the righteous? He needs no repentance. The sick man prizes the physician and his prescription. We do not talk about the physician if we are healthy; if we do, it will only be that we have heard about him from others who have benefited by him. But if we are sick, really sick in our spirits, sick of sin, then we shall be fond of Christ; and when His remedies are applied, we shall prize Him.

The cross expresses *the love of God*. God so loved the world as that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to redeem His people from their sins. It expresses all that love could do for sinners, all that love could design and devise and purpose for sinners. It expresses the greatest pain possible, the deepest shame possible, the most ignominious suffering possible. It expresses *the love of Christ*, who gave Himself to that solemn, painful death, to that bitter experience of desertion by His Father. It expresses the gate of heaven for a sinner, the true and only way of access to the Father, the only plea that a sinner can make, the only ground on which he can stand well, the only hope he is warranted to entertain for time and for eternity, the only window of heaven through which may beam, and shall beam, the goodness of God as from a bright and glorious Sun.

There is such an amazing *gathering* – shall I say? – at the cross as shall astonish all who see it, both in this world and that which is to come. What a gathering! There is *the Father*, the Father in the law. There is the law, the manifestation of the will, the good pleasure of God concerning man, the claim of God on man, the claim He will never forego. There is justice demanding its full due, determined to have nothing short. There is holiness divine, forbidding the approach of a

sinner to almighty God, of a sinner as such in himself. There is mercy melting over the church given to Christ; divine compassions wanting vent to sinners. There is *the Son*, a willing Sacrifice, ready to yield perfect obedience. There is the Son of God in weakness, the Son of God unable to save Himself, if He will save the church. There is *the Holy Ghost*, who dwelt in Christ without measure. O what a gathering! Never before, never since has there been such a gathering as at the cross on that mount.

If we see that gathering, we shall be amazed. If we see the character of the Father – O that it should be possible for Him to come there for satisfaction! If we see the Son, O what an amazement will fill our spirits that He should condescend to be there, that He should allow justice to bind Him, and yet have wings to fly there with all the earnestness of eternal love! And if we see the Spirit, who anointed that Man Jesus, that wondrous Man; and if we see justice and all its brightness as we can bear the sight, and mercy and compassion with all their tenderness, and pity omnipotent, we shall be attracted, we shall be held. We shall see dung and dross, emptiness, darkness, vanity and death upon all else. Wealth and life and goodness and righteousness and peace we shall see here. We shall not wonder at Bunyan's experience; we shall want it to be our own. He said when he got to the cross that that bundle, that burden that had been bound on his back fell off of its own accord into the sepulchre. And if we have a burden, we shall want to find that gone, just as he found his burden gone.

By the cross, then, every perfection of God is honoured and magnified; every claim of the law on man, on those elected men, was honoured, met perfectly. Justice is as much on the side of a redeemed sinner as mercy is. Hart expresses it well, speaking of his own experience,

“Here's an amazing change indeed –
Justice is now for me!”

Does a sinner long to see what is in store for him? Would he fain see God's heart? Would he fain see that there is something better than mortality, better than this mortal state, better than the best of this world? He will never see it except here; this will be the introduction to it, this will be the door, the way, the window, the means, by which God will convey some experience of what “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,” for them that wait for Him (1 Cor. 2. 9). Are we burdened? There is no sustenance like that which the cross affords. One says,

“The cross, it bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God

Lays the foundation of my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

When we have had the sight, we shall never forget it really. Says Newton,

"Never till my latest breath
Shall I forget that look."

O how could a man while memory lasts forget the sight of Christ crucified? He may turn away for a time, may be turned away by temptation, by false teaching, by error, as were the Galatians. But he will be reminded of it again and again, as Paul reminded them: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" Fancies fly away, notions, theories, intellectual things fly away before this marvellous thing, which melts away all prejudices against God's terms of saving a sinner. And the sinner is brought, as the apostle expresses it, to receive the atonement. He submits himself by faith to the righteousness of God.

The cross is *God's way of access to Himself*; and this the Scripture teaches us, and this the Spirit teaches us. Says Paul to the Ephesians, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (2. 13). To be nigh according to that word is to be reconciled. To be reconciled is to have all the differences between the soul and God taken away. His difference with the sinner, His charges against him, His accusations in his conscience brought by the law, fixed there – these done away, because Jesus for ever put away his sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And his prejudices, his enmity, and hardness and bitterness, and wrath and evil, his self-will and self-fulness, self-direction and self-strength – these were put away.

It is great to be saved by sovereign grace, willing to be saved on God's terms, which are that the sinner shall be a sinner in his experience, not practice, shall be a sinner mourning, weeping, confessing; that his conscience shall be a receptacle for the atonement; that his heart shall be as an empty vessel for mercy; that his soul shall be fitted by a solemn experience of rags, to receive a robe divine. If we get nigh like that, we shall not want to go away. Driven we may be, beguiled we may be, carnally tempted we may be for a time, but O we shall want to abide there. One sings, and we sing with him sometimes,

"Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the cross I gaze."

And the cross expresses *the church's perfection*. O bless God for that truth! One may say, "I get worse and worse in my experience." Well, though that is painful, it is good. He who gets better in himself, who forgets his sinfulness, will not be long before he forgets Jesus

Christ. But the man who gets worse, weaker, poorer, more dependent, whose eyes are open to see more, and who feels more painfully the evil of sin in his nature, who at times comes to this, "Now here I am; I could as soon make a world as I could help my own salvation. Here I am; I have no more power or hand in this matter than the dust under my feet" – that man will find a perfection. For Christ "hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." How? By one offering. "By *one* offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10. 14).

Why, all the commanded offerings of the Jews could not make them perfect; the comers to God by sacrifices ordained could never become perfect. Their sacrifices could never bring peace, real peace, into their consciences, though they were ordained. Now God has not told us to do anything, not commanded us to do a thing in this matter. We must do our duty among men, walk morally, speak the truth every man with his neighbour, defraud not any man. If one has grace, he will be the best master in the world or the best servant. Surely grace makes men upright. But when they come to salvation matters, then it is just this: "We are the clay, Thou our Potter." And the perfection God will have, for He is never pleased with anything but perfection, is found at the cross. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

And the cross is *the door to heaven*. As it is the way of access to the Father, so it is the door to heaven. "I am the Door." Heaven in a degree is to be known on earth; it is known in some particulars. First, it is known *in the forgiveness of sins*. Whenever God forgives a man his sins, He brings heaven to him. It is many years since God put my sins away first, and made me feel, as I laid my head on my pillow that night, that it would be as easy for me to die as to lay my head on my pillow. And O, to have gone that moment would have been the good thing that I desired. Now, heaven *is* known on earth. What is the song in heaven? "Washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1. 5). We shall never sing that song there, if we know nothing of it here. Redeemed sinners will join the spirits of just men made perfect; then the angels in their chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb!" (5. 12). O bless God for the atonement! Praise His name. Angels, though they need not, and therefore have not the atonement, praise Him; the spirits of just men made perfect praise Him; some sinners on earth praise Him for giving Himself, praise Him for dying, shedding His blood, pouring out His soul unto death.

Part of heaven is known in *justification*. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 8. 1; 5. 1, 2). The woman who was a sinner, she got this great matter, this justification (Luke 7. 37). There was the publican, he got this; he went down to his house justified. There was the

thief on the cross by the side of Jesus Christ, and he got this justification, and went to heaven that same day to be with his Redeemer and Justifier. It is part of heaven we possess if we possess justification. What more can God ask than that a sinner should be made a perfect person? How can he be made a perfect person but by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ?

Also part of heaven lies in *the communications that the Holy Ghost makes to the soul*. He does make communications. God does speak to sinners; some know it. We who have heard His voice would lie against our right if we said we had not. To some He has said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." To some He has said, "I will guide thee with Mine eye." To others, "I will help thee, I will strengthen thee, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." To some He has said, "Fear not." To some, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." What communications! Each word has heaven in it; each word is pregnant with goodness divine. If we have had a little of heaven, we can understand the warm feeling of Rutherford who said if he had a thousand souls, he could trust them all to Christ. How worthy He is of all trust and confidence! Worthy is the Lamb!

The cross *reconciles people to their lot*. It may be a lot of very keen suffering, very heavy burdens, very weary pilgrimage and hard fighting; but the cross will strengthen them and enable them in all. The cross affects the will of a child of God. He is willing; he is willing to be where and what the Lord would have him. "Not my will" – the cross brings that prayer out of a person's heart. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." The cross is the glory of a sinner. "Thy God thy glory"; and God is the God of a person in Christ. The cross explains the covenant to the sinner's heart: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8. 10-12).

O what we do owe to the cross of Christ! Does a child of God murmur at the way he is walking in? Does he find in his heart a questioning of the wisdom of God and the mercy of God to him? Does the rod appear to him to be a sword? Does he fear that God will cut him off? But if he finds God in Christ reconciling him to Himself, that will change the face of all, put a new aspect upon trouble, and turn it into a sign of his sonship, into a token of the love of God to him, and help him to bear the cross. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." And this comes by the cross of Christ.

Again. The cross is *meat and drink*. “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6. 53). That cuts away a great deal of our religion. Perhaps it does not leave much for us, but it leaves an eternal good, if we eat His flesh and drink His blood. What is it to do that? It is that mysterious act of faith on the Lord Jesus, whereby He is received as a Saviour, as dying, into a broken heart, into a broken-down sinner’s heart, whereby that sinner is saved. He has eternal life; he shall never die. All who have received Jesus Christ crucified shall live for ever. So saith the Scriptures. This is life.

Says Christ, “Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life” (6. 54). There is a vast and strong prejudice against this in our hearts. We are not different from, not better than the Jews who were offended at that saying. O but God brings His children to it. He sweeps away their inveterate unbelief and prejudice, and brings them as little children to eat that precious Bread, to receive Jesus Christ under the solemn and sweet and blessed consideration of dying. Have we not prayed often and do we not still pray, when hearing of Him as the Bread of life, “Lord, evermore give us this Bread”?

Can we wonder, then, that Paul should glory in the cross? and that he should assert in this very strong way, “God forbid – God forbid that I should glory” – boast, speak of anything, boast in anything, of anything, “save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” – my hope, my glory? Said the psalmist, “My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad” (Psa. 34. 2). And well they may be when they themselves have had the same mercy. To glory here is to boast of, to have an exclusive belief in, hope in, experience of, the cross, so that there shall be nothing of any sort or kind in the whole of this world or in the man himself that shall take his attention, hold his heart, and be a matter of boasting to his tongue.

O who can express fully the warm feeling of attachment to the cross that a revelation of the cross gives a sinner? Who can express the sweet, the comfortable, the unreserved trust and confidence that the sinner has in the cross of Christ? “In the Lord put I my trust,” said the psalmist. “How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?” As if he said, “Now there is nothing in my mind, my heart, my conscience, my thoughts, my affections, but what I find fixed, fixed on Christ; and therefore, because He is good, because His goodness endureth for ever, because of His infinite merit, because of His will, His good-will – how do you my persecutors, you who wish me evil, you who seek to harm me – how do you say to me, ‘Flee as a bird to your mountain?’ I am not without hope, I am not without means of help; and therefore I will not flee as you bid me. Here I will abide” (Psa. 11. 1).

“God forbid!” Why this strong word? There is a lurking, lusting nature in us that would boast of something beside this, other than this.

We know it. Have I done something well, as nature speaks? Have I been long in the way to heaven? Have I had good experience of God's love? Have I tasted many times that He is gracious? Yes. What then? Must I be a sinner still? Must I be just as at the first, with respect to redemption? May I not bring what I have experienced from God? May I not bring the promises that He has given me, and my experience of them, and add these to the cross? I may bring them to the cross and say, "These come from that, these are the fruit of that, these have come to me by that." But I may not bring them to add to the merit of the cross. I may thank God for giving them me by the cross, and should and will do so; but as to salvation, as to entering heaven, it will be when we come to die, as when we first saw the Lord by faith:

"Other refuge have I none...
Black, I to the Fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

A better passport we cannot have; other passport will not do. This will do. The eye of a needle we will have to get through, if we go to heaven; but this will take us through – stripped, stripped, stripped. This will take us through. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now I must leave it. May the Lord continue it, and increase the knowledge of this cross in us, and give us to feel the power of it in our spirits, and the peace of it in our consciences, and the love of it in our hearts. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

From Elisha Coles on God's Sovereignty, a book which has had a remarkable influence over the years in expounding "the five points of Calvinism."

Another ensign, asserting God's supremacy and rightful dominion is the general vote and subscription of men, especially the most knowing, and such as best understand Him.

1. They own it in their practice or actions. Abel offers the firstlings of his flock to God (Gen. 4. 4). Abraham leaves his native country at God's command, to go he knew not whither (Gen. 12. 4). He also offers his only and innocent son Isaac, in whose life and posterity all nations were to be blessed (Gen. 22. 2, 10). Job, when stripped of all, falls down and worships (Job 1. 21). When Aaron's two sons were destroyed by fire from heaven, he held his peace (Lev. 10. 2, 3). Eli, when that tingling sentence was denounced against his house, said, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good" (1 Sam. 3. 18). David, when driven

from God's sanctuary, and his throne usurped by Absalom, said: "Behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him" (2 Sam. 15. 26). The men of Nineveh, their destruction was pronounced peremptorily, of which they had no promise of remission, and consequently no visible ground of hope; yet they believed God, fasted, lay in sackcloth, and turned from their evil way (Jonah 3. 5, 8).

2. They likewise own it in their confessions and attestations: Melchizedec and Abraham do both style Him, "the most high God, Possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14. 19, 22). Job professeth that though he were righteous, yet if God will contend with him, he will not answer, but make supplication to his Judge (Job 9. 15). "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. 16. 4). "For His pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4. 11). "We are the clay, and Thou our Potter" (Isa. 64. 8). "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1. 11). "He giveth not account of any of His matters" (Job 33. 13). "In His hand is the soul of every living thing" (Job 12. 10). He is "the God of the spirits of all flesh" (Num. 16. 22). "All nations before Him are ... less than nothing, and vanity" (Isa. 40. 17). He "stilleth ... the tumult of the people" (Psa. 65. 7). "If it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it" (Acts 5. 39). "The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand" (Prov. 19. 21; Psa. 33. 11). "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16. 33). "The kingdom is the Lord's: and He is the Governor among the nations" (Psa. 22. 28).

Nebuchadnezzar, that proud and potent monarch, whose greatness reached unto heaven, and his dominion to the end of the earth; all nations trembled before him; whom he would, he slew; and whom he would, he kept alive; who said in his heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will be like the Most High; and who is that God that shall deliver out of my hand? Yet even he, this child of pride, is made to confess One higher than himself, and to bow before Him, proclaiming to the world that the Most High doth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou? and those that walk in pride He is able to abase (Dan. 3. 15; 4. 22, 34-37; 5. 19; Isa. 14. 13, 14). It might further be instanced in Cain, Pharaoh, Balaam and other wicked men, how they were even constrained to acknowledge the sovereignty of God (Exod. 5. 2; 9. 27, 28; Num. 22. 18; and Dan. 6. 26-28).

The Lord hath made a promise *to* late repentance, but where hath He made a promise *of* late repentance?

Thomas Brooks

SHEEP CROSSING THE RIVER

From Dr. W.M. Thomson's The Land and the Book, 1875

“Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock” (Psa. 80. 1).

Come down to the river. There is something going forward worth seeing. Yon shepherd is about to lead his flock across, and – as our Lord says of the good shepherd – you observe that he goes before and the sheep follow. Not all in the same manner, however. Some enter boldly and come straight across. These are the loved ones of the flock, who keep hard by the footsteps of the shepherd, whether sauntering through green meadows by the still waters, feeding upon the mountains, or resting at noon beneath the shadow of great rocks.

And now others enter, but in doubt and alarm. Far from their guide, they miss the ford, and are carried down the river, some more, some less; and yet one by one they all struggle over and make good their landing. Notice those little lambs. They refuse to enter, and must be driven into the stream by the shepherd's dog, mentioned by Job in his “parable.” Poor things! how they leap, and plunge, and bleat in terror! That weak one yonder will be swept quite away and perish in the sea. But no; the shepherd himself leaps into the stream, lifts it into his bosom, and bears it trembling to the shore. All safely over, how happy they appear! The lambs frisk and gambol about in high spirits, while the older ones gather round their faithful guide, and look up to him in subdued but expressive thankfulness.

Now can you watch such a scene and not think of that Shepherd who leadeth Joseph like a flock, and of another river, which all His sheep must cross? He too goes before, and as in the case of this flock, they who keep near Him fear no evil. They hear His sweet voice saying, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee” (Isa. 43. 2). With eye fastened on Him, they scarcely see the stream or feel its cold and threatening waves.

The great majority however, “linger, shivering on the brink, and fear to launch away.” They lag behind, look down upon the dark river, and like Peter on stormy Gennesaret when faith failed, they begin to sink. Then they cry for help, and not in vain. The good Shepherd hastens to their rescue, and none of all His flock can ever perish. Even the weakest lambs are carried safely over.

I once saw flocks crossing Jordan “to Canaan's fair and happy land,” and there the scene was even more striking and impressive. The river was broader, the current stronger, and the flocks larger, while the shepherds were more picturesque and Biblical. The catastrophe, too,

with which many poor sheep were threatened – of being swept down into that mysterious Sea of Death which swallows up the Jordan itself – was more solemn and suggestive.

BOOK REVIEWS

Works of William Tyndale; 2 volumes; hardback; lxxvi + 532 and 684 pages; price £33 the set; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

In the history of the church of God, we believe no man is worthy of more honour than William Tyndale. When we think of that dear man, in loneliness translating the Scriptures, often in a musty cellar or draughty attic, what he sacrificed for Jesus' sake! How different from an eminent minister preaching to hundreds, and being warmly welcomed! What a debt we owe to him for his wonderful translation work on which our own Authorized Version is largely based!

It is, then, with a feeling of gratitude to the publishers that we welcome the two-volume set of *Works of William Tyndale*, sub-titled "Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures." At the beginning of each volume and on the dust jacket is a portrait of Tyndale, that which hangs at Hertford College, Oxford. As he was only in his mid-forties when he died, how he must have aged through his hardships!

The works were first published in three volumes in 1848 by The Parker Society, named after the Elizabethan archbishop and, we believe, chaired by the famous Earl of Shaftesbury – its aim being to publish all the works of the Reformers. The three volumes are now produced as a two-volume set.

Those who have an interest in church history have doubtless read about Tyndale's *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* and *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, but it is gratifying actually to *have* them and to *read* them.

Apart from these well-known works, included is *A Pathway into Holy Scripture*, Tyndale's first original composition – his Prologue to his translation of the New Testament. Also there are prefaces to the various books of the Bible he translated and tables expounding certain words in these books, along with expositions of parts of Matthew, John, and John's First Epistle. Though a replica of the original, the print is very clear and Tyndale is not difficult to read.

Some people have thought it a pity that William Tyndale ever engaged in original writing; if he had not, he could probably have translated the *whole* Bible. But his own answer would have been that he considered himself a Reformer as well as a translator.

At the beginning is a 76-page life of Tyndale, and the books are well edited (with footnotes and explanations) by Henry Walter, who we are told was Rector of Hasilbury Bryan, Dorset. How often we stumble across unknown, godly clergyman, hidden away in small villages in the nineteenth century! What an indictment of the Church of England today!

Tyndale's works should not be approached as just containing things of historical interest – though there is included his *Answer to Thomas More* and *The*

Practice of Prelate. But also there is a mine of spiritual reading. William Tyndale writes essentially on the great doctrine of the Reformation: justification by faith alone. This he emphasises over and over again against the Roman Catholic doctrine of man's merit. Tyndale also very ably expounds many passages which *appear* to teach justification by works, clearly showing that there must be fruit, but the fruit springs from the root. Like the other Reformers, it may appear that he over-labours the one point (rather than the wider teaching of the Puritans) but this was first-generation Protestantism.

On first picking up Volume 1, we were attracted by the following:

"Note the difference of the law and of the gospel. The one asketh and requireth, the other pardoneth and forgiveth. The one threateneth, the other promiseth all good things to them that set their trust in Christ only. The gospel signifieth glad tidings, and is nothing but the promises of good things. All is not gospel that is written in the gospel-book: for if the law were away, thou couldest not know what the gospel meant; even as thou couldest not see pardon and grace, except the law rebuked thee, and declared unto thee thy sin, misdeed and trespass.... Apply always the law to thy deeds, and so shalt thou no doubt repent, and feel in thyself a certain sorrow, pain and grief to thine heart because thou canst not with full lust do the deeds of the law. Apply the gospel, that is to say the promises, unto the deserving of Christ, and to the mercy of God and His truth, and so shalt thou not despair; but shalt feel God as a kind and merciful Father.... All threatenings shall be forgiven thee for Christ's blood's sake."

These are books of quality and value.

Indwelling Sin in Believers: by John Owen; abridged and made easy to read; paperback; 176 pages; price £5.00; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a companion volume to *The Mortification of Sin* (see *Gospel Standard* 2004, page 155) and *Temptation Resisted and Repulsed* (see *Gospel Standard* 2007, page 223). Each are abridgements of Owen seeking to make his writings more accessible to the modern reader. *Indwelling Sin in Believers* would seem to be faithful to the original, though not all Scripture quotations are from the Authorised Version.

To mourn over the sin which dwells within us each is something which only a true Christian knows. Owen in his masterly way as a true physician of souls describes the awful malady of sin, how it works in all, but especially its effects in a believer and the need for a continual war against it. He describes the remedies too, the things that will weaken its effect, such as prayer, meditation, communion with God and watchfulness; he writes of the continual need for grace and to flee from the law which can only stir up sin.

Yet we felt not all of the Lord's people could read this book with the same profit. Some might attest the picture Owen draws is exact and the malady described as they have sadly verified it, but having so often proved their own weakness and frailty, they need more than having the remedies described. They need One who not only knows the disease but can undertake their case and apply the remedy for them too – they need a short cut to the cross of Christ. Such might find some of Owen's other writings more helpful – *The Glory of Christ* perhaps.

John A. Kingham, Luton

OBITUARY

Rachel Lucas Pearce, for 59 years a member of the church at Bethel, Luton, entered her eternal rest on May 9th, 2010, aged 96.

The following is her own account:

As some of my children have repeatedly asked me to write a little concerning my hope of salvation, I venture with much fearfulness, feeling to know so little, yet hoping there may be a few things come sweetly to my remembrance.

I was born at Eastleigh near Southampton on May 25th, 1913. My father, Mr. Caleb Sawyer, became pastor at Mayfield chapel when I was five, and we moved from Eastleigh to Mayfield to live in the chapel house.

As a child, I had some serious thoughts and when I was ill (as I very often was) would tell the Lord I would do better if He made me better, but when well again, was no more inclined to do that which was right. Yet I did not usually dislike going to chapel. Once I had a dream that I was standing by the cross of Jesus and He bowed His head down to me while I repeated the hymn, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild." This impressed me very much at the time, and I have never forgotten it, but as I was so worldly afterwards, I could take no comfort from it.

Between 15 and 17 years old, I much wanted the world, and a few times friends took me to places which I knew my parents would not like; also reading books which were harmful, but I often felt guilty as I had love and great respect for my parents. Swearing I did not like and untruthfulness, yet I cannot say I never told a lie to cover up my wrong doings. What a grief this has been to me since!

Well now, when I reached the age of about 17, I lost a friend (Anna) who was only 15, who for a time I went to school with, and who also attended the chapel. She died rather suddenly, but just before she died she said to her parents, "Have we all done wrong?" and then repeated the children's hymn, "Gentle Jesus," quite plainly. Her father came late at night to fetch my father to pray with her.

Anna's death seemed to fall on me with concern, almost more about her soul than my own at first, and at her memorial service I listened as I had never listened before. My father preached from Isaiah 40. 11: "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." [When her eldest daughter was born, she was named Anna after her.]

I believe my concern for my soul started from this time, yet I was in much temptation at this time and also had much trouble at work. My steps were often slipping but I felt the only thing I could do about it was to pray, but felt I could not pray to a holy God and expect answers if I clung to my sins. So one thing after another had to be given up. Having a lot of illness at this time, it seemed I must give up work for a time. I began to feel how vain were all things here below and that to know my sins were forgiven was above everything else. Sometimes I felt afraid to go to sleep at night for fear I should awake in hell, yet felt my convictions were so slight compared to many of the Lord's people, which has often made me afraid that I have not had real convictions.

The house of God was very dear to me now. I listened indeed for myself. The hymns were sweet to me – before the service Sunday morning I would go for a walk and take my hymnbook with me. How I listened for myself to the preaching, but feared there may be no hope.

The first sermon which seemed all for me was when my father preached at a chapel at a place called Little London, right in the country. The text was, “Thou hast been my help.” Looking back I wondered how it could have suited me at that time, being so young in the way, but when Mr. Ramsbottom preached from it recently, he brought it back by saying that God has been our help in convicting of sin, bringing out of the world and causing us to look only to Jesus, He being so very needful.

Other sermons were so good to me at this time when my father preached from Ruth 2. 13: “Then she said, Let me find favour in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.”

Another time from Ruth, “The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.” Mr. Collier gave me these words when receiving me into the church.

Once I went to special services at Shovers Green. I was about 22 years of age. I caught two buses to get there and then walked over the fields. I thought nothing of it. Mr. Raven preached so sweetly (to me) from, “How shall I put thee among the children?.... Thou shalt call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me.”

One other text stands out, when Mr Raven preached from, “Despise not the day of small things.” I felt it was just for me, and seekers, but taking home an old saint, he said how good it was to him, to my great surprise.

One Good Friday, I asked my sister if she would walk to Shovers Green to hear Mr. Frank Gosden. I was so pleased she was willing. Now I felt my sister seemed to have so much religion and I so little. Mr. Gosden’s text was, “A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.” How suitable this was to me! Those “precious littles,” he kept saying.

On holiday in Wales with my sister, we stayed at a youth hostel, something like a Y.W.C.A. There were those there who pitied me my bondage, as they said, and tried much to convince me I should be as happy as they, for it was as much presumption to say I did not know if Christ died for me as to say He had died for me. I began one evening to wonder if they were right and I was wrong, but going to bed early and taking my Bible, I opened on the words, “With a mighty hand and a stretched out arm have I saved you.” God was speaking to Moses about His people. It came to me with much comfort and I felt so confirmed that it was all the work of the Lord and thankful it was so.

My husband and I were married in September 1939 just three weeks after war was declared. We lived at Brighton and attended Galeed chapel. After we were married I was much taken up with caring for my husband and my new home, but then the bombing came and I did not feel fit to die. This brought on more concern. There were helps from time to time from the ministry. Being ill, and at home one Sunday, I read a sermon of Mr. Philpot’s. The text was from Deuteronomy 33. 29: “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?” This was good to me.

Here our son Roy was born and it was a time of much anxiety. A bomb fell near our house at the end of the road and our door was blown in and our little boy was covered in glass.

When our second son Caleb was a baby, we moved up to Hitchin to live. Seventy people applied for the house we moved to. It seemed wonderful that we should have been favoured to have it. We attended Welwyn chapel as we could not find anywhere good to attend in Hitchin. We enjoyed some of the sermons of Philpot that were read there. Mr. Goldsmith used to read them so well, but I cannot remember anything else in particular, except my father once preaching from, "Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand."

But we got weary of the journeys to Welwyn and felt such a desire to have a pastor. When my husband's father wanted to move and was vacating his house in Luton, we were asked to leave our house in Hitchin. We felt the way was made for us to move to Luton and be near the chapel, although we were leaving the country to a very enclosed house in the town of Luton. But the unattractiveness of this situation was forgotten in the joy of being near a chapel and a good minister. My husband had been brought up at Ebenezer chapel, Luton, but we felt much drawn to the friends at Bethel. What was our consternation when only three weeks afterwards Mr. Fookes, the pastor at Bethel, where we were now attending, died suddenly!

We felt much drawn to the friends at Bethel, sharing in their sorrow at the loss of their pastor, but now we wondered if we had done right in attending Bethel as my husband had been brought up at Ebenezer. We felt that had Mr. Fookes died just before we arrived instead of just after, we should have felt we must attend the chapel with a pastor. We continued at Bethel, and a real Bethel it has been to us at times.

About a week after we moved to Luton, it had to be decided if we would take over my husband's father's business, and the evening it was decided to do so, I was feeling very sad as for several reasons I did not want to do so. But that evening at chapel, Mr. Fookes preached from Job 23. 10: "He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." It just all seemed for me and I could not lift up a finger against the decision, though my dear husband gave me the opportunity.

The war ended in May 1945 and John was born on VE day.

We had many good Sundays with different ministers. One evening, being in troubled circumstances and cast down in soul, I went to chapel in much need. Mr Collier preached from Isaiah 5. 17: "Then shall the lambs feed after their manner." He described an experience so like mine, and then said, "If this is your experience, you are one of these lambs." O the sweetness with which it came to me, it raised me up to a hope. I have never forgotten it.

Another time Mr. Collier preached from Genesis 42. 25: "Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way." He spoke much on baptism saying it was not necessary to salvation but had we prayerfully considered it as being a *command* of God? Up to this time I felt I had not the experience to go forward with, not being necessary for salvation. Also, I dislike responsibility and would rather take a back seat, and it would have to come into everything, even dress. But now I could not leave it and felt I must pray about it to be shown the ordinance.

A blessed service was when Mr. Collier preached from Job 33. 26: "He shall pray unto God, and He will be favourable unto him: and he shall see His face with joy: for He shall render unto man His righteousness." Yes, I felt the Lord had heard my poor prayers and had been favourable unto me, and a good hope that I should see His face with joy, because He had rendered unto man His righteousness, the dear Lord Jesus taking all our sins. It was as if we had no sin at all in the sight of a Holy God. I felt as if my sins were covered, for I could not feel the weight of them. O the sweetness of it. For a little while I went on my way rejoicing.

Before Susan was born, it was a most trying time for me. A girl from chapel had died and her baby in the nursing home I was soon to go to. I often cried as it seemed my little hope had gone. Yet it was a relief that others were praying for me and felt I could pray myself and knowing my dear parents were praying for me, whose prayers I valued so much and had often been answered, was a help. Eventually I entered the nursing home. Susan was born at midnight, things went wrong and the heavens seemed as brass, feeling the Lord did not hear my cry. I was given a blood transfusion and mercifully brought through but in the morning felt rebellious. Why was all this allowed to happen? My dear husband came and amongst other things he repeated that text Lamentations 3. 22: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not." That was the word I needed. Now I could see it was a mercy I was not cut off as a cumberer of the ground. Reading the chapter in Lamentations 3 was so comforting and so suitable to me. Also I enjoyed reading Philpot's sermons.

Yet I still could not understand the (as I thought) unanswered prayers but the first time I was able to attend chapel, Mr. Janes preached from, "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9.11). He spoke of prayers not being answered as we expected, which was right to my case.

Mr. Oliver Pack came soon after and spoke of Hezekiah's night of mourning. He might have known all my fears of the night Susan was born. When I spoke to him about it afterwards he said, "If you have a night like that, you will have a bright day," or similar words.

Now comes a time when I had a special help when Mr. Foster came and preached from: "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." All my fears were removed and I felt it confirmed the reality of the hearing times that I had had, but I had been leaning on them more than Christ Himself. Also, that particular minister was a sent servant of God. I went on my way rejoicing.

We had many difficulties at Cowper Street, Luton, with the family increasing. We looked out on a brick wall but it was easy to bear to be near chapel and yet being so bad for the children, we looked around for somewhere else to live. The house at Harpenden was brought to our notice and felt it was to be our home and yet we did not go the right way to obtain it and we felt very guilty of going before the Lord. I went to a special service when Mr. John Gosden was preaching and felt so bowed down with sin. These words came in his text, "How much more shall the blood of Christ," etc. He spoke of the willingness of Christ to die for sinners, the Father so willing to send His beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit willing to reveal Him to poor sinners. I had difficulty in keeping back tears – sweet tears. "How willing was Jesus to die, that we

fellow-sinners might live!” Then when this sweet discourse was ended we sang the hymn 984:

“Hark! how the gospel trumpet sounds!
Christ and free grace therein abounds;
Free grace to such as sinners be;
And if free grace, why not for me?”

“The blood of Christ, how sweet it sounds,
To cleanse and heal the sinner’s wounds!
The streams thereof are rich and free;
And why, my soul, why not for thee?”

Every verse was good to me. How happy I went to bed that night!

When in hospital when Cynthia was born, I felt to be so dead spiritually, but opened my Bible one day on Luke 24, and verse 40 seemed especially sweet to me. I opened on the words, “He shewed them His hands and His feet.” What lovely condescension it seemed, and I much wanted to hear it preached from. Five years afterwards, Mr. Foster preached at Stotfold and took the subject, only from John 20. 20. How blessedly he preached from it two services! Truly a time to be remembered!

Ministers spoke often on baptism and the Lord’s supper. I began to see a sweetness in the ordinances and love drew me to them as a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ – and it was for sinners. My father came to Bethel and spoke at our special services from Ezekiel 36. 26, 27: “A new heart also will I give you, 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. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” I felt I must go forward, yet wanted something more.

One Sunday evening, Mr. Windridge was preaching. While I was sitting waiting for the service to commence, I was pondering over the matter of the ordinance and wondering what would enable me to go forward. I thought if there was a character in the Word of God like me, but felt that could not be, as I had been dealt with so gently with just a “still small voice” at times so quiet that I would wonder if it *was* the voice of God. But Mr. Windridge read Acts 16. When he came to the verse about Lydia I felt it was going to be for me – verse 14: “And a certain woman named Lydia ... which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.” I felt only the Lord could open my heart; and then he spoke of that faithfulness or worthiness, that all we have is in Christ, none of ourselves. I could hold back no longer. But before I spoke to the deacons I once more opened the Word of God and lighted on a passage about being baptized but I forget which one it was.

My husband gave his name in at the same time and we rejoiced together. He was away the Sunday the church meeting was announced, being best man at Mr. Bert Banfield’s wedding. Mr. Oxlade took for his text: “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I will call upon the name of the Lord ... I will pay my vows” (Psa. 116. 12-14). I thought, This cannot be only

for me; but no-one else came forward, so felt it must be, and he spoke so much my feelings.

When my husband came back, he was most dejected and a great darkness had come upon him, and he sank lower and lower till his distress was so great. This was a great trial. I feared for his mind. I thought I should lose my hope too, but Mr. Collier preached from, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." My husband was afterwards helped by a sermon from, "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Also he woke with the words, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" He was much comforted, and when my father baptized us (in June 1951) he preached from that text. What is it, he said, to receive the Holy Ghost? One thing is to be given a spirit of prayer as it was said of Paul, "Behold, he prayeth." We both went through the ordinance with peace and calmness.

When Mr. Collier received us into the church, the words he gave me were the words once good to me when my father preached from them in the Book of Ruth: "A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust." The first Lord's supper was a sacred time. My mind went to the dying thief and I felt there was mercy for me too. "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Myrtle was born a few months later.

Many were my trials and difficulties but I was helped through them from time to time and raised above them. One time, feeling everything was wrong providentially, the words, "Be still, and know that I am God" were a strength, feeling that if God was over all, then all must come right. I felt if He was my God (and the effect of the words made me hope He was), then come what may, all would be well. Another time of trial the verse, "No thought can fly, nor thing can move, unknown to Him that sits above," was a great support to me.

When my husband went to Sweden on business, the evening before he went, a load of fears came upon me, thinking what could happen while he was away, having ten children at this time. But as I went along to my bedroom that night, I felt the burden right lifted off me, so much so that I could hardly pray for help and safety, feeling I knew I would receive it and that all would be well. Only one difficulty arose and, in answer to prayer, that was soon overcome and I had such a good Sunday. Mr. Foster preached from Isaiah chapter 6, the first part: "In the year King Uzziah died." Mr. Foster spoke first of how death comes to kings and all of us – and what is time compared to eternity? Then he spoke so beautifully about the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His glory and train filling the temple. It was a time to be remembered. I had, I think, never so seen the emptiness of all things here below, even the best of them and what blessings and joys were to be found in Jesus Christ. I felt I could see and feel it. Yes, the world was killed to me then.

I was very ill at James' birth, so when the last three children were born – Timothy, Audrey and Marion – I knew the doctor was really worried about the confinements, but just before I went into hospital each time, I received a help through the ministry, which raised me above my fears.

Once, being in much trouble, yet feeling much of my sin in it, Mr. Morris preached to *me* (it seemed) from Psalm 71. 16: "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only."

Mr. Ramsbottom became pastor at Bethel in 1967. His first three months were a favoured time to me. During that time he preached from: "Who is

sufficient for these things?" I had been very concerned about him becoming pastor, but that settled me.

Latterly, I have walked in a path that has been more dark than light, though there have been bright spots. One Sunday morning I awoke with the words: "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." I hoped they might be preached from. Mr. Ramsbottom's text was Psalm 71. 20. "Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth." He spoke so much about where the Lord lay. Yes, He did lie there, but O, He is a risen Christ now. This was a good hearing time.

I lost my dear husband in 1996. He said just before he died, "Endless blessings on the Lamb." He repeated so warmly, "His dear heart was broken, too, when He bore the curse *for you*." He looked up at me, and spoke it so warmly, and I was so thankful for this; it took away the blow of losing him.

Not very long after he passed away, I had an attempted break-in one Saturday night at 12.50 a.m., but before these men could put a foot in, a man was going by with his dog which disturbed the would-be intruders. I have felt so thankful, I thought it worth recording God's wonderful protection.

Since then I have had the joy and blessing of many of my family and their loved ones called by grace. "Go on, Thou mighty God, Thy wonders to perform."

Here Mrs. Pearce's own account ends. The following are various scattered memories provided by the children.

Mum was worried about expecting so many children, and also Dad's diabetes. One Sunday evening, when staying in with the children, and Caleb (aged about 12 or so) was with her, he was reading out the various texts that ministers had preached from, and he read out Mr. Stovold's text: "Be still, and know that I am God." It came with such power, she felt it settled the matter.

Mum also related going to Nottingham once when pastor preached from, "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1. 6). She said that was really nice to her.

Mr. Joe Rutt (senior) was preaching at Bethel. The text was from Ephesians Chapter 4, verse 32: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Mum said how much that sermon had meant to her as she had previously found it difficult to forgive after difficult circumstances in her personal relationships and Mr. Rutt's sermon had really touched her heart that Sunday and he had showed her that she was wrong. She was a gracious example.

At the time of the attempted burglary, mum was very nervous of intruders coming back into the house and could not sleep properly for several days but the verses 3 and 4 from Deuteronomy 20 were made a help: "Neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." She was able to sleep peacefully after that.

While in Bethesda mum said how she had to sing, "Prepare me, gracious God, to stand before Thy face." She also quoted hymn 949, "There's not a name beneath the skies."

How much Mum enjoyed Mr. Ramsbottom's ministry and in her phone calls would always talk about what he had preached from.

Mother loved the faithful and God-honouring ministry of her beloved pastor under whose ministry she constantly fed and profited.

Her first love was to the house of God and she always put the things of God first.

When her grandson lodged with her, she always got him to read the Bible after breakfast and always without fail wanted him to finish up with Psalm 23.

Several of us remember the godly conversation of Dad and Mum as they drove home after the services. They little thought that they had listeners in the back seat.

Note by her pastor

Mrs. Pearce was a most godly lady, highly esteemed by her large family and by all the congregation. She always put the things of God first; the world meant nothing to her. It was not so much what she said but her whole life, witness and gracious influence.

During recent months her eyesight was very bad and her memory had begun to fail, but on my regular visits she almost always said,

“There’s not a name beneath the skies,
Nor is there one in heaven above,
But that of Jesus can suffice
The sinner’s burden to remove,”

on one occasion adding, “That’s about all I can remember now!” That summarised her religion.

She was one of the last people living who knew Mr. J.K. Popham well, as when young, she often met him through her father, Mr. Sawyer.

LOVING WISHES FOR A GIRL

*We wonder if these are birthday wishes sent to “E.M., Wolverhampton”
by Gadsby in January 1833.*

My dear Eliza, may it be
Your happiness to feel and see
The emptiness of all things here,
How bright or great they may appear,
Unless enjoyed by faith and prayer.

Riches and honours all are vain,
Pregnant with toil and care and pain;
And often act like a sly thief,
Rob us of joy and bring us grief.

Unless in them we view the Lord,
And learn His wonders to record,
No real good will they afford;
But if the Lord’s enjoyed in them,
They’re sure His kindness to explain.

May you in creature blessings view
How kind Jehovah is to you,
And gratefully enjoy the same
By faith in Jesus' love and name;

And may it be your constant care
To seek His will by faith and prayer.
Don't trust your heart a single day;
For that is sure to lead astray.

Numbers of things which please the eye
Prove snares, and end in misery;
And if such snares are gilded o'er,
Their danger is so much the more.

God grant you wisdom every day
All things with caution to survey;
Examine them by gospel light,
And pray the Lord to guide you right.

Remember, love, sly snares are set,
And often catch unguarded feet.
You need the Lord to be your Friend,
To lead you right and you defend.

Without His care you're sure to stray,
And wander far from wisdom's way.
God bless you with a child-like fear,
And make you His peculiar care.

May you the great Three-One adore,
And daily wait at mercy's door,
Take all your cares to Jesus' feet,
Trust in His name, His aid entreat.

In every station you may fill,
May you obey His righteous will,
At home, at school, where'er you be,
Whate'er you do, whate'er you see,
Keep this in view – the Lord surveys
The whole of all your thoughts and ways.

The Lord uphold you night and day,
Teach you to love, to watch, to pray,
And bless you with His love and peace,
In Jesus' blood and righteousness.
May you on Christ alone rely,
So prays your friend, W. Gadsby.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
SEPTEMBER 2010

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

THE POPE'S VISIT

We deplore the Pope's visit this month – especially a state visit, being welcomed by the Queen. The Pope is the head of a false religion, and his visit is not only an affront to the Lord's people but to our Protestant constitution, to the Queen's coronation oath, and to the state church, established as a Protestant church by law. Indeed the Articles of the Church of England state:

“The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardons, worshipping and adoration, as well as images as of reliques, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God..... Masses ... are blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits.”

On the other hand the claim that the Pope is coming as the sovereign head of a state is ridiculous, the Vatican consisting merely of 107 acres.

A number of things might be brought forward against the Pope's visit. Many are emphasising the constant child abuse by Roman Catholic priests. We might mention the cruel persecution of the godly over the years. But our chief objection is the erroneous doctrines of the church of which the Pope is head – the doctrines that dishonour Christ and mislead the people. We mention but five:

1. *A way of salvation in which works of one kind or another have their part.* The true gospel teaches only one way of salvation – by faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

2. *Mary as a mediator, and prayers to Mary.* “There is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.”

3. *Peter as the foundation.* “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

4. *An earthly priest forgiving sin.* “Who can forgive sins but God only?”

5. *The Mass a sacrifice for sins.* At Calvary the Saviour cried, “It is finished.” “By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

These are soul-destroying errors. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have

preached unto you, let him be accursed.” It is for this reason that we strongly object to the Pope’s visit.

* * *

We also deplore one of the chief purposes of the Pope’s visit, the canonisation of Cardinal Newman. What blasphemy for a mortal man to profess to confer sainthood on another mortal man! Only God can make a saint; and if a sinner is not through grace made a saint during his life, he certainly cannot become one a hundred years after his death. A saint is a sinner saved by grace.

But we are no admirers of Newman. John Henry Newman (1801-1890) had an evangelical upbringing, and at one time in small measure was an associate with J.C. Philpot at Oxford. Later he headed the Anglo-Catholic Oxford Movement, and then joined the Church of Rome.

In order to be fair, we began to read *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, Newman’s autobiography. We knew we should not agree with it but thought there might be some kind of “mysterious spirituality” – but we were appalled! What bitter hatred Newman expressed against the godly Reformers!

It has been a scandal that for years Newman’s hymn, “Lead, kindly light,” has appeared in most Protestant hymnals, even professed evangelical ones. The “kindly light” led him to the Church of Rome! During the years before the last Great War, a great conference of all religions was held. A hymn was desired to be sung. What hymn would accommodate *every* religion? “Lead, kindly light,” was decided on.

His other well-known hymn, “Praise to the holiest in the height,” was sung in his *The Dream of Gerontius* as the soul of Gerontius was carried from purgatory into heaven. Yet this too has appeared in most hymnbooks. Some argue it is not the author or background but the words; but “Praise to the holiest” is in no way sound on the atonement.

But what is to be expected of the Church of Rome if a man like Thomas More has been canonised – More whose inveterate hatred of the truth made William Tyndale’s death his chief ambition?

* * *

Today people say, “But it is Islam!” Islam is a great enemy; but Islam broaches its errors in the name of Islam; Romanism broaches its errors in the name of Christ.

May we be kept vigilant. “Buy the truth, and sell it not.” But may it never be in a bitter or self-righteous spirit. “Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” What better are we than they if not blessed with a personal, saving knowledge of the Son of God?

THE LOVINGKINDNESSES OF THE LORD

*Sermon preached by Herbert Dawson at Ebenezer Chapel, Edmonton,
London, on January 27th, 1929*

Text: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord" (Isa. 63. 7).

I should like to feel that not a few of you felt like Isaiah. The dear man was concerned to speak well of the Lord his God: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord." "I will mention"; and that is all one taught of God can do. When you begin to look at the dealings of God with you, and to look back over life's journey at His lovingkindnesses, the number is greater than human arithmetic can calculate. The illustration is used of the sand on the seashore and the hairs upon one's head, but even then you only "mention" the lovingkindnesses of the Lord. How many breaths have you drawn since you were born? So many lovingkindnesses of the Lord have you received and more. It is a great mercy if some of you are concerned to mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.

Let us then for a little while, as the Lord shall help us, seek to walk in Isaiah's pathway. It was a personal matter with Isaiah: "I will mention." Isaiah was speaking from his own heart, his own experience. Do you think that you can do this? "Something must be known and felt." It would be impossible for the dead to mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord in a God-glorifying way, for this is a matter for the living, one born again – "The living will lay it to his heart" – and it should be a concern with the living to mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord. It was because Isaiah was a man that was taught of God that this gracious resolution welled up in his breast: "I will mention" – nor shall men or devils stop me – "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord to me and mine."

One feels like a child on the seashore with a toy bucket with such a subject as this. What can you do in mentioning the lovingkindnesses of the Lord in a short sermon? Faithful men who have been sent to preach with a "Thus saith the Lord" in all ages have been mentioning the lovingkindnesses of the Lord. Thousands, tens of thousands of sermons have been preached about the lovingkindnesses of the Lord from one text and another, and yet only a "mention" has been made. The subject is so great, you can only "mention" the lovingkindnesses of the Lord. The great thing is if the Lord is pleased to enable you, preacher and people, to strike the right keynote.

This will be the occupation of the saints in the realms of bliss. The lovingkindnesses of the Lord – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – will be the delightful theme of the songs of the redeemed; but you must understand this, the people that sing the song of the redeemed in glory learn the

keynote in their journey through life and they are brought experimentally to join with Isaiah: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord."

The lovingkindness of the Lord must be communicated. You cannot earn it, you cannot buy it, you cannot merit it. The lovingkindnesses of the Lord are sovereign, and that is a great truth to learn. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy." If any of you this Sabbath morn feel the lovingkindnesses of the Lord welling up in your hearts, it is the outcome of sovereign grace – the sovereign act of a God of all grace to you.

You will notice the word "LORD" is put in capital letters, and most of you know that when the word "Lord" is put in capital letters in the Word of God it refers to the Trinity – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Isaiah was a man that was a believer in the glorious and cardinal truth of our most holy faith, the TRINITY. Each one, and everyone taught of God, is taught to believe in the Trinity. You may say, "O there are people that are illiterate and cannot speak of doctrine as others are enabled to do. Can such people be taught to believe in the Trinity?" Examine yourself, are *you* a real believer in the Trinity – an experimental believer? I am not talking about a creed, an article of faith. I am contending for what is to be known and felt within.

You will find this, when a man is taught of God, there is one blessing that man is on the stretch to get, and it is a blessing like our hymnwriter speaks of:

"My God, my Father, blissful name!
O may I call Thee mine?"

Such a character wants to know that the great God that rules on high is his Father, his heavenly Father; and each one that is taught of God feels a great tenderness, a very solemn tenderness, in praying what is called "The Lord's Prayer": "Our Father which art in heaven." You will find people that are taught of God feel like this: "O if I could *only feel* 'Our Father which art in heaven,' what a happy man I should be! how I should rejoice in the knowledge of it!" and that man believes in God the Father. Can there be a greater joy than for a poor sinner to cry, "Abba, Father," having the Spirit's witness within?

And then you will find this, each one taught of God wants to know that Jesus Christ died for him on Calvary's cross; yes, one taught of God wants to be led to Calvary's cross and there to view the sinner's Friend by the eye of faith, and feel,

"For me, O miracle of grace!
For me the Saviour bled."

Such people believe in God the Son, the Way to God, and feel,

"If ever my poor soul be saved,
'Tis Christ must be the Way."

And then everyone born again is taught this, that none can lead them into the truth but the Holy Spirit. The Word of God is plain: "None teacheth like Him." "He shall guide you into all truth," and that is all essential truth, truth that must be known to make a man meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. In this way, then, each one taught of God is made a believer in the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit; three Persons in One God, the great Jehovah.

Let us open this up a little, if the Lord shall help us, and the subject is great. I can only give you one or two hints about it. "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord."

The lovingkindness of *God the Father*. O think of it! "God so loved the world" – and that is God the Father – "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" – a word that is often read and often quoted. What a mercy to be inside it! The lovingkindness of God the Father. God the Father, long before the world was made, looked down through the ages of time and chose out a number which no man can number of sinners to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; and it is a great thing, a grand experience, if one can sing this:

"He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me" – (God the Father's love, that is)
"Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate,
His lovingkindness, O how great!"

I will mention the lovingkindness of God the Father, sending His Son to die, choosing God's elect, and then – O that one could speak as one would like to of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord – the lovingkindness of God the Son. I want you to understand this, when you mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, you do not want to do it from an abstract point of view, mentioning these things in the letter; you want a soft heart, a grateful heart, a broken heart, a contrite heart. If you want to do it rightly, you desire to do it experimentally.

The lovingkindness of *God the Son*. The apostle speaks of it: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," and that is the lovingkindness of God the Son, "that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich." God the Son came down into this world of ours, and He was a Babe in Bethlehem's manger. Let us now go to Bethlehem, and see this great thing which is come to pass, and may He who made it known to the shepherds make it known to us: "Emmanuel, God with us." Our Maker, our Creator, and yet a Babe.

“His shoulders held up heaven and earth
When Mary held up Him.”

Do you believe it – the lovingkindness of God the Son, laid in a manger, a stable for His home? O think upon it, and look at the lovingkindness of God the Son.

He grew up, and He went about this world of ours; He lived a holy life, a spotless life. He was the holy, harmless, undefiled Son of God.

“In Him the Father never saw
The least transgression of His law.”

And the wonderful thing is this, that all that Jesus did, all that God the Son did, was done with this motive springing up all the while – lovingkindness. As a mother sits by the fireside making the little garments for her babe, and sewing the love of her heart at every stitch, so God the Son in working out a robe of righteousness, fulfilled the law with His heart overflowing with love for the church of God. His own word is, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me. I delight to do Thy will, O My God.” The will of God the Father. What was that will? That He should bear His people’s guilt, and suffer in their stead. And He did. He

“Bore all incarnate God could bear,
With strength enough and none to spare.”

He lived a life of suffering, and yet a life of perfection; He never had a wrong thought well up in His sacred breast; He never had one wrong look from His holy eyes; not one word amiss ever dropped from His sacred lips; all His actions were God-like, divine, keeping the law in every jot and tittle. The lovingkindness of God the Son. And who did He do these things for? For the people that God the Father had chosen, the church of God. Do you think He did these things for you?

And then you think of this: what a suffering life it was that Jesus lived. He was set at nought, mocked, scourged, spit upon, forsaken by His friends. All His disciples forsook Him and fled. He endured the powers of darkness, the hidings of His Father’s face, and at length He was hung up on Calvary’s cross and crucified, all the while His heart overflowing with lovingkindness, so that you see the overflowings of it at Calvary’s cross: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” – lovingkindness reaches the heart of the dying thief there.

“I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord” – the lovingkindnesses of God the Son. Where is this gracious Saviour, God the Son, “verily God, verily Man”? Reigning on a throne of grace. And it is a blessed experience if you can sing a hymn like this:

“Awake, sweet gratitude, and sing
The ascended Saviour’s love;

Sing how He lives to carry on
His people's cause above."

Have you any evidence? Can you prove that the Saviour has carried on your cause? Have you known what it is to cast your cares at His feet and find that He careth for you? Have you had your mountains levelled, reduced to plains at Jesus' feet? Has He made the crooked things straight for you? You weigh these things up. Has He delivered you in times of trouble? Has He carried on *your* cause? You have much to rejoice in then. Do you keep silence about it? "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord" was Isaiah's resolution.

And then there are the lovingkindnesses of *God the Holy Spirit*; and that will bring us to some close dealing, and I like close dealing in the pulpit. I often have to draw near to God concerning this: "Let the Word of God, O Lord, be searching, discriminating." Preacher and people are dying people, and a very solemn matter it will be to be deceived. What an awful thing for people to step out of time into eternity – and life is short – and find their religion has been a cheat all the way through, a delusion, and only outside show. I hope that many of you are concerned to come to the light. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

"I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord." Look at the lovingkindnesses of the Lord in time things to us. Look at the daily miracles that are wrought – that you should have your table spread, and your back well clothed, and your feet well shod, your comfortable bed to go to, and your warm fireside. Say not, "These things are but time things." I must tell you this: If you know not what it is to mention these things at Jesus' feet, and to feel a little gratitude welling up from time to time, can you produce any evidence of being born again? "The dead cannot praise Thee," and they are not concerned about it. The only people that will thank the Lord aright for time things are people taught of God. Natural people may stand up and sing songs of praise, but the only people that will feel a soft heart and a contrite spirit through the goodness of God in time things are people that are taught of God. The Word of God is plain about it. "The living, the living, he shall praise Thee."

How many lovingkindnesses of the Lord in time things attend us through life's journey! Look at time things towards you. Some of you may think your path is a trying one. It is, I have no doubt that it is; each of us that has the mercy to be taught of God will have a trying path, and you will have as much in that path as your nature can stand under. But the point is this: there are lovingkindnesses of the Lord to be mentioned still. Look at Jeremiah's case. Dear Jeremiah complains his way along in his Lamentations (chapter 3, for about 21 verses). Read it when you

get home. (I am not flinging stones at Jeremiah.) *You* know what it is, some of you, to be filled with self-pity, and fretfulness, and irritability; and Jeremiah says, “*I am the man that hath seen affliction,*” as though no one else, from Dan to Beersheba, knew what affliction was. And you sometimes look at one and another and view their cross as a little one, and *your* cross, O how heavy it is! and you overlook the loving-kindnesses of the Lord.

I will tell you what would do you good, some of you. (I am not making personal remarks.) If you could go and look round some of the hospitals and see poor people there groaning on beds of languishing and pain; then if you could be taken to some of our asylums and see poor people there who cannot think with right thoughts because their mental powers are unbalanced; and then if you could be taken on to some prison and view your fellow-creatures shut up therein (who maketh thee to differ?); and to finish it up, if you could go round some of the slums and see people living in homes of wretchedness and want; don’t you think some of you would go on your way after a journey like that and seek for more grace to mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord? Here you are, well clothed, well fed, and with a hope in God’s mercy, and yet you grumble and complain. And I want you to understand that God has given you the lightest cross possible. Don’t you think for a moment that God has given you an out-of-the-way cross. He has given you the cross most suited to you, and you will find there is lovingkindness in His choice of it.

You make a great mistake, some of you. I have made it, and I can warn you from my own experience. You look at your cross and other people’s crosses, and you compare other folks’ circumstances with yours? Remember Asaph’s words: “I was envious at the foolish when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” Was he looking in the right place? Are you looking in the right place? Search in the Word of God, and find one warrant that you should look at other people’s crosses, or even look at your own, and judge accordingly. The Word of God tells us this: “Consider *Him*” – whom you serve and love and profess to follow. Look at the life of Jesus, consider the cross of Jesus. O think of the sufferings of Christ, and then what about yours? Should they be mentioned? “Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?” Can you answer these questions in your conscience? (The Lord grant it may be in working order.) Has anyone spit in your face? Have you been left alone by your friends, forsaken? Have you had your heart broken by reproach? Have you been called to endure shame and ignominy? Have you been scourged and made a gazing stock for the world? Where are you? “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed.” Since this service has

been [begun?] on this Sabbath morn, have not thousands dropped out of time into eternity? thousands dropped into the pit? *You are out of it.*

Let us come to this – not only time things – look at the *quickenings lovingkindness* of the Lord. I often think of the Apostle Paul at Ephesus. I read the Word of God and I try to think of what the apostle's thoughts were when he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians. You know that once Ephesus market place was full of a howling mob crying out for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." By-and-by, two or three years afterwards, the apostle dictates the Epistle to the Ephesians. "And you" – "You!" think of it. O how that man's heart must have leaped, to be sure, and what solemn awe must have filled his breast, as he realised the power of the Eternal Spirit to quicken poor sinners into life, and in such an unexpected way, and unexpected folk, too – "And you" – who would have thought of it? in Ephesus market place, and idolaters – "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins." Quickening lovingkindness.

Here are some of you this Sabbath morn. I am coming to close dealing, and I want you to consider these things. I wish you well. Here you are, with an aching void which the world cannot fill; and eyes opened too, eyes opened to behold what you are as sinners, some of you, and brought down, poor and needy, at Jesus' feet.

"The heart once hard as steel,
Now made for sin to feel,
Bears tokens of a ransomed soul."

You can join with the man in the gospel: "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." It is the beginning of the good work, and "thou shalt see greater things than these," poor sinner.

How comes this about? Once you were in the world, and of it, and you were at home there; no eyes to behold the King in His beauty, no thought of God, or eternity. Whence comes this quickening, then? You know what quickening is. It is to be made alive. The farmer puts the grain in the earth, and there it lies, and you may pass by for a little while and see no sign of life, but quickening is going on. If you could look down beneath the earth, you would see that the grain was dying, the outside was rotting, going through the process of death, but a living root going down, quickening, germinating; and then the evidence of it, the corn blade springing up. And so it is with poor sinners when life divine is put in the sinner's heart. There is a process of death entered into. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves," or our own righteousness, but in God; and the sinner taught of God dies to all hope of going to heaven by what he is or by what he can do; and a root is struck down in that man's soul, and that root is in Christ – "rooted in Him" – and that man feels,

“Nothing else can satisfy;
Give me Christ, or else I die.”

And if you feel these things it is because God’s quickening lovingkindness has reached your heart. Have you mentioned it? You say, “I almost feel afraid to mention it for fear it should not be a reality with me”; and yet you feel concerned about it, you want to be right, and you have many fears at times, and many “ifs” and “buts” about it. I must tell you this:

“The soul that with sincere desires
Seeks after Jesus’ love,
That soul the Holy Ghost inspires
With breathings from above,”

and this proceeds from quickening lovingkindness.

And then it is *separating lovingkindness*. People that are taught of God cannot be mixed up with the world at large, professing and profane; there must be a separation, and as you journey on through life you have to prove it. You cannot go with all that are designated “Strict Baptists” even. (I am not making personal remarks.) Separation, separation. Some you can walk with and talk with and feel a union to, and they are the subjects of grace. You can only feel a union with the living, and, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Look how separating lovingkindness wrought with Moses: “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” What about you? Where are you? Are you in the world and at home in it? Living and dying in such a plight you will be lost. It is a mercy to be like the psalmist: “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”

“I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.” Quickenings, separating; and what lovingkindness that is that brings a poor sinner to Calvary’s cross, to feel concerning Jesus Christ, “He is all my salvation and all my desire.” “What think ye of Christ?” If you have within your breast room that is made for Jesus Christ, if you want Him to rule in you and reign over you, and be your God and your Guide even unto death, you can “mention” the lovingkindnesses of the Lord. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God”; and yet there are some of you that *do* receive these things in love, and that proves there is something more than nature in you. You say, “I wish I knew more of the things of God,” and don’t you wish that you could reduce to practice what you do know of the things of God?

I like to meet with people that are concerned about practical religion. Religion that is not practical, and that does not work out in one’s everyday life, what is it? A sham, a farce; and when such a character

departs from time into eternity his religion in name and his nominal profession of the name of Jesus will only be as a millstone about his neck to sink him down, down into eternal misery. Have you never prayed a prayer like this:

“That wisdom, Lord, on us bestow...
To stop the mouth of every foe...
The proofs of godly fear to give,
And show the world how Christians live”?

Is it not the walk that concerns some of you when you are exercised about making a profession of the name of Jesus? You say, “O it is the walking out of a profession. O if I should be left to make one, and then bring a reproach upon the cause and God’s dear people that I love and esteem.” If you do not make a public profession, you still want to reduce to practice what you hear. You want to walk out the truth on whichever side of the baptismal pool you may be. It is well to have this exercise and to remember that God is able to make all grace to abound towards you, and here is a suitable prayer (and some of you have had to pray it): “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.” One needs that prayer every day, and all day long.

And then there is *sustaining lovingkindness*. God began to shew His lovingkindness to some of you a number of years ago. Go back, some of you, and some of you that are getting grey-headed, go back and weigh these things up. How have you travelled on through life’s journey! You have to come to this point:

“Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by God’s help I’m come.”

Every day new lovingkindnesses, sustaining lovingkindness, maintaining lovingkindness; and though your religion seems to have been often well nigh spent – you have come to your last gasp – what have you proved? “As dying, and behold we live”; “ever sinking, and yet to swim”; and here you are, “faint, yet pursuing,” this Sabbath morning; and still with your backs to the world and your face looking unto Jesus. What is this but sustaining lovingkindness? O you must speak well for God, some of you. He has been a good God to you. What have you been? Let us have the truth about it. You say, “Behold, I am vile”; “no sinner needed mercy more that ever sought God’s face than me”; and of all the people beneath the sun that should mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord you say, “I am the man.” Begin at home, each of you that are taught of God, preacher and people, too. “I will mention” – I like that line of things. Sustaining lovingkindness.

And then there is *reviving lovingkindness*. Peter could tell us something about it. Poor Peter, who went out and wept bitterly,

remembering his base conduct towards his Lord, and then had that blessed message, "Go, and tell My disciples, and Peter." Such was the lovingkindness shown towards Peter that special mention was made of his name, that restoring lovingkindness might reach his heart.

What do you know of this? "He restoreth my soul." Winter time is upon us; by-and-by there will be a restoration. Spring will come, and there will be life restored to what seemed dead before. Sometimes you get in such a state. You wonder where your evidences have got to, and you feel to be at the ends of the earth, and like the parched ground, and in a low place, and you have many fears lest you have mistook the way and deceived people round about you; and then God is pleased to look in again upon you, touch your heart, open your eyes, and all your waymarks are brought to view, and you have a reviving. Reviving lovingkindness. And one does need it. It is a mercy to have a religion that stands in the power of God, one that you have no power to maintain or control, so that when you have lost the comfort of it, you have to wait for the Lord to restore it. "No man can keep alive his own soul," but there are people that have a name to live, a form of godliness, but no power, and they go to some place of worship or another once or twice or three times a week at the outside, and they keep the lamp well polished, but it is the oil in the bowl that you want, and the light. What do you think of these things, then? If it is poor preaching – and one would preach the gospel better – it is a good text.

"I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord." Look at this word "mention." Isaiah touches a chord in my own heart: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord," and there should be a private mentioning and a public mentioning too. Should not these things be mentioned to the Lord? Look at the psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." And I do like the psalmist's experience at one time in life's journey: "Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God?" – I am a poor sinner, a guilty sinner, a hell-deserving sinner – "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that Thou hast brought me hitherto?"

You know this, if you know anything of divine teaching, that there is nothing that will humble a man like a sweet sense of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord. I like to get on the right side of that word of the Apostle Paul: "The goodness of the Lord leadeth to repentance." "Law and terrors do but harden." It is something like a father with the child. You may thrash, but you will not thrash tenderness into a child; severity will not do it. But O kindness, forgiveness, tenderness on the father's part will work wonders. And what tenderness your heavenly Father has manifested to you in the midst of all your baseness and your unbelief, and your backslidings! The Lord has made His goodness to

pass before you in the way. What have you felt like under a sense of it? Have you not wanted your eyes to be a sluice, and your heart to be soft, and to get down at His blessed feet and put your mouth in the dust? You have wanted to feel like this:

“Why me, why me, O blessed God,
Why such a wretch as me?”

(Why should I have all this lovingkindness shown to me!)

“And if my soul is sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well.”

It is a sweet experience when a man can do what the psalmist did: “I will offer unto the Lord the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” You often feel troubled, some of you, because your hearts are like adamant, and yet you would be thankful. It is a great thing to have a willing mind about it. The children of Israel by Babylon’s streams hung their harps on the willow, but they had a hope in their breasts they would take them down again, and there is the longing in some of our hearts that the Lord will look upon us again, that we shall again sing the songs of Zion with softness and tenderness and reality.

“I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.” The Word of God tells us this – and it may be a word in season to some of you – “The father to the children shall make known Thy truth,” and “Tell it to the generation following.” Have you ever looked at the way things were done in Old Testament times? how God made it a law and a statute in Israel that the fathers should tell their children of the goodness of God, and the dealings of Israel’s God in the wilderness, and in that way the records of the Lord’s lovingkindnesses were handed down from one generation to another? It is a mercy to be exercised to do this still, and to be wrought upon to speak the thing that is right concerning the Lord, mentioning the lovingkindnesses of the Lord. What I mean is this: “mention” the lovingkindnesses of the Lord in the *home life*. There are people that sit in our causes of truth that never think of having family worship, or bowing their heads in thanksgiving before a meal. You say, “O there is no need to be so formal; our life is full of duties.” I answer, “Give unto God the glory that is due unto His holy name.”

“I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord.” And then the lovingkindnesses of the Lord should be mentioned at times before the world at large. You say. “How does that fit in with that scripture, ‘Cast not your pearls before swine’?” The Word of God does not contradict itself, but I should think little of you or your religion if you were in the company of a worldling, and that man spoke against God, as many people do – about the weather, and such like subjects, making wrong remarks, God-dishonouring remarks – and if you, having known the

lovingkindness of the Lord, did not speak well for that God that has been so good to you. "Let your light so shine before men," not the church of God only.

"I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord." And then there is such an experience as one meditating upon lovingkindnesses. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul"; and our hymnwriter talks like this: "I muse on the years that are past." Sometimes the Holy Spirit helps one to remember what we were, and what we are, and lovingkindnesses one after another stand up before the eye of faith, and you feel like Manoah's wife, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us ... would He have shewn us these things?" What do *you* think about these things?

"I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord." In Malachi's day, "They that feared the Lord spake often one *to* another" – not *about* each other. What do you think was the theme of conversation? The lovingkindnesses of the Lord.

And then surely the church of God should know something about these things; but there are some of you this Sabbath morning that have not a guilty conscience about that. The Lord bless you. You *have* mentioned the lovingkindnesses of the Lord to the church, and may others be constrained to do likewise. The Word of God tells us: "Then they that gladly received the word were baptized." And you know the psalmist was concerned about mentioning lovingkindnesses in his day: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." And should these things be hidden then? It is right and proper, and scriptural, that the lovingkindnesses of the Lord should be mentioned; and those in the church are glad to hear these things spoken of, and it does them good, and it is for the establishing of their faith, and it produces a knitting together and a walking in blessed agreement. And the whole of it comes to this:

"All the glory,
All the glory, Lord, is Thine."

When all is said and done, I told you, you can say but little, you can only mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord in a sermon. And you must continue the mentioning at home, if you can – I leave the "if" to you. Of course, if you have no lovingkindnesses to mention, and if you have not found the Lord is a good God, and a kind and gracious God to you, I must leave that between the Lord and you; but if any here have known the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, there should be something mentioned about it – mentioned to the Lord. Should you not be found at

His feet owning His goodness? And if the church of God has not known it, the church of God is entitled to hear of it.

I conclude with this thought: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Everyone that is taught of God could write a book about the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, "the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books which *should* be written." Amen.

THE DYING THIEF

By William Fenner (1600-1640)

Where was the thief pardoned? Was it not in Golgotha, where Christ was crucified, the place where Christ did triumph, when He was crowned, where He forgave transgressions and sins? There it was where Christ pardoned him.

Now as it is with a captain, when he has his victory, he will set up some monument at the place that it may be a token thereof, so Christ, having wrought the salvation of sinners, set up a monument there where He wrought it – whereof none greater than this could be. Not the rending of the rocks, nor the earthquake, nor any of the wonders besides did so honour the death of Christ as the conversion of this thief, who like a physician having made an excellent medicine, and desirous to try it, will do that for nothing which he will not do again for much. So Christ having made an admirable sovereign plaster for the salvation of sinners, so soon as ever He had made it, He makes an experiment thereof on this thief, as if He should have said, "Now you shall see what My death can do."

So then you see that the conversion of this thief was no ordinary, but an extraordinary wonder.

The true believer has been justly compared to a little flame miraculously burning in the midst of mighty waters. There is everything around him and within him that is calculated to extinguish the holy fire. Satan, the prince of the powers of the air, is constantly agitating these troubled waters. The world is dashing its surges against it; and the flesh, with its mire and dirt, is labouring to smother the sacred flame. But all is vain. He who kindled it is almighty; He who has promised that it shall never go out is almighty.

Thomas Reade

THE SANCTIFYING EFFECTS OF FAITH

Thomas Manton (1620-1677) on Rahab the harlot

From Rahab's act – "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not," etc., observe that true faith, where it is weakest, will show itself by some eminent and notable effect. We, in the latter age, to excuse ourselves from duty, have involved all things into controversy; therefore it is good to look to the ancient faith. How did the holy ones of God live heretofore?

Here is an instance of an ancient faith, and the lowest of the kind; it is a firm belief of such things as God hath revealed to us, so as to make us fruitful and faithful in obedience to Him. And I would have you observe that in all this catalogue and chronicle of the faithful and eminent believers [Hebrews 11], no instance is propounded to us of an idle and barren faith, and always the apostle shows what was done by faith; for surely the working faith is only the true faith: "Faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5. 6). Rahab's faith was no dead faith, but manifested by works; therefore the Apostle James saith, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" (chapter 2. 21), and, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?" (verse 25). In this raw and young convert faith was not without its effect.

To make this more evident, let us consider the temper of her faith since it is so good to live by the ancient faith.

1. The ground of her faith was the fame and the report of God's wondrous works which He had done for His people. She had heard of the true God, as much as was necessary to acknowledge His power against His enemies and His grace towards His people, and this was sufficient as a means to beget saving faith in her soul. And if so, then we have greater grounds of faith than she had; for we have heard of the stupendous wonders of our redemption by Christ. Now, where more is given, the more we must account for: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12. 48). The more light God bestows, the greater improvement He expects. We have not only general rumours to build upon, as she had, but the sure Word, where these things are more certainly and clearly discovered to us; and therefore God expects a better tempered faith from us.

2. She makes a confession of that faith which was wrought in her heart; for to the spies she acknowledges God to be the only true God, both in heaven above and the earth beneath, and she acknowledges the Israelites to be His peculiar people whom He had owned and loved, and

that she could not be saved but as gathered to that people under the Head, Messiah; and in heart and affection she was already become one of God's servants, and this she professed to the spies. And the same is required of us: "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10, 9, 10). Let us own the true God in Jesus Christ, and love Him, and own and love His people. When once we are brought to this, to run hazard and take our lot with them, then we are in the right posture.

3. This faith and confession was evinced by some effect for she entertained the spies, which was all she was capable of doing at present, and she entertains them as some of the people of God, as members of the true church, or as of the number of them who worshipped that God whom she believed to be the true God. And truly much faith is shown in harbouring the saints and being kind to God's people. Many shall be tried at the last day by this: "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in" (Matt. 25. 35, &c).

Everything is accepted with God according to the principle from whence it flows. Now, what might it have been, for anything in the nature of the act, but her trade, an entertaining and being kind to her guest, for she kept a house of public entertainment? or what might it have been but a bare act of civility? Yet because of her faith in God and love to His people, it is counted an act of love and obedience, not civility, but religion. So our Lord hath told us, "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10. 41, 42). It is accepted of God if it be in Christ's name; and if we give because we believe they are Christ's disciples, who is our Lord and Saviour, it is respected as done to Himself, and shall be accounted as a fruit of faith.

But now those that love a gospel without charges, and whose faith shows itself by talk and high-flown and curious notions of religion rather than by any solid fruit, their faith is but an imaginary delusion, a shadow of faith, not any true grace. Faith that is true is a plain thing – to believe in one God, and that this God hath a people with whom I must travel to heaven; they are to be my everlasting companions. If I am true to this God and kind to His people, the thing is put to a plain issue.

4. This effect was accompanied with much self-denial, which was seen in two things:

i. In preferring the will of God before the safety of her country, and cherishing those guests who were strangers before the gratifying and pleasing her own citizens. We are bound to love, and we are bound also to seek the welfare of our country; but we are bound to love God more than our country. Therefore we owe fidelity to Him first, and then to the place we live in, and we are to promote their welfare so far as is consistent with our fidelity to our supreme Lord.

ii. The other instance of her self-denial was her venturing her life rather than betraying those messengers of Joshua that were the worshippers of the true God. It was an action that might have been of dangerous consequence to her, but to manifest her fidelity to God, she overlooks the threatenings and cruelty of her citizens, the promiscuous events of war, and the burning of the city in which she and her parents lived, and so in the effect, by her faith she renounced all to serve the true God. It is not every act will manifest true faith, but acts of self-denying obedience, in which we do deny ourselves for God, check our natural love, and thwart our lusts and hazard any interests. When God calls us to it, can we part with our conveniences of life, all that is near and dear to us in the world, upon the proper and sole encouragement of faith? This is a mighty evidence of faith.

5. I observe there was a mixture of infirmity in this act, an officious lie, which cannot be excused, though God in mercy pardoned it. This is not for our imitation, yet it is for our instruction, and it shows us this, that faith in the beginning hath many weaknesses. Those that have faith do not altogether act out of faith, but there is somewhat of the flesh mingled with that of the spirit. But this is passed by out of God's indulgence; He accepteth us notwithstanding our sins before faith, and notwithstanding our weaknesses in believing. Before faith she was a harlot; in believing she makes a lie. God doth reward the good of our actions and pardon the evil of them, not to encourage us in sinning, but to raise our love to Him who forgives us so great a debt, and receives us graciously, and pardons our manifold weaknesses.

What a painful consideration is that respecting the narrow way, "few there be that find it"; while of the wide gate our Lord has said, "Many there be which go in thereat." I am a dying creature, walking on the verge of an awful eternity. Heaven and hell lie before me. To one of these places I am, at the close of every day, advanced a day's journey. This day may bring me to my eternal abode of happiness or misery. The sleep which I take this night may be the sleep of death – and should it be so, where would my spirit, dislodged from earth, find itself? O my soul, ask yourself, with all the solemnity which becomes so awful a question, Where am I going?

Thomas Reade

A LOVING MOTHER TO HER DAUGHTER

My dearly beloved M.,

Though absent, thou art dear to my heart: "very pleasant hast thou been unto me," yea, still art. This morning my spirit has been much at Rainham, and I feel a sweet knitting to some I know there. What a oneness there is often felt to the Lord's people on earth; only one family. Some certainly bear more striking marks and features of their heavenly Parent, and glorify Him more by marks of obedience. I wish this were my happy case, for I am fully persuaded that they are the blessed of the Lord. "'Tis sweet to rest in His embrace"; to feel His love shed abroad in the heart, and the affections flowing out towards the Object of our desire; to say with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

"O the happiness arising
From the life of grace within,
When the soul is realising
Conquest over hell and sin!
Happy moments!
Heavenly joys on earth begin."

This morning while in bed I felt a softness steal over me, and I sought Him whom my soul loveth. He drew me; I ran into His arms of love and mercy; "He brought me into His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love." I said, "Lord I am black. O Lord, I am vile, baser than the earth." He said, "Thou art all fair, My love; thou art comely, through My comeliness which *I* have put upon thee." So "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." My griefs and sorrows were all hushed, and like a little child, I sank to rest on the everlasting arms of God's love and mercy. O how sacred are these moments to the soul! and what carefulness they produce, "yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal!" These blessed realities I do desire both for myself and those dear unto me; something must be known and felt by all the living.

May my precious M. know more of the blessedness of God's *full* salvation. Do not, my dear, nurse your doubts and fears. If the precious graces of the Spirit were given for merit or worthiness, on whom would they be bestowed? Not on you or me. God's love is a free gift, without money or worthiness. I do not doubt for you, my love, but I know this will not satisfy you; the Lord must by His own voice say again and again to your soul, "I am thy salvation."

Believing, we do rejoice in His dear name; God is a Sovereign and acts as He pleaseth. His children are all dear unto Him, yea, dearer than His own life, for He laid it down for their sakes, and because He lives,

they shall live also. His favours and love tokens He bestows with all wisdom and discretion, suited to each peculiar case. A bruised reed He never breaks, nor will He quench the smoking flax.

If my precious M. be one of these, which I believe she is, though she feels she does not deserve to share “in a favour so divine,” God’s Spirit will cherish that spark of eternal life breathed into the soul. Therefore wait on the Lord; He will come according to His word: “Behold, I will send My Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 3. 1).

“The Lord whom thou seekest,
Will not tarry long;
And to Him the weakest,
Is dear as the strong.”

[Remainder of letter lost]

March 2nd, 1867

Written by Mary Tanner, wife of Joseph Tanner of Cirencester

A DIFFICULTY RESOLVED

By J.K. Popham, 1925

There are some difficulties in the way. One difficulty is this. An honest conscience, an instructed heart is so sensible of the ease with which *one may be deceived by one’s own heart*, as to feel it a great hindrance; and yet it helps. We may be searching and trying, weighing and testing, looking for a repentance that we do not feel, a broken heart which we have not got, faith which we fear we do not possess, feelings of contrition, of love, of spirituality of mind, which are far above us; and we may say, “I shall never reach that kingdom, never get into it. I am carnal, sold under sin; what shall I do?” Not finding the graces of the Spirit flourishing in us, we are apt to conclude that we have never been born again, never had the Holy Spirit and never tasted that the Lord is gracious.

I believe the tempter is here. He endeavours to keep before the mind the graces of the Spirit as a foundation. What a mistake he causes us to make! How happy would some of us be at certain moments if we could but feel repentance and faith and hope and love and a broken heart! How gladly would we, as we think, go to God if such and such graces

were flourishing in us! We little suspect what I believe to be the truth, that the devil and our own hearts are together in plotting against us, trying to make of graces, which flow from Christ, a foundation. He is the Foundation *for graceless sinners*.

“Sinners are high in His esteem,
And sinners highly value Him.”

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST 44th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at Ebenezer Chapel, Matfield, Kent
on Saturday afternoon, May 15th, 2010*

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Buss, Mr. J.F. Ashby (Pastor, East Peckham) was elected Chairman. Around 80 members and friends had gathered and the meeting began with hymn 961. Mr. Joseph Rutt, the pastor at Matfield, asked the Lord's blessing on the meeting and the Chairman then read Isaiah 1. 1-20. He made a few remarks to compare those verses with our day, the departure from God, with Christianity opposed on every side. Yet today there is still a very small remnant as there was in Isaiah's day. His desire was that the Lord would give to His remnant in our land a spirit of true prayer that the Lord will preserve to us our freedom of worship and our Protestant heritage. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise and His arm is not shortened that it cannot save.

The Trust Secretary, Mr. Playfoot, introduced the Annual Report and the financial statements for 2009 and reminded the meeting of the principle objects for which the Trust had been established. These included to assist churches with the appointment of trustees, to obtain legal advice, and to provide grants and loans for the maintenance of chapel property. The General Fund expenditure had exceeded income by over £44,000. He felt that this fact should not be a concern to us as our guide was in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 2, verse 45, where Christ's love working in the hearts of believers caused them to sell their possessions and use the proceeds as every man had need. Grants paid out during the year had totalled £64,664. Whilst there are only 109 chapels on the Gospel Standard list, during the last two years the Trust had been able to make payments to assist sixteen of them. The main grants in 2009 were to Ebenezer Chapel, Ripley, to improve the accommodation for their pastor, to Hanover Chapel, Tunbridge Wells, to assist with damp problems and decorations, and at Hope Chapel, Rochdale, to replace the central heating.

The Publications accounts had net outgoing resources of almost £25,000. The value of sales at £30,745 did cover over 11,000 books but with only 109 Gospel Standard chapels, it must be realised that the greater proportion of the books are sold outside the denomination and substantial discounts have to be given to bookshops and distributors. As a result there is no profit after deducting direct costs. Support costs, bookroom salaries and overheads have to come out of donations, legacies, interest and substantially from reserves.

The Secretary again reminded trustees of the requirement to register chapel property with the Land Registry where appointments of trustees take place after March 31st, 2009. Also, some progress had been made with the model constitution for church working funds ready for registration in 2012 and a sub-committee had been formed to take this forward. Involvement with the sale of closed chapels sadly continued. Three were currently on the market including Petworth in West Sussex, which was under offer. With all these things we did get behind with attending to some matters and we had to come in with the dear woman of whom it is recorded, "She hath done what she could."

In encouraging use of the Gospel Standard Library the Secretary referred to the scanning project which the Trust had financed. A visit to the library pages on the Trust Publications website will enable a catalogue to be downloaded and scanned pamphlets and articles indicated therein can then be obtained by email from the library. The *Gospel Standard* magazines from 1835 to 2008 are available through Trust Publications on DVD at the price of £37 and the year 2009 is available on our website and can be downloaded by following the instructions on the download page. Thought had also been given to scanning the *Friendly Companion* but it would first be necessary to compile an index and that presented quite a problem.

The Publications accounts could give no real idea of just how much time had to be spent in research, writing and preparing books for publication, let alone the recurring duties of dealing with orders, packing and distribution. At the last Committee meeting there had been twenty-four items on the book production list, although some would not proceed and others might take some years. He mentioned two books just available – *Sermons of a Seceder*, sermons of William Tiptaft, and a little book on some *Scots Worthies* written by John Broome. Other titles were expected within a few months. *The History of the Gospel Standard Magazine*, which had been brought up to date with a chapter about the current Editor. *Dairyman's Daughter* was being reprinted with new photographs and then the illustrated *Pilgrim's Progress*, with *Christiana's Journey* were being reprinted. *Bible Doctrines* was a very helpful little book for many countries where knowledge of doctrine is not

very sound and we were supporting financially its translation into Farsi, the most widely spoken Persian language, and Urdu, the national language of Pakistan.

It was clear from our book list that the greater part of our books, perhaps two thirds or more on average, were for children and younger people and he reminded the meeting of Mr. Ramsbottom's book on the life of Joseph, *Behind a Frowning Providence*, a help for young people in these difficult days. There was still a steady sale of other titles and he emphasised the spiritual profit from reading again the solid biographies such as John Warburton's *Mercies*, *The Hidden Pathway* of Elsie and Herbert Dawson, William Gadsby's life, *Tell it to the Generation Following*, the life of Joseph Pack and others, and the autobiography of Mr. Bradford, the late pastor at Ebenezer, Matfield. We had to remember and to prove that their God is our God, "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." Finally, the Secretary thanked the subscribers and the chapels for their continuing support and encouraged others to join the Trust.

There were no questions for Mr. Playfoot. The Chairman thanked him for all the work that he puts in over the year and he also thanked the Publications Manager and Mr. John Kingham for all their work, and also others who gave of their time liberally and without payment. The members present then passed the resolution to receive the 2009 Annual Report and Financial Statements. They also re-elected the three committee members retiring in rotation, Messrs. J.F. Ashby, J.R. Broome and D.J. Christian, with no dissent. Hymn 1145 was then sung, following which Mr. Jabez Rutt addressed the meeting on "The Days of Lot."

In the first part of his address, Mr. Rutt took us through the history of Lot's parentage, his time with his uncle Abram and how, as the Lord greatly prospered them both (Genesis 13), so the land was not able to bear them all and they had to part. Abram gave Lot first choice and he chose to go to the lush plains of Jordan. He then pitched his tent toward Sodom. So a word of warning was given to us concerning our motives in our pathway. Covetousness influenced Lot and eventually he dwelt in Sodom which, as with Gomorrah, was exceedingly wealthy, just like our society today, but also sin prevailed. If we take one wrong step, as with David, it usually leads to another. We read next of Lot sitting in the gate, a person in some sort of authority and influence within a city that was ripening for divine judgment. Even in the most impossible situations we should pray; and Abraham, in pleading for these wicked cities to be spared, no doubt thinking of his nephew, is a wonderful example of a praying man. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Mr. Rutt then dwelt on the sin of sodomy and the judgment of God. They were very solemn days that Lot lived in so it was a very solemn subject with which he had to deal. There were remarkable similarities to the days in which we live. In Sodom the evidence of their deep depravity and corruption was this awful sin of sodomy. It was brazenly practised without shame and so it is in our country today. They were proud of their wickedness and of their life style. They were ripening for divine judgment as God had told Abraham. Surely as we look at our nation, but for the grace of God, we are likewise ripening for divine judgment and the clear sign is the practice of sodomy. In Ezekiel we read of the condition of prosperity and pride that prevailed in Sodom: "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, abundance of idleness." We see the same today. We read in the second Epistle of Peter of godly Lot in Sodom. "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." It was an example to us. Mr. Rutt had been down to the Dead Sea where the plains of Jordan had been and it is absolute barrenness. We read also in the Epistle of Jude of "Sodom and Gomorrha and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

What a parallel he felt could be drawn with the day in which we live when the Word of God is rejected, when the Christian religion is despised and set at nought. The Levitical law is quite clear and in Leviticus 18 we read, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination." This terrible sin of sodomy he felt is a sign that a society has become so corrupted and so depraved that it will bring the judgment of Almighty God down upon it. There is clear instruction in the book of Deuteronomy: "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel." Under King Rehoboam, Solomon's son, Judah provoked the Lord with their sins and idolatry and "there were also sodomites in the land." But in the days of Rehoboam's godly grandson Asa, we read that "Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did David his father. And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made." One thing that stood out very clear in a close study of Holy Scripture was that the terrible sin of sodomy is always connected with idolatry, with a leaving of the worship of the true God, of the Lord Jehovah. It seemed to be a sign of mankind given over to his own lust and the power of Satan. In the days of godly King Josiah there was real repentance and turning again unto the Lord, and they cleansed the temple

of the vessels of Baal, put down the idolatrous priests and broke down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the Lord.

In the Epistle to the Corinthians we were reminded that the gospel was being preached in nations that were given over to paganism, idolatry and these wicked practices and there were those in the early church called by divine grace out of these practices of whom Paul writes: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed...." The Christian believer is called away from these things and the practice of these things and it is the duty of the Christian believer to condemn these things. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*...." He said that some will argue that sodomites cannot help their natural inclinations but you might as well say an adulterer cannot help doing what he does. They *can* help doing what they do, they do it of their own will. The Word of God condemns fornication and adultery, and it condemns sodomy. He did emphasise that separation comes because we love our Lord Jesus Christ, and if we love Him we love His Word, we love His truth, we love holiness and righteousness.

Finally, there was a solemn word in the Book of Deuteronomy likening sodomy to a vine. A vine as it grows wraps itself around and insinuates itself into the smallest cracks. So sodomy today insinuates itself into every little part of society, in politics, in education, in the media, in the professing Christian church. Sadly, many Church of England ministers are tainted with this sin. Just as it was in the days of Lot, the men were pressing at Lot's door to get to the angels of the Lord effectively to rape them, so these men and women are pressing at the door of the church of Christ today saying, "You must accept us. You must accept our practices. We are normal people. There is nothing wrong with us. We are believers in Jesus Christ. You cannot reject us." The Apostle Paul in Romans 1 connects again sodomite behaviour with idolatry and paints a picture of men and women given up by God to terrible blindness to their depraved behaviour. Mr. Rutt concluded by reading from Deuteronomy 32. 32-35 concerning the vine of Sodom and the calamity which must come.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Rutt for his timely address and the meeting then concluded with the singing of hymn 1137 and the benediction.

D.J.P.

We must not think to dance with the devil all day and sup with Christ at night.

John Trapp

SUFFERINGS OF THE BAPTISTS

Most people have heard of the sufferings of the martyrs in the reign of Queen Mary, and those of the Huguenots in France and the Covenanters in Scotland; but, sadly, few seem to know of the bitter sufferings of the Baptists at the hands of the Church of England during the reign of Charles II. We feel that our young people especially should know what our godly forefathers had to endure.

The reader is now prepared for a tale of woe. The history of our denomination from 1660 to 1688 is not so much a history of progress as of endurance. Persecution commenced immediately after the king's return. The clergymen ejected during the Commonwealth and the Protectorate, with the exception of such as had "justified the late king's murder, or declared against infant-baptism," were restored to their livings by Act of Parliament. Though the High Commission Court was not re-established, it was presumed that the old laws of Elizabeth were in force again, and magistrates in every part of the kingdom were eager to execute them.

Immediately after Venner's insurrection, Hanserd Knollys and many more were apprehended and lodged in Newgate and other large prisons. "Above four hundred," says Crosby, "were crowded into Newgate, besides many more in the other prisons belonging to the city and parts adjacent." Vavasor Powell, then preaching in Wales, was treated in the same manner, and many of his brethren in the principality shared his fate. Throughout the kingdom the Baptists were exposed to outrage. "They have been haled from their peaceable habitations," says John Sturgeson, "and thrust into prisons, almost in all counties in England, and many are still detained, to the utter undoing of themselves and families, and most of them are poor men whose livelihood, under God, depends upon the labour of their hands. So that they lie under a more than ordinary calamity, there being so many thrust into little rooms together, that they are an annoyance each to other, especially in the City of London, where the Lord Mayor crowds them very close together, that it hath been observed, the keepers have complained they have had too many guests. And whilst they suffer there, some of their wives and tender babies want bread at home."

The execution of John James was a horrible illustration of royal malice. John James was a Sabbatarian Baptist.* His meeting-house was in Bulstrake Alley, Whitechapel, London. On October 19th, 1661, he

* In former days some of the godly Baptists kept Saturday as the Sabbath, the best known being the Stennett family.

was dragged from his pulpit and committed to Newgate on the charge of uttering treasonable words against the king. The principal witness against him was one Tipler, a journeyman pipe-maker, a man whose character was so well known that the magistrate before whom Mr. James was taken refused to receive his deposition unless some other witness would corroborate it. Others were found who confirmed Tipler's testimony, but one of them afterwards confessed that "he had sworn against Mr. James he knew not what." In fact, there can be little doubt that the witnesses were suborned, probably bribed, to commit perjury. There is the more reason to believe this, because when the Lieutenant of the Tower read the information laid against Mr. James in the presence of his congregation, and asked them how they could hear such doctrines, they all replied "that they never heard such words, as they shall answer it before the Lord, and they durst not lie." But the death of the victim was predetermined. It was no difficult matter to procure a verdict against him. He was tried and convicted on November 19th, and sentenced the next day to be hanged, drawn, and quartered.

So flagrant was the injustice that his wife was advised by her friends to present a petition to the king [Charles II] for his life, setting forth the facts which have been mentioned, and entreating his Majesty's interposition. But they had miscalculated. Charles treated the heart-broken woman with gross brutality. "With some difficulty she met the king, and presented him with the paper, acquainting him who she was. To whom he held up his finger, and said, 'O! Mr. James – he is a sweet gentleman'; but following him for some further answer, the door was shut against her. The next morning she attended again, and an opportunity soon presenting, she implored his Majesty's answer to her request. Who then replied, 'That he was a rogue, and should be hanged.' One of the lords attending him asked him of whom she spake. The king answered, 'Of John James, that rogue; he shall be hanged; yea, he shall be hanged.'"

On November 26th, Mr. James was dragged, after the manner of traitors, from Newgate to Tyburn, the place of execution. His behaviour under these awful circumstances was dignified and Christian. In his address to the multitude, referring to his denominational sentiments, he said, "I do own the title of a baptized believer. I own the ordinances and appointments of Jesus Christ. I own all the principles in Hebrews 6. 1, 2." He charged his friends to continue their religious assemblies at all risks. His closing exhortations were remarkably solemn and impressive, reminding the people of the days of the old martyrs. "This is a happy day," said one of his friends. "I bless the Lord," he replied, "it is so." When all was ready, he lifted up his hands, and exclaimed with a loud voice, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." So he died. His

quarters were placed over the city gates, and his head was set upon a pole opposite the meeting-house in which he had preached the gospel.

The hand of power was heavy on the Nonconformists in every part of England. In Buckinghamshire the persecution raged with intolerable fierceness. So numerous were the prisoners, that the magistrates were obliged to hire two large houses for their accommodation, the county jail being too small.

On one occasion, in 1664, the Baptist minister of Aylesbury and eleven of his congregation were seized, among whom were two women. They were placed before the justices at the Quarter Sessions, and advantage was taken of the 35th of Queen Elizabeth [probably a law passed in the 35th year of her reign] to require them either to conform to the Church of England and take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, or to abjure the realm, and they were told that if they would not do either, they would be declared guilty of felony, and sentence of death would be passed on them. Unawed by this prospect, they replied that as they could not comply with the requisitions, they threw themselves on the mercy of the court; on which they were sentenced to be hanged, and sent back to jail till the day of execution. The sentence would have been executed, had not measures been promptly taken to lay the case before the king and obtain his interference. The son of one of the condemned persons hastened to London, and by the assistance of William Kiffin, procured an interview with the Lord Chancellor, who immediately proceeded to the king. Implacable as Charles had proved himself to be in John James' case, he saw that the wholesale murder contemplated at Aylesbury would bring his government into disrepute, and might stir up resentment not easily to be appeased. He was willing enough to worry his subjects into submission, or at least to attempt to do so, by confiscation and the dungeon, but the thought of sacrificing twelve lives at once to the demon of intolerance was too shocking – even for Charles II. A reprieve was placed in the hands of the applicant, and at the next assizes his Majesty's pardon was produced by the presiding judge, and the prisoners were released.

From J.M. Cramp's *Baptist History*

The great eulogium of those whom Paul mentions in Hebrews 11 is that they died in the faith. They had their fears, faintings, failings, conflicts and trials, like us; but they overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of His testimony. Now they are with Him, whom they loved unseen. To Him be all the praise! For themselves they have no more to say than that He loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood.

John Newton

BOOK REVIEWS

The Visitor's Book of Texts, by Andrew A. Bonar; paperback; 280 pages; price £6.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Andrew Bonar (1810-1892) was one of the best-known ministers in the Free Church of Scotland in the nineteenth century. So well-liked was he that children were named after him, the best known being Andrew Bonar Law, who became Prime Minister of England.

Andrew Bonar was the author of the excellent biography of his friend, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, and it was he who so ably edited *The Letters of Samuel Rutherford*.

This is an unusual book; we have never seen anything like it. It consists of texts and passages of Scripture which Bonar found helpful in visiting the sick, the dying, the bereaved, the troubled, children, the aged, etc. The twenty-four chapters each deal with a different condition. The author also adds useful comments on the texts, and also on the way to speak to different people – for instance, the distinction between the godly and the ungodly. He strongly warns against giving spiritual comfort to those in a state of spiritual death. Of course, in the Scottish tradition he makes the free offer of the gospel.

There are also useful practical hints, especially the importance of being brief in visiting the sick. As would be expected, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorised Version.

Though so unusual, this could be a most useful book for a young man beginning his first pastorate, or to a deacon in his office of loving concern for the sick and aged.

It hardly needs to be said that Andrew Bonar insists on the importance of prayer about the visits and that whatever the minister says or reads will be of no avail unless the Holy Spirit uses it. The book ends:

“O Holy Ghost, the Guide into all truth, the Glorifier of Jesus, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of Christ, the Promise of the Father, the Spirit of counsel and might, of love, power and a sound mind – breathe the breath of life!”

While the Bridegroom Tarrys, by R.B. Kuiper; large paperback; 144 pages; price £6.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We were not really familiar with who R.B. Kuiper (1886-1966) was. Perhaps we should have been. Born in Holland, he became a minister in the U.S.A. and was a Professor at Westminster Theological Seminary. The sermons in this book were preached in Grand Rapids in 1919 when he was thirty-three years old.

While the Bridegroom Tarrys warns of the danger of slumbering and sleeping in the light of Christ's return. Really the ten sermons gathered together could be entitled, “The Signs of the Times.” Preached immediately after the First Great War, they warn against theological liberalism and other anti-Christian ideas. The warnings given are just as relevant today. Though some of the errors bitterly afflicting the churches that he mentions (such as Christian Science) are not such

an issue today, others (such as Roman Catholicism) are. Satan is ever active and from year to year he brings forward fresh strategies in opposition to the truth.

We really liked Kuiper's style. He is terse, direct, and makes good use of the occasional short, sharp sentence. The whole tone of the book is solemn.

Kuiper is strongly Calvinistic, quoting from The Canons of Dordrecht and the Heidelberg Catechism. He writes, "It is sometimes said that the issue of our day is not Calvinism but Christianity.... The antithesis is a false one. Are not the fundamentals of Calvinism at once the fundamentals of Christianity?" (page 97).

He also sees the dangers of Premillennialism and warns against it throughout. Even more he warns against worldliness: "Worldly-mindedness is one of the most outstanding faults of present-day Christians. How seldom do they engage in spiritual conversation! They talk on temporal affairs almost all the time. Meditation on God and godly things is an all-but lost art. The mad chase after a portion of the world's goods leaves no time for it.... Mrs. and Miss Church-members can hardly be distinguished any longer by their dress from Mrs. and Miss Worldly," etc., etc. (page 91).

Indeed R.B. Kuiper maintains:

"We do not hesitate to affirm that tribulation at the hands of the world is a mark of Christianity. 'The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you' (John 15. 20). 'If *any* man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me' (Matt 16. 24)" (page 35).

We found *While the Bridegroom Tarries* profitable reading.

John Henry Newman, The Greatest Pervert to Rome, by Matthew J. Hyde; booklet; 31 pages; price £2.30 including postage; published by The Huntingtonian Press, and obtainable from 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hampshire, SO30 4EB.

This is a lecture given for The Protestant Alliance by the author, who is a member of their General Council. The title is taken from a review by J.C. Philpot in the *Gospel Standard* for 1866, page 55, where he mentions two brothers, one of whom was J.H. Newman whom he describes as "the most distinguished pervert from the Church of England that Rome has received."

Matthew Hyde has well researched his subject, which is of topical interest due to the Pope's visit to this country in September this year when he is expected to beatify J.H. Newman as a saint. He gives Newman's main reason for his defection as his disagreement with the doctrine of justification by faith and his failure to accept that the Scripture is the sole rule of faith and Christian conduct.

As there appears to be much ignorance today of what we believe and of the errors of the Roman Catholic Church, may this publication be made a means to awaken us from our spiritual ignorance and lethargy, which can only be effected through the work of God the Holy Spirit.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

John Henry Newman: Becoming Rome's First Ecumenical Saint, by Richard Bennett and Michael de Semlyen; booklet; 24 pages; price £2.00 (£1.25 each for 10 or more copies); published by Dorchester House Publications, and obtainable from P.O. Box 67, Rickmansworth, Herts., WD3 5SJ.

This book is divided into two parts, the first: John Henry Newman – Becoming Rome’s First Ecumenical Saint, in which Newman’s work entitled an “Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine” is stated to be the basis on which the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) was based. A brief life of Newman follows, with his work as principal writer for the Tractarian Movement (later known as The Oxford Movement) in their publication of “Tracts for The Times.” Newman was at first critical of the Roman Catholic Church to gather a following for his work; he then withdrew his criticisms and supported Rome’s view on justification by works and baptismal regeneration, trying to prove that these and other errors were contained in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Faith of the Church of England.

The second part: Newman’s Devotion to the Eucharist and the Consequences, which describes Newman’s devotion to the Eucharist or the Mass, quoting from *The Original Catholic Encyclopedia* that “The Tractarian Movement, headed by Newman and his friends, had its sympathies awakened to the traditions of a Catholic past, and especially the revival of faith in the Real Presence and The Eucharistic Sacrifice.”

The blessed service of remembrance is thus turned into a sacrifice continually offered, and the bread and wine, claimed to be changed into the body of the Lord Jesus Christ and thus worshipped, is a form of spiritual idolatry. The authors state (on page 23): “What makes Newman’s devotion to the Eucharist so horrific is that it is a rejection of the manifest love of God given in the gospel,” see 1 John 4. 9, 10.

This book contains much useful information relating to the true purpose behind the visit of the Pope to this country.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

Pope Benedict XVI and The United Kingdom; paperback; 108 pages; price £5; published by Free Presbyterian Publications, and obtainable from 138 Woodland Road, Glasgow G3 6LE.

This book has been written by six contributors who are all office bearers in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland; three are ministers and three ruling elders. The introduction is by Douglas Somerset which is followed by five chapters: 1. Who is Benedict XVI? by Matthew Vogan; 2. The Pope and the Constitution of the United Kingdom, by Hugh Cartwright; 3. The Pope as the Head of a False Religion, by Roy Middleton; 4. Papal Infallibility, by Alexander Ross; 5. The Pope in Scripture, by John MacLeod. The final section is an extract from the writings of Robert Lewis Dabney entitled, The Attractions of Popery.

This is a comprehensive coverage of the proposed visit of Pope Benedict XVI to this country, written from a Protestant and scriptural viewpoint. It explains the Pope’s position as both the head of a worldwide religion and head of a small sovereign state, the former of these two being the most relevant to those who value our Protestant constitution and religious freedom.

Readers who are concerned at the low state of real religion in our country and the readiness of our political leaders to do all in their power to sacrifice biblical principles to obtain popularity would be well recommended to read this book.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

THE LORD'S SUPPER

How condescending and how kind
 Was God's eternal Son!
 Our misery reached His heavenly mind,
 And pity brought Him down.

When Justice, by our sins provoked,
 Drew forth its dreadful sword,
 He gave His soul up to the stroke
 Without a murmuring word.

He sunk beneath our heavy woes,
 To raise us to His throne;
 There's ne'er a gift His hand bestows
 But cost His heart a groan.

This was compassion like a God,
 That when the Saviour knew
 The price of pardon was His blood,
 His pity ne'er withdrew.

Now though He reigns exalted high,
 His love is still as great:
 Well He remembers Calvary,
 Nor let His saints forget.

Here we behold His bowels roll,
 As kind as when He died;
 And see the sorrows of His soul
 Bleed through His wounded side

Here we receive repeated seals
 Of Jesus' dying love:
 Hard is the wretch that never feels
 One soft affection move.

Here let our hearts begin to melt,
 While we His death record,
 And with our joy for pardoned guilt,
 Mourn that we pierced the Lord.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

If Christ had not died, sin had never died in any sinner unto eternity.

John Owen

All are not saved by Christ's death, but all which are saved are saved by Christ's death.

Henry Smith

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
OCTOBER 2010

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

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN POLITICS

“By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By Me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth” (Prov. 8. 15, 16).

In this evil day, the prayers of God’s people continually are that the Lord will raise up men of integrity and honesty in high places. May evil laws be overturned and good laws established. May the Lord bind the floods from overflowing.

Thinking of the general election earlier in the year, and a new Prime Minister, we have been reminded that over a period of two centuries there was invariably what can best be described as “a Christian influence” in Parliament, and not least on our Prime Ministers. At times there was real godliness, but more often there was an influence present to restrain and constrain. The Lord is able in mercy to favour us with this again.

What set our mind thinking in this channel was the statement in the papers that David Cameron is the youngest Prime Minister since the Earl of Liverpool. Cameron was 44 when elected and the Earl 43. But who was the Earl of Liverpool? He was Charles Jenkinson, who became Prime Minister in 1812 and continued without a break for fifteen years. But we remembered that he attended the ministry of William Huntington. Just think of a Prime Minister going to a chapel like that today!

Apparently the famous architect, Henry Peto, prayed at the laying of the foundation stone of the Custom House. The Earl asked him where he attended church, and on hearing that he was a member with Huntington, began to attend himself. King George III’s favourite coachman was also a member with Huntington, and used to leave his works lying about, knowing that His Majesty picked them up and read them.

Our thoughts then went to the reason why the Earl of Liverpool became Prime Minister, the assassination of Spencer Perceval on the steps of the House of Commons – the only Prime Minister to be murdered. Little is remembered about Perceval today, apart from one thing: he was known as “the evangelical Prime Minister.” A staunch Protestant, a loving husband and father, a man of utter integrity and great kindness, obviously a man of godliness and grace, his influence was not so much his politics but his Christian character.

Then going back further, immediately before, we thought of the youngest ever Prime Minister, William Pitt. Now there is no evidence that Pitt was a godly man. The well-known story is told of how he was once persuaded to hear a gracious minister, Richard Cecil. The sermon was a simple, sweet, gospel sermon, but on coming out Pitt confessed that he just could not understand (and yet England never had a more brilliant mind). This story has often been told to illustrate the sovereignty of grace. God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes.

But Pitt was a close friend of William Wilberforce. He both loved him and admired him. And so for many years there was an influence, and Pitt would act in a way to satisfy the desire of his godly friend.

During the nineteenth century, there is one figure who often appears, Lord Palmerston. He was in Parliament for fifty-eight years, thirty-eight of which he was a cabinet minister. On two occasions he was Prime Minister. Again there does not seem to be any evidence of his godliness, but he often consulted the godly Earl of Shaftesbury, a relative, and many God-honouring decisions were taken in this way.

Of course the two great nineteenth century Prime Ministers were Gladstone (Liberal) and Disraeli (Conservative), who between them held office for over twenty years. Gladstone was a very High Churchman, but exercised a moral influence. In fact, he wrote a book entitled *The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture*. What Prime Minister would write a book like that today?

Disraeli, a Jew, was nominally a member of the Church of England. The story is told of how he was infuriated in losing the 1880 Election and blamed the Anglo-Catholics who supported Gladstone. Having one duty to perform before relinquishing office, the appointment of the first Bishop of Liverpool, he sought revenge. Scouring the country, he looked for the lowest of churchmen and found J.C. Ryle in a vicarage in Suffolk. Ryle had the ability and the qualifications and was duly appointed – and once in, he was there for twenty years. People have often wondered how it was possible for J.C. Ryle to become a bishop in the national church. But there is a God in heaven who is sovereign over all.

We come to David Lloyd George, the hero of World War I. The Kaiser said, “Had Lloyd George been on my side, we would have won!” Now there were many most unsavoury things in Lloyd George’s life but he knew what was the truth. (We gather that all his life he was a Baptist deacon.) On one occasion one of our ministers, who held a very responsible position, was appointed to escort the Prime Minister Lloyd George on a tour of the House of Lords. Remarking to him, “Sir, I prefer the House of the Lord!” he said, “And Lloyd George knew what I meant.”

There is the remarkable story of the dark days of the War, January 1918. The King called a national day of prayer. In the evening of the Lord's day, the service had just begun in one of our little Strict Baptist chapels when the door opened and in walked the Prime Minister and his Secretary. (Some accounts say the United States of America Secretary.) They had walked across a rain-swept common in order to be there. (Can we think of such a thing happening today?)

After the service Lloyd George remained, talking with the little congregation, and thanking the minister for his prayers. The story goes that as they went out, Lloyd George said to the Secretary, "That is why we are going to win the War!"

Sadly, Andrew Bonar Law, though named after the famous Free Church of Scotland minister, did not seem to wield any influence, but Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister did. When he announced the death of King George V, he did so in the words of Scripture: "When he had served his generation, he fell on sleep." Then at the time of the abdication crisis, when Edward VIII wanted to marry the twice-divorced Mrs. Simpson, Baldwin refused to yield an inch, standing for true and honourable principles.

Which brings us to Winston Churchill, who so often in his famous speeches would use expressions like "by the help of God."

This is not meant to be a list of names or of historical figures. We see Almighty God over and above it all, in His mercy to England over the years, interposing *here* and influencing *there*. He is still the same. "He doeth as He will among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?"

As we face the future, may we ever remember that He is in complete control. He is on the throne. His Word declares: "By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By Me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth."

Our prayer is that "in wrath" He will "remember mercy." We do not deserve it. Our great need is self-abasement and humble confession and humiliation, nationally and personally. But what the Lord has done in the past, He is still able to do today.

There is something peculiarly soothing to the heart of a true Christian, to know that He who rules over all worlds, in whose hands are the destinies of nations, and who guides the minutest concerns of families and individuals, is his Father and his Friend. The more we know of God, of His power, wisdom, love, faithfulness and truth, the more we shall bow before His throne in humble adoration, and filial confidence and love.

Thomas Reade

PRACTICAL RELIGION

*Sermon preached by Mr. Jabez Rutt at Lamberhurst Chapel
on September 18th, 2008*

Text: “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, wast neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10. 36, 37).

Some godly men interpret this parable in a completely spiritual way, and I do not discountenance that it can be interpreted in a spiritual way, but they *completely* spiritualise it. They would say that the man that was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho is Adam. He goes from Jerusalem, the city of peace, down to Jericho. They liken his falling among thieves as falling into sin, and they liken the priest and the Levite to the law of God, which cannot help him. They liken the good Samaritan to our Lord Jesus Christ, who came and poured in the oil and the wine of the everlasting gospel, came and gave the poor man complete deliverance and supplied all his needs. And whilst one would go with them and say, “Well, yes, we could look at it in that light,” I do not believe that that is the *primary* meaning of the parable. The primary meaning of the parable is: “Go, and do thou likewise.”

We must be very careful in our interpretation, and it is sadly a fault among our little group of churches, that often some very clear, practical parts of the truth of God are spiritualised away completely, and there is only a spiritual application of it. The practical application which is so obvious and important is ignored. It is so with this parable and it cannot be right. Whilst I say we can look at it in that spiritual light, yet as I have said to you before, the truth of God is like a diamond. If you hold a diamond up to the light and turn it round in different ways, it will shine; the facets on that diamond will sparkle as the light shines on it as you turn it round, and so it is with the truth of God; you can look at it from all different angles. But let us be careful of not spiritualising away the practical truths of God’s Word. We can hide behind this spiritualisation and then live a life of sloth, and take away the very essence of the meaning of what our Lord Jesus is teaching us, and what the Word of God is pointing out to us. The teachings of Jesus Christ are pre-eminently practical.

Another prime example of this (and I have heard it done many a time) and that is those solemn words which we have in the Epistle of James, “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” The amount of times I have heard that expounded in a totally spiritual way and the works are spoken of as absolutely spiritual, nothing to do with practical works. Yet in the very context there he speaks of the practical works that the Christian believer performs through faith that worketh by love. That

is what the Apostle James is so emphatically laying down there, and that is what our Lord Jesus here is so emphatically laying down. This lawyer said, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And the Lord said unto him, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" And he answered clear and right, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." We need to be very clear on this: this man obviously trusted in himself that he was able to do that. We cannot do that. We can try to do that, we should try our whole lives to do that, but we cannot do it, we are sinful, we are corrupt, we are unclean.

I remember so distinctly in my early spiritual days when the Lord first quickened my soul into life, I was working in the East End of London, and I remember that divine teaching of the Lord showing me how wrong things were in my life. I would get up in the morning and I would make resolutions. I was not going to do this and I was not going to do that, and I was not going to do something else. I knew that they were wrong and I was determined not to do it. Time and time and time again I had not gone two hours into the day and every single resolution was broken. I sincerely made those resolutions, but I had to prove that I could not keep them. I could not do it. What does the Lord do when He teaches us like this? He brings us to the very end of self. He shows us what we are, a useless, wretched sinner: that is what He shows us. Painful work when He breaks the arm of our flesh! We use that term pointedly, because if you break your arm it is very painful, and when the Lord breaks the arm of our flesh it is very painful, it is disabling, isn't it? And so it is in a spiritual sense when the Holy Ghost begins to teach us our helplessness, our hopelessness, our emptiness, our poverty, our inability. It is then that we begin to pray, when we realise our emptiness. You may not know what you want, you may not know what you need, but you begin to pray.

"And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.... But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" Now this is the teaching of the parable: "Who is my neighbour?" What the Lord Jesus shows so clearly is that our neighbour is all of our fellow human beings, all of them. A dear woman, I believe now in glory, but you know, sadly, she had been brought up among our churches, she had never mixed anywhere else, she would do anything for a chapel person, but she would not go near the world to help them. My dear, beloved friends, that is a wrong spirit. I buried that dear woman with a sweet hope though she showed

a Pharisaical spirit, but it is a spirit that is among our churches. We touched on it last Thursday: it is the spirit of the Pharisee – and though we would not express it in so many words, and we would actually deny that we had the spirit of a Pharisee, yet by the way we behave we have the spirit of the Pharisee. Though we do not realise that we have got the spirit of the Pharisee, it is there, in the way that we speak, in the things that we do and the things that we will not do, in the judgments that we make. In those judgments we betray our Pharisaism. And I must tell you this, that I preach as much to myself. Do not think that I am preaching down to anyone. I have known this spirit; that is why I preach like I do. I have known it in my own heart, in my own life, and I have also known what it is for the God of heaven to frown upon me because of it. O that the Lord would deliver us from such a fleshly, carnal spirit!

In this parable this man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. The poor man was in a totally helpless, lonely condition. Now, we read that the priest, a man elevated among the Jewish people, came down, but he was too good for that man taken among thieves. He went the other side of the road. He was not going near the man; he passed by on the other side, no compassion, no mercy. Following him, the Levite, who had to do with all the sacrifices and the ordinances of the temple, came and looked at him; then he walked away, no compassion, no mercy. Yet these men were lifted up as probably some of the most spiritual and the most religious and the most godly among the Jews. We find this time and time and time again. The Lord Jesus (I have often pointed out to you) speaks more woes against the Pharisees and scribes than anyone else. The Pharisees were the most religious, the most strictly religious. That is where we have to be so careful; sometimes we have a lot of flesh in our religion (I preach as much to myself) and when that flesh gets in the way, then we become pharisaical. That is what the flesh produces, a pharisaical self-righteousness. “Come not near to me; for I am holier than thou,” is the fruit of the flesh, not of the spirit.

“By chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan...” Now the Jews despised the Samaritans, but this “Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him.” I have often pointed out to you how many times, especially in Mark’s Gospel, do we read of our Lord Jesus Christ, “and He having compassion on the multitude.”

“His heart is made of tenderness;
His bowels melt with love.”

That is the mind and the spirit of Christ. "He had compassion on him." How do you and I behave? How do you behave when perhaps a neighbour is in trouble? It does not matter how ungodly they are, it does not matter how unrighteous they are, you should help them. They may spitefully use you, but the Word of God says help them. That is the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We touched on it last Thursday evening here in the Gospel according to Luke: the Lord Jesus lays it out so clearly, so emphatically, how we are to behave ourselves. "If thine enemy hunger, feed him"; that is the spirit of Christ. Are we guided by the spirit of Christ? Do we bring forth these fruits of love and kindness? What do you think the Lord Jesus means when He says, "they"? Who does He mean when He says, "they"? He means the world, "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." You know, friends, I get tired of it. You might say, what are you speaking of? As soon as a minister begins to speak of good works, the first thing we hear is: "You will never get to heaven on good works." Amen, you never will. But if you have got the grace of God in your heart, you will be fruitful unto every good work; that is the fruit that is brought forth, and that is what the Lord Jesus is labouring here. "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy."

That word seemed to abide on my spirit this morning when I was seeking to meditate here, Hosea chapter 6 verse 6, and it is quoted twice in the Gospel of Matthew: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." How often we get so tied up, and it is a fleshly "getting tied up," and we say, "Well, I won't help that person because of this or because of that or because of something else"; or, "I won't help this one because of this or because of that." "Judge not, that ye be not be judged"; that is the meaning of that word, when we reduce everything to our judgment, and then we become the judge of evil thoughts. Listen to the Word of God: "Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." I make no apologies for a practical sermon. John Bunyan said, "The practic part is the hardest part," and it is, but you know, in some senses, it is such an important part. If there is no practical part to your religion, something is solemnly wrong, according to the teaching of the Word of God. There is something solemnly wrong with your religion if there is no practical part, if there is no bringing forth of the sweet fruits of love, kindness and tenderness. I often quote Philippians chapter 2: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." What does he go on to say concerning the mind of Christ? He "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.” “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt you in due time.”

Often this self-righteous spirit arises within us because of a lack of knowledge of ourselves. When we look on another person, we despise them because they are this, or because they are that, or because they are something else. When the Lord really, truly opens something of the inward sinfulness of your and my heart, the corruption of our nature, instead of looking and despising, you will have to say, “There go I but for the grace of God.” It will temper your spirit. You do not follow people in their sins and you do not approve of them in their sins (that is not what I am saying), but when you can look down in a pharisaical way upon them and despise them, you pass by on the other side. Why? Because you are holier than they are, or you think you are. That is a wrong spirit, my beloved friends, it is a wrong spirit. It comes from sinful, self-righteous flesh.

“Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.” I have had to prove this, and I have had to prove it very painfully, when we get lifted up in a fleshly religion and in a pharisaical spirit, the Lord will permit you to fall, and when you fall you will drop fathoms and you will then realise just how proud you were, just how lifted up you were. You thought you were being such a righteous person, you thought you were being such a holy person, and you thought you were being such a right person, and yet when the Lord really permits you to come down, you will realise just how proud you were. My dear, beloved friends, as I preach these things, I want to emphasise, I am not looking down on anybody here at all. I preach these things because I have tasted them, handled them and felt them and painfully known them. I have had to fall down, I have had to come down, when I have been lifted up in this Pharisaical spirit. That is how one recognises it, because we have been there, we have known what it is.

This spirit of grace is always kind, the spirit of grace is always loving; that is the very root of it: “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” That is the very root of it: it is the love of God in Christ; it is the love of God manifest in the Person of His Son. The eternal Son left the bosom of the Father, He came to this sin-cursed world, He was made of a woman and made under the law, He lived in this world, He lived among the Pharisees, He lived a holy, sinless, perfect, spotless life, He was set at nought, persecuted, misjudged, falsely accused. He did no sin; He lived a perfect holy life. Why did He live here? To redeem His people in love to His church, to His people; He came to suffer, to bleed and to die; He came to live for them, to suffer for

them, to die for them. That is the spirit and mind of Christ. Nothing was too great, no burden was too heavy, for that infinite love of the eternal God to poor lost man, that love that took Him to Gethsemane, that love that took Him to the judgment hall, that love that nailed Him to the cross of Calvary, that love that took Him into the grave, that infinite love of the eternal God. When we are enabled by grace to follow Him to do those things that are right in His sight, if we are led and taught of the Spirit, it is love that will motivate us.

These things are so beautifully set out in the Word of God in many different places, but I think one of the clearest places they are set out is in the 4th chapter of the 1st Epistle of John: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." This spirit of love is the root of grace. The first word that was ever applied and sealed by the Spirit in my heart, the first word of hope was in Ephesians: "And ye shall be rooted and grounded in love." It is a root grace. Just look at it for a moment. Covetousness in the heart of man is a root evil; it undergirds every other sin; it is rooted in our very nature. "The love of money is the root of all evil," not as some people quote it, "Money is the root of all evil." It does not say that. It is "the love of money is the root of all evil." We see it in the turmoil in the financial markets today, and what is rooted in it? The love of money. Greed, covetousness. Look at the turmoil that it brings. And so it brings it also personally into the lives of men and women, and if we get taken up with that spirit, it will bring it into our life. It is a root evil; it is rooted in our very nature.

But in the true believer, when the Spirit of God quickens a poor sinner and brings that soul from spiritual death into spiritual life, when He sheds the love of Christ abroad in their heart, they are rooted and grounded in love. That is the motivating principle of the true believer. Firstly, love to Christ, love to His glorious Person. Like the psalmist said, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications." It is love that unites a sinner to Christ. Think of that beautiful word that we have in Galatians: through "faith which worketh by love." Faith works by love. If you and I have true faith, it works by love; that is the motivating principle. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love."

What a beautiful word that is, "God is love"! God is true, essential love. Just look for a moment at the Godhead. "God is love" in His very being. To have the spirit of love there must be more than one, for the manifestation of it. We have the revelation in the Word of God of the glorious Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, these Three are One. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." And then

the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, He expresses His love to His eternal Father. In Romans we read of the love of the Spirit, but we see in the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Ghost there is love, infinite love. God is love. Flowing from that infinite, eternal love of God unto poor, sinful man through the glorious Person of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, there is this spirit of love. God is love. And if we know anything of real religion, we will know what it is to love. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." We see the evidence, as we have elsewhere in this Epistle: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit."

I shall never forget, before I entered the ministry, I was reading that excellent book, *The Christian in Complete Armour* by William Gurnall, and the dear man of God spoke of the graces of the Spirit. It made such a deep impression upon me; the Lord so used it to enlighten me. He said this: "You will never have the graces of the Spirit in the singular. If a person has faith he will have love, and if he has faith and love he will have repentance." As he went on he spoke of the sacred graces of the Spirit, and said, they never dwell in the singular. I shall never forget reading that; it made such a deep impression on me. If we have faith we shall have love; it is a faith that worketh by love. You might say, what is the distinction you are trying to make? There are some people that have an intellectual faith. It has no love, it is very intellectual and very logical and they can lay out all the doctrine for you, but there is not that holy love to Christ, not that holy love to His Word, to His commandments. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," to His ways. That soul loves the Lord and loves His ways and loves the people of God and desires their company. If you love somebody you want to be with them. The Spirit of love.

O you know, friends, we should be very jealous of it. I know, and I have often reminded you of it, the Lord since He has brought us together here He has given us a sacred spirit of love, of union and communion. We should be jealous of it; the enemy will not like it; may the Lord maintain us in it. "He giveth more grace." May we pray for it. The enemy will try and come among us and try and divide, that is what he has always done; he sows discord among brethren. O that that love

that the Spirit has wrought in our hearts among us might increase yet more and more, that we may endeavour, that is a strong word, "*Endeavour* to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

We are digressing a bit here, but I think we have laid this foundation: "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.... We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Did you notice what we read together in the 58th of Isaiah? There they were fasting and the Lord said to them, "Ye have joy in your fast." "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness?" This is the fast that I have chosen. They were fasting for strife and debate and to smite with the fist of wickedness. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush?" Look at the Pharisees how outwardly for everyone to see they bow down their head as a bulrush: come not near unto me for I am holier than thou. They were righteous and had need of nothing. The Pharisee despised the publican who could not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven. I thank God that I am not as other men are, even as this publican. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry and He shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday: and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought." You think of those words again of John the Baptist when he said to them, "Bring forth therefore works meet for repentance."

O that the Lord would grant us this religion, this practical religion! A faith that has those gracious works of love, of kindness and of compassion to accompany it, that we may indeed "do good unto all men." I felt rather drawn to the Epistle of Titus, and there the Lord gave the apostle that grace to exhort his servant. He says, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,

righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." O friends, how does your religion and how does my religion measure up to the Word of God? Because that is what we are to measure by, the plumbline of Holy Scripture. Are we zealous of good works? Do we do good unto all men? Acts of kindness and love and compassion?

Just think of that word, the exhortation in the Ephesians: "Be ye kind ... tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." If you find anything in your life that is the opposite to this, it does not come from the Spirit of God, it comes from the flesh. When you feel a hard spirit, a cold spirit, an angry spirit, that does not arise from the Spirit of God. That spirit of grace in the heart breathes kindness and love and compassion and tenderness, and you will rise to it in love to your Master. I know I have told you before but it illustrates the point. Many years ago now a man that was in business telephoned me as he had got an employee who had done something that was wrong, and he asked me how he should deal with the matter and I exhorted him to be kind and compassionate and to be careful how he dealt with the matter. And the next day he rang me back; he had sacked the man on the spot. And I said to him, "Friend, I am pleased that my Lord and Master did not treat me like that, because that is what I deserved!" He said, "I had never seen it in that light." "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." "Freely ye have received, freely give."

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." It is recorded throughout Scripture of those that do acts of kindness and compassion that these things are the fruits of the Spirit – all goodness and kindness and compassion. May the Lord grant it to us. May He deliver us from the spirit of the flesh.

Published by request.



Let the sermon thou hast heard be converted into prayer.

Edmund Calamy

Zeal is like fire. In the chimney it is one of the best servants; but out of the chimney it is one of the worst masters.

Thomas Brooks

THE SAVIOUR'S SYMPATHY

My dear Sir,

Though by the Lord's mercy I have not, since the years of my miserable bondage in Africa, been much subject to a depression of spirits, I know how to sympathise with you under your present complaints. But while I am sorry for your trials, I rejoice much more to observe the spirit of submission and dependence with which you are favoured under them. Whatever may be the immediate causes of your troubles, they are all under the direction of a gracious hand, and each in their place co-operating to a gracious end. I think the frame of your spirit is a sure evidence that God is *with* you in your trouble, and I trust in due time He will fulfil the other part of His promise, to comfort and deliver you, because He has given you to know His name (Psa. 91. 14, 15). It will be always a pleasure to me when a letter comes with your superscription, but while writing is so painful to you, I shall be willing (since you are pleased to receive mine so favourably) to send you two or three for one, rather than expect a punctual return of answers, till your health and spirits shall enable you to gratify me without inconvenience to yourself.

Your saying that, "If I have never been in the like circumstances, it is impossible for me to conceive the uncomfortableness of them," reminds me of one admirable peculiarity of the gospel, which seems a fit topic for a paragraph in a letter to you at this time. I mean the encouragement it affords us to apply to our great High Priest, from the especial consideration of His having felt the same sorrows which we also feel. Though He is now exalted above all our conceptions and praises, is supremely happy in Himself, and the Fountain of happiness to all His redeemed, yet He is still such an one as can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities (Heb. 4. 15, 16). He has not only a divine knowledge, but an experimental perception of our afflictions (Isa. 63. 9). And, as Dr. Watts well expresses the thought,

"Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

You complain of a dejection of spirits, which I apprehend nearly expresses the sense of ἀδημονεῖν (Mark 14. 33), which is one out of many of those emphatical words the evangelists use to give some apprehension of that depression, agony and consternation of spirit which filled the soul of Jesus when He entered upon the great work of atoning for our sins. All that He endured from the hands of wicked men was probably very light in comparison of what He began to suffer in the

garden when He was exposed to the fierce conflicts of the powers of darkness, and when the arrows of the Almighty drank up His spirits, and it pleased the Father to bruise Him (Zech. 13. 7). How different the cup He drank Himself from that which He puts into our hands! His was unmixed wrath and anguish, but all our afflictions are tempered and sweetened with many mercies. Yet we suffer, at the worst, unspeakably less than we deserve, but He had done nothing amiss.

“Now let our pains be all forgot;
Our hearts no more repine;
Our sufferings are not worth a thought,
If, Lord, compared with Thine.”

But what I chiefly intend is that having suffered for us, He knows how to pity and how to relieve us by an experimental sense of the sorrow which once filled His own soul (yea, all His life long He was acquainted with grief), even as we (if it be lawful to compare great things with small) are prompted to pity and to help those who are afflicted in the same way as ourselves. May He be pleased by the power of His Holy Spirit to reveal with increasing guidance and power in your soul this mystery of redeeming love. Here is the source of consolation, that Jesus died for us, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. The knowledge of His cross, like the wood which Moses cast into the spring (Exod. 15. 25), sweetens the bitter waters of afflictions and sanctifies every dispensation of providence so as to render it a means of grace. A comfortable hope of our acceptance and reconciliation in Him is, I apprehend, that “preparation of the gospel of peace,” which for its continual use and application the apostle compares to shoes, which whoever wears, shall walk safely and surely through the thorny and rugged paths of our present pilgrimage (Eph. 6. 15; Deut. 33. 25).

Though there may be many tribulations, yet since there can be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; since in the path of sufferings we may see His footsteps before us; since it is the established law of the kingdom (Acts 14. 22); since the time is short, and the hour coming apace when all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and His grace engaged to be sufficient for us in the interim; why may we not say with the apostle, “None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear, so that I may finish my course with joy”? There is no proportionate ground for comparison between the sufferings of the present life and the glory that shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8. 18). So the apostle thought, and no man seems to have been better qualified to decide upon the point for, on the one hand, his outward life was full of what the world calls *misery* (1 Cor. 4. 10-14; 2 Cor. 6. 4-10; 11. 23-28), and on the other hand, he had been caught up into the third heavens, and had seen and heard more than he could disclose in mortal language.

I shall be glad when you are able to inform me that your health and spirits are better, which I shall pray and wait for. The Lord has an appointed time for answering the prayers of His people. While His hour is not yet come, we can do nothing but look and wait at His mercy seat. But though He seems to tarry, He will not delay beyond the fittest season. Though He cause grief, He will have compassion. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. In the meantime I commend you to those most gracious and comfortable promises, Isaiah 41. 10 and 43. 2, which I trust will be your present support and the subject of your future praises.

I am respectfully, dear Sir,

Your obedient and affectionate servant,

John Newton

February 11th, 1769

THE MOUNTAIN OF MYRRH AND HILL OF FRANKINCENSE

*Comments on Song of Solomon 4. 6 by Grey Hazlerigg (1818-1912)
with special reference to public worship and the prayer meeting.*

“Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.”

It is a great thing to know where Christ is to be found, that we His people may seek Him there and by His grace find Him “Whither is thy Beloved gone,” say some, “that we may seek Him with thee?” Here the Lord Jesus gives the answer:

“I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.” Under the Old Testament dispensation this would signify Mount Moriah, where the temple was built, the sacrifices offered and the pure incense burnt. In this divinely-instituted worship Christ met with His dear people. They saw His power and glory in the sanctuary. But in a gospel signification these words point to the true church of God as the place where the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is set forth in the preaching of the Word and administration of the ordinances, and from which prayer continually ascends to God. To the Old Testament saints they would be words to encourage them to a constant attendance upon the sanctuary services, as representing typically the death of Christ and His intercession, and their acceptance both as to their persons and prayers in and through Him. To New Testament saints they are words to encourage in a due and diligent attendance upon all public means of

grace. To such places Christ bids His people go, alluring them by the declaration of the text: "I will get *Me* to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." As though He said, "Seek Me in all these things, for in them I will be present, and meet with and bless your souls."

Here then is a sweet word for faith, and when this is properly understood, the dear children of God wait eagerly, diligently and hopefully upon Jesus in the appointed means. They do not find Him to be a barren wilderness. He does meet with them, and though not always giving them the same degree of sweetness or sensible apprehension of His presence, He cannot deny Himself, but is with them in His Christlike character to carry on, as a gracious Sovereign, His work upon their souls. This also is to continue until He comes again:

"Until the day break, and the shadows flee away." The time of the law was the time of darkness and shadows to the Old Testament saints; but Christ, in due time, came and dispersed those legal shades. To us the whole of this present life is a night season, a shadowy time, compared with the day which will break when Christ comes again, and saints will behold His glory, see Him even as He is, and be with Him for ever. Moreover, there are special seasons of gloom and times of a sort of midnight darkness. Well, what says the word of our text? In spite of everything of sin and Satan, law and terrors, discouragements from within and hindrances from without, desert not the means of grace, "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," cleave to the Word of God, attempt to pray, go to the place of worship, turn not aside to those who speak lies, go not after vain things, listen not to self-indulgence, sloth and love of ease, listen not to the discouragements arising from times of dryness and deadness attending the use of means, wait for Christ, remember He is true, and He has said, "I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense."

We see, then, the general signification of the text: Christ having in the previous verses commended His people collectively as united according to His expressed will in church fellowship, now calls them to a diligent, persevering attendance upon all the means of grace and ordinances of His house, signifying to them that during this dispensation He will meet with them in these various means, and be present in their assemblies as the Christ of God, to carry on His work of grace, and build them up in their most holy faith.

But we observe that He divides these means of grace into two, answerable to the two institutions under the law – the offering of sacrifices and burning the pure incense in the temple worship. We will first consider, then, reversing the order, what may be more especially meant by the hill of frankincense, and then what by the mountain of myrrh.

"The hill of frankincense." The literal hill of frankincense was, as we have seen, Mount Moriah, where the incense was burnt on the golden altar morning and evening, typical of the prayers of the people ascending up to God, perfumed with Christ's intercession and offered in His name. This answers, of course, to the church, and more especially has respect to it as the place of true prayer, for we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit. But in a more peculiar manner it may lead us to the prayer meeting, where the dear children of God assemble together for the especial object of pouring out their supplications unitedly to the Lord.

O what a delightful thing is the union of many hearts in prayer! "Whilst one is wrestling with our God," in a way of vocal utterance, for "each one to wrestle too." This is sweet; this is heavenly; this often brings all heaven before the eyes and into the hearts of God's people. Neglecting prayer, churches cease to thrive; the ministry grows feeble, barren and inoperative; the graces of the saints languish; the increase of God seems withheld; all things go into decay. When God intends a revival, He usually pours upon the people the spirit of grace and supplication. Then mourning takes place of carelessness; then the voice of the turtle, being heard in the land, the time of the singing of birds draws nigh. O sweet renewings of the blessed Spirit! He comes to revive, restore, increase and bless.

Now, if the prayer meeting of the saints is such an important thing, how sad it is to hear the Lord's people say, "It is only a prayer meeting!" Only a prayer meeting? Is that nothing? Is the united approach of God's saints to His blessed footstool nothing? Does not Christ, too, say here, "I will get ME to the hill of frankincense?" Did not the united prayers of saints bring Peter out of prison and smite the persecutor? Have not the prayers of saints overthrown kingdoms? (Rev. 8). Do they not still bring blessings on a land and prosperity to His churches? Surely there must be something very wrong when people say, "It is only a prayer meeting!"

But we know what may here be said: "If prayer meetings were really as you represent them, O how gladly we should attend them! But what with the tedious length of the prayers, and other unedifying accompaniments, all spiritual profit is entirely done away, and we go to the prayer meeting only for the worse instead of the better." We confess there is something in all this, but not sufficient to cause a Christian to neglect the assembling of himself together with God's people at the time of prayer. Sometimes people look for too much, make no allowances for human infirmity, and despise the day of small things. Sometimes they neglect to seek that they may go to the prayer meeting in such a way as to add their mite to the general spirituality of the meeting. No man can pray out the feelings of carnal hearts. We must tell our readers that both in the preaching and prayer meeting much may depend on the state of

those who take no open part in the services. Depend upon it, earnest, exercised, desirous and therefore praying hearts usually make a prayer meeting.

But having given this general hint to those who attend these meetings, that they may be stirred up to desire and seek to come to them in a more earnest, exercised state, we must now say a word to those who take a part in them of a more public nature, or who engage in prayer. In the first place, much will depend upon the general state of these persons' souls, and whether they are living before God and daily exercised, studying to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. A person who is not thus daily living a Christian life may, as to the form of words, speak well in prayer, but he will generally be dry, tedious and unedifying to God's people.

But supposing those who take a part in these services to be spiritually-minded, exercised men, we would say, if possible, let them devote a few minutes to private waiting upon God about the prayer meeting before they go to it, and let them also, if again possible, be in good time. A man bustling from the shop to the prayer meeting will seldom be in a posture of mind to approach wisely unto God.

Now suppose this, so far as practicable, to have been attended to, when the man rises to pray, if he would pray properly, he must, of course, be brought to look to and depend upon the influence of the Holy Spirit, who is called the Spirit of supplication; which shows us that supplication, in the spirit of it, cannot exist without His divine aid. But then let us always remember that the Spirit does not work upon God's people in a way of impulse, but by bringing into exercise the renewed faculties of their souls. These He stirs up to spiritual and gracious exercises. Thus He animates and enlightens their understandings, brings into exercise their judgments, stirs up their wills and affections in a spiritual way, and brings their consciences into a proper exercise. Thus He is to them a Spirit of understanding, of judgment, of faith, of love, of a sound mind. From this we see that persons who depend upon the Spirit and are led by Him will be spiritually judicious, for the Lord is a God of judgment, and there will be order and edification in what they do; for God is a God of order, and all the Spirit's operations are for the edification of the body of Christ.

From these simple principles of truth will follow such things as these. In the first place, the man led by the Spirit will be judicious as to quantity. "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." A man led by the Spirit is not forced by Him to go on praying till all edification ceases and everybody is wondering when it will all come to an end. Where two or three will engage, it cannot be necessary for each to range over the whole field of subjects, as if afraid that he who follows

shall be shut up and have nothing to say. Certainly moderation in quantity is very desirable.

Then again, prayers should be prayers, and not sermons, elaborate expositions, perhaps, of a text felt that day. How admirable is that model of prayer, commonly called the Lord's prayer! How brief, how full, how petitionary its sentences!

Then again, persons who pray in public should remember that unless their voices are heard, they may pray exceedingly well but others are not edified. We have heard some in prayer who have spoken no louder than if they were in family worship; and indeed their voices have been so inward that it was impossible for those even near to them to hear more than a word here and there.

It is astonishing what habits men will contract in public worship, and sometimes such as greatly mar edification. Incessant repetitions of particular words, or of the Lord's name, almost to a breaking of the third commandment, a habit of coughing in the midst of the sentences, an apparent coming to a conclusion, and then a breaking forth into some new vein of prayer, which often is exceedingly vexing to the hearers. These after-thoughts and after-prayers are very little from the Lord, and sadly annoying to the hearers. The prayer was a good and edifying one so far, but the good man had perhaps thought it too short, or had some new set of ideas come into his mind, and forthwith he breaks forth afresh, and the hearers lose all the former benefit and retain nothing besides a sense of weariness and disappointment.

We have written all this with an earnest desire that our prayer meetings may be more edifying, more like "the hill of frankincense."

Christ then encourages His dear people to attend the prayer meetings, and indeed incites to all prayer and supplication, private as well as public, in all things and for all saints in these words: "I will get me to the hill of frankincense." But there are other meetings of the saints, and as to all these meetings appointed by Him and agreeable to His Word, He says, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The dear children of God say, "O what shall we do our dear Saviour to praise?"

They find that it was Christ's expressed will that His people should be baptized into His name, and in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, as one God of love to them in Jesus. They comply graciously with His expressed and holy will. The church meets to attend to this ordinance of Christ's house. He says, "Lo, I am with you." He meets with them in this "mountain of myrrh," this divine and sweet institution, this spiritual ordinance, in which His death, burial and resurrection are set forth, and the believer's death, burial and resurrection to eternal life and glory in and with Him. Here the saints often blessedly meet their

Lord. He comes to the “mountain of myrrh,” and in all those sublime truths set forth by this ordinance they hold communion with their Lord and rejoice in Him.

They afterwards, according to the expressed order of His house, partake together of the ordinance of the supper. Here the death of Christ is the principal thing brought before their minds, represented as it is in the broken bread and poured-out wine. In baptism it was death, burial and resurrection; here it is more peculiarly death; not, of course, as excluding the other truths of God, but as the principal thing to be contemplated at this time.

So here we have again the “mountain of myrrh,” the place of the bitter sweet, of Christ’s atonement, that sweet-smelling myrrh. But the meetings for the preaching of the Word are of the same nature. Though in them, of course, the whole body of the truth of God has to be exhibited, and the ministry has the wide range of the whole Word of God to expatiate in. Still even here Christ and His cross is the essence of the preaching. The testimony to Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Christ is the Rose of that Sharon, the ministry of the Word, which would be a barren, scentless wilderness without Him. “Hereby know we the Spirit of God,” the ministry of the Spirit. “Every spirit,” any kind of preaching, “that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.” Christ is the Alpha and Omega of everything in the church. Hence it is called “a vineyard of red wine.” Christ and Him crucified is All in all. Christless experiences, Christless doctrines, Christless performances, all these things are as so much dross and dung. If anything have not Christ in it, it is not of God. The Spirit of God is not in it, and God Himself is not there. Elijah might have supposed God to be in the earthquake, wind and fire; but no! Christ and God were in “the still small voice” which brought him out of his cave to stand before God.

Well then, here is sweet encouragement to the saints to go to prayer and preaching meetings, to “assemble themselves together,” to attend to the ordinances of Christ’s house; for He cries as from the heavenly place to them, “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.”

O sirs! closet prayer will be found to be but a dry, sapless, lifeless, heartless, comfortless thing, if you do not enjoy communion with God in it.

Thomas Brooks

The most comely garment that ever we can wear is the robe of Christ’s righteousness.

William Perkins

GOD'S MYSTERIOUS WAY

*An unusual incident in the life of Henry Stonelake (1860-1933).
(See August wrapper, page iv.) We trust this may be of help to
some other minister placed in the same circumstances.*

After the birth of my eldest daughter in the year 1893, I was much favoured with a spirit of thanksgiving and praise, so that I could adopt the language of the psalmist: "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good." While I was in this frame of mind, I left home on the Saturday evening to take the services at Tadworth on the next Lord's day. On my arrival at the friend's house where I was to put up for the night, I was informed that the deacon of the church was in much trouble. Two of his grown-up children were almost imbeciles, and one of the two, a son, had disappeared from his home and had been absent for about a week. All efforts to trace him had thus far been futile. When I heard of the poor man's trial I felt much perplexed in my mind as to what I should preach on for the following day. The portion which was on my mind was from Psalm 107. 1, 2. Unbelief said within me that it would be useless for me to take such a portion for my text if I were to say anything which might be a help to the tried saint. I thought that I ought to find something in the Book of Job. But all my efforts to try to obtain another text proved unavailing, for the words would continue coming to my mind: "O give thanks unto the Lord..." Therefore I resolved with the Lord's help to endeavour to speak from this portion of the Word.

I was much helped that morning to speak out of a full heart. The tried deacon sat not far from the pulpit. Occasionally fears would arise in my own breast that there would be nothing in my ministry that morning for his help or comfort. When the service was over I said to the poor man, "I have heard all about your trouble and fear that you may have had nothing this morning, but I was obliged to take that text." The deacon was completely broken down. He took my hand and shook it most warmly, saying to me, "Something will come out of this," for while the gospel was being proclaimed, the Holy Ghost had shone into his soul, and I believe that he had a sweet assurance given to him that the Lord would soon appear on his behalf. His mind was quite comforted, and during the rest of the day he was much favoured to be able to cast his burden on the Lord.

I returned home on the Monday, but although nothing had been heard then respecting the lad, the good man was still supported in his mind. On the following Tuesday I was travelling in the northern parts of London, for at that time I was still in business, and when I entered the railway carriage to return home, to my amazement I saw the lost young man sitting there in front of me, and his mother sitting by my side. The

mother of the young man was as much astonished to see me as I was to see her. She then informed me that they had received a telegram from the police only that morning, and that she had been to fetch him from a district thirty or forty miles away from his home.

Thus I was able to enter into their joy almost as soon as they did themselves, although I was living a good many miles from their home at Tadworth. In this particular case the Holy Spirit showed to me that it is not for me to attempt to find some balm for the wounded mind, for if the Lord wounds, He must heal, and His healing medicines are not those of man's making. He works in His own sovereign way and manner, and His way at all times will be for the best.

MORE SUFFERINGS OF THE BAPTISTS

*An account of how the well-known minister
Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) was treated*

Benjamin Keach, a leading Baptist minister, wrote a small book for children, entitled, *The Child's Instructor; or, a New and Easy Primer*. In the catechetical portion of the book, Baptist sentiments were inculcated. It was affirmed that "believers, or godly men and women only, who can make confession of their faith and repentance," should be baptized. The personal reign of the Saviour on earth for a thousand years, held at the time by some Baptists,* was taught. And, which was peculiarly offensive, Mr. Keach said, that "Christ's true ministers have not their learning and wisdom from men, or from universities, or human schools; for human learning, arts and sciences are not essential to the making of a true minister, but only the gift of God, which cannot be bought with silver or gold. And also, as they have freely received the gift of God, so they do freely administer; they do not preach for hire, for gain or filthy lucre; they are not like false teachers, who look for gain from their quarters, who eat the fat, and clothe themselves with the wool, and kill them that are fed; those that put not into their mouths they prepare war against. Also, they are not lords over God's heritage; they rule them not by force and cruelty, neither have they power to force and compel men to believe and obey their doctrine, but are only to persuade and entreat; thus is the way of the gospel, as Christ taught them."

For this he was indicted at the assizes. The language of the indictment may amaze the reader. "Thou art here indicted by the name of Benjamin Keach, of Winslow, in the county of Bucks, for that thou,

* It would seem that Bunyan, and later Dr. Gill and Toplady, held this view.

being a seditious, heretical and schismatical person, evilly and maliciously disposed, and disaffected to his Majesty's government of the Church of England, didst maliciously and wickedly, on the first day of May, in the sixteenth year of the reign of our sovereign lord the King, write, print and publish, or cause to be written, printed and published, one seditious and venomous book, entitled, *The Child's Instructor; or, a New and Easy Primer*, wherein are contained, by way of question and answer, these damnable positions, contrary to the Book of Common Prayer, and the Liturgy of the Church of England."

The trial took place October 9th, 1664. Chief Justice Hyde, afterwards Lord Clarendon, presided, and conducted himself with a malignity wholly unbefitting his office. Under his direction, a verdict of "Guilty" was recorded, and the judge then proceeded to pass sentence in the following terms: "Benjamin Keach, you are here convicted for writing, printing and publishing a seditious and schismatical book, for which the court's judgment is this, and the court doth award: That you shall go to jail for a fortnight, without bail or mainprise; and the next Saturday to stand upon the pillory at Aylesbury, in the open market, for the space of two hours, from eleven of the clock to one, with a paper upon your head with this inscription: 'For writing, printing and publishing a schismatical book, entitled, *The Child's Instructor; or, a New and Easy Primer*.' And the next Thursday to stand in the same manner, and for the same time, in the market of Winslow; and there your book shall be openly burnt, before your face, by the common hangman, in disgrace of you and your doctrine. And you shall forfeit to the King's Majesty the sum of twenty pounds, and shall remain in jail until you find sureties for your good behaviour, and appearance at the next assizes, there to renounce your doctrines, and make such public submission as shall be enjoined you."

The punishment of the pillory was abolished by Act of Parliament in the year 1837. The instrument so called was an upright frame placed on a scaffold, upon which the offender stood, his head appearing through one hole of the frame, and his hands fixed in two others. As this punishment was generally reserved for persons guilty of perjury and other infamous crimes, the mob were accustomed to pelt them with rotten eggs or various kinds of filth, and even with stones and brickbats, so that death sometimes ensued. To such an exposure the Lord Chief Justice of England delivered up a worthy minister of the gospel. The sentence was duly carried into execution, and the sheriff, who was himself a fierce opposer of the truth, took care that the judge's directions should be obeyed to the very letter.

It was market day at Aylesbury. The town was thronged. People flocked thither from all parts of the country to see the new and strange

spectacle. But though many of them were prepared to deride and sneer, the usual expressions of popular indignation were wanting. Hitherto the pillory had been reserved for the vilest criminals. But Mr. Keach was a good man, and a preacher of the gospel. They could not find it in their hearts to pelt *him*.

Precisely at eleven o'clock he was placed in the pillory. Many friends attended him, and stood around the instrument of torture for the purpose of sympathy and encouragement. And there too stood his wife, and "frequently spoke in vindication of her husband, and of the principles for which he suffered." A true helpmeet!

"Good people," said he, "I am not ashamed to stand here this day, with this paper on my head; my Lord Jesus was not ashamed to suffer on the cross for me, and it is for His cause that I am made a gazing-stock. It is not for any wickedness that I stand here, but for writing and publishing His truth." "No!" exclaimed an Episcopal clergyman, who was standing by. "It is for writing and publishing *errors*." "Sir," replied Mr. Keach, "can you prove them errors?" He would have answered, but he was too well known by the multitude. One told him of his being pulled drunk out of a ditch. Another upbraided him with being lately found drunk under a haycock. At this all the people fell to laughing, and turned their diversion from the sufferer in the pillory to the drunken priest; insomuch that he hastened away with the utmost disgrace and shame.

When the uproar had subsided, the voice from the pillory was heard again. Having somehow slipped one of his hands out of the hole, he took his Bible from his pocket and said, "Take notice, that the things which I have written and published, and for which I stand here this day a spectacle to men and angels, are all contained in this Book." The jailer snatched the Book from him, and replaced his hand in the hole.

Still the voice came from the pillory. "A great concernment for souls was that which moved me to write and publish those things for which I now suffer, and for which I could suffer far greater things than these. It concerns you therefore to be very careful, otherwise it will be very sad with you at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven; for we must all appear before His tribunal."

The officers interposed, and he was compelled to be silent for a time. But again he ventured. "O did you but experience the great love of God, and the excellences that are in Him, it would make you willing to go through any sufferings for His sake! And I do account this the greatest honour that ever the Lord was pleased to confer upon me."

The sheriff was furious, and declared that he should be gagged if he did not hold his tongue. So he refrained from speaking. Yet he could not forbear uttering these few words: "This one 'yoke' of Christ, which

I can experience, is 'easy' to me, and a 'burden' which He doth make 'light.'"

When the two hours had expired, he was released, and "blessed God with a loud voice for His great goodness unto him."

That day week he was exposed to the same indignity at Winslow, where he lived, and bore it with equal patience and manliness. There also his book was publicly burnt, according to the sentence.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION

From David Clarkson (1622-1686), Dr. Owen's joint pastor

How can Christ be said to love those to whom He denies so many temporal blessings, and visits with such variety of grievous afflictions?

Answer 1. These outward dispensations were never a sign of love or hatred; much less under the gospel, which promises fewer outward mercies and bids expect more afflictions. The names of legal and Old Testament spirits have been of late abused, misapplied; but if they belong to any, it is to those who expect more outward blessings and fewer afflictions, and judge men by these. Solomon's rule is true here: "No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all," etc. (Eccles. 9. 1, 2). Ye cannot conclude that Christ hates you because He afflicts, nor that He loves because you are blessed in temporals. The least drachm of grace is a surer sign of Christ's love than all the kingdoms, all the glory, all the pleasures of the earth, if in one man's enjoyment; and victory over the least lust than freedom from all outward pressures; otherwise, we might say, Dives was loved, Lazarus hated, and Festus in more favour with Christ than Paul; nay, Christ Himself might conclude He was hated of God, since none more afflicted or less encouraged with temporals.

Answer 2. Wants and afflictions are so far from being arguments of Christ's hatred as they are many times evidences of His love. For afflictions it is evident (Heb. 12. 6-8), Christ thereby conforms us to Himself, and makes us partakers of His image, holiness (verse 10, 11). And for wants I thus prove. The people of Christ want nothing but that which is not good, for He has promised to withhold no good thing. Why does a father envy his child that which is not good for him, but because he loves him? From wants outward you should conclude the employment [enjoyment?] of what you want is not good rather than the want of what you would enjoy is from hatred. It is no defect of love in Christ, but defect of goodness in what you want, that makes you want it.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Accomplishment and Application of Justification, by Henry Sant; 15 page pamphlet; price £1.50 including postage; published by the Huntingtonian Press, and obtainable from 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 4EB.

This Sovereign Grace Union address on Romans 3. 24 contends strongly for the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith, as opposed to Romanism and “the New Perspective.”

Published along with the booklet on Newman by Matthew Hyde (reviewed last month) to coincide with the Pope’s visit, until the end of October *both* booklets are available for only £3 including postage.

Rehoboth Strict and Particular Baptist Church in Bromley: 100 Years of Gospel Witness; 24 pages.

We reviewed Part 1 in March 2009. This is Part 2, which brings the chapel history up to date. We are pleased that these little histories of our chapels continue to appear.

There are a number of very interesting pictures, including photographs of L.S.B. Hyde, R.J. Morris, J.O. Pack, from the past, and a number of present-day ministers and deacons – including the Bromley pastor, Mr. Hedley Taylor.

No price or availability is mentioned, but Mr. Taylor’s address is: 129 Crown Lane, Bromley, Kent, BR2 9PJ.

THE ECHO

True faith produces love to God and man.

Say, Echo, is not this the gospel plan?

The gospel plan.

Must I my faith and love to Jesus show,

By doing good to all, both friend and foe?

Both friend and foe.

But if a brother hates and treats me ill,

Must I return him good, and love him still?

Love him still.

If he my failings watches to reveal,

Must I his faults as carefully conceal?

As carefully conceal.

But if my name and character he blast,

And cruel malice, too, a long time last;

And if I sorrow and affliction know,

He loves to add unto my cup of woe;

In this uncommon, this peculiar case,

Sweet Echo, say, must I still love and bless?

Still love and bless.

Whatever usage ill I may receive,
Must I be patient still, and still forgive?
Still forgive.

Why, Echo, how is this? Thou'rt sure a dove!
Thy voice shall teach me nothing else but love.
Nothing else but love.

Amen! With all my heart, then, be it so;
'Tis all delightful, just and good, I know.
To practise now shall I directly go?
Directly go.

Things being so, whoever me reject,
My gracious God me surely will protect.
Surely will protect.

Henceforth I'd roll on Him my every care,
And then both friend and foe embrace in prayer.
Embrace in prayer.

But after all the duties I have done,
Must I in point of merit them disown,
And trust for heaven through Jesus' blood alone?
Through Jesus' blood alone.

Echo, enough! Thy counsels to my ear
Are sweeter than to flowers the dewdrop tear.
Thy wise, instructive lessons please me well;
I'll go and practise them. Farewell! Farewell!
Farewell! Farewell!

G.B.

Bath, 1874

This poem was ready for print before we saw it in the September *Zion's Witness*. May this prove to be Holy Ghost emphasis.

OBITUARY

Grace Harris, for 59 years a member of the church at Southampton, entered her eternal rest on December 26th, 2008, aged 87 years.

The following is her own account:

I was brought up under the sound of the truth and so was taught to read and learn from my Bible, but when I became old enough (about ten years of age) I did not want anything to do with these things. My Bible was put on one side, unread, and I found it very irksome to attend the house of God. Indeed I would gladly find an excuse to stay at home on Sundays, but used to go out of custom.

In my heart I despised the people of God. One thing I have to be thankful for is that the Lord did not permit me to enter into many outward sins, although I often felt very rebellious about this matter, which left me as hard as stone, living without God and without hope in this wicked world.

When I was nearly fifteen years of age, I went to chapel one Sunday and Mr. L.R. Broome preached from this text: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8. 9). (This was at Southampton chapel in 1937 before Mr. Broome became pastor.) I cannot remember anything that was said, but I do know that the text went so home to my heart that I did not know what to do and felt really ill about the matter. That night I took out my Bible to read for the first time for a few years, and then I prayed for the first time as a guilty sinner before God.

This went on for a few weeks, my sins lying very heavy on my conscience, until one night when I was living away from home, being in domestic service, there was a terrific thunderstorm and a voice seemed to say to me, "Thou shalt surely die and not live." I believe I prayed that night as I have never done in my life that the Lord would save me from going to hell, and the Lord spoke to me and said, "Be not afraid. It is I. I am with thee, and will keep thee." Although the storm was still going on, there was such peace flowed into my heart and soul and such a love to the Lord that I forgot about all earthly things.

When I rose the next morning, instead of having the burden of my sins, I was praising the Lord for what He had done for my soul. Old things had passed away; behold all things had become new. Even the things in nature seemed to be different and at every possible moment, even walking along the roads, I used to talk to the Lord. What a love I felt to the Lord's people in those days! Even to walk behind them going down the road was wonderful. How I longed for the time to go to chapel, hungering and thirsting after better things! My Bible was everything to me in those days, and I used to read such Scriptures as these: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10. 37), and, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10. 38), and, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other.... Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6. 24). At this time I felt willing to give up everything to follow the Lord.

Then I remember hearing a sermon preached by Mr. Burgess (late pastor at Bournemouth chapel) from, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8. 28), and how it was opened up to me of the "all things that work together for good." As I came out of chapel that night, I could have danced for joy to think that I had found myself in such a blessed way, although I had not experienced any of the "all things" for myself then, but what prospects there were before me.

I went on in this good place for some weeks, but then I began to be tempted and wondered if I had ever begun in the right way and been deceived after all that a good work had begun in me.

At one particular time I felt I should have to hide from the Lord so that the Lord's people would not know there had been a change in my life, and I believe I tried to change my dress more fashionable and, as I thought, I would not say another word about better things to anybody. But when I got to chapel on the Sunday, Mr. Broome's text was this: "The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (Jonah 2. 10). He said, "There may be somebody here trying to hide from the Lord, but if that good work has begun in you, it will be carried on. Would you like to get up and go out?" and as I listened to that sermon I verily trembled in my seat. O what a place I found myself in! I couldn't pray as I had done, so distant from the Lord.

Then the next Sunday, Mr. Walters was preaching, and instead of commencing his sermon like most ministers, he looked straight at me and said, "When last did you pray? I say again, when last did you pray?" How these words went home to me for it seemed as if he knew all that was going on in my heart.

Then along this time Mr. Carr was preaching at Southampton. I can't remember his text, but at the end of his sermon he said, "It would be well if even one here went home this night and prayed, 'Show me myself,' and then, 'Show me Thyself.'" I believe I went home that night and prayed that from my very heart, and that the Lord would lead me in all the ways of His people. Well, I believe the Lord answered that prayer although it took a long time.

For several years I walked in a very dark pathway although I used to hear my case described under the ministry from time to time. The war came and working in the factory was no easy thing for me, but there I proved the keeping power of God, for I could see that had it not been for the grace of God, I should have been left to do and be just like my workmates. Many times I thought whilst working at my machine, "Who maketh thee to differ?"

During these years of darkness, I felt to be in such soul trouble that I thought I should have to put an end to myself. Well, I thought I will have one more look in my Bible, and my eyes fell on these words: "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" (Psa. 139. 7-10).

So I went on and I believe the desires of my heart were such as this: "Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed!" (1 Chron. 4. 10). I remember one sermon that was good to me at this time. Mr. Broome preached from, "By night on my bed I sought Him [the Lord Jesus] whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not" (Song 3. 1, 2).

Then I got into that place where I thought I would walk in and out amongst the Lord's people and not say another word, for I felt I could not stay away from chapel, couldn't go back into the world, and yet couldn't get any farther. Thus I continued in this state for some time until I just felt I could not go on any longer when on a Sunday morning I went to chapel and Mr. Broome took this text: "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Dan. 5. 27). It seemed that he knew all my case and he spoke particularly of being weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. He said, "There may be somebody here walking in and out of the Lord's people, who appears to be like them in dress and manner, but your heart isn't right; you will have to come out of it if that good work has begun." How I trembled as I listened to that sermon! Then the last hymn, 701, was given out and it so described the feelings of my heart.

We were staying to dinner in those days at the chapel and I believe I went to the back of the chapel and poured out my heart to the Lord, broken-hearted. Still I did not get the relief I wanted.

Then I went on for some time and felt like Job: "My soul is weary of my life.... I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10. 1). Then I heard a sermon from this text: "Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me" (Job 10. 2), and I felt, why did the Lord contend with me, going on as I was going?

Then the next Sunday I was especially helped under the ministry from these words: "I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them" (Isa. 42. 16). All the darkness was described which I had been walking in, and I then felt a ray of hope that I should be brought out of it.

Then on the following Friday (being Good Friday) we went to hear Mr. Carr at Bournemouth, and I had such a good hearing. He spoke from these words: "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53. 4, 5). I felt then that the Lord had done it all for me, after all my backslidings; He had borne it all upon Him. Yes, I could now sing (hymn 759):

"Jesus heals the broken-hearted;
O how sweet that sound to me!
Once beneath my sin He smarted,
Groaned, and bled to set me free."

One day I was looking for a word and my eyes fell on this text: "Thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant; even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off" (Isa. 56. 4, 5). These words so struck me: I could keep the Sabbaths and take hold of His covenant, but there was the choosing of the things that please the Lord; and so it became an exercise to me.

Soon after this I found we were expecting an increase in our family and I felt very tried as we had no home of our own. One Sunday morning, a text Mr. Broome preached from was so given to me I felt I should have to walk it out one day, and it was spoken particularly of providential things as well as spiritual: "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together" (Gen. 22. 8). I could not get away from these words, and then the time came that I had to go to the hospital and naturally speaking there were no hopes of us having our dear baby. When I got to the hospital I realised how ill I was, and began to wonder even if I should return home. How I had to take this text with me to the hospital and bring it before the Lord many and many a time! The words came: "The Lord is with thee. Go thou in thy strength," and I felt I could leave everything in the Lord's hands. The Lord will provide, and I believe He did. When I was sufficiently recovered, although very ill, and I knew that all was well, I felt such a thankfulness to God and such a union to the Lord's people, particularly at Southampton, for such a text to go through with, I felt I should have to go home and tell them what great things the Lord had done for me, and I made that vow if spared to return I would go.

So I longed for the day to return home and get to chapel again, and when I did go to chapel the text was this: "There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Josh. 21. 45). Wasn't this a wonderful word to me, for I could say there had not failed one good thing which the Lord had spoken unto me?

For a few months I could not get to chapel very much, but when I had more freedom I began to hunger and thirst for a word to choose the things that please the Lord, and one week in particular this was felt, and the sermon was from,

"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them" (Isa. 41. 17), describing all my experience of the past week.

I still went on looking for a word, and one Wednesday evening as I was going to the prayer meeting, I was begging the Lord to bless the meeting to me, and I stood on the corner of the street before I went in and said, "Will there be a word if I go in?" Isaiah 35 was read and it was opened up to me, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." (3, 4, 8). In the address spoken there was the word "strengthen the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees that we may keep Thy commandments."

After this I became very tried and wished that I had never opened my heart about these things, but I felt a drawing out again under a sermon preached from this text: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11. 13). I felt I could say I was a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth and would have to confess these things one day, and more so when I looked at the following text: "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country" (Heb. 11. 14).

So I went on hoping the way would be made plain and yet I felt so unfit to obey the ordinances, when hymn 723 at a prayer meeting was so sweet to me ("Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched"). This had such a humbling effect on me for I had been looking for something big to go forward with for a long time.

Then the thought would come, was I a proper child to attend to these ordinances? and my prayers were answered on the Sunday for Mr. Broome spoke from this: "The eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly" (Isa. 32. 3, 4). How the time will come when we shall not only talk to the Lord, but will have to tell out to the Lord's people, and I felt that time had come with me.

A few more weeks passed until I felt I could keep that back no longer which I hoped the Lord had done for me and this verse (hymn 43) came so sweetly to me:

"Shall I envy, then, the miser,
Doting on his golden store?
Sure I am, or should be, wiser;
I am rich, 'tis he is poor:
Having Jesus,
I have an immortal store."

So I commenced a letter to Mr. Broome but had to leave it to attend to my duties. When I did have the time to finish it, I was so tempted I could get no further in the matter so I thought, "I will leave it until after Sunday. Perhaps there will be a word for me, and then perhaps I will venture, and 'if Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.'"

There was the word to suit my case: "For a long season (ye) have been ... without (the) law" (2 Chron. 15. 3). It was spoken particularly of the law of the

commandments. Will you always have it on your conscience that you have not obeyed these ordinances? Haven't you got one thing you can say that the Lord has done for you, not one thing? These words were spoken which had been on my mind: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6. 5). "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19. 18). "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14. 15). So I felt I had to finish my letter to Mr. Broome, which I did.

After I had posted it I still felt exercised about the step I was taking and my eyes fell on these words: "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isa. 55. 12). The Lord was better to me than all my fears, for I was helped to tell out what the Lord had done for my soul at the church meeting, and felt it good to be there.

(The above writings were compiled for an old member who was very deaf and so the record was made for her when Mrs. Harris came before the church.)

Mrs. Harris came before the church on June 27th, 1949 and was subsequently baptized in July 1949.

We knew Mrs. Harris since 1977 when my wife and I started to attend Bethesda, Southampton. Our memory of her is one who had a love to the Lord Jesus Christ; to the Lord's house and people; and to her family.

Mrs. Harris was very loyal to Bethesda chapel and her chief concern was to be found at the services on the Lord's day and at the weekly prayer meeting.

For many years she and her late husband would be found at the chapel mowing the lawn and taking care of the "beds." Mrs. Harris also played the organ for a period of time. She had a prayerful concern and love for each one of the church and congregation and, I believe, there was a love amongst us for her.

In recent years she became frail and was afflicted by cancer in her face. This necessitated removal of bone from her face, one of her eyes, and chemotherapy treatment.

One occasion I shall never forget was visiting her one Sunday afternoon in hospital after an operation when she said, "What are my sufferings compared to His?" Also, when talking with Mrs. Harris in her home she commented that she could leave all things behind.

Mrs. Harris was concerned that she might have to go into a home and be separated from her family. In the Lord's overruling purpose a way was made for her to enter a local hospice. On the Sunday before she passed away, we read from John 14: "Let not your heart be troubled...." Little did we realise that Mrs. Harris would prove the truth of these words in the reality of them.

Her funeral took place on January 16th, 2009 at Bethesda Chapel, Southampton, and she was interred with her late husband at Eastleigh Cemetery.

Mrs. Harris was a very humble person and would have shunned the thought of having her obituary published. "The memory of the just is blessed" (Prov. 10. 7)

M.D.R.

We have often wondered why so many of Mrs. Harris's generation, when so abundantly blessed early in life, did not under the sense of the Saviour's love make an open profession then, but not till years later.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
NOVEMBER 2010

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

EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS

*Sermon preached by Mr. G.D. Buss at the Meetings of the
Gospel Standard Society at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester,
on September 11th, 2010*

Text: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22. 20).

These words, written by the Apostle John, were inspired by the Holy Ghost in a most unlikely place. Who would have thought that rocky outcrop, that Isle of Patmos, so barren, so forbidding, so lonely, would have been such a place of blessing to John and to the church of Christ ever since? Indeed the light that we have, if we have any light at all as the Lord may give it us concerning the latter days, largely comes from this mysterious part of God's holy Word. And there we have a lesson at the outset of our meditation this afternoon that "God is able to make all grace abound toward us," wherever He may put us, and in whatever circumstance He may lead us to and through. With God all things are possible. You may think you cannot be favoured till you find some greener spot, some easier path. Well, if John were here this afternoon, he would say it was on the Isle of Patmos he had one of his greatest blessings. Never, ever limit the Lord.

Now we have in our text this afternoon the last promise in the Word of God and the last prayer. The last promise is this from the lips of the Saviour Himself: "Surely I come quickly. Amen." That is followed by the last prayer recorded in God's holy Word that welled up immediately in the heart of God's servant John when he heard these blessed tidings: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." And perhaps we should pause there a moment and make this observation. For John to respond as he did in that way, first of all he was under the divine influence of the Holy Ghost. All real prayer comes from that same source, even as David said, "My heart is inditing a good matter" – margin reading, bubbling up like a well. That is the work of the Holy Ghost.

But secondly, John must have felt a measure of preparation for the solemn event promised. This was not a bold presumption. This was not just a false foundation that he was resting on. Here was a man who had stood at the foot of the cross literally, had seen the blood and the water come from the wounded side of the dear Saviour, and his testimony then

was true and sure. He said (it was John who wrote it in his Epistle): “There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ... and there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood.” And John had known that Spirit bearing witness with his spirit concerning the sanctifying power of the water of regeneration and the justifying power of the blood of Christ, and on that blessed foundation, “upon a life he did not live, upon a death he did not die,” this man felt ready for this solemn appointment, this solemn engagement of which our text speaks.

I wonder how many here this afternoon could answer with the same readiness by the Holy Ghost’s teaching: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus”? O perhaps you say, “But I want a little longer yet to enjoy this world. I want longer yet to satisfy my flesh. I have got many more things I want to do, and have what the world calls a good life.” Well, dear friends, if you were on the Isle of Patmos those things would have been irrelevant. If your pathway had been sanctified to you, you would have said with John, “It is Jesus only and only Jesus I want.” O I do believe a child of God, though not always feeling ready for this great event – as we sang in our hymn just now, “Our fears often say we never shall find true peace in that solemn day” – and yet I do believe there is that inward, longing desire of every living soul expressed in the good hymnwriter’s words:

“Prepare me, gracious God,
To stand before Thy face;
Thy Spirit *must* the work perform
For it is all of grace.”

“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Let us then with God’s help just drop a few thoughts upon this word, and may the Holy Ghost apply it with power and cause us to be exercised like John was in this same way. First of all, we have this divine Testifier, spoken of in the earlier part of this Book as a true, *the* true – note that – *the* true and faithful Witness, the One who Himself said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” O the testimony of Jesus is pure, holy, infallible, immutable! “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” He said, “but My words shall not pass away.” And this testimony is seen in His Word, His holy Word, but it is received in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost where His children are to be found.

And so James says in his Epistle, “Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” And just as it is when you are engrafting one plant into another, you make a cut in the plant that is receiving, and there is also that cutting off of the branch from its original host and then it is bound in, hoping the sap will rise and bind it in permanently, so there are two ends to this matter. On the one hand

there is that necessity for a child of God to be cut off from any hope in himself, any hope in this dying world, any hope under the law, because there he cannot fulfil its conditions and covenant, having been cut off from all hope there, and then grafted in, where? Where? To the wounded side of Jesus, putting his only hope there. O when God does that, then the word is also engrafted into the heart of a believer. "Christ is in them then the hope of glory," and they have that which cannot be taken from them, and they receive the testimony of Jesus. They are those who can answer the Prophet Isaiah's question. Can you answer it? "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Who are they who believe it? Those to whom the arm has been *revealed*.

O friends, what we owe to sovereign grace if our heart has been opened like Lydia's and our eyes have been unlocked to see light in God's light, our ears unstopped to hear with a hearing ear! O we cannot praise sovereign grace enough for the difference He makes, for without that we would not receive this testimony. We would receive the devil's lies and the world's deceits, but not the testimony of Jesus. But O blessed be God, many here this afternoon can trace out how they were taught to receive the testimony of Jesus. And that is the testimony of which our Lord speaks in John 17: "Sanctify them through Thy truth." You ask, what is truth? "Thy Word is truth." That is what God uses under the power of the Spirit to sanctify His church in an experiential way, to bring them into personal possession of the truth, so they may say with some God-given confidence, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." These are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are the last *surely* in the Word of God. We have three other very blessed *surelies* which are the comfort of Christ's church. We have what we might call the *surely of the atonement*. "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." That is a most blessed *surely*. "Behold the Lamb of God," said John, "which taketh away the sin of the world." He could see the *surely* there. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." And the believer's delight is to be led by the Spirit, not only to know that He bore away the sins of the church of Christ, but to see his individual name and case and condition dealt with in that bearing away.

"My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine;
While like a penitent I stand,
And there confess my sin.

“My soul looks back to see
 The burdens Thou didst bear,
 When hanging on the accursed tree,
 And hopes her guilt was there.”

O the child of God could not bear that piercing thought if her guilt was not dealt with there. If it is not dealt with there, then it will be like a millstone round our neck to all eternity. It will! O then how essential it is to know we have a place in that *surely*. For if we have a place in that *surely*, then the one in our text, like dear John, we may anticipate with a gracious confidence.

And then there is another *surely* which is very sweet, in Isaiah 45. “Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” There is the *surely of justification*, the obedience of Another applied sovereignly and effectually by God in the covenant of His grace and by the power of the Spirit too in the experience of a believer, whereby they rest under the obedience of Christ as their shelter from offended justice and from all that would harm the soul. Blessed shelter! “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Blessed shadow this! “A great rock in a weary land.” O friends, if we are sheltering there, just as it was in the night of the Passover they were sheltering under that promise of God concerning the blood: “When I see the blood, I will pass over you,” so those who are sheltering beneath Christ’s righteousness when this day surely comes, the second coming of the Saviour of which we will speak in a moment, I say those are safe and only they. Just as in the night of the Passover the only safe houses were those where the blood was sprinkled and applied, so in that great day it will be those who are under the blood of Christ, sheltering there, believingly, will be safe, and only they. “For our God is a consuming fire.”

Then there is another very beautiful *surely* to encourage the sheep of Christ as they press on. “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.” It has been said they are the two sheepdogs which round up the church of Christ, the flock of Christ: goodness and mercy. The good Shepherd goes before and those two sheepdogs round up the flock behind. “Goodness and mercy.”

“With mercy and with judgment,
 My web of time He wove.”

So said good Samuel Rutherford, and so will every child of God be able to say at the end of it all:

“I’ll bless the hand that guided,
 I’ll bless that heart that planned,

When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

"*Surely*," then, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."
"*Surely*, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."
The Holy Ghost will bring that to pass. And, "*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 this *surely* in our text as it were crowns it all. Here is the consummation of all the other *surelies* I have hinted at, when the dear Saviour comes "the second time without sin unto salvation."

So our next question this afternoon is this: who is it who will come? Well, we have no doubt, because our text tells us. John takes it up into a prayer: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." But it would not be remiss just to remind ourselves who this blessed Jesus is. He is the eternally-begotten Son of God in a nature like our own. He is One who has been God and will be God to all eternity, equal with His holy Father and the Holy Spirit as the holy Son, but also He who in the fulness of time (God's time), we read, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." O the blessing of the eternally-begotten Son being sent into a nature like our own, verily God, verily Man; Immanuel, God with us!

He is the One who came in His first coming. O what a lowly coming it was, laid in a manger, living in an obscure home in Nazareth for most of His holy life, and then when at last He ventured forth into His holy ministry, He said, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." And even when He hung on the cross dying, why, dear friends, He had nowhere to lay His head, had He? O the humiliation of the dear Redeemer in our text, He who sweat great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, He who stood innocent, pure, unresisting in the judgment hall, led "as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." Then led out to be crucified between two thieves, hanging there bleeding, suffering, dying. This is the One who will come "the second time without sin unto salvation." He came the first time to fulfil that word which we read of God the Father: "He hath made Him" – that is God the Son – "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." That word has been fulfilled in Christ. It never needs to be repeated. It is done, finished, complete. Bless God for that.

So when He comes the second time, that is what Paul meant when he said, "Without sin." We must be very careful how we understand that

word. When He came the first time, He did not come as a sinner. God forbid that it ever cross your mind! No, He was “holy, harmless undefiled,” O ineffably pure. There never had been a man like the Man Christ Jesus whose holy humanity was in divine union with His Godhead. O this blessed Jesus! He *could not* sin. He *did not* sin.

So how did He come in the first place? Why, He came, dear friends, to have sin imputed to Him, laid at His door to put away, because He was the Surety, and in the covenant of grace He had promised, yea engaged to enter into that suretyship for His church. When God’s time came for that to be entered into,

“That was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
He pity ne’er withdrew.”

He swore to His own hurt in that covenant and He changed not.

Yes, who can measure the hurt that the Man Christ Jesus entered into, spat upon, mocked, railed upon, scourged, a crown of thorns on His holy head, nailed to a tree between two thieves? And not only that – that was suffering enough – but O the inward sorrows and agonies of His soul when His heavenly Father withdrew the comforts of His love for a season while He endured the just punishment for the sins of His people. O He swore to His own hurt.

“Ye who think of sin but lightly,
Nor suppose the evil great,
Here may view its nature rightly,
Here its guilt may estimate.”

You will find it at Calvary; not at the law, not at Sinai. Yes, sin is exceedingly sinful at Sinai, but friends, it is much more to be seen at Calvary, for there you see who bears the awful load. There you see the One who bows under the wrath of offended justice. There you see One drinking to the very dregs the cup of divine vengeance, draining it. As good Murray M’Cheyne, the Scottish minister, once said, “He had that cup put into His hand; it was full of the wrath of God against the sins of His church; He drained it to the very last drop; He wiped it clean, then filled it with love.” And now, dear friends, as the virtue, as the fruit of His sufferings, the love of Christ is seen in that cup of salvation which is put into the hand of every believer by God’s goodness and mercy. Yes,

“Vengeance, when the Saviour died,
Quitted the believer;
Justice cried, ‘I’m satisfied,
Now, henceforth, and ever.’”

This dear Jesus laid down His holy life, breathed out His last breath. His holy soul for a season lay in the bosom of His heavenly Father; His holy body lay incorruptible in the grave; and then on that resurrection morn He rose from the grave, fulfilling what we read of in Romans: “Delivered for our offences ... raised again for our justification,” and for a few days, weeks, He mingled with His infant church on earth, displaying His wounded hands and feet and side from time to time, conversing with them, communing with them, and then we read those wonderful words: “He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them.” Can you imagine – it is not reading between the lines wrongly – as they looked up to Him as He stretched out those hands, why, they would see the wounds in the hands. And while He blessed them, while He was still blessing them, a blessing Jesus, He was parted from them and received up into heaven, and then was fulfilled Psalm 24: “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.”

So He entered and took His rightful place on the throne of God at the right hand of His heavenly Father. And friends, while He awaits His second coming, is He idle? No; though His work of atonement is finished, though that work is now behind Him for ever, done and done for ever, yet He intercedes. This very moment He is interceding for the church of God at the right hand of His Father. Those once-wounded hands are spread out on behalf of

“All who come to God by Him;
Salvation He demands;
Points to their names upon His breast,
And spreads His wounded hands.”

There He sits, a Prince and a Saviour to give “repentance and remission of sins.” That can come from no other source, whatever men may say. Repentance is God’s gift; remission is God’s gift, and it comes through Jesus only by the power of the Spirit into the heart of the believer.

“Every grace and every favour
Comes to us through Jesus’ blood.”

So He is not idle. No, He is blessedly active, blessedly working on behalf of His dear people, though His work in the other sense is finished.

But then we have here this truth: “Surely I come quickly.” Now you may say to me, “But it is now well-nigh two thousand years since John was inspired to write these words. How can we speak about this word being *quickly*?” Well, we have three things to say about that. First of all, our timescale and God’s are very different. That is in your pathway as well, isn’t it? How often the Lord has to say to you and to me, “My

time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.” That is why Job had to stay in the fire as long as he did. “He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” He did not come forth till it was God’s time. He did come forth, but he did not come forth till it was God’s time. O friends, our timescale is different from God’s. God’s ways are not our ways, neither His thoughts our thoughts. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” O may we be submissive in this matter. His time is always right. His time is always perfect. And though He may keep you waiting, and often does, it is always for a purpose. He waits to be gracious. And “they shall not be ashamed that wait for Him.” If there is one here then this afternoon hour waiting for the Lord to appear, as we sang in hymn 321, and you can turn it into a prayer: “Lord, do appear. I need Thee in this matter and that matter. I need Thee in my soul, in my circumstances, in my family, in the church. Lord, do appear.” Well, remember, there is

“A time He has set to heal up your woes,
A season most fit His love to disclose;
And till He is ready to show His good-will,
Be patient and steady, and wait on Him still.”

Secondly, this word *quickly* means *suddenly*. When He does come in the second coming, we are told it will be “in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” It will be so sudden that we are told in one sense none will expect it, although the little remnant on earth left at that time who are believers – for “Shall He find faith on the earth?” was a question He asked – they will be looking at the signs of the times and know that His coming is imminent, but the hour knoweth no man save the Father. It will suddenly happen. It will suddenly come, and it will bring that word *time* to an end. Yes, every clock will stop. Every watch will cease. Time shall be no more. He who created time will end time. How solemn that will be! No wonder Paul says, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” O for grace to use the time we have well. As one good man said, “Time is temporary; time is important; time is measured; but remember, time is followed by eternity.” Temporary; important; measured; followed by eternity. “Surely I come quickly.” It will be a sudden intervention, sovereignly by Almighty God.

But then thirdly, it means this. Good William Cowper puts it in such beautiful language.

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

As we were reminded this morning by the Lord's servant, God's kingdom is being extended. And though in our day we do not see so much of it as perhaps we would like to, God's purposes are ripening and they are ripening fast, unfolding every hour, and we need grace to remember that. And though the bud often has a bitter taste in our day, sweet will be the flower, and it is true in your circumstances, child of God.

Little did Joseph think how God's purposes were ripening fast. You think how they seemed to have come to a halt. He languished in the prison. He looked back over such strange events. On the one hand there was the hatred of his brethren. Even his father misunderstood him. Then there was that man he met in Dothan, and if he had not met him he would never have found his brethren, never have been cast into prison, but that man met him and he met his brethren. You know what happened: thrown into a pit, sold as a slave. Then even down in Egypt when things began to go well for him, he was cut back by the folly, foolishness and immorality of that woman, Potiphar's wife, and then thrown into prison, the king's prison, and quite thought when at last he interpreted with God's grace the butler's and baker's dreams that that would be an avenue of deliverance. Then we read those words, "But the butler forgot" – did not remember. And there Joseph languished in the prison, not one human hand to help, nowhere to look. O no wonder the Word of God says in the margin that at that time the iron entered into his soul. Where are God's purposes? Where is this God who hears and answers prayer? Where is this God who is able to do exceeding abundantly? Where is He, Lord?

But you see, then the time came, God's time. Yes, His purposes were ripening fast. Pharaoh dreams. In one day Joseph is translated from the prison cell to a throne at the right hand of Pharaoh. O when God works, friends, He works. "I will work and no man shall let it," no man shall hinder it. A wonderful type of the deliverance of a child of God in the day of his death, delivered from the body of this death, delivered from this dying world, a tempting devil. O delivered and taken "safe into the arms of Jesus, safe on His loving breast." I say, the dying day for a believer – and mark what I say, *for a believer* – is the most blessed day of his life. It is. Can you say then, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" this afternoon? What a solemn day for the unbeliever though. Who can measure the awful solemnity of being a lost soul, for ever sinking down into the bottomless pit and no arm stretched out to save, no hand to help? O the loss of a soul, friend, is immeasurably solemn. O may you lay that to heart and be seeking the grace that John had here to be ready for this great coming of the dear Saviour.

“Surely I come quickly.” And before we come to the actual second coming, as we will in a moment, just remember the case of the widow woman of whom our Lord spoke. There was in a city a widow who had an adversary, and the only person to whom she could take her case according to God’s providence was the unjust judge. He gloried in his reputation. He feared not God and did not regard man. He gloried in that. How ever did such a man get to be in that position of authority, you might ask? But God is a sovereign, and sometimes He permits base men to get into positions of power. You see it in our own generation. But remember, they are under God’s control. As she goes to that man’s door, she knocks and asks him, “Avenge me of mine adversary,” and he would not. But every time she went to that man’s door, she went to a higher door and knocked at the door of the Lord God omnipotent, He who “sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be.” And she kept knocking at *that* door, until one day she goes to the unjust judge’s door, and for very ungracious reasons, he does what she wishes. He is wearied of her coming and avenges her of her adversary. The Lord Jesus Christ takes it up: “Hear what the unjust judge saith.” Hear what this godless man says. But now hear what God has to say: “And shall not God avenge His own elect?” You say, “Own elect – that is too high a doctrine for me.” Listen; wait a minute; see their character: “which cry day and night unto Him.” Yes, “I tell you that He will avenge them *speedily*,” just as our text says.

This is something proved in the lifetime of a believer here below. The principle is there, in their walk, in their pathway. The time is set to heal up their woes, for the Lord comes, makes the crooked straight, the rough plain, breaks in pieces the iron bars and brazen gates. He still does it, and He will still do it, believer, as long as you need Him to do it, but in His own time and in His own way.

But now our text of course refers to that glorious event when this same Jesus whom we saw, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, go up into heaven shall come again in like manner, the same body, the same glorious Person, verily God, verily Man. And He will come, and when He comes, He will gather all nations before Him, and who will be safe in that great day? Well, Paul tells us, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” O then here is the character, those who may look with a humble, God-given confidence towards this day, those looking ones, those who know a little of what Isaiah says: “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Those of whom we read in Psalm 34, “They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.”

Those who have to look off every other source; no help in self; no help in mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter. No, no help whatsoever. It is Jesus only and only Jesus.

“Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin.” That is, He will not bring their sins to remembrance. He will say, “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.” “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun.” The Word of God says so. It will be the Sun of Righteousness which is their glory. The obedience of Christ will cover them. “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” This is the prospect. This is the kingdom we were hearing of this morning to which God’s dear people are looking.

Yes, “Surely I come quickly.” And there are evidences even in our own generation of these latter days. The powers of antichrist are rising on every hand, more and more openly, more and more brazenly, and the living church of God is becoming more and more excluded from those who have the mark of the beast. Yes, the mark of the beast is that which will be the mark which the world looks on as the mark of respectability, but those who have not got it will be the outcasts, shunned, despised, but loved of God. “Let us therefore go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

Now says dear John, the Lord said to him, “Surely I come quickly.” He said, “Amen.” What does that mean? Friends, in God’s account it means, it shall be so. He is the Yea and the Amen. The yea is the giving of the promise, and the amen is the fulfilling of it. It *shall* be so. God’s people, just like John, turn it into a prayer under the power of the Spirit’s teaching. Lord, let it be so. And that is why we pray, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” How many a child of God has prayed that in his earthly pilgrimage? Even so, come, Lord, with the light from heaven. Even so, come with a word from Thy gracious lips. Even so, come with a little light on my path. Even so, come with a gracious sense of Thy presence. How often they said, Come, Lord Jesus. Come where I am. Come into my poor, sinful heart and make it Thy abode. Come into my pathway, Lord, and show Thyself my Defender, my Shield, my Sun, my Help, my Hope. O they have often prayed this prayer here below, “Even so, come, Lord, Jesus.” But O this is the final prayer they will ever pray. Blessed, glorious prayer! “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

Why do God’s dear people anticipate this glorious day? I will tell you why. First of all, because they will see the crown where it belongs, not on the head of any inferior being. No longer will Satan and his forces usurp the throne of God. No longer will the world have its say.

No. O then shall be seen who is King of kings and Lord of lords. Every knee shall bow before Him then, yours and mine, either in judgment or in mercy.

Again, why will a child of God look to this day? Because they will be raised in a body sinless, pure, holy, harmless, undefiled, no original sin in it, no wandering mind, no wayward heart, no unclean thoughts in it.

“Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies.”

Blessed anticipation for a child of God!

But then we may ask, what then are we to be engaged in while we wait? Are we to be idle? No! O that is why I read in that chapter in Thessalonians (first Epistle, chapter 5) where the Apostle Paul describes this very event. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” We need the answer to that prayer (don’t we?) whether we are waiting for death or if we are alive and remain when the dear Saviour returns. O that our body, soul and spirit be preserved blameless! Yes, in Christ the child of God is blameless, without fault. Blessed thought that! Justified. Then O yet while we are in this poor body, we still have to complain with Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” It is a constant warfare and a constant battle. Every day, every hour, every moment sometimes it seems hard, sweating work, does it not? It is a warfare. It made God’s dear people say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Come and put this warfare to a final end. Come and gain the final victory in my heart. Lord, bring near that day when freed from this poor body, this corrupt nature, I shall see Thee as Thou art, praise Thee as I ought, and be found at Thy dear feet holding a palm of victory. Lord, what a miracle it will be! O said good John Newton not long before he died, There are three miracles in heaven. One, he said, there will be those there we never expected to see there, and some not there we quite confidently thought would be there. He said, “But the greatest miracle of all will be if I am there.”

So what do we need while we wait? The very last verse in Scripture is the key to it: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”



It is between Christ and His church as between two lute-strings – no sooner is one struck but the other trembles.

Thomas Brooks

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY NORTHERN MEETINGS

*Report of Meetings held at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester,
on Saturday, September 11th, 2010*

PRAYER MEETING

Mr. J.R. Ince (Pastor, Nottingham) read Psalm 72 and, after prayer, spoke from part of verse 17 as follows: "His name shall endure for ever ... men shall be blessed in Him."

We realise and acknowledge that there is quite a broadness to this subject that we have before us this morning, and of the limitations of time, but we trust and hope that the Lord may bless the few remarks that are made to our real good and to the profit of our never-dying souls.

This is a Psalm of David, praying for his son who had just received the enthronement of Israel as king, but it goes out in prophecy to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and His spiritual kingdom. We felt directed to encourage the Lord's dear people under that particular truth because of the particular concerns that we have in our own day and generation when we see so many changes taking place, and where we see such a depletion in our churches. There is a constant reminder in the Word of God that the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is prospering and is flourishing. It is enlarging and it is growing. We should never lose sight of the importance of these things, and allow other things to cast us down and leave us disappointed.

I always feel that when we make expressions of disappointment, when we feel disillusioned about things concerning the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, we need to be very careful. Who are we disappointed in? Who are we disillusioned with? These are the important issues, because it is a reflection upon our God and Saviour, in whom we have been brought to put our trust, and our hope, our confidence and our expectation; that we should be constantly looking to Him. Things are changing round about us. There have always been changes in the world, and I think that we accept that, but the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, the word that He has spoken, the decrees that He has made, the counsels that He has upheld never change, never alter, and these are the things which our faith hangs onto. These are the things that preserve and keep the church and people of God. This is the means of their perseverance to the end. Putting our confidence and hope in Him who is King and Ruler, who reigns over His kingdom.

Verse 17 seems to summarise the whole of the Psalm as it concerns the benefits, the privileges and the favours and the blessings which the Lord continues to bestow upon His people throughout the continuing

ages and generations. “His name shall endure for ever”; and it has done so in the hearts and lives of all those whom He has loved from all eternity, whom He has effectually called by His grace and brought out of nature’s darkness into His marvellous light, and who serve Him, and worship Him and are devoted to Him. It is the same name and the same Person, the same glorious and wonderful Person that the church has always believed in, always depended upon, and always looked to; and He will continue. “His name shall endure for ever” with the church. When we consider His kingdom which He has established in the earth – where are all the other kingdoms of the earth, the kingdom and empire of Babylon, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans? Their kingdoms have gone, but the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ continues. It is maintained. It is strengthened. It is added to, and the Lord’s dear people will continue to see that flourish despite all things.

Our mind was drawn to hymn number 4 in Gadsby’s selection with regard to this kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ:

“He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave TO BE.”

We read:

“His providence unfolds the book,
And makes His counsels shine;
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,
Fulfil some deep design.

“Here He exalts neglected worms
To sceptres and a crown;
And there the following page He turns,
And treads the monarch down.”

All things are in the hands of our God. All things are under His divine control. I do feel that the Lord’s servants have felt the need and necessity to keep emphasising the importance of these things in this day of declension. Here we hope that we are enabled not only to commit ourselves and our own circumstances and the events that surround us into His hands, but also that of our local churches, and the collective church, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One important thing that arises in connection with this is the fact that we have before us in our closing hymn, subject to the Lord’s will, these words, and I feel that they are very encouraging:

“A kingdom of immense delight,
Where health, and peace, and joy unite;
Where undeclining pleasures rise,
And every wish has full supplies.

“A kingdom which can ne’er decay,
While time sweeps earthly thrones away;
The state which power and truth sustain,
Unmoved for ever must remain.”

We see the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, His kingdom, consists in the life and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. I feel that there is something that we can include here in our text to be found in verse 15: “And He shall live.” He shall live; that is the important thing. He still lives. He continues to live. He lives for the benefit of His people. He lives to intercede for them at the right hand of His heavenly Father, seated and exalted, having finished and accomplished the work that was appointed for Him to do.

We read in Psalm 18, verse 46 – and we feel very much that 46th verse in that Psalm, a Psalm of David when he thanked the Lord for His delivering mercies to him. He was often found to have many doubts and fears. He was very cast down in his mind at times and even brought to distrust the Lord, and we read on occasions that he paid for those things, although the Lord wonderfully overruled in his case. But he declares in verse 46: “The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.” I feel that is the key to the whole chapter, that the Lord liveth, that it was his God and Saviour that sustained him, that helped him, and delivered him on so many different occasions. That same God and Saviour is our God and Saviour. He ever liveth for the benefit of His people. The charge and responsibility of the church is upon His shoulders, and we read throughout this 72nd Psalm: the importance that He looks down upon the church in all their needs and cares as they arise. At the same time He subdues all their spiritual enemies. Now this is the Lord Jesus Christ, manifestly set forth in His life and power which is put forth for the benefit of His people, and that is what His name consists of, His divine and glorious attributes and perfections. It is those, friends, that continue to be a very lively source of encouragement, strength, renewing and reviving, confirming and establishing, delivering and healing for the church of God.

With regard to the import then of these things, our thoughts went to consider Solomon for a moment, with regard to his name. It was a name given to him by God through His servant, the prophet Nathan. Jedidiah – beloved of the Lord. I know that may refer to Solomon in type. It refers to the Lord Jesus Christ in truth. He was the Beloved of the Lord. If you read those closing verses in Proverbs chapter 8, you will see under the divine attribute of wisdom, this wonderful union, blessedness, happiness and joy that existed between God and His Son. That is something that is very clearly opened up before us in the Word of God,

when the Lord Jesus Christ came out of the water, recorded in that 3rd chapter of Matthew, when He was baptized: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And then of course the same in the mount of transfiguration scene, but there is an addition: "Hear ye Him." That is the important thing and a great blessing if the Lord grants and bestows upon us hearing ears and understanding hearts because He is the only name, the only Person who is able to save sinners.

We would just open up that particular important aspect in the light of the name that David gave his son Solomon, which means peace or peaceful. Now that, of course, sets forth the whole work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever we may look in this world there is no peace, never will be any peace; men strive for it, they look for it, they desire it, they want it, but there never will be any peace. Certainly through the fall of our first parents, no man is at any real peace in this world so long as he is not reconciled to God, and that is one of the important things that we have in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ coming down into this sin-cursed earth. It was for sinners whom God has loved in eternity, whom He has placed into the hands of His dearly-beloved Son and will appear unto, in His own time and work in their hearts and bring them into this blessing of peace in their souls, and it is a peace that passeth all understanding. It is peace procured through the sacrifice of Christ through the shedding of His precious blood. If you read Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians and chapter 2, you will see an inseparable link with peace and blood. And there is no peace without that blood, by faith in application of it to the soul, when the Lord's dear people, under a felt sense of their own sin and guilt will be brought there to confess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and what He is able to do for them.

One of the most wonderful things that are connected with this is the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ in John chapter 14 declares there: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." Well, we all know and understand that when someone makes out a will (the testator), he leaves that will to whoever he has in mind to leave it, to whom it might be distributed, friends, relatives or some other cause of one kind or another, and then there is an executor that implements that will once the testator has died. But the most wonderful, blessed truth here, the most unique and extraordinary thing that we have is the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ was the testator and the executor of His own will. Never, friends, has that ever been known and never will it ever be known.

The Lord Jesus Christ died to save His people, to redeem them from their sins and iniquities, and then He resumed His breath. O this great blessing – He lives! The excitement that arose when He met Mary and others following His resurrection, the fact that He lives, and He lives to

intercede for the church, He lives to be their King, He lives to rule and reign on their behalf. The important thing, friends, for us is, are we one of the subjects of His kingdom that He has set up and established in the earth, because as a King He is victorious, as a King He has triumphed over all the church's enemies – sin, Satan, the world, the flesh, the devil? All these are defeated foes. They have all been subdued by the Lord. O that we could take that into account at times in respect of the path in which we are found.

Yes, the Lord's people are subject to many doubts and fears, and this particular chapter that we have read is typical of the fact that the Lord is very sensitive and sympathetic to all the needs of His people. And that is because He has purchased them and redeemed them by His precious blood. He has blessed them with that peace, and not only is it peace with the Lord Jesus Christ, peace that brings us into union with Him, but He has reconciled them with God. He has reconciled them with the throne of grace. He has procured their peace for them.

It is a very solemn thing when we consider the latter part of what has been laid upon our mind: "Men shall be blessed in Him"; because outside of that blessing it is a curse, and there is no other particular option there. Outside of that blessing is a curse. It is only through the Lord Jesus Christ that we shall be saved, that we shall be enabled to stand faultless before the throne of grace, that we can ever be accepted by God the Father, and that we can have access to Him. Now this, the Lord Jesus Christ has done for His people, but there are the very solemn implications of what follows.

You see, we read in verse 20: "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." David was, we would say, virtually on his deathbed. David's end had arrived, but he was secure and safe in the Lord Jesus Christ. He had been brought to enjoy the blessings of a covenant-keeping God through the peace of that covenant that we have sealed and ratified by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That, friends, is what we need as sinners, that the Lord Jesus Christ might appear unto us. Who knows whether we shall ourselves see length of days? David did, but who knows? Providentially we are all in the hands of God. He is, in that sense, no respecter of persons, but will we be found on that true foundation stone? Will we be ready and prepared in that day, in that hour?

"His name shall endure for ever." It is that name that we need to be brought to trust by the grace of God. May we prayerfully seek it. That name that is above every name, that there is no other name that we shall be enabled to put any trust or confidence or hope in. The Lord's servants, when He raises them up and commissions them to preach the

everlasting gospel, He commissions them to preach up this name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will be perpetuated throughout all the ages and generations. They will themselves be echoing the same things that the apostles spoke of: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It is through this precious name of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through what He is able to do for His people, to accomplish for them.

It is a great blessing when we can rest upon this name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and know some of the blessings that are opened up unto us here with regard to the fact that He continues to live to intercede for them, and He is able to satisfy all the needs and cares of the church as they arise. He is able to give strength to those who feel much spiritual weakness in themselves. He is able to enrich the souls who know and feel much spiritual poverty. He is able to deliver His people from darkness, by appearing to them, revealing His light in their hearts through His Word, and by His promises. He is able to bring those who may well find themselves in spiritual bondage, and bless them with gracious liberty. Now this is what the Lord Jesus Christ continues to be for His people, what He continues to do for them, and we are encouraged here. This is one of the privileges of the church, those who are here in our text "blessed in Him." The privilege and benefit that we have in approaching a throne of grace. We shall not approach in vain. He continues to be One who prevails for the church on their behalf. He personates the case of each one of those who have been brought by faith to put their trust in Him.

In conclusion, we think of the words of the hymnwriter. What comfort!

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear."

We hope that these few remarks that have been made this morning may be encouraging for us. "His name shall endure for ever ... men shall be blessed in Him," through Him and by Him alone, according to the divine appointment of His heavenly Father. There is salvation to be found nowhere else but in this divine and glorious Person that we have in our text. May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

Hymns 949, 558 and 257 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. T.H.W. Scott (Luton, Bethel), Mr. Michael Hydon (Attleborough) and Mr. Adrian Topping (Haywards Heath). Mr. Ince closed with the benediction.

BUSINESS MEETING

After the singing of hymn 1139, Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone) asked God's blessing on the meeting.

Mr. G.D. Buss (Chairman of the Gospel Standard Society) read Psalm 72, commenting that it was the same as the reading at the prayer meeting, but that there may be a purpose in it, and that there is no vain repetition in God's Word. He then spoke as follows:

Dear friends, the point on my spirit, and very graciously confirmed in the address we heard earlier from the Lord's dear servant, is that the answer to the prevalent ills of our generation is to be found in the gospel. We live in troublous times. In fact Daniel was inspired by the Holy Ghost to say that the walls would be built in troublous times, and we are in troublous times. Our nation is beset – and not only our nation – increasingly by the powers of antichrist that are more and more evident and more and more apparent and virulent. We only need to think of the militant secularism and atheism that is now so brazenly set forth, the false doctrine of evolution and many other things which scientists claim undermine and deny the very existence of God. In this, of course, they are solemnly and dreadfully deceived. But the sad thing is that the vast majority of our fellow-citizens give ear to this deceit and are being blinded by it.

There is also, and particularly at this time with the papal visit due, the power of the Roman Catholic church. In some respects you may say it is not what it was at some times in generations past, but it is still a very significant force behind the scenes in our nation, and not for our nation's good either. It is a very sad thing that this nation, that was so wonderfully blessed with the Protestant Reformation, should so blatantly turn its back on those things that once made this nation great. And while we have no reason to take up any carnal weapon against the Pope or the Roman Catholic church – that would do no good – nonetheless we should be very concerned at the inroads that this system has made in our society.

And then there is, of course, militant Islam which seems to grow by the week, and every week seems to come to the fore in some way or another. This and many other things make us realise we are living in troublous times, and we may in fact look at the waves and the billows that are coming against the church of Christ, and begin to despair and to despond. But we were reminded by our dear friend that at such a time as this, like David at Ziklag when everything around him seemed gone, the dear man looked up and "encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

And if we are enabled to do that at this time, we will be delivered from another enemy to our church, which is *apathy*. There is a

sleepiness abroad for which we do need a gracious cure. There is almost perhaps a fatalistic spirit, that these are the end times and we must expect it. We *must* expect it, yes, but may we not be content to see the powers of antichrist grow as they do. O may we be among those who sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land.

But in this chapter we have read again, we have the answer to the difficulties of the day, and the gospel is the only answer. We read in verse 19, “Blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen.” The Lord Jesus Christ before He died left on record a very wonderful word: that the end would not come until the gospel had been preached among all nations. And that is still proceeding, and that will continue until the end of time. The gospel is the answer. It is not gathering books like the Koran together and burning them in the market place. They are carnal weapons. Our weapon is God’s holy Word, the sword of the Spirit. That is the answer. The gospel is the only answer.

The second answer, and O how much this is needed personally and in our little group of churches in particular: the reviving of the church of Christ! Often that comes in troublous times, but in verse 6 we have a very wonderful word: “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth.” In many respects the church at the moment is like mown grass. It seems to have been cut back in so many ways. But see the answer. “He” – that is Christ – “shall come down” – in His Word, in His gospel – “like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth,” and we have each seen mown grass and then the rain comes upon it. Two things follow. One, there is a sweet smell, a sweet savour, a freshness, a refreshing in the earth. The second thing is how very quickly does the grass respond and fresh blades appear. Dear friends, this is the answer, that He would come down like rain upon the mown grass and as showers that water the earth. When God is sovereignly and graciously pleased to revive His church individually and collectively, then we will see these answers we long to see, and may it be our desire: “O revive us that we may rejoice in Thee.”

So our dear friend was led this morning in the same way as I hope I have been led. This is the mystery of God’s providence and sovereignty, but may there be a purpose in it.

CHAIRMAN: It is my privilege to welcome you to this business meeting, and first of all to ask our General Secretary Mr. David Christian to address you. We miss our friend Mr. Henry Mercer who for many years stood on my right hand and on Mr. Ramsbottom’s right hand before that. We also extend our cordial good wishes to our friend Mr. Mercer, though not with us at this time, as he has now laid down that office that

he fulfilled for so many years. It is our privilege to ask Mr. Christian now to speak to you and may the Lord help him as He has done former Secretaries.

The Secretary of the Society, Mr. D.J. Christian, then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD AID AND POOR RELIEF SOCIETY

Mr. Chairman and dear friends,

It has always been a pleasure to attend these Northern meetings and I believe we have known the Lord's gracious presence with us on many occasions. It is thirty-five years since I first attended and as I look around today, we are reminded of many gracious friends now passed to glory, and others in old age and infirmity unable to be with us. Also, with much sadness, we think of the chapels that have closed and the low state generally of our churches. The Committee is deeply concerned about our churches and realises the great need for the Holy Spirit's work if there is to be a reviving amongst us.

Last November the Committee invited the ministers on the Gospel Standard list to a prayer meeting at Clifton and another meeting has been arranged, if the Lord will, for November 13th this year when it is hoped as many of our ministers as possible will attend.

May the Lord hear and answer the petitions and shine upon the churches.

We have been reminded in the *Gospel Standard* for September, in the piece Mr. Ramsbottom wrote about the papal visit, that our foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ and we are thankful that this is a foundation that will not give way. In our land today we see so many things, so many examples of how things that were once accepted are being overthrown and things which are contrary to God's Word accepted as normal. Sadly these things even creep into the churches and dishonour our Lord. Paul, when writing to Timothy, says, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." This is a very blessed truth for which we are thankful, but the verse does not end there. It goes on: "And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." How we need personally to take heed to these things!

We live in a day when there are many attacks on Christianity, and during the past months there have been attacks on the Gospel Standard position. We seek grace to stand fast to the things "most surely believed among us" and to walk worthy of our Lord and Saviour.

We do remember all our ministers and pray that their labours may be blessed of the Lord, and we would not forget those who have had to give up preaching due to old age and infirmity.

Turning now to financial matters, the Society is not immune to the general economic situation which has meant that interest rates have been kept very low, and this obviously has an effect on the Society. We do attempt to secure the best possible rates without taking undue risks and during the year have made several changes to our deposits, which will result in higher income. We are thankful that we have sufficient funds to maintain the levels of grants, and subscribers are welcome to advise us of friends who may be in need so that the appropriate action can be taken.

We are very grateful to our subscribers for their continued financial and prayerful support and for the collections and donations received, especially for the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund, which does not have very large reserves.

For the first six months of this year, the income of £55,732 exceeded the cash payments by almost £20,000 but this was due to the receipt of £45,000 representing most of the balance of the legacy left by Mr. R. Shelton in 2006.

We have been informed that a sum of about £50,000 will be received shortly, but sadly this has come from the sale of one of our chapels, Petworth, which had to close.

We usually fix the prices for our magazines for the coming year at our July Committee meeting. Mr. Chapman, who prints and distributes the magazines, has been very helpful in obtaining the best prices for the paper and has also managed to reduce the postage costs. Taking these and possible exchange rates into account, it has been decided to keep the prices the same as this year, except that a reduced rate has been introduced for *Perception* if ordered in chapel parcels. It would be very helpful if friends who change from having the magazines privately to receiving them in chapel parcels could inform us so that we can amend the records and avoid sending duplicate copies.

We would acknowledge the Lord's goodness to all of our Editors through the past year, His goodness in the help given to them and the support for them.

The Committee has decided, if the Lord will, that the Annual Meeting will be held at Clifton again in 2011. This will be on Friday, April 15th, which unusually will be the week before Easter, as Easter falls very late next year.

We are always pleased to welcome new subscribers who hold the Gospel Standard position and forms can be obtained from the Secretary.

We do thank our friends here at Manchester for the use of the chapel once more, and, in view of the expense of maintaining an old building, the Committee decided that the collection taken this afternoon would be for the chapel funds.

Finally we give thanks to God for all His mercies through another year but especially for His unspeakable gift – the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Christian for his report, and for all he does on behalf of the Society.

Mr. T.H.W. Scott (Bethesda Secretary) then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Mr. Chairman, subscribers and dear friends,

It is always a pleasure to give a short report and update on the work of Bethesda, especially now that five months have elapsed since the report given at the Annual General Meeting in April.

So far this year ten residents have passed away in the Homes, all of whom are missed. Although it is not always possible, many Bethesda funerals are held in the Homes, which is a very suitable arrangement for the residents in the Homes who would otherwise be unable to be present. Although we have lost ten residents we are thankful that there have been seven admissions.

During the year it has been necessary to register Bethesda with our new regulatory body, the Care Quality Commission, or the CQC as we generally call

it. The duty of the CQC is to make sure that care homes meet essential standards of quality and safety, and it has been necessary to sign a declaration for each of our Homes that we are compliant with the regulations. The standards to be met are based on twenty-eight outcomes which people resident in a care home can expect to experience. The new regulations come into force on 1st October, and the provisions of the old Care Standards Act will then cease to exist.

We have no major building projects in mind at the moment, having completed a number of extensions and improvements to the Homes over the past few years. At Brighton we have recently had a number of intruders, including one trying to break into the drugs trolley, and another into the garden store. These incidents are unsettling for the staff and residents, particularly night staff, and it has been decided to install a six-camera CCTV system to monitor the various areas of the Home and premises. This work will cost £3,250. We do take the safety of the Homes very seriously and are willing to do whatever we can to promote security.

We continue to be concerned at the ever-widening gap between income from fees and our expenditure. As you will be aware, quite a number of Bethesda residents are financially supported by Local Authorities. In many cases, this year zero increases in their support have been awarded, or if there has been an increase at all, it has been limited to 0.5%. The problem is not helped by the small size of our Bethesda Homes compared to many being built today and operated by large commercial groups. A recently published survey by consultancy PricewaterhouseCoopers has found that there is a risk to survival of smaller care providers. Today, homes for sixty or seventy beds are not uncommon, but our small Bethesda Homes are unable to benefit from any of the economies of scale enjoyed by larger homes. Although occupancy rates this year have been reasonable, with annual fees of over £25,000 even a few vacant rooms lead to a severe reduction in income. At the moment there are five vacancies at Brighton, and three at Harpenden and Studley. We are grateful for all the support given by the churches and our subscribers and donors, even though the deficits we are speaking of are very great. In speaking of these difficulties, we are not unmindful that all our needs *have* been met, and we acknowledge the Lord's sustaining mercies to Bethesda for what is now sixty-five years.

We continue to receive many tokens of the value of our Bethesda Homes from both residents and their relatives. Sometimes relatives are not altogether sympathetic to the religious and spiritual aims of the Homes, but it is generally acknowledged that the care given is of a high standard. Of course, some residents have few family members, and to them Bethesda is a double blessing. As we go round the Homes, we notice the kind and loving way so many of the staff speak to the residents, and we feel we have many valuable and loyal workers amongst us. The Managers, their deputies and the senior care staff have many responsibilities in these highly-regulated days. We wish again to take the opportunity to thank *every* member of staff for the work they do. We do not forget those whose contribution is not so readily seen, such as our catering and domestic staff, and also the gardeners who do such a splendid job in the grounds of the Homes, which are often commented on by visitors.

You may have noticed from the advertisement in the September *Gospel Standard* that our Harpenden Home Manager, Mrs. Susan Verweij, will be relinquishing the position at the end of May next year. Susan has been Manager

at the Home for nearly five-and-a-half years, but had worked at the Home for many years before that. If there is a suitable vacancy she is hoping, if the Lord will, to continue at the Home part time as a senior carer. Naturally we shall be glad to have the benefit of her many years' experience in the care of the elderly.

As most of you will know, Mr. Adrian Topping has been appointed as Bethesda's General Manager, and began his duties at the beginning of this week. We are pleased Mr. Topping is able to be here with us today, and I know he will be pleased to speak to any of you if you have the opportunity. Mr. Topping's appointment reflects some of the changes in governance required by the Care Quality Commission, particularly in monitoring the running of the Homes and reporting back to the Trustee body. I shall be working closely with Mr. Topping over the next few months as he settles into his new role. I will continue to be responsible for the financial accounting side of Bethesda for the time being. I am sure we all wish Mr Topping the Lord's help and blessing in the future.

Bethesda *has* to change with changing times. On numerous occasions when faced with fresh challenges and difficult things to deal with, we have been forced to recall how the Lord has been mindful of us in the past. We do try to look to Him for much-needed guidance as we adapt to the requirements of the present times. When the first Bethesda Home was opened at Redhill in 1948, this was the same year the momentous National Assistance Act was passed. In those days residential care was familiarly known as "Part III accommodation." After the passing of the Act little changed in elderly care for over thirty years. In the 1980s things began to change rapidly, culminating in the 1984 Registered Homes Act. When I was appointed General Secretary this was the Act we were working under. Since then we have had the National Care Standards Commission, then the Commission for Social Care Inspection, neither of which lasted very long, and now the Care Quality Commission.

In spite of the changing scene, our aim remains as it always has been, that elderly friends from our chapels might, to quote an early document, "be tended in a godly atmosphere," or as the first edition of the Bethesda rules states, "to be cared for in a spiritual as well as a home-like atmosphere."

The Chairman thanked Mr. Scott for his report, and expressed appreciation for all he has done for Bethesda over many years, desiring that as he lays down the work, the Lord would richly bless and abundantly favour him. He extended warm wishes to Mr. Adrian Topping and wished him the Lord's abundant blessing.

CHAIRMAN: I have just one or two notices to read to you, first of all concerning the Gospel Standard Trust. Many of you will be aware that we are having to consider a model constitution for the churches under new legislation from the Charities Act, and Mr. Playfoot asked me to read the following paragraph to you at this meeting:

"The report of the Gospel Standard Trust Annual Meeting in the September *Gospel Standard* refers to work on the model constitution for churches' working funds, which will be needed for registration of churches in 2012. We have made good progress on this and the

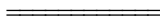
sub-Committee has approved a draft for consideration by the Executive Committee at their next meeting on September 17th, if the Lord will. It is hoped that soon after that we shall be able to submit it to the Charity Commission for their consideration. As soon as we can inform the churches of our final result, we will do so as the Lord may help us.”

There are several new books which the Gospel Standard Publications are in process of producing: a new edition of *The Dairyman's Daughter* which has new pictures in it which are quite a good enhancement to the book; also the excellent Bible study of Mr. Ramsbottom on the Book of Zechariah called *Christ in the Book of Zechariah* is about to be issued. The letters of J.K. Popham, both the ones published and the ones unpublished, have been gathered together by our young friend Dr. Matthew Hyde, and this edited and annotated book will, God willing, be in the denomination before many weeks are past. Also, the illustrated *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part 1, which many of you may have seen, has been reprinted and that is due out very soon now; and secondly the new edition of Part 2 is now being produced, illustrated in the same manner as Part 1. It is called *Christiana's Journey*.

The Gospel Standard Library has asked me to read the following statement from them:

“Mention was made last April about the storage of church records and the Trustees passed a resolution at a meeting in July that the records held at the Library and any deposited with them in the future will be on permanent loan to the relevant record office of the area where the chapel was located. Photocopies of important documents will be obtained by the Library who would also have a comprehensive list of the reference numbers of all items deposited, which would facilitate anyone having access to them. All records will be in safe and right conditions for the preservation of old documents, whereas the Library has limited facilities, and then not always ideal. The Librarians will be very willing to help in any way and channel records to the appropriate authorities and the proposed leaflet which will be circulated very soon is intended to be helpful and informative, but not to dictate to chapels. But on the other hand it is important that old chapel records are preserved for posterity.”

The meeting concluded with the singing of hymn 364, and prayer by the Chairman.



The love of God is like a sea, into which when a man is cast, he neither seeth bank, nor feeleth bottom.

John Boys

LIVING TO GOD'S GLORY

My very dear and beloved M.,

It seems a long time since I wrote to you, not because you are far from my thoughts, O no, for you, like your precious father, are ever before me, more or less, in my waking and sleeping hours....

O my beloved M., the Lord has in His infinite mercy given us a glimpse, though but a faint one, of His power and goodness! For O how little can we know in a time state what the Lord really is to His people; kept by the power of God, perpetually His care, from the beginning of the year to the end thereof; not a dog daring to move his tongue. "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment shalt thou condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord" (Isa. 54. 17).

The Lord's goodness and favour to me and mine hath often of late broken my heart and melted my spirit at His footstool. His goodness seems too much for so vile a creature as I daily feel to be. But I bless His name, that He knows where He has planted His fear, and that His ear is open to the groanings of the prisoners, "for if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," that God's grace might prove sufficient, and His strength be made perfect in weakness.

I desire to live more than I ever have done to God's glory, for I feel persuaded that nothing else is worth living for; and am certain that nothing short of God's salvation will do when we come to Jordan's stormy banks. As we know not how soon we may be brought there, we do well to be upon our watch-tower, that we be not terrified when the Lord cometh with His troops. My sun is going down, the day goeth away, and the shadows of the evening are stretched out. I have reached my threescore years, which is in God's sight "but as yesterday." How true it is, that "man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." Such is man; may our language be, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am."

My heart is often with you, and I long to see your dear face. What a mercy that you are so mercifully provided for. The Lord give you grace to use His blessings to His honour and glory, for He hath given you both the "upper and the nether springs." Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments.

M. Tanner [her mother]

March 14th, 1867

KEEP CLOSE TO GOD

By Richard Alleine (1611-1691)

Christ is to be trusted not only for the world to come, to give us entrance into heaven, but for this world also, to lead and help us on, to be with us in all our way from first to last. Our great difficulty, and our great danger of miscarrying is not so much in our end as in our way to it. As hard as it is to die well, it is harder to live well. Though the last enemy, death, looks with a more frightful face, yet our enemies that we meet with all along our lives, sin, and lust, and temptation, do us the most deadly mischief.

He that has conquered sin need not fear to encounter death; do but live a holy life, and then be nothing careful how ye shall die. Of those saints in Hebrews 11, Abel, Abraham, Sarah and the rest of them, it is recorded that they lived by faith; it is said of them, "These all died in faith" (verse 13); not one among them miscarried in death, who by faith kept close to God in their lives.

BOOK REVIEWS

Sighs and Songs, by Henry Fowler; hardback; 106 pages; price £10.95 plus £1.60 postage; published by John Crowter, and obtainable from Haystacks, Green Lane, Potter Heigham, Norfolk, NR29 5LP.

An editor receives various books for review, but we must confess we were delighted to receive *Sighs and Songs*.

The name of Henry Fowler (1779-1838) has been dearly loved by the people of God. How the godly over the years have had their hearts touched when singing:

"They may on the main of temptation be tossed,
 Their sorrows may swell like the sea,
 But none of the ransomed shall ever be lost;
 The righteous shall hold on his way."

Henry Fowler was pastor at the old Gower Street Chapel, London, and produced this little book just before his death. It consists of sixty-five hymns, each followed by a short meditation. Only one is familiar, "Jesus, o'er the billows steer me," with its beautiful prayer, "Hold me fast, and keep me near Thee." The hymns contain deep exercise of soul, humble confession of sin, guilt, unbelief and temptation, but Christ in all His glorious suitability to meet the sinner's need. The hymns are on such subjects as: Hope in the Mercy of God; Deliverance Comes at Last; Comfort for Tremblers; The Atoning Lamb; Mary Magdalene; Christ Remembers Peter; The Price of Redemption; Precious Blood; The Righteous Advocate. There is also a lovely poem written to John Kent in the light of their both reaching their journey's end. (See page 352.)

It may be thought the price is high, but Amazon have published a paperback of one volume of Fowler's original hymns which costs as much as £15.99.

We are grateful to John Crowter for the work he is doing.

Also available:

Henry Fowler's Original Hymns, Volume I; 168 pages; £15.45 including postage and packing; Volume II; 194 pages; £16.45.

Volumes I and II bound together; 364 pages; £22.95.

All three together; 472 pages; £28.45.

Selection from Wise Counsel: John Newton's letters to John Ryland; special small paperback; 110 pages; price £3.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

In reviewing *Wise Counsel* in March (page 88), we described it as a fascinating book, consisting of eighty-three letters by John Newton, most of which have just been rescued from obscurity. The dearly-loved Newton needs no introduction.

This selection contains three of the letters, Letter 1, Letter 5 and Letter 28. It also contains the editor of *Wise Counsel's* overview of the letters, and his article on the earlier years of Newton and Ryland.

The selection is intended as "an enticing introduction to *Wise Counsel*."

Sampler from a Way to Pray, by Matthew Henry; small paperback in the Pocket Puritan series; 68 pages; price £3.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) is best known as the great commentator. In fact, it is said that Whitefield read through his commentary on the Word of God on his knees. It is not generally known that Matthew Henry wrote a number of other works, among which was quite a lengthy book entitled *A Method for Prayer*. This is a very profitable work, from which *A Way to Pray* is taken and is only a small part.

We must confess we were disappointed. The little book is "updated and revised by O. Palmer Robertson," but he has updated it and revised it too much. Surely it would have been better if he had written his own book saying this is what Matthew Henry taught and believed.

We are specially surprised that (page 55) there is a prayer "at the baptism of adults," which Matthew Henry did *not* write. While we agree with Mr. Robertson's view on baptism in the passage rather than Mr. Henry's original piece on infant baptism, is it right to do this? The footnote states: "He (Matthew Henry) provides prayer for the baptism of infants, but no prayer for the baptism of adults. The following section has been introduced as a modest provision for the omission!"

Our Great God and Saviour, by E.J. Alexander; large paperback; 194 pages; price £7.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Written by a present-day preacher, formerly minister at St. George's Tron Church, Glasgow, the chapters deal with The Character of God, the Salvation of God and The Church of God. Each chapter (sixteen in all) is based on an exposition of the Word of God: for instance, the greatness of God – Isaiah 40; the

holiness of God – Isaiah 6; the faithfulness of God – Psalm 89. There is a very good chapter on regeneration based on John chapter 3. In it the author clearly shows this is God’s work from first to last, in which He is sovereign.

OBITUARY

Florence Edith Polley, member of the church at Mount Zion, Geelong, Victoria, Australia for eighty years, passed away on June 13th 2010, aged 96. Her writings are as follows:

I have been asked to write of the Lord’s dealings with my soul. I have been very reticent to do so as I do not want any glory to myself but,

“Herein may self be all abased,
And sovereign love alone confessed.”

I was born in the year 1913, the sixth of a family of eight. My mother, I believe, was a godly person. She induced my father to find the Strict Baptist chapel in Geelong, having previously moved to there from Dandenong where I was born. My eldest sister and I had started attending the Wesleyan Church in Geelong and I remember how I rebelled against going to a place like Mount Zion, being only thirteen years old at the time.

However, the preaching I heard there was made effectual in convincing me of my sins. The text being one Lord’s day, “That I may know Him,” etc., I felt I did not know the Lord Jesus in a saving way, though I had often sung about Him, and I was led to cry for mercy. My prayer at that time was “Lord, help me”; “Lord, have mercy upon me.” I had helps at times under the preached Word, also from some of the hymns we sang in the Sabbath school, one especially:

“And does thy labouring bosom heave,
Thy heart for Jesus sigh?
Though guilt and doubtings make thee grieve,
Still for His mercy cry.”

Well, I still went on seeking and crying for mercy for a year or two, when one day whilst lying on my bed feeling as miserable as can be, the Lord Jesus suddenly revealed Himself to me as my Saviour. The words He spoke to me, though not Scripture were, “Saved one, I am thine.” I felt my burden was gone and rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Shortly after I felt constrained to follow my Lord, and after telling the church a little of what the Lord had done for my soul was baptized by Mr. H.A. Flitton, whose ministry was made effectual in calling me by grace. I did not get any special word at the baptizing but felt a sweet peace invading my soul. I was only sixteen years old at the time and now am nearly eighty-four. I have had many trials and also answers to prayer during my sojourn in this wilderness world, having been tempted at times, but the Lord has been very gracious to me and enabled me to cast all my care on Him who is well worthy to be praised. Shame and confusion of face belongeth unto me but I would bless the Lord for all His mercy to such an unworthy sinner. I feel that my time here must be short, but,

“When called to meet the King of dread,
Should love compose my dying bed,
And grace my soul sustain,
Then ere I quit this mortal clay,
I’ll raise my fainting voice and say,
Let grace triumphant reign.”

I should mention that I have had many trials, but also many sweet promises applied. One especially, one night when feeling very despondent this came sweetly, “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” I can say, “My Jesus has done all things well.”

“When I see Him as He is,
I’ll praise Him as I ought.”

I am now in my eighty-seventh year and have felt the ministry of Mr. Gordon Seymour profitable to my soul. The Lord has sent him to us in answer to prayer. May he continue long with us if the Lord will, and grant him seals to his ministry.

July 2002: Last Lord’s day Mr. Seymour spoke from these words: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee” (Isa. 26. 3), which brought back memories of these words being precious to me many years ago. May the dear Lord enable me to look to Him for life, for strength, for righteousness, for all, for truly He is the one thing needful.

Since last writing a little of the Lord’s dealing with my soul, I passed through great darkness of soul, fearing I should be lost after all, Satan tempting me to give all up, but I have proved him to be a liar and was sweetly raised up again through the preached word and the verse of one hymn, 908 Gadsbys:

“Sin burdened soul, with tempest tossed,
Thy bark shall every storm outride,
Grace once received can ne’er be lost,
Nor hell from Christ thy soul divide,”

coming very sweetly to me.

I should say I am now ninety years and six months old and have just passed through a severe affliction of body, but have been brought safely through, blessed be the name of the Lord. I can say, “My Jesus has done all things well.” O if I ever reach heaven I will crown Him Lord of all.

“How sovereign, wonderful, and free,
Is all His love to sinful me!
He plucked me as a brand from hell;
My Jesus has done all things well.”

These words came sweetly to my mind this morning, and I can truly say, He has been wonderful to me throughout my life in spite of all my sins and backslidings.

I am now ninety-one years old and do not know how much longer I will be spared to continue in this wilderness world, but may my remaining days be spent in praising Him, my dear Jesus, who has called me out of darkness into His marvellous light.

“I love the windows of Thy grace,
Through which my Lord is seen,
And long to meet my Saviour’s face,
Without a glass between.”

These words expressed my inmost feelings and desire after hearing a sermon preached by Gordon Seymour on the “Exceeding Precious Promises” (2 Pet. 1. 4).

I am now ninety-three years old and have much to bless the Lord for in supplying all my temporal needs through another year though sometimes the way is rough, but,

“His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?”

These are the end of her writings, and in September 2008 she was taken ill with pneumonia and went into hospital for treatment. In time she recovered in a measure, but it was clear that she would not be strong enough to return to her home again.

On October 7th, a place was found for her in a residential care home in the Geelong area. It was arranged for her to have the telephone installed in her room for the purpose of hearing the services from Melbourne church via the relay. The church at Geelong was opened for two afternoons a month for a time to enable her to attend, and then reduced to one meeting a month until it was noticed that her strength was diminishing with age. This caused family members to be very concerned about taking her out, as on one occasion when her grandson put her in the car at the home, she had to be taken back to her room for some oxygen. She was so determined to go to chapel, that after about ten minutes of treatment, she felt enabled to attend and was all right for the duration of the service and the return journey home.

The Lord helped her by His grace to be resigned to His will, but she was often longing to be taken home to glory.

It was a privilege to visit her and she enjoyed visits from her family, especially those that feared God. She was very concerned about the welfare of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Sadly, so few of the family members manifest any works of grace as yet.

On May 13th, 2010 Floss had a fall in the home. She was in great pain and taken to the Geelong hospital where an operation was performed on her hip, which was broken. She recovered in a measure and was enabled to go back to the Bellrise care home, but on May 31st had a stroke in the morning some little while before we last visited her. She was unconscious, but after a time in the room, she came round and recognised us and one read from Psalm 23. After further strokes, she was taken home to be with Christ in the early hours of June 13th, which is far better for her but a great loss to our church out here. She was an example of humility and love.

The funeral service was held at the undertakers’ chapel in Geelong, followed by the interment at the Eastern Cemetery where her mortal remains were buried with her late husband, William Polley, in sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

G.S.

TO AN OLD RESPECTED FRIEND

Written by Henry Fowler to John Kent just before the former's death.

We stand upon the brink
Of Jordan's swelling tide;
And shall we in the waters sink?
Shall death from Christ divide?

Poor, worthless sinners, vile,
Indeed, my friend, we are;
But still Immanuel deigns to smile,
And says, "Thou art all fair."

Our covenant God will sure
Convey us o'er the flood,
Where we shall breathe an air more pure,
And bless a Three-One God.

No coldness, deadness, sin,
Shall tease and vex us there;
No Canaanite shall enter in,
No heart-perplexing care.

Then come my brother, friend!
Let's tune our harps once more:
Ere long our covenant God will send,
And bear us to the shore.

O may a precious gale
At last to us be given!
Then, like a vessel in full sail,
We'll enter our blest haven.

The proofs I have had of the depravity and deceitfulness of my heart have been much stronger since I knew the Lord than before! How often have I sinned against light and love, and a sense of multiplied obligations! I have been remarkably a child of Providence, but my experiences have not been so much diversified. I have not suffered much from the fiery darts and black temptations of Satan. On the other hand, I have no raptures or high consolations to speak of. I never was for an hour like the apostle at a loss to know whether I was in or out of the body. The sin of my nature cleaves close to me as my skin, and infects all I say or do. But it is given to me to believe that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin, and that when He said, "Him that cometh, I will *in no wise* cast out," He meant as He spoke, and will make His Word good. Upon this rock I build. Other refuge have I none. If He was strict to mark what is amiss, He might justly cast me off now in my old age, and forsake me, when my strength faileth, but He has said "*In no wise!*"

John Newton

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
DECEMBER 2010

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

THE WISE MEN

Thoughts on Matthew chapter 2, verses 1-11

What a simple yet profound statement that is which begins the chapter: “Jesus was born in Bethlehem” – the coming of the eternal Son of God into this world of sin and sorrow, with a divine purpose, to save His people from their sins! And yet the world went heedlessly on. “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.”

As J.C. Philpot so beautifully writes:

“On an ever memorable night, at a poor village, in a lowly stable, there being no room for such humble guests in the inn, a Babe was born of a pure virgin. I need not tell you who this Babe was: you well know that it was no other than the Son of God in our flesh. But who on that memorable night when, in fulfilment of ancient prophecy, the Child was born and the Son given, knew what a momentous event had taken place?”

But almighty God was not without His witnesses. “There came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” Exactly who these wise men were, we are not told. They are described as *magi*. Nor do we know how many there were, or exactly where they came from. But we know that God had made them truly wise, for true wisdom always brings a sinner to seek the Lord Jesus till he find Him.

The means God used was a wonderful star (possibly the wise men were astronomers?) but He must have clearly revealed its meaning to the wise men, that a glorious King had been born. It was a long and arduous journey, but faith can never be satisfied till it finds the Saviour.

We have no star in the sky to guide us now, but God has given us His holy Word and His Holy Spirit – and they never lead astray.

“Shine, Bethlehem star! O shine, the night is dark;
Shine through the mists and gloom that I may see.”

When the wise men reached Herod’s palace, they were clearly disappointed. No one seemed to know. *It is clear the star of Bethlehem never led them there.* Why did they come to Jerusalem when the Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem? Obviously they used their own reason! As they neared the holy city, they felt they had arrived. There was no need of any star now. But we need the Holy Spirit to lead us *all* the way.

Discouraged, we can well understand that “when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.” And the star “went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.” So the Holy Spirit leads a living soul where Jesus is – not now at Bethlehem, but exalted in heaven, a great and glorious High Priest, once crucified, but now living and reigning for evermore. “Here is my hope, my joy, my rest.”

It was “the house” in Bethlehem to which the wise men now were led – not the stable at Bethlehem. The popular “nativity pictures” give a wrong impression, the shepherds and the wise men arriving together. This must have been some months at least after the Saviour’s birth, and godly Joseph would not have remained with Mary his wife in a poor stable.

But now we see a wonderful display of living faith. The Lord Jesus was specially honoured by the faith of the wise men at His birth, and the faith of the dying thief at His death. It was a poor house into which the wise men entered – a poor man, a poor woman and a little Child. But they “fell down, and worshipped Him.” They were not disappointed. They were satisfied. “Go, worship at Immanuel’s feet.”

The three gifts which the wise men presented were exceedingly costly and precious. They must have been a wonderful help to the family during their flight into Egypt. The eternal Father was caring for His beloved Son. But their mystic significance has always been understood: gold, because He was a King; frankincense, because He was God; myrrh, because He must suffer, bleed and die. The shadow of the cross could be seen over the Saviour even in the days of His infancy.

We are not called to make presents of “gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” to the Saviour, but “love so amazing, so divine, demands our soul, our life, our all.” But it was not the Lord Jesus who was enriched. It was the wise men, as they departed. They could have feelingly said:

“I’m rich to all the intents of bliss,
If Thou, my God art mine.”

They had Christ. They had everything.

Mysteries are plain when the Lord opens, and plainest things are mysteries when He shuts.

Joseph Caryl

There may be a trust in God where there is a walk in darkness.

Stephen Charnock

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

*Sermon preached by Jesse Delves at Ebenezer Chapel, Richmond,
on July 18th, 1951*

Text: “He said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory” (Exod. 33. 18).

Moses was one of many instruments God raised up to fulfil His purposes among men, and particularly among His ancient people here. His leadership was attended with unparalleled difficulties and with obstacles and mountains which appeared impassable, and difficulties which in the nature of them were well nigh overwhelming. But no difficulty is too hard for God, no mountain too high. Hence He endued Moses with grace and strength to bring His people forth out of Egypt, with all that attended it, into the wilderness, the wilderness of discipline and of many sharp trials and deliverances to the borders of the promised land.

Here, and in the chapter before, we have a record of the base idolatry of the children of Israel when Moses was away from them, in the making of a golden calf and worshipping that, and thus in their impatience and rebellion provoking the wrath of God against them, whereby they were visited with judgments resulting in the death of many people. And one of the most solemn things attending this was the indication that God would not go up with them, that He would send an angel before them to drive out their enemies, but that He would not go up in the midst of them because they were a stiffnecked people, lest He should consume them in the way. That evidently solemnly affected the people more than anything else did, because when they heard these evil tidings, they mourned and no man did put on him his ornaments. God had said unto them, “Put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee. And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.” They had taken off their golden earrings before in their rebellion to indulge in their idolatrous practices, but now they took off their ornaments to mourn and repent in dust and ashes.

Who can visualise the issues of sin when people depart from God and serve other gods? Moses was enabled to plead with the Lord concerning them wherein in some particulars he may stand as a type of the Lord Jesus in His intercession. He pleads not because of any redeeming features in the people, but upon the ground of the Lord’s own promises, and in his pleading he pleads for three things. Particularly he pleads for guidance: “If I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way” – that is direct me in the way that I have to go and make that way known to me – “that I may know Thee” – that I may know Thee to be my covenant God in vouchsafing that guidance and in directing me in

the way that I should go. "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence," and what a confirming promise the Lord gave him. He said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." This may be very confirming to some under extreme conditions, under particular burdens or some weighty exercise where they may feel to have special need of a word from the Lord thus to guide and direct them. Moreover Moses says that the Lord's presence with the people was that confirming witness that they were a people separated from all other people upon the face of the earth. "Wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

Here are two points for some consideration. First, if the Lord departed from the people, that is, if His presence was not with them, there could be no more solemn judgment than this. This brought a great mourning among the godly, who stripped themselves of their ornaments and humbled themselves before the Lord. There can be no clearer witness with respect to a people that they are the people of God than if the Lord be with them in confirming tokens of His grace and presence. What an amazing thing it is that the infinite God should condescend to presence Himself with a people, a community, an assembly, a congregation, a church, and is not this according to His promise concerning His people? For He has said, "In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." I believe it is Dr. Owen who said that the life of a church consists in the presence of the Lord in it. I feel I can believe that, for nothing can take its place. There is in it a power, an unction, an influence, a sacredness, a beauty, a majesty that can never be defined in words but is only known as it is felt in the gracious experience of it. And is it not a great thing when there is such an inward witness, even in a sanctuary, so as to cause one and another to feel that the Lord is in this place? "He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Nothing would give such rest as that. We may be careful and troubled about many things, burdened, under weighty temptations, anxious; but when the Lord comes in a particular experience, His presence in the heart brings such rest with it. I should like to be able to describe it, but I know what it is. He brings His own rest and when He fills your heart nothing can disturb you. "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." "And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name."

Then Moses, having obtained favour of the Lord in that degree, proceeds to ask for even greater things. "And he said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." There is something very striking about the way this

is put before the Lord, "I beseech Thee," in the form of an earnest entreaty, as though it is of more importance to him than all beside. Whatever I may possess, if I possess not Thee I am undone. It seems to express the yearning of the soul for God. "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." Have you ever come in here in your soul's feelings? It is like a venture of faith, to ask another favour of the Lord, under a consciousness of His approbation. "I beseech Thee." You may have been favoured with some tokens of His mercy and yet feel you lack something in your soul that you cannot describe and yet for which you yearn. Thus getting some hold of the Lord in prayer, you entreat Him as though your very soul moves in earnest longing for that sweet blessing: "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory."

There is a glory that cannot be seen, as we read in this particular chapter, "No man shall see Me and live." There is a glory that cannot be seen by any creature in this mortal state, as pertaining to God. Yet there is a glory that can be seen, not with a mortal eye (though there is a glory that can be seen even with a mortal eye), but there is a glory to be seen by faith that is altogether peculiar to those to whom the particular revelation is made. It must be said here, I believe, that we see in this aspect more of the glory of His mercy than of His majesty, for we could not bear very much of that. And so it appears to have been here: it was a felt glory that Moses saw.

"I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." It is a remarkable manifestation of God's sovereignty that was made to Moses here and which is referred to by Paul in the Epistle to the Romans where he says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.... it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." How free and yet how sovereign is that mercy, and we shall never see the glory of God in an acceptable way, in a gracious way, unless we see mercy mingled with that glory. If we were to see that glory without the mingling of mercy with it, we should be utterly consumed. God is a glorious Being who dwelleth in the light, to whom no man can approach.

The Lord said to Moses, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts: but My face shall not be seen." The majesty of God could not be borne by a creature and yet you see He blessed Moses, even to see the glory of His back parts; He put him where he had a firm standing. So it must be with a child of God, to see this glory. The Lord

Jesus Christ is the Rock of Ages and this is the foundation of the church, and the only standing ground where they can firmly stand to witness the veiled glory of God, and the cleft of the rock may indicate the wounded, bruised, dying Substitute who by His substitution afforded a shelter, a cleft in the rock, a hiding place where the glory of God may be bearable.

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me;
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

There is a glory to be seen in God that is effective according to the measure of it upon the subject who is favoured with it. “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.” For instance, is there not a glory *in the presence of the glorious Godhead*? I cannot bring it before you, but I believe I have had a moment or two in my life when I have felt melted in my soul under a view of the blessed Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, spoken of by John in his Epistle, where he says, “For there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One.” Have we ever seen this glory? Have you had a few moments in your spiritual life when the veil has, as it were, been a little lifted from your heart and you have seen the beauty and majesty of the blessed Trinity, three glorious, co-eternal Persons, each possessing the fulness of deity inherent in this one God, and yet distinct in their personality; each essential to the salvation of the church and her ultimate glory in Him?

Sometimes in prayer there is just a little opening of *the wonder and majesty and glory of the Trinity*. You may understand me; it has a wonderful liberating power in your heart when you get it. You can pray then. That is to say, your heart seems drawn to the mercy seat to plead for Christ’s sake and to venture into the presence of the Father through the merit of His precious blood, through the Holy Spirit as Paul has it: “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” O but it is just a faint glimpse but wonderful to see and most confirming to believe.

Not only so, is there not a glory *in the perfections of the Godhead in the attributes* that essentially pertain to Him and which constitute Him so, so that we can plead what He is? I have no need to name them particularly, but all those attributes pertain to His power, His omnipotence and His immutability, His justice, His grace and His mercy; all blend one with the other in a glorious harmony so that no attribute clashes with another in the Godhead. Is there not a glory here? Perhaps you say, but all that is a long way away from me; I do not know anything about it. But you may know something about it and you will know something about it, because in the dealings of the Godhead with your soul at times, there will be what I might term a solemn awe upon your

heart and a little opening perhaps of His immutability, His faithfulness, His holiness, His justice, His mercy, His grace.

"I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." There is a peculiar glory in *the Person of Emmanuel* that is at times just seen, though but slightly, in the eye of a believer. There is a glory there. His Person is essentially glorious in its complex constitution as very God and very Man. None can compare with Him; He is fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into His lips. Is there any difference between you and me and the world? In the prophecy we read that to some He is a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness and no beauty that we should desire Him. Is that what He is to you? Is there nothing more than that? Or is there in Him something which draws the affections of your soul towards Him at times in holy worship? As we read in the Canticles, "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved amongst the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Has He ever been made precious to you in this aspect as being so eminently suited to your case?

"Show me Thy glory." O does not this describe the longing of a living soul? You would not want to see the glory of Christ unless you were one of His. He is not a root out of a dry ground, is He? No, say you. O but perhaps you say, I would love Him if I could, but I am such a poor, dry, withered stick. He can soon turn your wilderness into a standing water. The Holy Ghost alone can reveal Him. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." That religion will take you to heaven. I do not believe that you will ever really feel the Lord to be precious in your soul and eventually drop into the bottomless pit. No, not if that preciousness is real; it binds you to Him.

"I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory." O say you, but I have never seen it. Well, if you feel you have never seen it, can you come in with the prayer of Moses, "I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory"? Is there a vacancy in your heart that only the Lord can fill? Do you really long for Him to come and form Himself in your heart the hope of glory? "Show me Thy glory." There is something to be seen and perhaps you say, but I do not see it; no, and yet is there not in your very soul the secret longing to see Jesus?

"Show me Thy glory." Is there not a glory in *His incarnation*? There must be a glory in that because that glory was seen by His disciples. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." We beheld His glory; and this is the point with the Lord's children: what was the glory that John saw? It was the glory of His divine Sonship, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

“Show me Thy glory.” Is there not a glory too in *His substitution*? The view of that and the knowledge of it filled the apostle to the exclusion of everything else: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” How absorbing and confirming it is when it is given that you see Him. You lose sight of everything else. And the glory of the cross is that glory that poor sinners long to see because that is the remedy for all their guilt, this is the Lord’s provision, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Has the Spirit of God ever discovered the glory of His Christ? Have you felt at times a ray of hope in your soul as you have got just a glimpse by faith of a once-crucified Man?

“Here it is I find my heaven,
While upon the Lamb I gaze.”

“Show me Thy glory.” Does not this also follow in relation to *His exalted majesty at the right hand of God*? “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.” There is a glory that His people at times are favoured to see in a living Jesus, living representatively as the first fruits of the glorious harvest.

“Show me Thy glory.” Perhaps sometimes some of you read in the Scriptures of the Lord Jesus and have to say, Show me the glory there is in this. Lord, open my poor, blind eyes and let me see something; open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law. When the Lord reveals Himself in these particulars, in some measure the glory of His grace and of His mercy to you, when He makes it known and gives you to feel it and brings into your heart a taste of forgiveness, what effect has that?

One effect is *worship*; it will always produce worship. It will not make the things of God and eternity light, but it will produce in your heart a sacred awe that words cannot describe and which yet is very blessed to feel. It produces worship. You fall before Him and it is a sweet falling.

“The more Thy glories strike my eyes,
The humbler I shall lie.”

That is true, is it not? and that is real humility when it is really felt. Jesus Christ, said Thomas Goodwin, is most glorified in secret. How those tokens of grace will flow together in your heart and all to lift Him up in your affections.

“Sinners are high in His esteem,
And sinners highly value Him.”

It will produce *repentance*. It was so with Job after all he passed through; nothing really brought him down but a view of God. His three

friends could not do it; they did not understand him; neither did Elihu, although he had a very quieting effect upon his spirit. But it was the view he had of God that brought him down into deep repentance. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." O this is where His glory is seen and this is where it will be above all the ignorance and confusion of face that can be felt. How glorious He is in the eye of faith at such a time. None can compare with Him.

"Show me Thy glory." Another effect is *conformity*. A sight of His glory in these particulars will conform you in some measure to His suffering image and produce a willingness to bear your cross for Christ's sake.

"Show me Thy glory." Another effect is *love*; when He reveals Himself, love flows out toward Him because it is His love entering into your heart. "We love Him, because He first loved us."

But there is a glory that can be seen by a believer even with his mortal eyes and that is the glory of His works both in grace and in providence. If we look up even to the visible heavens we see the glory of God, that is if we have open eyes to see it. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork," and there is something very real about this when the Lord blesses your soul and brings pardon and peace and sets your soul at liberty. You will see His glory in the leaf of a tree; everything will speak it; it is as it were so many voices speaking the glory of God, and if we may be favoured to feel that this God is really our God, is there not a glory in the sense of that relationship? "Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Have we ever seen the glory of God in a faint measure, had a glimpse, a blink of His glory? It is the glory of His mercy and the glory of His sovereignty and the glory of His goodness. That was what He proclaimed to Moses and that is what He will proclaim in your heart. When He reveals this glory He will bring His goodness to you, poor, unworthy sinners that you may feel to be, His goodness in His blessed gospel, and He will proclaim His name before you and give you to know who He is and what He is. He will give you to see the glory of His sovereignty and He will make it known in your soul that you are to speak of His sovereign mercy. I "will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." I think it may be said that as to our knowledge of divine things here, even if we are graciously taught, it is more of the glory of His mercy that we see than the glory of His majesty. Yet you cannot see the glory of His mercy without seeing

His majesty in it. O have there not been moments when His mercy and His majesty, His justice and His grace, have mingled in your feelings so as to enable you to say,

“Compared with Christ, in all beside
No comeliness I see;
The one thing needful, dearest Lord,
Is to be one with Thee”?

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

*Part of a sermon preached in London by William Dyer during the
Great Plague, 1665*

First, Jesus Christ is the Peace-bringer. He brought in everlasting peace by righteousness, and not by a sword, Luke 2. 14: “Peace on earth, and good will towards men.” Why was the Bread of Life hungry, but that He might feed the hungry with the bread of life? Why was Rest itself weary, but to give the weary rest? Why was the Prince of Peace in trouble, but that the troubled might have peace? None but the Image of God could restore us to God’s image; none but the Beloved of God could make us beloved to God; none but the eternal Son could make us sons; none but the Wisdom of God could make us wise; none but the Prince of Peace could bring the God of peace, and the peace of God, to poor sinners; and therefore He is called our Peace (Eph. 2. 14).

O what is so sweet a good as Christ! and what so great an evil as sin! The former brings us to joy and peace; the latter brings us to woe and misery. That is the first.

Secondly, He is the Peace-maker, as well as the Peace-bringer. He is the Peace-maker between God and men: sin is the great make-bar between God and the soul; sin is the wall of separation between God and us, and the Prince of Peace makes peace between God and us. He paid all the debts, and took up all the controversies, and blotted out the handwriting, and hath broken down the partition-wall, and made up the great breach between God and man: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor. 5. 19). Mark, it is in Christ; so likewise elsewhere. “Ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” O sinners, Christ is our Peace-maker. The Prince of Peace makes peace between God and us; He reconciles God to men, and men to God, so that though God might be justly displeased with us, yet in His Son He is well pleased with us. He is more pleased with a believer for Christ’s sake than He was displeased with him for sin’s sake.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is the Peace-giver. Alas, poor sinners, we have no peace with angels, no peace with conscience, nor one with another, till

the Prince of Peace give it to us: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," saith our Lord unto His disciples (John 14. 27). O sirs, He gives peace with God. "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5. 1). Christ giveth peace to us which the world cannot take from us; worldly trouble cannot overcome heavenly peace.

Fourthly, He is a Prince of Peace, or the peaceable Prince. So He is styled not only Peace, but the Prince of Peace. Indeed, beloved, He is all peace to a believer. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," speaking of Christ (Prov. 3. 17). Mark, *all* her paths are peace.

Now, what are these paths? I shall name six to you. 1. The path of repentance. 2. Of faith. 3. Of truth. 4. Of self-denial. 5. Of obedience. 6. Of holiness.

Firstly, these are several paths of peace, and peaceable paths. O sirs, there is no peace to be found but in the paths of peace! As all His works be great and marvellous, so all His ways are peace and pleasantness.

Secondly, His gospel is a gospel of peace. It is a great mercy to enjoy the gospel of peace, but a greater mercy to enjoy the peace of the gospel.

Thirdly, His reward is peace. "He shall enter into peace" (Isa. 57. 2). Here the joys of heaven are called peace. The true sons of peace and the peaceable sons of truth shall be crowned with peace; they shall enter into peace. And thus, beloved, I have briefly, yea I have fully proved the point – that Jesus Christ is the cause and fountain of a believer's peace.

Use. Now for the application of the point.

By way of information: here we may see what great need we stand in of Jesus Christ. O Christians, is Jesus Christ the cause and foundation of all our peace? Then we have no right or title to peace, but by the Prince of Peace. "We have no peace with God," saith the apostle, "but through our Lord Jesus Christ." We are reconciled to God in Christ Jesus; and "we who were afar off," saith Paul, "are made nigh by the blood of Christ." We are only acceptable in the Beloved, so that, beloved, it is all in Christ, and through Him, that we have our peace. A Christless man is a peaceless man; he hath no peace with God, no peace with angels, no peace with conscience. Till we be Christ's friends, we are our own foes. It is true, a wicked man may speak peace to himself, but God speaks not a jot of peace to him; he may speak peace to himself till he falleth into everlasting flames: God is his enemy, the devil is his foe, angels hate him, all creatures cry for vengeance upon him. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57. 21). No, not a word, not a dram of peace to a person who is out of Christ. Therefore, O sirs, consider in what need ye stand of the Prince of Peace.

GOD'S MERCY TO SINNERS

Thomas Manton (1620-1677) on Rahab the harlot

That God is ready to show wonderful mercy to penitent sinners if they return to Him and believe in Him, how great soever their sins have been before, Rahab the harlot is an instance. She had been a Gentile, and lived an unclean life, yet when she owned the true God, she is pardoned, and placed in the catalogue of God's worthies who are eminent for faith. There are many such instances given us in Scripture, not to lessen the nature of their sins, but to amplify God's grace.

In John 4 we have an instance of the woman of Samaria. She was a vile woman, for (verse 18) Christ tells her, "Thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband"; yet afterwards she was a notable means of promoting the faith of Christ. Former sins will not hinder their acceptance with God who seriously come to seek grace. The same also may be observed in another woman which washed Christ's feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head (Luke 7. 38). The woman was a heathen, and one that had lived in a sinful course, but she then relented, and lets fall drops of tears plentifully upon Christ's feet, which tears were the effects of sorrow and love; and because she wept much and loved much, it argued a great expression of gratitude from her, because of the great mercy showed to her in the pardon of her sins: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much" (verse 47).

The throne of grace is open for all sorts of sinners; it admits of no exception of persons. "Turn and live," is the great tenor of the gospel: "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. 18. 32); "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33. 11). And publicans and harlots, though infamous amongst men, yet they are not excluded, but accepted with God if they turn from their evil course. Nay, many times they enter into the kingdom of God before self-justiciaries: "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matt. 21. 31). For there is nothing that lies so cross to the spirit of the gospel as self-righteousness. Now, when people pride and please themselves in an external righteousness, there is more hope of a publican than of them. Christ invites and calls such, and we must not keep them off: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. 9. 13). But we must remember two cautions:

1. That they must break off the course of their sins. For our commission is this (and we cannot speak comfortably to you upon any

other terms): "Turn and live." We call them not to confidence while they live in their sins, but to repentance, that they may break off the course of their sins. To tell them of trusting in God's mercy while they remain in their wickedness is a vile flattery, and the worst sort of flattery; but to show them the way of repentance is charity. See Isaiah 55. 7: "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"; and Daniel 4. 27: "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor." He speaks this to a cruel, oppressing king, Nebuchadnezzar, who had troubled all the world by his ambition, that he would let go his captives, and behave himself more righteously, restore the prey unjustly taken for the enlarging his empire and territory. And so I may say to all sinners; if their faith be unfeigned, if their repentance be serious and sincere, there are hopes of mercy for them, not otherwise.

2. There is another caution, and that is to be as eminent in their repentance as they have been in their sins; so was Rahab; so was that Gentile woman that came to wash Christ's feet; so was the woman of Samaria. The apostle requires it as an equitable proposal to all converts: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh" (Rom. 6. 19); that is, which men will judge to be equal; that which, if you have but reason and conscience within you, you cannot but judge reasonable. I know how bad you are, and you cannot yield God such entire obedience as He doth require and as He doth deserve, and I have regard to the infirmity of your flesh; but "as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." Be as eminent in your sanctification as formerly you have been in serving your base lusts and vile affections; serve God as well as you have served the devil; and as you have been guilty of such foul sins as render you infamous among men, so serve God now exemplarily. It is equitable you should be as eminent in holiness as you have been in sins and wickedness.

The grounds of this, why the Lord shows wonderful mercy to penitent sinners, whatever their sins have been before, are:

i. The greatness of God's mercy, that can pardon all, even our greatest sins. We sin as men, but He pardons as a God: "I am God, and not man"; therefore Ephraim is not destroyed (Hos. 11. 9). It was well Ephraim had to do not with revengeful men, but with a pardoning God. God acts like Himself in the exercise of His mercy. Sure an emperor's revenue can pay a beggar's debt. Surely so great and infinite mercy can pardon and absolve our obligation to punishment. Alas for us men! It is tedious to think of forgiving seven times a day, to forgive when still a man is perverse and multiplying his offences; but to forgive seventy

times seven, it breaks the back of all our patience; but God will pardon like Himself, after many and many offences.

ii. The infiniteness of Christ's merit. Surely His blood can wash and cleanse out all these stains. An ocean can cleanse one nasty sink, be it ever so foul. "The blood of Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1. 7).

iii. The covenant of grace exempts no sin but the sin against the Holy Ghost: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matt. 12. 31). There is no sin but this one which hath not been forgiven, or may not be forgiven, in one person or another; therefore, though they have fallen very foully, yet we should not despair of them.

iv. The power of the Holy Ghost can change and sanctify the vilest heart, and can turn a dunghill into a bed of spices; for nothing is too hard for the hand and power of God. He that made all things out of nothing, He can make a graceless heart to become gracious; for what is too hard for the Almighty? When the Lord speaks, all things are possible to God. He can make sometimes the last to be first (Matt. 19. 30). He can make those that set out last for heaven to do more than an early professor; indeed, they must be more earnestly diligent. When Celsus objected against Origen that Christianity was a sanctuary for flagitious [deeply criminal] persons, because of the large terms of the gospel, he made this answer: "The gospel," saith he, "is not merely a sanctuary to receive them, but it is an hospital to cure them." There is a mighty Spirit that can turn them from those sins and change their hearts; they come to it as to an hospital to cure them of their foul diseases, which no other physician can do but Christ.

Use. To check despair for ourselves or others.

First, For ourselves. There is a twofold despair – a raging and a sottish despair. Raging despair is when we are filled with terror, and are afraid of the wrath of God, that we think we shall never be forgiven, having daily offended Him. Sottish despair is when we think of sin, and go on to please our lusts.

1. This point serves to cure the raging despair. This is spoken of in Cain: "My punishment is greater than I can bear" (Gen. 4. 13); and Judas, who said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood.... And he cast down the thirty pieces in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matt. 27. 4, 5). To cure this raging despair, consider, if you have but a mind to return from your great and infamous sins, the Lord is more ready to receive and pardon you than you can be to return. While the prodigal was yet a great way off, the father ran to meet him (Luke 15. 20). And when David had fallen foully, and his conscience was full of trouble, "I said, I will confess my transgressions

unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psa. 32. 5). When he did but conceive the purpose, the Lord renewed the pardon. O do not stand aloof from a pardoning God; you have a sure and sufficient remedy before you in Christ Jesus and in the covenant of grace. The Lord saves none as innocent, but He excepts none as penitent. Therefore to say, My sin is greater than can be forgiven is to please the devil and cross God's design in the work of redemption. Is your disease so great that the Physician of souls cannot cure it?

2. There is a sottish despair, when men are not much troubled for their sins, but think they shall never be converted, and be brought to love this strict, holy and heavenly life, and so resolve to go on and make the best they can of a carnal course, and drive off all remorse of conscience. This is spoken of: "And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart" (Jer. 18. 12); and, "Thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go" (Jer. 2. 25). They think there is no possibility of their ever being reduced or reclaimed to a holy and heavenly life, and so past cure, past care; and are resolved to live as they list. The case is desperate, say they, and I am at a point; and thus they are resolved to continue, and go on in their evil course. These are obstinate in their infidelity and impenitency, and therefore they are worse than the former. Despairing fears are not so bad as these desperate resolutions, because they do not only doubt of God's mercy, but question His sovereignty, and refuse subjection to Him, and despair of sanctification rather than pardon, and draw wilful, rebellious conclusions from it. O do not cherish such a thought, nor yield to such despondency! God can turn and pardon you; and though with men it is impossible, yet not with God.

Secondly, This is of use to check our despair for others; for when you find some of your relations, after many warnings, to relapse into gross sins, certainly we are bound to do all we can to reclaim them from them. Give not over praying and warning; you ought still to represent to them the danger of such courses, but cut them not off from all hopes, for God can reclaim the most odious sinners; and show them that there may yet be hope of mercy for them, and that no past sins can hinder our conversion to God, if the Lord pleases; and that they ought to put themselves into a posture to seek His grace; though still you are always to represent the danger of those desperate courses wherein they are engaged.

GATHERING STONES TOGETHER

*Prayer Meeting Address given at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
on December 31st, 2009*

Reading: 1 Samuel 7. 1-12

Text: “A time to gather stones together” (Ecclesiastes 3. 5).

We firmly believe what we sing:

“All my times shall ever be
Ordered by His wise decree.”

We firmly believe it, but may we at all times feel it.

This chapter begins, “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” That is, God is in control. Nothing can take place apart from His divine permission. He orders all things according to the counsel of His will. And beloved friends, as we come to the end of another year, it will be a wonderful thing if we could sweetly feel it: “My times are in Thy hand.”

But this word here speaks of there being a special time appointed by God for various things. I think there are twenty-eight different things He mentions here. Now, “A time to gather stones together.” God’s ancient people were very good at gathering stones together. As you read through the Old Testament, you find on so many occasions, and often specially led by the Spirit of God, they were gathering stones together. I mention just one or two. The stone that Jacob gathered and he raised as a pillar at Bethel. Again, the stone that Jacob raised as he separated from his father-in-law Laban, which he called Galeed, a stone of witness. And then of course we think of that heap of stones that was gathered together on the crossing of the River Jordan, that there might be a constant reminder of the faithfulness of God and the wonderful miracle He performed and the way He made a way where there was no way. Just to mention one other, that great heap of stones they gathered together when Absalom was completely overthrown by the power of God assisting King David.

But we read this evening of the Ebenezer stone. Samuel gathered that stone on a very momentous occasion, looking back over all that God had done for Israel, thinking especially of the wonderful overthrow of the Philistines by the power of God in answer to prayer. And he gathered that stone, and he “called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

But there is “a time to gather stones together.” And surely, beloved friends, the most suitable time of all is the last day of the old year, in looking back, looking back to the first day of the year, but also going beyond that and looking back over all the years of our lives. So this

evening under the leading and teaching of the Holy Spirit, may it be “a time for gathering stones together”: those little helps you have had by the way, the upholding in the hour of trial, support in the day of bereavement, encouragement when you have been disappointed, answers to your prayers, remembrance of deliverances granted, the supply of every need, strength equal to the day, the faithfulness of God. May the blessed Spirit enable us for a few moments to spend our time this evening gathering these stones together.

Some of you have had great sorrows. O may the Lord enable you in looking back over a year of great sorrow to gather a stone here and to gather another stone there, how the Lord has helped you in your troubles and how He has sanctified some of your sorrows. Perhaps together we can sing,

“With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow
Were lusted with His love.”

O may there be this gathering of stones together. In the church of God – we have a few stones to gather together here at Bethel. In our homes and lives and families; in our souls.

“A time to gather stones together.” The Lord by the prophet Jeremiah said, “Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps.” You know the difference. Those waymarks in ancient Israel were enormous pillars and the high heaps were composed of lots and lots of little stones. And God’s people have their waymarks and their high heaps. Perhaps you can look back to some signal mercy this year. “Set thee up waymarks.” Perhaps you cannot, but can you gather a stone here and a stone there and cast it on the heap and see it rise higher and higher? Like the little old hymn:

“Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”

In ancient Israel some of those high heaps reached higher towards the sky even than some of the waymarks. O may it be a time for gathering your stones together.

Very briefly, a three-fold effect. As you are helped to gather your stones together, may there be that heart of true gratitude, remembering what the Lord has done. “What hath God wrought!” Secondly, as we seek to gather our stones together, O may it be with a spirit of humble confession and self-abasement, shame at our poor returns for all that the Lord has done. But then there is another thing. As you are enabled to gather your stones together, sometimes you can go back to *this* one or you can go back to *that* one and the remembrance of it encourages you.

Let me give you an instance. Jacob gathered his stones together at Bethel. What was it – twenty or thirty years later the Lord told him to go back to Bethel? It was not a new stone. He had to go and gather that old one, and he went back to the place where the Lord appeared for him, and he gathered that stone together. There was a going back to it, a former blessing, and there was the encouragement. He was counting it and he was able to say, “He answered me in the day of my distress” – He did not leave me or forsake me; He heard me – “and was with me in the way which I went.”

So there is a gathering our stones together in gratitude, in confession, and for our encouragement, as you are able tonight just to gather a few of your stones together, to feel that He who did this will not forsake you now. He who has been with you this year will be with you in the next.

“He who has helped you hitherto
Will help you all your journey through.”

The Lord bless you with true happiness. Everybody will be wishing one another late tonight and early tomorrow morning a happy new year. “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God.”

TRINITARIAN BIBLE SOCIETY

Over nearly 180 years, the Society has been remarkably blessed by the Lord with all the resources necessary to carry on, and indeed at times, expand its work. More recently, a particular feature of this provision has been the wonderful supply of significant funds through legacies. In the late 2000s [2005-8], a deliberate policy was followed to utilise these substantial surpluses towards future expansion of the work, particularly in relation to translation projects. However, by the end of 2009, in the light of the economic downturn, and the not unnatural result of lower levels of sales receipts and donations, the Society had to accept that the excess income from earlier legacies was all but exhausted and the Society’s cash reserves were depleted.

As a result the Society is no longer in a position to maintain spending at present levels. For 2010 a reduced expenditure budget meant that some activities have been curtailed or suspended, but a significant deficit of £575,000 is still being projected for 2010 here in the UK. Major contributing factors are a reduction of nearly 20% in the sales of Bibles and smaller Scripture items compared with the equivalent period in 2009 and a reduction of nearly 50% in donations. Further budgetary reductions, which it is still hoped will be only temporary, are therefore needed in 2011.

In the realm of projected expenditure, the Society has made significant financial investment in major translation projects, namely the Spanish, Hebrew, French, Mongolian and Romanian Bibles, which it is hoped will generate

substantial interest in the years to come. Some of these projects have taken longer to bring to fruition than had been anticipated, which has in turn inevitably placed long-term pressure on the Society's resources.

The General Committee and Management of the Society are actively considering a variety of proposals which will, with the Lord's blessing, bring the Society safely through the current financial challenges it faces. The process of self-examination and humble prayerful dependence upon the Lord, in order to determine His mind on the matter, and His leading through these difficulties, has been under way for some considerable time at Board and senior management level. Recently, the Society's members and supporters, both individuals and hundreds of congregations throughout the world, have received a letter seeking their prayers.

All the Society's activities are being scrutinised and actions are being taken to ensure that a balanced budget can be adopted for 2011. However, some of these measures, if implemented, will prove painful, including the slowing down of some translation work, the further reducing of the granting of Bibles and other Scriptures, and staff reductions.

On behalf of the General Committee and the staff, the Society seeks your prayers at this difficult time that not only would the Lord provide for its financial needs, but also that He would reveal to the Society His will in the matter, and that He will grant it much wisdom to know where cutbacks might be made should they be deemed necessary. All concerned at the Society fervently believe that its vital work must and will continue, but they acknowledge their total dependence upon the gracious hand of God to supply according to His own promise: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9. 8).

ELI CHAPPELL: 1818-1904

For forty years a faithful minister

By F.S.

The subject of this memoir was born of godly parents in the year 1818. His father was a farmer living at Gibb, a small hamlet situated between Chippenham, Wilts, and Sodbury, Gloucestershire.

When Mr. Chappell was a boy, Rowland Hill [the well-known preacher and hymnwriter], when on his way to Wootton-under-Edge, frequently stayed at the farm for the night, and in the morning held services in the open air, when the farmer left his business, the labourer his duties, and they would gather to hear the gospel.

Owing to persecution which our friend's father suffered for Christ's sake, he was obliged to leave the farm in which his capital was invested. This greatly reduced his circumstances. He removed to the village of Castle Coombe, where the Lord helped him, and in His own good time, opened his mouth to speak. For many years he laboured, and was well received, amongst the old Independents.

When Eli Chappell was old enough, he was apprenticed to a tailor in Castle Coombe. During his apprenticeship, by the working of the Holy Spirit in his soul, he began to feel how sinful he was before God, but God in His infinite mercy gave his soul peace. It is to be regretted that no written account of the Lord's dealings with him was made. What is here set down is chiefly derived from conversation with him.

For a few years he lived a godly life. He crossed the Atlantic with his wife and family, and settled for a short time in New York, where he was baptized. While in New York he took a chill, and when convalescent, was ordered stimulants by the doctor who attended him. This proved to be the commencement of a great temptation to which he became a prey. A craving for intoxicating liquor mastered him, his love for the Master grew cold, and the devil, taking advantage of the low state of his mind, tempted him to commit suicide. But it was not the Lord's will that one of His little ones should thus perish; the wanderer was guided into the narrow path again in the following manner. One Sunday morning, feeling very despondent, he crept into the porch of a chapel after the service had commenced, and heard the preacher give out his text, 2 Kings 4. 26: "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well." The Lord applied the words with divine power to his soul. The snare was broken, and his soul being set at liberty, he was again enabled to rejoice in the God of his salvation.

After he had returned from America, he was desirous of casting in his lot with the Independents, with whom he worshipped, but in the course of time his mind became exercised respecting the work of the ministry. At this time the Lord greatly encouraged him with the words: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Hearing of the way Mr. Chappell's mind was being led, the pastor of the small Independent church which our friend attended invited him to speak in the neighbouring villages. He did so, many souls being blessed through him.

Being led, however, to contend for the doctrine of God's free and sovereign grace, Mr. Chappell was brought into conflict with the pastor, the result of which was our friend discontinued his membership of the Independent church and joined the Strict Baptist church in Castle Coombe.

About this time (the year 1860) a cottage was opened at Horton in Gloucestershire by a few friends, who invited him to supply for them, which he frequently did, the Lord blessing his efforts to the souls of His followers. A little chapel was subsequently built, but before its erection, some of the friends wishing to follow the Lord in the ordinance of believers' baptism, Mr. Chappell was chosen to conduct the service, and a convenient stream for the ceremony was selected.

The husband of one of the candidates, a poor woman, was much opposed to the course his wife was taking, and urged on by an evil spirit, he armed himself with a thick stick, and when his wife was in the water he dashed into the stream. Perceiving the man's intention, Mr. Chappell seized him by the collar of his coat, with the result that all three went below the surface of the water. A friend came to the rescue, and when the three regained their footing the candidate's husband was so frightened that he walked quickly out of the stream and the service was continued without further interruption. The persecutor afterwards, by God's mercy, became a worshipper at the very chapel he once hated.

Another candidate, an old man over eighty years of age, whose infirmity necessitated his being carried into the water in a chair, was so favoured with the presence of the Holy Spirit that he said he felt he could have gone to the bottom of the sea with his dear Lord and Master.

About the year 1867, Mr. Chappell removed his home to Blunsdon, near Swindon, Wilts. Trials and afflictions attended his pathway. Like all of Adam's posterity, he was subject to many infirmities of the flesh, but in the midst of his trouble the sweet truth encouraged him that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him," for, "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

While living at Blunsdon, a remarkable instance occurred of how God supplies the needs of His children. Being in business as a tailor, he had contracted a debt in respect of goods obtained from a tradesman living at Chippenham. Part of the money required to clear the debt was forthcoming, but he was anxious to pay the whole amount. As the time for payment drew near, a voice within urged him to go with what he had. At length he ventured to obey the injunction, but while in the street at Chippenham his faith was greatly tried. As he was in this troubled state of mind he met a farmer, who said to him, "Mr. Chappell, are you in trouble?" Our friend confessed that he was. Then the farmer said, "I had but little business to come to market today for, but I felt I must come," and he took from his pocket just the sum of money needed, and gave it to Mr. Chappell. After the farmer had been made acquainted with the facts of the case, he recognised the goodness of God's providence, and both he and our friend wept for joy.

From Blunsdon Mr. Chappell removed to the village of Stratton St. Margaret. While at Stratton he one day felt constrained to give a poor man all the money he possessed, 2s. 6d. He did so, and before the day was over a friend called upon him and gave him a sovereign [eight times as much], causing him to see the goodness of the Lord.

From Stratton St. Margaret he removed to Swindon. In the year 1882 his beloved wife, who for several years had been blind, was taken home. Not long before her spirit left her body she sang that sweet hymn:

“There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.”

Her end was peace.

Mr. Chappell continued to preach in many Strict Baptist churches in the west of England until he was eighty years of age, when bodily infirmity compelled him to leave the ministry. Many souls testified that he had been the means of great blessing to them.

After giving up preaching, until the time of his death he received support from the Gospel Standard Aid Society, by which means, and the kind help of friends, he was, through the watchful care of his heavenly Father, kept in comfort for the remainder of his days. He loved to converse on spiritual matters; the affairs of this world seemed to grow less and less interesting to him. He was fond of quoting hymns, and those he could not remember by heart he would read from a well-thumbed copy of Gadsby's hymnbook. He once said, “The enemy has been tempting me a great deal today, but he will not triumph, for God has said, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,’ and when once the blessed Redeemer has begun His work in a poor sinner's heart He will carry it through to the finish, and God is stronger than the devil.”

He would often speak of conflicts with the evil one. The aged saint was anxious to leave this world, but he would say, “My times are in Thy hand,” and, “I cannot go till God in His own good time sees fit.” Very gradually was his poor tabernacle of dust brought down; until eleven days before the end he was able to sit in his room and read. He then took to his bed.

On one occasion, speaking of his departure, he said,

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.”

At another time he said, “I shall soon see Him face to face; my heaven, my all.” To his son he remarked, “I should like to depart, but I wish to wait the Lord's time.” He also said, “I believe I shall go to my own company,” and that he felt firm upon the Rock. He seemed to feel that underneath him were the everlasting arms. During the last day or two of his life his breathing was very laboured, and though he appeared conscious he was unable to speak. On February 20th, 1904, the end came very quietly; he simply ceased to breathe, and his spirit fled.

His body was interred at the Swindon cemetery, Mr. George Russell conducting the service. Mr. Russell remarked at the graveside that he believed that Mr. Chappell had buried more people than any minister of

the Strict Baptist denomination in the district for some distance around, and now his time had come. A favourite hymn of Mr. Chappell's was sung, and his body was lowered into the grave in which, nearly twenty-two years previously, his wife's remains had been laid.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Life of John Milne of Perth, by Horatius Bonar; hardback; 456 pages; price £14; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We were not really familiar with John Milne (1807-1868). He was one of that remarkable group of men – Robert Murray M'Cheyne, William C. Burns, Horatius Bonar and Andrew Bonar, all good friends. So he was very much involved in the remarkable outpouring of the Spirit in Scotland in the 1840s, and in the events which led to the disruption and the formation of the Free Church of Scotland.

Almost all Milne's ministry was exercised in Perth though for four years he was in Calcutta before returning to his native Scotland.

The book is described as "one of Scotland's finest evangelical biographies." John Milne was obviously a godly man and minister, marked by his deep spirituality, humility and love for the gospel. The well-known Horatius Bonar, the author, was also a remarkable man – but we do not consider him the best biographer! Apart from being very Victorian, the book does drag: so many long letters, original documents, diary and journal extracts, etc. The book would have read better had the author summarised and carefully edited these. *The Life of John Milne* is well illustrated.

We are glad, though, that Horatius Bonar included a poem which John Milne wrote, which we found most profitable and reproduce here.

I am Thy Levite, Lord; Thou art my lot alone.
 Give me a will in sweet accord with all that is Thine own.
 Great things I will not seek; they only prove a snare;
 Enough if Thou my spirit keep, unhurt by sin and care.
 Too long I've lived for time; too long have walked by sight
 Let me now leave this earthly slime, for things all great and bright.
 Give me that unction pure, which opes the blinded eye,
 And let me see, right clear and sure, the things that are on high.
 O clothe me with Thy righteousness and make me clean within,
 That I may see Thy blessed face, Thy grace and mercy win.
 Lead me within the veil, where stands Thy glorious throne,
 And let my Saviour's plea prevail, as if it were mine own.
 Here I Thy name will praise, Thine anger's turned away;
 And Thou wilt magnify Thy grace, and all Thy love display.
 What wilt Thou, Lord, that I for Thee should do or bear?
 My heart will joyfully comply to serve Thee everywhere.
 To battle forth I go; Jehovah is my strength:
 I will not fear though strong the foe; I shall prevail at length.

We hope it is not presumptuous to close with a question which perhaps our Scottish readers can answer: Is there a difference between the religion of John Milne and that of such preachers of a former day in Scotland like John Durham and the Erskine brothers, or even his contemporary John "Rabbi" Duncan?

Some Account of the Last Sickness and Death of Joseph Francis Burrell, edited by Watkin Maddy; 28 pages; booklet; price £2.30 including postage; published by the Huntingtonian Press, and obtainable from the publishers: 72 Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hampshire, SO30 4EB.

This is a small book but it contains a wonderful account of the last days of one of God's honoured servants, Joseph Francis Burrell (1770-1853), who was for forty years the pastor of the church meeting in Great Titchfield Street, London. It has been out of print for many years and Mr. H.E. Sant relates in the preface how he located it in a university library in Dallas, U.S.A., who gave permission for it to be reprinted.

Mr. Burrell was born in Mosheim on the borders of France and Germany and brought up as a Roman Catholic. He came to England when eighteen years old and was convinced of sin and delivered from a life of dissipation, immorality and error by the Holy Spirit through reading the New Testament gospels. He became a hearer of William Huntington and later married his daughter, Naomi. His life has been published with the title *The Triumph of Christ*, and his call to the ministry, *Zion's Waymarks*. Mr. Burrell died when eighty-four years old. His last sermon was preached on October 5th, 1853, and he passed to his eternal rest on October 20th of that year. Although the nature of his illness caused his mind to be confused on natural things, he was kept clear on spiritual matters. We recommend this book to our readers.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

Roman Catholicism, Christian or Counterfeit? by David M. Blunt; 48 pages; booklet; price £3 including postage; published by Christian Watch, and obtainable from the publishers, Christian Watch (Resources), P.O. Box 3268, Leamington Spa, CV32 6YA; and also **Roman Catholicism Examined in the Light of Scripture**, edited by Timothy Nelson; 28 pages; booklet; published by The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, and obtainable from Bethany Manse, 5 Old Antrim Road, Ballymena, BT42 2HG.

These two booklets examine the Roman Catholic Church. The first contains four chapters, i.e. 1. Rome and History; 2. Rome and Society; 3. Rome and Christianity; 4. Rome and our Duty. The second contains five chapters contributed by different ministers of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, i.e. 1. The man: Peter's Successor or Papal Usurper; 2. The Mediator: Jesus Christ Alone; 3. The Message: Justification by Faith; 4. The Mass: Sham not Sacrifice; 5. The Mandate: Exposing Error.

Perhaps one good thing has arisen from the sad decision of our government in inviting the Pope to visit our country: that is the publications by various Protestant churches and societies of the true nature of the Pope and the church he represents. May the Lord in mercy use this literature to enlighten our fellow citizens, that glory might redound to His great name. We recommend these two booklets to our readers.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

William Cowper and John Newton: An Unusual Friendship, by Kenneth Dix; paperback; 60 pages; price £3 plus £1 postage; published by The Fauconberg Press, and obtainable from 10 Priory Road, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU5 4HR.

We are pleased to read anything about John Newton and William Cowper, two names that are dear to our readers.

An Unusual Friendship is a good little book, bringing in new facts about both men, at Olney and afterwards, and opening up the background in an interesting way. The subject, of course, is the remarkable friendship between Newton and Cowper.

The book is carefully documented in numerous footnotes, and has a good bibliography. There are lovely illustrations of Olney Church, market place in 1850 and "the Great House," scene of memorable meetings.

We do not agree with all the author's applications – for instance, his suggestion that Cowper's hymns lack joy, assurance and are too introspective.

Brave Boys of Derry or No Surrender! by W. Stanley Martin; hardback; 76 pages; price £5.95 plus £1.50 postage; published by Nordskog Publishing and obtainable from The Mourne Missionary Trust, 3 Carginagh Road, Kilkeel, Co. Down, BT34 4QB.

Originally written about the year 1900, and last published by The Mourne Missionary Society in 1986, this is the well-known little work on the wonderful deliverance of the town of Londonderry in Northern Ireland in 1689.

James II had been forced to abdicate, having tried to force Roman Catholicism on England. But now he was leading an army composed of French and Irish Roman Catholic soldiers, with a desire to win back the crown. Ireland was the "back door" to England! If only he could capture Londonderry, Ireland, and then England could be his again. But thirteen young apprentice boys took the lead in the cry of, "No surrender!" locking the gates and hiding the keys. In the end, after the Protestant cause had endured much suffering, the Roman Catholic army had to retreat.

The stand of the apprentice boys is still commemorated in Londonderry each year today.

Nicely produced, in clear print and well illustrated, the story is faithfully told in simple, almost colloquial language. Intended for children and young people, it is certainly of interest and profit to older readers. *Brave Boys of Derry or No Surrender!* is very suitable for a Sabbath school prize.

The book ends with a long poem on "The Siege of Derry," by Mrs. C.F. Alexander, the well known author of "All things bright and beautiful."

Christ in the Book of Zechariah (see advert on page vii).

Some have believed that there is more of Christ in the Book of Zechariah than in any other part of the Old Testament. It certainly contains prophesies of: Christ coming in lowliness – His rejection and betrayal – His crucifixion – His priesthood – His kingship – His coming in glory – His building the Lord's temple – His reign – His establishment of lasting peace and prosperity.

This work is not intended as a commentary on the whole of Zechariah but rather seeks to set forth the glories of Christ in this wonderful Book.

OBITUARY

Audrey Isabella Riche, for 44 years a member of the church at Bethel, Luton, and formerly at Hanover, Tunbridge Wells, passed away on September 4th, aged 81.

The following is her own account of her early days, written in May 1986:

Sometimes I am asked: "How did you come to go to chapel?" and I attempt to give a brief answer. Lately it has been much on my mind to try to write a little account of the Lord's mercies to me in this respect.

I was born on May 1st, 1929, at a farm in the parish of Much Hadham, Hertfordshire. I was the fourth child of my parents, another son being born nearly seven years afterwards. My father was a sincere churchman, attending the parish church at Much Hadham, where he was church warden. He was a dear man, kind and tender-hearted to the extreme, loving to help others, and never anxious about his own gain. His wish was to see his children grow up to be the same – religious and a help to society. We were each christened at the correct time, and then taken to church when we were thought to be old enough. My father said grace at meals, and we were taught to say our prayers at bedtime. We kept Sunday quietly, going to church, reading or quiet occupations, and perhaps visitors to tea. Sometimes we sang hymns in the evening. I think I was what is called naturally religious. I loved all these things. I remember sitting by an old lady who came to do mending for my mother and learning the hymn, "God is working His purpose out." I really loved it, especially the chorus:

"Nearer and nearer draws the time,
The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea."

I remember also struggling to read a book of Bible stories that my Grandma gave me.

My very earliest religious impression dates back to when I was between four and five years of age. We were going out, and my sisters and I were in the bathroom having our faces washed. I think perhaps someone had been naughty and mother was telling us about the judgment day. I was really worried, and I remember walking slowly from the bathroom to the bedroom thinking, what should I do? Some things I would not like my mother to know, so what if they were all open before God on the day of judgment? This fear was often with me through my childhood. However, I thought to be religious was the important thing.

My oldest brother, Geoffrey, was sent to a boys' prep school in Bishop's Stortford and my two sisters and I were sent to St. Mary's Convent school. My father believed in the universal love of God to everyone. He thought there was good in all religions, just differences of opinion. He saw nothing inconsistent in sending us to the convent. He had heard that the nuns did not try to influence pupils to turn Roman Catholic and he wanted us to have a good education. He did not realise the influence it would have on my mind.

I watched closely all that was done, and envied the Roman Catholic girls what I thought were their privileges – having catechism lessons, a library of

books for their own use, and being closely knit in the framework of their religion. Once a Roman Catholic got a catechism book for me by deceit, I so badly wanted one. As I grew up I longed more and more to know *what* was right. I often had to take my troubles to the Lord in prayer. I looked on the nuns as saints; they were such docile, sweet-tempered, kindly people. We once held a debate amongst ourselves – Roman Catholic girls against Church of England – but my feeling was, they lived their religion, knew what they were talking about, whereas we were so lukewarm and uninformed.

One thing I would here record. When I was about fourteen, I gave my autograph book to one of the nuns (my maths teacher, of whom I was *very* fond) and this is what she wrote in it: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” This made a great impression on me and I began to pray more earnestly. I prayed as I cycled to and from school, by my bed when I had gone to change out of my school uniform, and also went into the school chapel for this purpose. I believe I did lean hard on the Lord at the time of exams and He helped me.

I also sought Him constantly as to what to do when I left school. I wanted to work with little children, and my headmistress recommended me to go to Saffron Walden Training College to train as an infant teacher. She also gave me the opportunity of helping in the kindergarten from the time I was sixteen to eighteen years of age. It was then, working closely with one of the nuns, that I wondered if I ought to become a nun. This nun once said to me, “If you ever want to be a nun, do your training first, and then enter a convent.” So this settled my mind to go to college first and put off for a while this question of religion. It was not that I found it easy to give up the thought of my own home and family, but O I did want to be right.

All this time I was living in the midst of the world. Dances, cinema, the local tennis club were part of my life and I knew no different. It was either this or life in a convent, as far as I could see. I was not happy, felt I could not do what I would, and yet I longed after holiness.

I went to college with the intention of joining heartily in everything. When I found there was a Student Christian Movement, I felt this is for me and was pleased to attend the meetings. Once a month a speaker was invited to speak to the group. About the third month one of the lecturers, Miss Riche, was invited to speak. Before the meeting an announcement was made that it would be held in Miss Riche’s room and we were each to take our Bibles. I thought this seemed rather old-fashioned. I had a Bible, but I had hardly ever opened it. However, I went with it.

I remember the time so vividly. We were sitting round – about twelve to twenty of us – on chairs or cushions. Miss Riche asked us to turn to the Book of Ezekiel, chapter 47. I had never heard of it and had no idea where to look, so the girl next to me found it for me. I cannot remember what was said, but was just so impressed with the newness and sincerity of it all. Most people seemed to like the talk and asked Miss Riche if she would speak again the next month. For my part, I could not wait for the month to go by – I did so want to hear more. In the meantime Miss Riche spoke to me once or twice in a very friendly way; she told me later that it was because she knew I had been to a convent, thought I might be Roman Catholic, and wondered why I went to hear her speak.

Well, the next time came at last, and there we were sitting round in the same circumstances as before, and, I don't know how it was, but somehow the subject of predestination came up. I had never heard of it and did not understand what it meant, but what amazed me was that immediately most of the girls became hostile and argumentative. They obviously just could not bear the subject. I can see now how Miss Riche straightened her back and spoke with such firm persuasion that I felt sure she was right. I could not understand it; it seemed rather a hard doctrine, but I do not think I ever from that moment doubted that it was right. I remember Miss Riche saying something like this – that the world was like a garden, and the Lord, the Heavenly Gardener, had a right to come and pick what flowers He wished. O I did want to be one of them; I did want to know more about these things!

Well, after much heated discussion the meeting ended and to my sorrow the girls said that they would not listen to such things again, and they never did while I was at college. This was during my first term at college.

Well, in the rest of that year I often spoke to Miss Riche, usually just if I met her in the corridor, and she occasionally handed me a magazine to read – the *Gospel Standard*, the *Friendly Companion* or the *Gospel Magazine*. I loved the sermons, but was totally amazed that men could preach such beautiful things. It was during this time that I began to read my Bible daily, not because I knew that anyone else did that, but because it seemed the only way to become acquainted with it. Towards the end of my first year I was unwell and in sick bay for a few days. Then Miss Riche came to see me one evening and she opened her Bible and read Psalm 27 to me. It was all so new, so good – I have ever since counted that my favourite Psalm.

When I came to my second year at college, I had a study bedroom of my own instead of sharing. It then became easier for me to be independent of other girls and to come and go as I wished. Also, a strange thing happened. Second years were appointed to certain duties in college and I was put in charge of stationery. This meant opening the stationery cupboard once a week and the students came for whatever they needed. I did not know until I was given the job (and it was the students who voted people into these jobs) that it entailed getting the stationery cupboard key from Miss Riche each week and returning it to her, also ordering fresh stationery from her. This, of course, meant more opportunities of speaking to her, without other students being suspicious why.

About November that year, Miss Riche asked me if I would like to go to a little chapel at Dunmow with her one Sunday. I did, but do not remember much about it. Of course, a non-conformist type of service was quite new to me. Then in December she asked me to go to Cambridge with her, to Tenison Road Chapel to hear a Mr. Jones [Percy Jones, died January 4th, 1982, aged 88]. That occasion I remember so well. I can picture myself in the seat now, and the minister in the pulpit preaching, and the feeling I had that it was *God Himself* speaking through that man to my soul.

From then it was that this preaching became so important to me. It was from then that I looked up to the Lord to place me where I could hear such preaching. I was also impressed with the hymns. They seemed so real. I had seen the people in the parish church hold up their hymn books and sing away, but this was different and it touched my heart.

After Christmas it was soon time to begin to look for a teaching post. One day I saw a letter on the notice board from Luton Education Committee asking for teachers for infant and junior schools. I told Miss Riche about it. She said she thought it would suit me well as there would be two chapels there for me to choose from. In the meantime she took me to chapel with her, I should think five or six times before I left college.

I remember so well when I left. I was parting with the friend who had been such a help to me. I had got ten weeks at home before starting teaching. My desire was to show them at home something of this "new thing" that had captured my heart and affections. But everything went wrong. My parents were not pleased with the change, and my huge trial began, that of grieving my mother, whom I so dearly loved and could not bear to hurt, and yet seeming unable to do anything about it. A rift grew up between us, which lasted for the most part until the last few weeks of her life, when she showed again that old love and tenderness, that made it break my heart to lose her. I remember one time particularly when my parents wanted me to go to the seaside with them on a Sunday. When I refused they were so upset and said they would not go without me, and I had spoilt their pleasure. I was helping on the farm at the time and one day I was singing all day, in great sadness,

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow."

This reminds me to mention how I came to buy my Gadsby's hymnbook. One day Miss Riche and I were travelling in her car, and she sang, "Fear not, I am with thee" (hymn 329). O how I wanted that hymn book! I found it advertised in one of the magazines she lent me, so I sent for one. How I loved it, and have ever since! I remember how she came into my room at college and I showed her I had got it, and she was so touched and said how she hoped it would be made a blessing to me, and it certainly has.

Well, these sad holidays came to an end, and the time arrived to come to Luton. I did not know how to wait to be near a chapel. The first Wednesday evening I went along to Ebenezer, only to find the service was cancelled, and as I stood outside wondering what to do, an old lady said to me (she also had not known the service was cancelled), "Come to Bethel with me." So we walked down Dumfries Street to Bethel. Then what a blessing that spot was made to me! Sundays and week nights I could hardly wait for the services. I can truly say the Lord blessed me, and watered my soul, and bored my ears to the doorposts. *He knew* the trial of my heart concerning my parents which continued and increased, and He so blessed my soul that I had no alternative but to press on, and to continue to draw water from the wells of salvation.

Here Mrs. Riche's own account ends.

After a few years at Luton, she felt led to Tunbridge Wells, though finding it very hard to leave Bethel. She was greatly blessed under the ministry of the pastor, Mr. S. Curtis. In the Christmas holidays of 1955, she visited a friend in Luton, and was telling her of various things the Lord had done for her. The friend asked whether she felt the time had come to speak of these things to the church. She realised it probably had, but she wanted a word from the Lord, not just from man.

During these Christmas holidays she was at home at her parents' farm, and things were very difficult for her, particularly as Christmas Day was on a Sunday, and she felt unable to join in with the usual Christmas activities on that day. Towards the end of the time, she went to bed one evening, and turned out the light, and the Lord spoke the word to her, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee." It was as if, without her thinking about what came next, everything the Lord had done for her passed before her. She longed for the Lord to show her what she should do before returning to Tunbridge Wells, and it was as though the Lord Himself spoke, "What doth hinder thee?" And she said it seemed as if she could see a way ahead of her that went straight through baptism, and she answered, "Nothing Lord." From then the way seemed so clear.

On returning to Tunbridge Wells after the holidays, she wrote to Mr. Curtis, and subsequently went before the church at Hanover, Tunbridge Wells, and was baptized on February 9th, when Mr. Curtis preached from, "To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen" (Rom. 16. 27). She felt she could see such wisdom in every step of the way that the Lord had led her that there was not another text in the whole Bible more suitable for her. She walked through the waters of baptism with great joy, and wrote, "I have to say to the honour and glory of my precious Saviour that I was allowed to walk on in the light of that joy for a very long time."

In 1961 she married Bernard Riche (brother of Miss Riche), and moved to Great Shelford, near Cambridge. They attended Oakington chapel, which was about ten miles away, and her great desire was to be able to live somewhere within walking distance of a chapel.

Her husband was eventually offered a transfer to a new office which was opening in Luton, and she often spoke of how the Lord provided a home for them about a mile from Bethel. They moved there in 1965 and she transferred her membership to Bethel in 1966. She was a person who saw the Lord's hand in the little details of life, and many times over the years that she lived in their house, she would speak of how suitable it was in different ways for the family as they grew up there.

She loved the ordinance of the Lord's supper, and sometimes mentioned how her pastor referred to it as a "strengthening ordinance" and how often she had found it to be so. In the last few months of her life, she found it particularly hard to be unable to attend the ordinance.

In October 2004, her husband was taken suddenly, having a heart attack one night and passing away the following afternoon. The previous evening, Mr. J.R. Broome had been preaching at Bethel from Exodus 33. 13. She had come to chapel feeling in much need, yet felt to be lifted above her present circumstances, though little knowing what was before her, and wrote of feeling the presence of the Saviour, then and in the days that followed.

In September 2006 she moved into the Harpenden Bethesda Home, and deeply valued this provision, the care shown to her, and especially the morning readings in the Home, and the services which were relayed there. She referred to Bethesda as being "a waiting place for that home above."

Latterly she was unable to attend chapel, and listened to the services over the relay in her room. Many times she spoke of how good the services were to her, on one occasion saying that every word had been for her. Two sermons she particularly mentioned were the evening of June 13th, 2010, when the text was,

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us," and the evening of August 1st: "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The former sermon was subsequently published in the *Bethel Pulpit*, and a few days before she died, she spoke of how she had enjoyed reading it.

On July 12th, Mr. Christian took the reading at Bethesda and read Exodus 33. The verse which had enabled her to go forward and be baptized, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee," was sweetly opened up and blessed to her again. When Mr. Christian read the words from Exodus 33, she was overwhelmed by the remembrance of the Lord's goodness to her.

Then on August 8th, Mr. Jonathan Buss preached from the same text (Exodus 33. 19) and this was a very special time to her.

On Friday, September 3rd, she had a happy day, enjoying a walk in the garden, time spent with another resident and visits from some of her family. About 8 o'clock in the evening, she had a stroke, losing the use of her right side and also her speech, and passed away in hospital at 6:20 the following morning.

While in the hospital, she was unable to communicate, although when spoken to, she would open her eyes and look at her family, and her eyes filled with tears when the verse was quoted to her:

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

She had often spoken of how she dreaded having a stroke and being helpless and unable to speak, yet the Lord's goodness to her continued to her final hours, in that she was taken quickly to be with Him, and not left for a long period in such a helpless condition.

A.A.K.

Note by her pastor

Mrs. Riche was a wonderful example of what it means to give up everything for Jesus' sake. To her dying day she felt the sadness brought about by her separation from her father and mother whom she so dearly loved. She walked out the word: "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." "Whose faith follow." May we be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."



I find from the Word of God that two roads lie through the wilderness of this world. The one, at its beginning, is pleasant to carnal nature, being strewn with forbidden pleasures, sensual delights and materialistic gratifications; but growing darker and more crooked and thorny as it advances, it ends abruptly in eternal misery. The other, difficult at the entrance, requires many sacrifices and much self-denial; but gradually increasing in light and beauty, it terminates in the blissful regions of immortal glory. In which of these roads am I now walking?

Thomas Reade

PRAISE FOR THE INCARNATION

"For your sakes He became poor" (2 Cor. 8. 9)

All praise to Thee, eternal Lord,
Clothed in a garb of flesh and blood;
Choosing a manger for Thy throne,
While worlds on worlds are Thine alone.

Once did the skies before Thee bow;
A virgin's arms contain Thee now;
Angels who did in Thee rejoice
Now listen for Thine infant voice.

A little Child, Thou art our Guest,
That weary ones in Thee may rest;
Forlorn and lowly is Thy birth,
That we may rise to heaven from earth.

Thou comest in the darksome night
To make us children of the light,
To make us, in the realms divine,
Like Thine own angels round Thee shine.

All this for us Thy love hath done;
By this to Thee our love is won:
For this we tune our cheerful lays,
And shout our thanks in ceaseless praise.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)
from the German

THE POPE'S VISIT

Much concern has been expressed that our young people and children do not really realise the dangers of Romanism and just how wrong its beliefs are. Because of this, several people have requested that a sermon entitled *Only One Way – The difference between God's Way and the Way of the Roman Catholic Church*, preached at the beginning of the week of the Pope's visit, should be published. This is based on John 14. 6 and seeks simply and clearly to explain vital differences between what the Scriptures teach and what the Pope stands for – but emphasising the *right* way and the vital necessity of being found in it.

Copies are available free of charge from Mrs. Alison Kingham, 11 Sutherland Place, Luton, LU1 3SY. Though intended for our young people, there is certainly no desire to limit the booklet to them.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

Editor: B.A. Ramsbottom

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OUR MAGAZINES

Through God's mercy the *Gospel Standard* has now been published without a break for 175 years. We would raise our Ebenezer, saying, "Having obtained help" (and *only* as having obtained help!) "we continue to this day." May the founders' desire still be granted:

"Thus may we prove God's promise true,
And glorify His name."

The Editor