

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JANUARY 2012

“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

It is a sad world which sees the dawning of the year 2012. Unrest in the Middle East – Libya, Syria, Egypt – financial crisis in Europe, but worse: the flood of wickedness which at times seems almost to overwhelm the world and our country. Dreadful is the way in which evil is now legalised and lauded, while those who stand for truth and righteousness are scorned if not persecuted.

Amidst it all God still has His people, “a remnant according to the election of grace,” who sigh and cry because of all these things. Their hope is in that simple, foundation truth: “The Most High Ruleth” (Dan. 4. 17), a truth that can never be overturned.

As we look back over the past year, it is with gratitude that we still have our privileges – the gospel, the Lord’s day and the freedom to worship. The godly Puritan George Swinnock, writing 350 years ago, emphasised the need for God’s people never to forget their mercies:

“Meditate on God’s mercies to you from your birth. Look at the dangers you have been delivered from, the journeys you have been protected in, the seasonable help He has sent you, the suitable support He has afforded you in distress, the counsel He has given you in doubts, and the comforts He has provided you in sorrow and darkness. Every breath in your life is a gift of mercy.

“Do not forget the former favours bestowed on you and your family. The civet box, when the perfume is gone, still retains its scent. So when your mercies are past, you should still have the scent and savour of them upon your spirit.

“Then meditate on your present mercies. How many do you enjoy – house, family, body and soul are all full of blessings! Think of them particularly. If jewels are bundled up together, their riches and worth are

hid; they must be viewed and considered one by one; then their value will appear.

“Meditate how freely they are bestowed, on their fulness and greatness. But O your soul’s mercies – the image of God, the blood of Christ, eternal life and seasons of grace! Your whole life is a bundle of mercies.”

These are seasonable words, as true now as then. But in contemplating the Lord’s mercies during the past year, how we are conscious of so many failures and sins. Our only refuge is the mercy of God in Christ in the atonement.

“Can blood such dreadful sins atone?
Yes! blood as rich as Thine.”

Our burden this year is to write on a most weighty subject, “The Withdrawing of the Holy Spirit,” a subject we were led most solemnly to speak about some months ago. How we need to pray David’s prayer: “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me” (Psa. 51. 11), both personally and in the churches!

THE WITHDRAWING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Word of God is abundantly clear. When once the Holy Spirit takes up His abode in a sinner’s heart and life, He never leaves him. That sinner never deserved the Holy Spirit’s presence. All his sins can never cause the Holy Spirit finally to leave him. It can be said of the Holy Spirit as well as the Saviour:

“Whom once He loves He never leaves,
But loves him to the end.”

“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine own hands.”

Then if the Holy Spirit never leaves the heart of a sinner saved by grace, if this is impossible, why, why did David pray a prayer like this: “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me”? If where the Holy Spirit works in a sinner’s heart, He is never taken away, why did David pray a prayer like this? We think we can say for two special reasons. The first was this: this was still a dark and shadowy dispensation. There was not yet the full revelation of the gospel with the Old Testament church. The Holy Spirit worked among them and they knew of the Holy Spirit, but they did not have the full light. We think of that wonderful revelation just before the Lord Jesus left this earth, John chapters 14, 15 and 16, when He spoke so beautifully on the work of the Holy Spirit. But when David prayed this prayer, he had not yet had that clear revelation that we have:

“Whom once He loves He never leaves,
But loves him to the end.”

But then secondly, David felt he deserved it. You find in the Old Testament and even in the New that people do pray that the Lord will not do things He has clearly promised He will never do; but it is because they feel that they deserve He will. The first part of this verse: “Cast me not away from Thy presence.” Well, “The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.” But David felt he deserved it. So, “Cast me not away from Thy presence.” He deserved it. “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” He felt he deserved it. It is part of this humble confession of sin. “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.... Purge me with hyssop.” Hyssop was that little plant used for applying the blood. He wanted a personal interest in atoning blood. So do we. “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

“Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” He felt he deserved it. Yet what a mercy, we know that for a sinner saved by grace that is an impossibility. The Lord never begins to work in a sinner’s heart and then leaves him finally. But – and this is a very solemn *but* – though the Lord never takes away the Holy Spirit from the heart of a sinner saved by grace, that is, the Holy Spirit never leaves the heart of a sinner saved by grace, the Holy Spirit does sometimes leave a church that has been abundantly blessed, a church where He has been at work. Solemn thing that, that there are churches that the Lord has blessed and where the Holy Spirit has most graciously worked, and then the Holy Spirit is taken away, taken away for ever, taken away finally, and Ichabod is written there. It seems very clear that if the Holy Spirit ever departs from a church or from a congregation, that He never returns.

In the Book of the Revelation, we have this expression: the candlestick and the removing of the candlestick. It is the same point, the same truth. Really it is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” revealed by the Holy Spirit; the candlestick, the divine light shining, the Holy Spirit’s light shining, and to those seven churches in Asia Minor at the beginning of the Book of the Revelation, the Lord solemnly warned them about the removing of the candlestick. Some of them were blessed churches. Where are they today? It would appear that not one of them exists, or if there is any worship there, it is either false or mixed worship.

And have we not seen it with our own chapels? Some most favoured places with large congregations, and then the witness comes to

an end. Why, we preached at one of our chapels in our early days to five hundred people. It is gone now. Now you see the removing of the candlestick, the taking away of the Holy Spirit. How we need to heed that word: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," because those who worship can grieve the Spirit of God, and then the Spirit of God departs.

"Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." When the Holy Spirit departs from a church, it is not in a moment; it is not overnight. You have it opened up very strikingly, very clearly in the vision that Ezekiel saw. He saw the glory of God in the temple. The glory of God was at the front, the glory of God over the altar. It is in his vision. He saw the glory of God removed from the altar to the back of the temple. It was gradual. It seemed no-one was concerned, no-one noticed it. Was there anyone who would weep between the porch and the altar concerning this departure of the glory of the Lord? But then as you go on through the Book of the prophet Ezekiel, you find that the glory of God moved from the back of the temple outside the temple, and the people did not realise the difference. They did not realise it had gone. And there it lingered. The people had sinned. They had grieved the Lord. There had been a quenching of the Spirit. There was this gradual withdrawing. And then the glory of the Lord moved from outside the temple, from the threshold and it hovered over the city, hovered over the city of Jerusalem. Was no-one concerned? Would no-one pray? Was there none to say, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us"? Until at last Ezekiel said he saw the glory of God disappear over the tops of the mountains. (See Ezekiel chapters 8 to 11).

That is how the Holy Spirit withdraws from the church, how the glory of the Lord departs and how the candlestick is removed – not all at once. And when the Holy Spirit departs from any church, chapel, meeting-place, the doors may as well be closed. The services might go on, hymns might be sung, there might be preachers, but if the Holy Spirit is not present, if the Holy Spirit is not graciously working, then it is all empty and all in vain.

There is a need to pray this prayer in this present day: "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us," because it does seem apparent on every hand, in the nation, in the professing church of God and in our own chapels as one by one they are closed, that the Holy Spirit is being removed. We need the confession of Psalm 51 personally and concerning our churches. We need to examine ourselves: why? We need to examine ourselves, are we walking according to the light of the Holy Spirit? Are we grieving the Holy Spirit? Are we disobeying the Holy Spirit? Are we quenching the Holy Spirit? "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us?" Because it must ever be this if there is to be any hope, any blessing, any salvation: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” But moving on a little, it does seem that in so many places where the Holy Spirit is not entirely withdrawn from the denomination and churches and congregations, that there is a withdrawing of His influence. Now there is a difference. There is a difference between the Holy Spirit departing and departing for ever, and the Holy Spirit withdrawing His sacred influence. So what a need there is to pray this prayer, that the sacred influence of the Holy Spirit should not be withdrawn.

If we have known the Holy Spirit working among us, we need to be thankful and to bless the Lord for it, but not take it for granted and not slip back into indifference and prayerlessness.

“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” Still graciously work amongst us in sinners’ hearts. There can be no real change, no real conversion, no real blessing apart from this. Take not the Holy Spirit’s gracious, sacred influence away from our prayer meetings. O may there be those real, prevailing prayers that we have known. May we not be left to lapse into formality, carelessness. “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us” in our solemn, sacred assemblies. “Take not Thy Holy Spirit” away from the preaching of the gospel, otherwise it will do no real good. It might instruct the mind, but it will not touch a single sinner’s heart. It is “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us” in the way we behave one towards another, in our homes and lives and families, how we deal with our choices and decisions and plans. “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us” in our church meetings. “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us” in our love and fellowship one towards another. “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” And then that prayer:

“May the grace of Christ, our Saviour,
 And the Father’s boundless love,
 With the Holy Spirit’s favour,
 Rest upon us from above.
Thus may we abide in union
 With each other and the Lord;
 And possess, in sweet communion,
 Joys which earth cannot afford.”

“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” O may there be that constant prayer at our prayer meetings and in our homes for the Holy Spirit in a special way to be present with us, to bless the Word as it is read and as it is spoken, to work in sinners’ hearts in the new birth, for, “Ye must be born again” – no hope, no salvation, no heaven without it. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” We need the Holy Spirit to bless the gospel to us, to enable sinners to believe, to give the gift of repentance, to give the gift of faith. We need the Holy Spirit’s presence to meet the needs of seeking, longing souls, to give a token for good, to give a crumb of mercy. We need the Holy Spirit to touch our hearts, to shed abroad the Saviour’s love. We need the Holy Spirit to give us a spirit of real worship, that we might worship at Immanuel’s feet, and that flowing together to the goodness of the Lord. O in a special way that is the Holy Spirit’s sovereign, gracious, merciful work. “They ... shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord.”

“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” We need the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ, to make Him precious, to shed His love abroad in our hearts, to assure us of our interest. O, “take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” We do need the Holy Spirit to enable us to “walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us.” O this prayer: “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” We need to be concerned lest in any way we should grieve the Holy Spirit. We need our hearts to be kept very, very tender in these things. We need to watch against hardness in the things of God, because when the Holy Spirit is graciously present, there is no hardness.

We speak of the sweet, bedewing influences of the Spirit of God. “I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” This has been it in days of real prosperity in the church of God. We talk of the outpouring of the Spirit. May we pray for it. That is the very opposite of: “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” But that beautiful word: “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field.” Apart from the Holy Spirit’s work, a church, a congregation, a chapel is a wilderness, and apart from the Holy Spirit’s work, your heart, my heart is a wilderness. “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high.” And then the difference! It is not a wilderness any longer. The Lord says the wilderness shall become a fruitful field. Now may there be this burden, may there be this prayer.

This of course is the negative in the church of God: “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” O may there be the positive, the praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and His sacred, powerful influence in the church of God and in our lives. That beautiful word that some of us have treasured and may we still prove it: “According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth among you” – that is it – “so My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.” O may we be kept humble before the Lord in confession, in His holy fear.

“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from us.” Now that is the church of God. Now personally. The Holy Spirit once working in a sinner’s heart never

leaves that sinner. What did the Lord Jesus say? "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever." O what a word that is: "He may abide with you for ever"! But just as with the church of God, where the Holy Spirit does not finally, entirely depart there can be a withdrawing of His sacred influence, so with us personally. Now if the Holy Spirit has ever blessed us, He will never leave us. That is clear. "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." But there can be the withdrawing of His sacred influences, and then we become careless, and there is not much life when we come to the house of God, not much appetite, not much desire, and we read the Word of God formally, because it is our duty. There is not much liberty in prayer. Perhaps we become more careless in the things we do. Our affections are not completely set on things above. We become more carnal, more earthly-minded.

Well, we could go on and on and on. You know these things. It is a mercy if they grieve us. It is a mercy if they make us sad. It is a mercy if we are not satisfied with them. So in this sense, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me," His sacred, gracious influences. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." We long for it. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection." We could do with that. We think of some of those beautiful hymns of ours, some of those hymns on the Holy Spirit, like number 27.

"Cheer our desponding hearts,
Thou heavenly Paraclete" – the Comforter;
"Give us to lie, with humble hope,
At our Redeemer's feet.

"Revive our drooping faith;
Our doubts and fears remove;
And kindle in our breasts the flames
Of never-dying love.

"Show us that loving Man
That rules the courts of bliss,
The Lord of Hosts, the Mighty God,
The eternal Prince of Peace."

These are the gracious leadings and workings of the Holy Spirit. But at the end it tells us quite clearly what happens when the Holy Spirit does withdraw His gracious influence.

"No longer burns our love;
Our faith and patience fail;
Our sin revives, and death and hell
Our feeble souls assail."

“Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” I need Thee to teach me. “They shall be all taught of God.” May I be one of them. Teach me by Thy Spirit. “That which I see not teach Thou me” – the way I have to go; teach me where I am wrong; reveal the Saviour to me. Fulfil that ancient promise: “I will make a Man more precious than fine gold; even a Man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” Shed abroad the Saviour’s love in my heart. It is Thy office to glorify the Saviour and to take of the things of Jesus and to reveal them to sinners. O “take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” May He still be with me to teach me and lead me and hold me and uphold me and bless me.

So with a child of God, the Holy Spirit can never finally leave, but there can be that grieving of the Holy Spirit. There can be the withdrawing of His sacred influence. That is what William Cowper meant:

“Return, O holy Dove! return,
Sweet Messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast.”

People have contradicted that word. They have argued that it should never appear in a hymnbook. But they are looking at it from the point of view of hard, dry doctrine, a doctrine that the Holy Spirit in the sinner’s heart never leaves him, and they are forgetting altogether the experience of it, the sad experience. O may it be our great concern in the churches and in our own hearts and lives and families and circumstances, to be under this vital, sacred influence and love and teaching and gracious work of the Holy Spirit. The Lord graciously fulfil this prayer: “Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.”

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As we enter on the new year, we think of the apostle’s words: “Not knowing the things that shall befall me.” The future is wisely hidden from us. But a few things we do know. The world will not be less wicked. Satan will not be less active. Our needs will still be as great. But that wonderful fulness of love, mercy and grace in Christ will still remain.

We are conscious that there is much deep sorrow among our congregations, in many different ways. “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upwards,” and born again to more trouble. Yet we know “affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground.” May sorrowful souls know the sinner’s only safe and sure retreat (as spoken by Eliphaz): “I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause.” Encouragingly he adds: “Which doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous thing without number.”

We sympathise with our sorrowing friends; but may you know that greater, deeper sympathy of our great and glorious High Priest, “touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

When we come to Marah, we cannot drink of the waters, for they are bitter. But there is a remedy – divine interposition: the tree cut down and cast in. That is, Christ taking the sinner’s place; and then the merit of His death being applied to a feelingly guilty soul, and His power made known to uphold and deliver and bring safely through in sorrow. Israel were not always at Marah. “They came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and three score and ten palm trees.” “Nevertheless afterward!”

As the years pass by we mourn the loss of the godly taken by the hand of death. “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth.” Apart from our own congregations, we have sympathised with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in the quite sudden death of the Edinburgh pastor, Hugh M. Cartwright. Mr. Cartwright was a man of much ability and grace, and had a deep love for the *Gospel Standard* and the gospel truths that it stands for. We mourn when it is “the time of the King’s mowings.” What a beauty we see in the promise: “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass”! May it be graciously fulfilled.

We are prayerfully interested in our new ministers and those hoping to take up pastorates. Especially have we been saddened by the severe illnesses of Mr. David Haddow, Mr. John Broome and Mr. Philip Warren, praying that the Lord will be with them. We believe there is still a spirit of love and sympathy in our churches; and,

“Love is the golden chain that binds
Those happy souls above;
And he’s an heir of heaven that finds
His bosom glow with love.”

The past year has marked the 400th anniversary of our King James Version of the Bible, and we have been gratified to read of the many tributes paid – even by ungodly people. 2012 marks the 60th Anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen’s reign. We pray Almighty God may favour her in her last years. We wonder what other anniversaries will be remembered this coming year. Much has been written of Calvin recently, and now John Knox and the Reformation in Scotland. 2012 is the 350th anniversary of the 1662 Great Ejection from the Church of England of over 2000 ministers who could not, for the truth’s sake, subscribe to everything in the Prayer Book. There was much persecution and distress. We need to remember our worthy forefathers and what they endured.

But we feel sure that the one anniversary which will captivate people’s attention will be the centenary of the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912. This terrible event left an awful impression then, and has done ever since. Many books continue to be written. But for God’s people it

was a fearful judgment that took place. There was so much boasting – never a ship like it – given the name of a heathen God – unsinkable (blasphemously it was said, “Not even God can sink the *Titanic*”). But what a disaster with such terrible loss of life! A young Strict Baptist from Garstang tried hard to book a place on the *Titanic*. What disappointment when he failed! But what relief afterwards! Our disappointments are “*His* appointments.”

Apart from anniversaries, there will be much excitement next year when the Olympic Games take place in England. This is counted a great honour, and thousands enthusiastically look forward to it. Sadly this enthusiasm almost becomes idolatry at times in the adulation of sporting heroes. It appears the Olympic Games were known in New Testament times, for the Apostle Paul writes: “Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.”

In closing we wish our churches and our readers well, at home and overseas. It is not in a way of formality that we close with the benediction. We feel it contains everything. (What a beautiful ending it is to our services!)

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”

Yours to serve in the gospel,
The Editor
B.A. Ramsbottom

A NEW YEAR SERMON

*Sermon preached at Southill Chapel, on January 1st, 2011,
published at the request of the Southill friends*

Text: “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel” (Phil. 1. 12).

I always feel New Year’s day is a solemn time. We look back over the past year, past and gone for ever, and we have the new year before us. How many of us shall see the end of it, we do not know, neither do we know “what gloomy lines are writ for us or what bright scenes may arise.” Really it is wise that we should not know, that the unknown way is hidden from us. But as we come to the new year, I am sure that some of you have things before you that you dread, you shrink from. Others have things you look forward to; perhaps some have things written down in your diary. But the Apostle Paul said on one occasion, “Not knowing the things that shall befall me.” Even the great apostle did not know.

But one thing is sure: there are going to be “things which happen to us.” Because we know this world is a world of sin and sorrow and man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward, we know that some of those things which will happen to us will be days of trouble, days of disappointment, days of sickness, days of ill health, days of bereavement, days of pain. We know that in greater or less measure, along with joys and happiness and pleasant things, there will be *these* things which happen to us. We would rather they did not happen to us; we do not want them to happen to us; but we know that as time goes on there will be things here and things there, and these things will happen to us – in the church of God, in the world, in our homes, in our families, in our lives, in our circumstances, things which will happen to us. But you know, beloved friends, the point here is this: that though these things will happen to us, they will not only happen, they will not just happen. The Word of God tells us that they will *fall out*.

“The things which happened unto me have fallen out.” So that means that whatever befalls you and me in this coming year, it will happen – of course it will happen; it must happen – but it will not just happen; it will not merely happen. It will fall out. And where will it fall out from? It will fall out from the lap of an all-wise providence. “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” It will fall out of the hand of an almighty God.

So here we see the mystery of providence, almighty God, sovereign, in control, nothing taking Him by surprise, nothing happening by chance, blind fortune, nothing being accomplished just by the will of Satan and evil men. O to have believing views this afternoon of almighty God upon the throne. “He doeth 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?”

“His providence unfolds the book,
And makes His counsels shine;
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,
Fulfil some deep design.”

O that in our congregations we had clearer views, more believing views of the greatness of our God, that He is almighty, that He is sovereign. So all that is going to take place is going to fall out according to His own purpose and according to the counsel of His own will.

“The things which happened unto me have fallen out” – not just happened; they have fallen out. But the blessed point here this afternoon is that for the people of God, whatever takes place falls out for the honour and glory of God and for the good of His people. As the apostle puts it here: “Fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” And his desire is that the churches should realise it. Well, I suppose in one

sense we do realise it. We have that beautiful hymn in our hymnbooks: "God moves in a mysterious way." We know it off by heart; it is a wonderful thing if we possess it in our hearts. Like the old preacher said, "If only we did believe what we do believe" – the mysterious providence of God, in complete control, making everything work together for the honour and glory of His name and for His people's good. That well-known yet perhaps little-known word: "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." The Apostle Paul said it, and he said, We know it, but he did not say we always feel it, because the apostle himself sometimes did not really feel it. He had some sad things to say about what he felt. Just take the second Epistle to the Corinthians chapter 4, when he tells us something about his feelings there, and what about chapter 1, when he was pressed beyond measure so that he despaired even of life? But he said, "We know it." "We *know* that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Of course, the emphasis there is on the word *together* – not just one by one, but together. It is like some of these wonderful medicines you hear of. They say if someone who understands reads through their prescription, some of the things in themselves are deadly poison. If you took one by itself, it would kill you. But together and when they are skilfully blended together, the difference, what a cure!

"And we know," says the apostle, "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." And do not forget this word "all things" means *all things*. I understand that even the great Dr. John Gill in one place tries to explain it away by saying that of course it cannot mean all things; things that are happening in far-off China are nothing whatsoever to do with working together for your good and my good; we have got to be sensible in understanding it. But my old friend Mr. F.L. Rowell had been reading Dr. Gill on that, where he said that it is ridiculous to think things in far-off China are among the "all things." Mr. Rowell at that time with a large family and in poverty was praying that the Lord would appear. The very next day he received a letter from a young soldier who had been conscripted and sent off to either North or South Korea to fight there. In his letter he said that he received plentiful wages, but nothing to spend it on out in the Far East, so he felt a bit of it would be helpful for Mr. Rowell and his large family. "All things," even to the uttermost parts of the earth – nothing excluded – working together for them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

"The things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." It seemed impossible that they

could, but they have. Paul says, "I would that ye might understand it," because unbelief can never understand this, and the world cannot understand it, and carnal religion cannot understand it, and sometimes you and I cannot understand it, but Paul says, "I would that ye might." It is only as the Lord shines on your heart and He shines on your pathway and He shines on the Word and He shines on your providences that you understand it.

"I would, brethren, that ye understood it." Well, what were these things here that Paul was speaking about, these things that were so distressing his beloved friends and among the Lord's people in the churches? What were these things, sad things, disappointing things? Well, very simply, Paul was in prison in Rome. He could no longer visit the churches. They were missing his presence, his visits. He no longer had the freedom to go about here and there, preaching what he so much loved, the glorious gospel of the grace of God. And it seemed at this particular time he was being limited even more in his freedom. The churches were troubled about it. Why does the Lord permit it? Why are things like this allowed to take place? It is such a dreadful loss to the church of God. Surely the Lord could have overruled it. Surely He could have given Paul his freedom. Why are such things happening? Why are such things being permitted? Well, I think perhaps some of you know something of the unbelieving *whys* at times, don't you? Why has this come into my life? Why has the Lord permitted it? Why has the Lord allowed it? The people of God generally did not know the answer. But you see Paul was blessed with living faith to find this resting place. One of the old German hymnwriters starts his hymn like this: "O sweet, beloved will of God." Now, Paul had a resting place there.

So he said, "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." He puts a *rather* on it. In other words, it is better that all these terrible things have happened, than if they had not have happened. *Rather*. Well, how could it be? In two or three ways.

First of all, there were some of God's chosen ones, hidden away in the ruins of the fall, even in Rome, even in Caesar's palace. How could they possibly be reached with the truth? Well, Paul must be there in prison.

"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." There is a *rather* here. Paul says, It is a good thing that I am here. It is a good thing that I am suffering. It is a good thing that all these things are happening to me. It is for the furtherance of the gospel. One here called by grace, one here awakened, one here blessed. That is one thing for the furtherance of the gospel.

But there is a second thing. Paul goes on to say, “My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear.” In other words, Paul was being permitted to set a most gracious and loving example in suffering. And it was such a help, such an encouragement to many others of the tried and tempted people of God.

“The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” And then there was the third thing. Paul could no longer visit the churches to preach to them. What did he spend his time doing? Writing some of those glorious epistles, which were not just made a help and a blessing in the life of Paul, but are still being made a help and a blessing in the church of God today. O you see the mysterious sovereignty of God. Sometimes you wonder why some things happen in your life. Why has this taken place? Why has the Lord permitted it? Let us be clear, beloved friends, often it is afterwards, often it is looking back, it is *then* God’s people can say, “Disappointment, His appointment.”

So I read to you about Joseph. What a wonderful commentary the life of Joseph is on this verse: “The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” In Joseph’s case, his own exaltation, his own blessing, the good of his family, the maintaining of the Old Testament church in that day, the supplying of their needs, the glory of God. Well, that chapter I read to you this afternoon (Genesis 37) was a terrible chapter, wasn’t it? Poor Joseph – you say, Why, why should these things happen to him? Dear, godly boy. I know he was not always wise in some of the things he said to his wicked brothers, but being so cruelly treated, his brothers planning his death, deceiving their aged father, throwing him into a pit, selling him to Ishmeelites. Then he lands up in Egypt, a slave in a heathen land, in a heathen home, so far away from his family, seemingly never going to see them again. And what about these dreams he had? Let us be clear, those dreams he had were God’s word to him in that day; they were God’s promise. If you have ever seen things going wrong, things turning out badly, look at that chapter we read this afternoon. If you go on to the chapter where he is in the house of Potiphar, well, things go from bad to worse – deceived, cheated, falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife, standing firmly, seeking to honour the Lord, thrown into prison, forgotten by the butler whom he had befriended. All these steps seemed to be steps to ruin.

“I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.” The Lord had a purpose there. But “until the time that his word came, the word of the Lord tried him.” They put him in irons. The

margin says the iron entered into his soul, and well it might. You see, Joseph, when he was in the midst of it, could not see the Lord's purpose in it. He could not see these things falling out of the hands of a good and wise and gracious God. Till his word came, the word of the Lord tried him. It was later, in after years, when everything had been put straight, in looking back, he could say, "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."

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

The end of a thing is better than the beginning, and Joseph proved it. "For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off."

"The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" – for the good of old Jacob and the church of God in that day. "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."

"I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." Now, only the Lord can do this. Only the Lord can turn things into other things. The first miracle the Lord Jesus performed was turning water into wine, and He can still turn things into other things. He did with Joseph, and He did with Paul. In one place He says this: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Now the world has never accomplished that. The world with all its inventions can turn all kinds of things into all kinds of other things, but the world has never yet learnt the secret of how to turn sorrow into joy; that is in the Lord's own hands. He did it with Joseph; He did it with Paul; and He can do it for you. "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

"I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel." Whilst you were singing that beautiful hymn on divine providence, I just turned up and put the marker in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 11. We read of "the persecution that arose about Stephen." That was a dreadful thing in the early church. The Lord raised up such a godly, eminent man. Suddenly he was taken from them in cruel circumstances, stoned to death, that martyr's death. There was a persecution arose, "the persecution that arose about Stephen." It was a time of deep sorrow and dreadful distress for the early church. But in those closing verses in Acts chapter 11, you see the unfolding of the mystery of divine providence, the things that happened falling out rather to the furtherance of gospel.

“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the Word” – where the gospel had not been preached, where the truth was not known. They were preaching the Lord Jesus. “And the hand of the Lord was with them.” You see, things were falling out rather. “And a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” And then you find that blessed church at Antioch. It seemed that the church at Jerusalem was a bit bewildered and puzzled, not so sure whether it was alright. Well, they sent someone to find out – “Barnabas ... who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God he was glad.”

“The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” And so it can be with your things – in your home, your life, your family, your circumstances, the church of God – for the furtherance of the gospel in the church, but also for the furtherance of the gospel in your own soul. As the Lord sanctifies these things to you, blesses you in them, upholds you in them, speaks to your heart, makes the Saviour’s love known, leads you into fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, graciously upholds you, it is for the furtherance of the gospel in your own heart. When we have some of these other things, smooth things, nice things, well don’t we love them! But sometimes there is not just as much prayer, just as much gracious exercise, just as much nearness in following the Lord. We do need these things to come “as an eagle stirreth up her nest.” Don’t we want to settle in our nest? But we have not to find a resting place here. There is only one resting place for faith, and that is with Him who said, “Come unto Me,” in all your sorrows, in all your sins, and in all these things you cannot understand that are happening to you. “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

“In the ark the weary dove
Found a welcome resting place;
So my spirit longs to prove
Rest in Christ, the Ark of grace.”

I believe the Apostle Paul found it in Rome, in prison with all his sorrows; he found a resting place in Christ, a resting place in His love, a resting place in His will, a resting place upon His promise.

“I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” Well of course, it has happened often in the history of the church of God. In the early days, when Christians were being martyred, there was one dear, godly, young girl who suffered agonies in her death for Jesus’ sake. It is said that four hundred people who were watching that were wrought upon by the Spirit of God savingly.

“The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” One of the covenanters wrote to the cruel archbishop, who was having so many put to death for the truth’s sake, and he advised him that if you are going to burn them, for your own sake you had better burn them where no one can see, or burn them in cellars, because the witness of these dying martyrs is so used by the Spirit of God, that people are flocking to the banner of the truth from Romanism and false religion.

“The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.” Of course, you see it in the case of John Bunyan. What a blessing his preaching was made in this district. But he was stopped; he was in prison for twelve years. Why did the Lord permit it? Why did the Lord allow it? Now the thing which happened to Bunyan, it fell out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, because there was more blessing through his writings in prison than in all his preaching when he was free. O the mystery of divine providence! You know what John Kent says:

“Great is the mystery, truly great,
That hell’s design shall hell defeat;
But here eternal wisdom shines,
For Satan works what God designs.”

And so the things which happen, which seem so sad, so solemn, in the hands of a gracious, all-wise, all-loving, almighty God, they turn out to the furtherance of the gospel, in the church, but also in the souls of the Lord’s people.

“And I would brethren, that ye should understand this.” It is not just the great things; it is some of the small things. I have often mentioned that remarkable story as an instance, that it might be a help to our hearers. Some of those – perhaps you would not call those things which happen to you sorrows or tribulations, but they are awkward things, inconveniences, you wish they did not happen. That story of the well-known Bishop Taylor Smith. In the First World War he was Bishop to His Majesty’s Forces. It appears that he was a godly man, much admired and very dearly loved. He was once going on important business. He had to change trains, and he missed the connection. It put everything wrong, all his plans, everything. He had to wait about two hours for the next train. Well, everything was going wrong: if it was a meeting, he could not be there for it, or he would not be able to get back. Then he suddenly thought, God makes no mistakes. He said, “Lord, sanctify it. What is Thy will and purpose in it?” So he went for a little walk to a nearby park. He sat down on a bench, looking up to the Lord, why it had happened. A poor man came – he was either there before or he came and sat by him. He had his head between his hands and was

groaning, and the good bishop said, "Can I help you my friend?" But the man would not have anything to do with him. In the end he said, "There is only one man I could speak to with my trouble. It was that old bishop of the forces who came and visited us when we were in the trenches." Bishop Taylor Smith said, "Well, he is here; I am he." Even in the little things as well as the great things.

"I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel." And didn't the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself emphasise these small things? "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings?" The other gospel says two for one farthing, so if you spend two farthings, you get one thrown in free. A worthless sparrow – "Not one is forgotten of God"; "Not one can fall to the ground without your Father." "But ... the very hairs of your head are all numbered" – the little things as well as the great. "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." That is a good word for the new year, isn't it?

"I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." But above anything and everything else, what about the cross of Christ? When you think of it, why were wicked men, evil men, permitted to treat the Son of God so shamefully, to spit in His face, to scourge Him, to buffet Him, falsely to accuse Him, to crucify Him, so that the earth itself shook and the sky was darkened? You say, How can it be, that a good and gracious God, His Father in heaven, should permit this, allow it? I think you know the answer, don't you? The things which happened, by divine, eternal, covenant appointment, fell out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. Well, there would not have been any gospel apart from it; no gospel to preach, no gospel to believe. He was taken by wicked hands and crucified, but it was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God that poor, lost, ruined, guilty sinners might have hope and they might be saved through His atoning death with an everlasting salvation. "And I would brethren, that ye should understand this" – the wonders of the cross of Christ, looking back two thousand years and the blessings that flow from Calvary.

"The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." It is the first day of the new year, and what lies before us, we do not know. But we know that there is a good and gracious, all-wise, almighty God in heaven, and all our times are in His hand.

"All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please our heavenly Friend."

And may we be sweetly helped to venture forward, resting on all-sufficient grace, and proving that we are under the shadow of the

almighty, the shadow of His everlasting love, the shadow of a Father's tender care, the shadow of His mysterious providence, and to prove this as we go on day by day: that the things which have happened to us have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel.

THE NORTHERN IRON AND THE STEEL

By J.C. Philpot

“Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?” (Jer. 15. 12).

You see that the Lord, when He is pointing out the trials His people are passing through, compares them to “iron.” He does not diminish their weight; He does not at all lower their oppressive tendency. But then, in order to administer a suitable remedy to Jeremiah's soul, He brings forward something much stronger. “Shall iron,” He says, “break the northern iron and the steel?” No surely; the “northern iron and the steel” shall break through that. The common iron never can break through the northern iron, which is a metal of such a far superior nature; still less prevail against that keen, well-tempered steel which can cut through everything it touches.

Now if your hearts are exercised with iron sorrows, temptations, trials and perplexities, I am sure you will want the almighty power of God in your souls to cut them asunder. And God can do it. Are you a poor, persecuted believer? God can cut down in a moment that enemy who is persecuting you. Are you tempted of Satan? He in a moment can cut his fiery darts asunder. Are you passing through a severe trial? By the application of some precious promise the Lord can in a moment cut the trial asunder. Are you entangled in some grievous snare that you feel and cry out under night and day, and yet are unable to extricate yourself? The Lord can in a moment, by the application of His precious Word to your soul, cut that snare asunder. He has but to bring against it “the northern iron and the steel,” and it is done in a moment.

How was it with Jeremiah? Did not he say, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart”? Why? Because keen persecutions, sharp trials, severe temptations had given him an appetite. That was the reason why the “Word was found.” He fell upon it as a hungry man upon a crust. It was sweet to his soul, because it brought with it a precious deliverance from the temptations and the sorrows his soul was groaning under.

Thus we see that in proportion as we feel the iron nature of trials and sorrows shall we experience “the northern iron and the steel” of God's almighty power and grace to deliver. Happy are the people that

are in such a case! Happy the people that have this Lord for their manifested God!

THE ASCENSION
By John Flavel (1628-1691)

Why did Christ ascend?

I answer: His ascension was necessary upon many and great accounts. For,

Firstly, If Christ had not ascended, He could not have interceded, as now He doth in heaven for us. And do but take away Christ's intercession, and you starve the hope of the saints. For what have we to succour ourselves with under the daily surprises of sin but this: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." Mark that: *with the Father*; a Friend upon the place, One that abides there on purpose to transact all our affairs, and as a Surety for the peace betwixt God and us.

Secondly, If Christ had not ascended, you could not have entered into heaven when you die. For He went to "prepare a place for you" (John 14. 2). He was the first that entered into heaven directly, and in His own name, and had He not done so, we would not have entered when we die in His name. The Forerunner made way for all that are coming on in their several generations after Him. Nor could your bodies have ascended after their resurrection, but in the virtue of Christ's ascension. For He ascended in the capacity of our Head and Representative, to His Father, and our Father, for us and Himself too.

Thirdly, If Christ had not ascended, He could not have been inaugurated and installed in the glory He now enjoys in heaven. This world is not the place where perfect felicity and glory dwell. And then, how had the promise of the Father been made good to Him? Or our glory (which consists in being with and conformed to Him), where had it been? "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24. 26).

Fourthly, If Christ had not ascended, how could we have been satisfied that His payment on the cross made full satisfaction to God, and that now God hath no more bills to bring in against us? How is it that the Spirit convinceth the world of righteousness (John 16. 9, 10) but from Christ's going to the Father, and returning hither no more? which gives evidence of God's full content and satisfaction, both with His Person and work.

Fifthly, How should we have enjoyed the great blessings of the Spirit and ordinances if Christ had not ascended? And surely, we could not have been without either. If Christ had not gone away, "the

Comforter had not come" (John 16. 7). He begins where Christ had finished. For He takes of His and shows it to us (John 16. 14). And therefore it is said, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7. 39). He was then given as a sanctifying Spirit, but not given in that measure as afterwards He was, to furnish and qualify men with gifts for service. And indeed, by Christ's ascension, both His sanctifying and His ministering gifts were shed forth more commonly and more abundantly upon men. These fell from Him when He ascended, as Elijah's mantle did from him, so that whatsoever good of conversion, edification, support or comfort you receive from spiritual ordinances, He hath shed forth that which you now see and feel. It is the fruit of Christ's ascension.

Sixthly, and lastly, If Christ had not ascended, how had all the types and prophecies that prefigured and foretold it been fulfilled? "And the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10. 35).

So that upon all these accounts it was expedient that He should go away. It was for His glory and for our advantage. Though we lost the comfort of His bodily presence by it, yet if we loved Him, we would rejoice He went to the Father (John 14. 28). We ought to have rejoiced in His advancement, though it had been to our loss; but when it is so much for our benefit as well as His glory, it is a matter of joy on both sides that He is ascended to His Father and our Father, to His God and to our God. It was because of the several blessings flowing to us out of Christ's ascension that He charged His people not to be troubled at His leaving of them (John 14). And hence learn,

Inference 1. Did Christ ascend into heaven? Is our Jesus, our treasure indeed there? Where then should the hearts of believers be but in heaven, where their Lord, their life is? Surely saints, it is not good that your love and your Lord should be in two several countries, said one that is now with Him. Up, and hasten after your Lover, that He and you may be together. Christians, you ascended with Him virtually when He ascended; you shall ascend to Him personally hereafter. O that you would ascend to Him spiritually, in acts of faith, love and desires daily. *Sursum corda*, up with your hearts, was the form used by the ancient church at the sacrament. How good were it if we could say with the apostle, "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour" (Phil. 3. 20). A heart ascendant is the best evidence of your interest in Christ's ascension.

Inference 2. Did Christ go to heaven as a Forerunner? What haste should we make to follow Him? He ran to heaven; He ran thither before us. Did He run to glory, and shall we linger? Did He flee as an eagle towards heaven, and we creep like snails? Come Christians, "Lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily besets you, and run with patience

the race set before you, looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12. 1, 2). The Captain of our salvation is entered within the gates of the new Jerusalem, and calls to us out of heaven to hasten to Him, proposing the greatest encouragements to them that are following after Him, saying, “He that overcomes shall sit with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev. 3. 21). How tedious should it seem to us to live so long at a distance from our Lord Jesus!

Inference 3. Did Christ ascend so triumphantly, leading captivity captive? How little reason then have believers to fear their conquered enemies? Sin, Satan and every enemy were in that day led away in triumph, dragged at Christ’s chariot wheels, brought after Him as it were in chains. It is a lovely sight to see the necks of those tyrants under the foot of our Joshua. He made at that day an open show of them (Col. 2. 15). Their strength is broken for ever. In this He showed Himself more than a conqueror, for He conquered and triumphed too. Satan was then trodden under His feet, and He hath promised to tread him under our feet also, and that shortly (Rom. 16. 20). Some power our enemies yet retain. The serpent may bruise our heel, but Christ hath crushed his head.

Inference 4. Did Christ ascend so munificently, shedding forth so many mercies upon His people? mercies of inestimable value reserved on purpose to adorn that day? O then see that you abuse not those precious ascension-gifts of Christ, but value and improve them as the choicest mercies.

THE COMING SINNER IS ELECT

By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Satan useth to roar out after them that are coming to Jesus Christ, that they are not elected. Coming sinner, even the text itself (John 6. 37) affordeth thee help against this doubt, and that by a double argument.

1. That coming to Christ is by virtue of the *gift, promise* and *drawing* of the Father. But thou art coming; therefore God hath given thee, hath promised thee, and is drawing thee, to Jesus Christ. Coming sinner, hold to this, and when Satan beginneth to roar again, answer, “But I feel my heart moving after Jesus Christ”; but that would not be if it were not given by promise, and drawing thee to Christ by the power of the Father.

2. *Jesus Christ hath promised* that “him that cometh to Me *I will in no wise cast out*” (John 6. 37). And if He hath said it, will He not make it good, I mean even thy salvation? For not to cast out is to receive and admit to the benefit of salvation. If then the Father hath given thee, as is manifest by thy coming, and if Christ will receive thee, thou coming

soul, as it is plain He will, because He hath said, "I will in no wise cast out," then be confident, and let those conclusions that as naturally flow from the text as light from the sun or water from the fountain, uphold, strengthen and encourage thee.

If Satan therefore objecteth, "But thou art not elected," answer, "But I am coming, Satan, I am coming; and that I could not be but that the Father draws me; and I am coming *to such a Lord Jesus as will in no wise cast me out*. Further, Satan, were I not elect, the Father would not draw me, nor would the Son so graciously open His bosom to me."

I am persuaded that not one of the non-elect shall ever be able to say in the day of judgment, "I did sincerely come to Jesus Christ." Come they may feignedly, as Judas and Simon Magus did, but that is not our question. Therefore, O coming sinner, be not afraid, but come.

GOD'S WORD OUR RULE

By George Swinnock (1627-1673)

Every part of divine worship must have a divine precept. As the first command teacheth us *what* God is to be worshipped, so the second command teacheth *in what way* He will be worshipped. The tabernacle and all the instruments thereof, yea, the very snuffers and ash-pans, were to be made exactly according to the pattern in the mount (Exod. 25. 40; Heb. 8. 5), typifying that all the exercise of worship used by the church, whether in doctrine or discipline, must be conformed to the written Word (Gal. 1. 8). Our religion must be not only rational but regular; our worship must be both universal and canonical. "As many as walk according to this canon, or rule, peace be on them" (Gal. 6. 16). The saints' service must be word-service (Rom. 12. 1); so the word is rendered by our translators, "The sincere milk of the Word" (1 Pet. 2. 2).

The institutions of Christ, not the inventions of men, are the rule of worship. Our work is not to make laws for ourselves or others, but to keep the laws which the great Prophet of His church hath taught us. That coin of worship which is current amongst us must be stamped by God Himself. We are to be governed as the point in the compass, not by the various winds (the practices of former ages, or the fashions of the present generation, which are mutable and uncertain), but by the constant heavens. Our devotion must be regulated exactly according to the standard of the Word. It is idolatry to worship a false god, or the true God in a false manner.

Men indeed are no sooner plucked out of the pit of atheism, but they presently climb the high places of superstition, delighting to go from one extreme to another. As a gay suit of apparel, so the service of God in a

gaudy dress, is most taking with carnal eyes. I have read of a popish lady in Paris, that when she saw a glorious procession to one of their saints, cried out, "O how fine is our religion beyond that of the Huguenots! They have a mean and beggarly religion, but ours is full of bravery and solemnity." But as heralds say of a coat of arms, if it be full of fancy things and devices, it speaks a mean descent; so truly that manner of worship which is mingled with men's inventions speaks its descent to be mean – namely, from man. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8. 20).

Such may serve God with more pomp than others, but I am confident they serve Him to less profit than others. "In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15. 9). Their worship is in God's account no worship. They who made temples, altars and ceremonies of their own heads, thought that they had remembered God, but He tells them plainly that they had forgotten Him (Hos. 8. 11-14). Men manifest abundance of arrogancy in undertaking to prescribe newer and neater ways of worship than God Himself, as if they excelled His Majesty in wisdom; but little do they think how exceedingly by such practices they provoke Him to fury. Ezekiel 8. 3-5; Ezekiel 43. 8: "In their setting of their threshold by My thresholds, and their post by My posts ... they have even defiled My holy name by their abominations that they have committed; wherefore I have consumed them in Mine anger." So Ezekiel 6. 9; 2 Chronicles 7. 20.

A MEMORIAL OF THE LORD'S GOODNESS

The life and experience of John Smith of Islington, London.

It seems strange that, being German, he should have such a common English name!

John Smith, of 31 Oxford Road, Islington, died on February 22nd, 1875, aged 65.

The following is from the "Memorial of the Lord's Goodness," in his own writing: I was born in London, August 31st, 1809. My father, who was a baker, was a native of Germany, who, with two brothers, left Sobernheim, a town on the Rhine, two days before Napoleon entered and ransacked the place. My father left behind him his father and one sister, both of whom died a few years after, so the family never met again, the brothers being scattered in a strange land. Such are some of the bitter fruits of war.

I have much cause to be thankful to the Lord for my dear parents. My father naturally was of a hasty and passionate disposition, and like

his forefathers, "he begat a son in his own image." How often have I found it to be a truth: "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16. 32), and smarted from these words: "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him" (Prov. 29. 20). My dear mother had her household gods, and these "gods" were her children, myself and sister. She often said, "My heart is wrapped up in them," and I believe it was.

My father, being in comfortable circumstances as a tradesman, sent me to a boarding-school at Southgate, where I had every comfort needed. While I was there I felt I was in an unsaved state, that the Word of God said, "Ye must be born again," and that unless I repented, I must perish. This may have been nothing but natural conviction and fear, but know it, and fear it, I did more or less. The Psalm of Dr. Watts, commencing, "O that the Lord would guide my ways," used often to be given out and sung, and I remember the desires of my heart at times went with the words, and were thus written on the memory and abide with me until now. And another hymn frequently given out was sweet to me as a boy, and through grace more sweet to me now: "Give me the wings of faith to rise." Being made acquainted with and witnessing the trials with which my parents were at times exercised, for they made us children sharers in their joys and sorrows, keeping few secrets from us, I well recollect while sitting in the chapel at Southgate the feeling coming over me that perhaps this was or would be the happiest time in my life. I have often thought since, how little do children prize the love and care for them in putting them under tutors and governors, and all to do them good in their latter end. And what am I now but the same spiritually? And thou shalt know that like as a father chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee; and all to do thee good in thy latter end.

I left school in June 1823, being fourteen years of age. Whilst my parents prided themselves in their son as before the world, I was daily finding that sin was my master; pride, self-sufficiency, passion and rebellion working in me mightily, though kept in some measure by parental fear, added to which those secret sins of corrupt nature that are the fearful ruin of thousands, body and soul, and that too often bring distress and anguish into unsuspecting families. Notwithstanding this, to all appearances I was looked upon as a steady, light, and lively young man, though at the same time inwardly knowing and sensible of my lost state before God, sinning and repenting, resolving and running on wilfully, sometimes under the fear of immediate destruction, thus proving how fast Satan holds possession of the sinner, until a stronger than he, even God the Holy Ghost, takes possession and turns him out. I regularly attended a Wesleyan chapel, and knew I was in my sins, and that living and dying so I should be lost for ever. I found it true that

“Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone.”

I married in 1830, my father having purchased a business for me near Burton Crescent. After being two years and a half in that house, and my eldest two children being born, I sold the business, having in over-exertion, to save expense, ruptured a blood vessel. Being able to pay only 18 shillings in the pound, my creditors kindly allowed me what time I required to pay the balance. I then resolved never to go into that business again. Whilst out of employment in 1833, one of my millers told me of a business in the Strand. Here I commenced again in the same trade, in spite of my (as I thought) firm resolution to the contrary.

Just about this time a heavy affliction presented itself I had never dreamed of. On one occasion, feeling afraid of myself, I ran out of the house. I saw the gallery door of Covent Garden Theatre open, and thought I would go in and fill up my time there, and did so. A well-known comic actor named Tyrone Power was to appear that night, and I was rather anxious to see him, being naturally fond of comic singing and mirth. In the course of the evening he came on the stage amid a “thunder of applause.” When he appeared, a sudden thought came into my mind: “Is that you? A fine man like you coming purposely to play the fool, and to make fools laugh? I am one of those fools who paid you to do it. I am as bad, if not worse, than you. If you and I were taken away by death this night, where should we be for ever but banished from the presence of the Lord?” A fear and dread came over my soul whether I should ever get out of that place alive again. I felt so ill and faint that it was with some difficulty I did get out, the gallery being quite full, and the performance going on, but stay I could not. I therefore ran home, and went up to bed without saying a word.

The next morning I had to send for our doctor. I kept my bed for nearly a week, during which it pleased the Lord to lay my state in some measure as a sinner upon my heart, and the lost estate I was in as before a holy, righteous God, and to sanctify the dispensation to my soul, by bringing before my view things past, present and to come. I was led to see how grievously I had sinned against the Lord, and amongst outward sins, Sabbath-breaking and Sabbath-trading stood out very prominently, being then in the practice of taking in “Sunday bakings.” I knew I was in an unsaved state, and if God in His mercy did not pardon me, I must perish for ever, and that justly. I tried to pray for pardon, but could not. There was a lion in the way that stopped me with this question in my conscience: “How can you ask the Lord to forgive your past sins, when you know, and He knows, you certainly intend to violate His law by baking next Sunday?” Satan tempted me to hold out by suggesting it was useful to the cause of God, by thus letting many go to a place of worship

who otherwise would not go. But the Word of God said, "Let us not do evil that good may come."

I had a sore conflict about it for two or three days. The fear of losing the few customers, or some of them, that I had, the trouble I was in and ruin before me, with the need I felt of the mercy and blessing of God, tried me much. Cries and tears there were, but which I could not call prayers, for they seemed stopped. I felt I must give up Sunday business, or give up praying. I could not do both. This I have sometimes looked upon as the Lord in His mercy making my heart honest, and enlightening my conscience as to His omniscience and immutability. However, unbelief was at the bottom of my indecision, but the Lord says of His children, "They shall cry, and I will hear them." It pleased Him to apply such passages of His Word as the following to my heart with power to hear and receive: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added." "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." Thus I was enabled on my recovery at once to give up Sabbath-trading.

Some time after this, while still in an unsettled state of mind, I heard a sermon from Job 1. 5. It pleased the Lord to accompany His Word in this sermon with a searching and convicting power to my soul, searching out and showing me the difference between me and a real child of God, whose soul is under the power and influence of divine grace, both as exemplified in Job's jealousy for the honour and glory of God, of his Christian character, and his conduct with regard to his children, having a holy fear and an earnest desire for their salvation. Sin and guilt were brought home to my conscience with a deeper sense than ever I had felt before. I discovered the lack of this grace in me, notwithstanding all my supposed amendment and outward walk. I felt indeed that I was lost, and was brought into secret soul-trouble before the Lord. I realised in my soul's feelings the just anger of a holy God, a sin-hating God, an immutable Jehovah, whose words are: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass away until all be fulfilled." "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Thus the Spirit, I trust, by the Word convinced me of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. Not only fear and trembling came upon me, but an earnest cry to be saved. "God be merciful to me a sinner," was the cry, more or less, of my heart. I began to experience that the Lord was a heart-searching God, and secret as well as outward sins and iniquities were laid open to my heart and conscience in life, walk and conversation, to which I was constrained to plead guilty. And, although

I knew from the Word of truth that there was no salvation but in the Lord Jesus Christ and through faith in Him, yet there was in me a putting off all these sins, more or less, with a secret hope that the Lord would be more generous and merciful to me by so doing, and on account of which I was truly sorry before God, and desirous to be delivered from them. By this I have reason to hope and believe that, though mixed with much legality, there was that godly sorrow working repentance in my heart by the Holy Spirit that needed not to be repented of, as the apostle writes in 2 Corinthians 7. 10.

The desire of my soul was to know Jesus, and God reconciled to me in Him. My soul was athirst for God, for the living God. Sitting under a legal ministry, I was continually hearing the exhortation to “believe in Jesus,” and that Jesus was “waiting to be gracious” if I did but believe in Him. The simple believeth every word, and I believed the word preached, but felt in my soul I needed the Lord to grant that His Spirit would witness with my spirit that I was a child of His. Whatever I credited then, I found this was the testimony my soul sought after day and night. I have gone to bed fearing I might awake in hell before morning, and have been constrained to thank the Lord in the morning that I was on this side of eternal perdition. The eyes of my understanding were more and more opened unto the spirituality of the law, reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart; so that through the increasing discovery thereof, I became more or less dead as to any hope from that. I found it to be a lingering death, and find to the present what it is to be always delivered unto death, and to die daily.

So I was made to flee for refuge to the hope set before me in the gospel, Christ Jesus, feeling convinced there was no other name by which I could be saved but the name of the only-begotten Son of God. This I knew in theory years before, but never experienced the all-important truth as then.

And now I would say it has often been an exercise of soul to me that I could not point to any precise day or time when it pleased the Lord of His infinite grace and love to quicken my soul from a state of death and sin to a new birth unto righteousness, as some are sweetly enabled, like Paul, to do. But I have often been constrained to feel with the blind man, when he was asked how and by what means he was made to see, and who did it: “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see”; and as with another, when it pleased the Lord of His grace to touch the eyes of my soul, I saw as it were men as trees walking. I feel to this day how much I need the eye-salve of God the Holy Ghost, that I may still see more clearly, by the eye of faith and love, Jesus, the way, the truth, the life.

After some time (it might be a few months), whilst at a weekly prayer meeting, I was blessed with a view of Jesus by faith, which gave

me such a hope in His love, mercy and favour as to fill me in a measure with peace and joy. It drew my affections towards Him, enlarged my heart in His ways, and enabled me to dedicate myself to His service, to run in the way of His commandments, and to desire that I might be kept in His fear. A great change was manifest outwardly and inwardly in myself, in my business and family concerns. From being light and fond of worldly company, passionate of temper, sometimes even to swearing, I was brought to feel my need of being kept and held up in my goings, that I might not sin against God. This was soon discovered by those around me, and it began to be admired. I was sometimes praised for the great change that had occurred, and I must say that from my heart my desire was to live irreproachably, and if possible as pure as an angel both in word and deed. Hearing of many who were called "religious people," that were a disgrace to the name they bore, my continual aim and prayer was that I might so act and live that my neighbours should be constrained to say of me, "Now, there is a good man," and that I might adorn the doctrine of God in all things. No doubt there was secret legality and self at work under this, but I knew it not then. I knew nothing of Job's ditch then, nor did I know the need of it.

Being so praised on the right hand and on the left, I was led to question in my mind whether I was in the right path or not, for I knew it was written: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you." But this state did not last long, and whatever testimony I lacked, I did not long lack tribulation, nor did I, through grace, lack the sweet feeling of love to the brethren. Many, many times those portions of the Word of God were made a comfort and support to my soul in trying paths: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you"; "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

(To be concluded)

"Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I also am known" (1 Cor. 13. 12). Christians know but little of what they should know; they know but little of what they might know; they know but little of what others know; they know but little of what they desire to know; they know but little of what they shall know, when they shall come to know even as they are known; and these weak and imperfect glimpses that they have of God and heaven here are infallible pledges of that perfect knowledge and full prospect which they shall have of God and heaven hereafter. That little spark of joy is an earnest of those everlasting delights which shall be theirs when all sorrow and mourning shall flee away; and those sips of comfort are but foretastes of that river of everlasting pleasures which is at God's right hand.

Thomas Brooks

BOOK REVIEWS

The Life and Ministry of Robert Walker, Vicar of Wymeswold, Leicestershire; edited by Henry Sant; hardback; 272 pages; price £16.95 plus postage and packing; published by The Huntingtonian Press, and obtainable from 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hants., SO30 4EB.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, there were a considerable number of godly ministers in the Church of England – not just those denominated as Evangelicals, but those who would be known as High Calvinists. A brief glance at the *Gospel Magazine* of that period reveals many (to us) unknown ministers (even from unknown villages) writing beautiful articles or speaking at the Clifton Conference. Their doctrine would be almost identical with that of the *Gospel Standard*.

Among these was the subject of this book, Robert Walker (1824-1883), vicar of a village named Wymeswold in Leicestershire. He appears as a man of godliness and grace, admirable in every way. Even apart from this, he had been an eminent mathematician at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was a Fellow. But, as a humble believer, he counted these things loss for Jesus' sake. In his own words, as reported on the fly-leaf, Robert Walker wrote:

"It used to be a terrible stumbling-block to me to find so many learned men, so many acute men, so many scientific men, infidels. It is not so now; I see that God has said, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.' I see as plainly as it is possible for me to see anything, that no natural man can receive the things of the Spirit of God. Hence I expect to find men of this stamp of intellect coming out boldly with their avowals of unbelief in the written Word of God. The only answer I can give to them is, 'God has in mercy taught me better'; and never do I sing those beautiful words in the well-known hymn, but I feel my eyes filling with tears of gratitude to the God of all compassion,

'Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God.'

So it was with me; so it must be with any one of them, if ever they are to know the truth in its power, or to receive the love of the truth that they may be saved."

J.C. Philpot was one who spoke well of Robert Walker in the *Gospel Standard*.

The book is edited by Henry Sant, and consists of a memorial of Robert Walker; his correspondence and letters received; two sermons; some annual addresses he wrote; and a few miscellaneous writings. His "Annual Addresses" (to his parishioners) are well-written and profitable.

A considerable part of the book consists of twenty-four letters written by Bernard Gilpin to Robert Walker. There seemed to be a deep affinity and love between the two. These twenty-four letters appear in the Memoir of Bernard Gilpin, headed, "Letters to a Clergyman." As usual there is much that is precious in Bernard Gilpin's letters – though he does at times seem a little condescending to one who was eminent in godliness himself.

Two things concerned us. We could not follow Bernard Gilpin's reasoning that though it was right at the time for him to secede from the Church of England, it may *not* be right nearly thirty years later! (See pages vii-viii). But more

important, at the end of Letter 18 Bernard Gilpin seems to suggest we should not put too literal a construction on the miracles (e.g. the Flood, the sun standing still, etc.) We must confess that for some years this had worried us in Bernard Gilpin's writings. (See page 354 in the original 1874 *Life of Bernard Gilpin*.) The Editor of the present publication has wisely put a footnote on this point.

Huntingtonian Press are producing some lovely books. (This is beautifully produced.) It may be asked: why an almost unknown vicar? The answer seems to be because he was a close friend of Bernard Gilpin.

We wonder if the time has come for Huntingtonian Press to give James Bourne, the Gilpins and that little group a rest. What about a life of John Vinall?

Bible Search, by L.R.J. Broome, edited by J.R. Broome; 147 pages; price £4.50; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the Publications Centre at 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, AL5 3BZ.

The pieces in *Bible Search* were written as Editorials in the *Friendly Companion* between 1965 and 1984, when for twenty years Mr. Leonard Broome was its Editor. Month by month, at the end of each piece, ten questions were added, based on either the Editorial or other articles in the magazine. Answers to the questions are given at the back.

A wide range of subjects is covered in the pieces. Many have short titles such as "Next," "Catch," "Safety," "Unmoveable," "Water." A number of pieces, such as "Holiday Sundays" (page 105), may cause some self-examination. Mr. Broome obviously took a keen interest in his surroundings, and it is sometimes surprising how his train of thought develops from one small word. Younger children may have some difficulty in following the argument, so we would say this is a book for mid-teens onwards, or the family circle (as the older magazines said).

The book is attractively produced and is being sold at a very reasonable price.

T.H.W. Scott, Harpenden

COME NEARER, LORD!

Alas, my God, that we should be
 Such strangers to each other!
 O that as friends we might agree,
 And walk and talk together!
 Thou knowest my soul does clearly love
 The place of Thine abode;
 No music drops so sweet a sound,
 As these two words: *My God*.

I long not for the fruit that grows
 Within these gardens here;
 I find no sweetness in their rose
 When Jesus is not near.

Thy gracious presence, O my Christ,
 Can make a paradise;
 Ah what are all the goodly pearls
 Unto this Pearl of Price!

May I taste that communion, Lord,
 Thy people have with Thee?
 Thy Spirit daily talks with them,
 O let Him talk with me!
 Like Enoch, let me walk with God,
 And thus walk out my day,
 Attended with the heavenly guards,
 Upon the King's highway.

When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?
 O come, my Lord, most dear!
 Come near, come nearer, nearer still;
 I'm well when Thou art near.
 When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord?
 I languish for Thy sight;
 Ten thousands suns, if Thou art strange,
 Are shades instead of light.

When wilt Thou come unto me, Lord,
 For till Thou dost appear,
 I count each moment for a day,
 Each minute for a year.
 Come, Lord, and never from me go;
 This world's a darksome place;
 I find no pleasure here below,
 When Thou dost veil Thy face.

There's no such thing as pleasure here;
 My Jesus is my All;
 As Thou dost shine, or disappear,
 My pleasures rise or fall.
 Come, spread Thy savour on my frame,
 No sweetness is so sweet;
 Till I get up to sing Thy name,
 Where all Thy singers meet.

Thomas Shepherd (1665-1739)

Shepherd was formerly a minister in the Church of England and later an Independent pastor. He was one of the earliest hymnwriters.

OBITUARY

Raymond Oakley, formerly pastor at Arcal Street Chapel, Sedgley, died on December 3rd, aged 84. He was a minister in our churches for 62 years.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
FEBRUARY 2012

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

**THE NECESSITY, NATURE AND SOURCE OF
TRUE REPENTANCE**

*Address given by Mr. G.D. Buss at the Annual Meeting of the
Gospel Standard Trust at Fenstanton Chapel, Cambridgeshire,
on May 14th, 2011. Published at the request of the Trust.*

Seeking the Lord's help and your prayerful attention we will consider the necessity, the nature and source of true repentance. In a sense, the hymn 239 (Gadsby's) that you have just sung is really all that could be said about that most vital subject, repentance.

I will make three or perhaps four preliminary remarks before addressing the subject in hand.

First of all, we must always remember that the Word of God must be paramount in any view of doctrine; whether it be faith or repentance, grace or any other aspect of divine truth, the Word of God is our final and ultimate standard. The first Article of Faith in our excellent Articles states that the Word of God is a divine revelation from God to man. So whatever we say must be subject to that standard, not the opinions of men either good or bad, but to the Word of God as Isaiah says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

Secondly, I believe that much of the confusion about this subject would be avoided if two things are remembered. First of all, the distinction between the flesh and the spirit – that which is of the flesh is flesh, and that which is of the spirit is spirit. When those two things are intermingled, perhaps unwittingly, or perhaps even wittingly in certain circumstances, then confusion arises about the nature of real repentance. Secondly, we must remember that the Word of God, amidst many other things, speaks of two great covenants. One is the covenant of works under which we are all born in our natural state and that is a legal ground; then there is something completely distinct, the covenant of grace. All the fruits of the Spirit, of which repentance is one, were provided for, not in the covenant of works but in the covenant of grace, and if we keep those two covenants distinct and separate, with God's help, again I believe much confusion could be avoided.

Thirdly, though perhaps something our churches would do well to remember more specifically is that repentance is to be preached, and

whatever our godly forefathers meant by the wording of the Articles that we subscribe to, one thing I am absolutely certain is it did not mean that repentance should not be preached. Repentance *is* to be preached, it is to be proclaimed, it is to be set forth before sinners because it is a vital thing. The great point, of course, is how true repentance should be preached and how should it be brought before the sinners.

I hope with God's help to look at the subject from the three points of the title: the nature of repentance, the necessity of repentance and the source of repentance. Let us see what our Articles of Faith say. Article 13 says, "We believe that faith is the gift of God, as well as true spiritual repentance and hope, and a manifestation of pardon to the soul; that through faith Christ is made precious to the soul, and the soul drawn out in love to God; that all [that includes repentance] are the fruits and effects of the blessed Spirit, and that they will most certainly be productive of good works, and a walk and conversation becoming the gospel." Article 24 reads thus: "We believe that the invitations of the gospel, being spirit and life [and at the bottom of the page is a little footnote, 'That is under the influence of the Holy Spirit'] are intended only for those who have been made by the blessed Spirit to feel their lost state as sinners and their need of Christ as their Saviour, and repent of and forsake their sins." Thirdly, Article 26: "We deny duty faith and duty repentance – those terms signifying that it is every man's duty [now listen very carefully to this] to spiritually and savingly [they are the two significant words, *spiritually and savingly*] repent and believe. We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever. So that we reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God" in that spiritual sense. Note what I am emphasising, in such a way which implies creature ability.

Now, yes, some may say they would have worded some of those statements somewhat differently, and yet the foundation truth beneath is absolutely certain. They are the doctrines of free and sovereign grace that God has a people to whom He has imparted the blessings of grace. They are a chosen people; they are a called people; they are a purchased people; they are a people who will surely get home to glory. That is the foundation of those doctrines we have read there and yes, there has been much debate and contention. Some have unwittingly misunderstood them, whilst some others, sadly, have wrested them to make them say what they were never intended to say; but let me reiterate that those godly men who wrote those Articles were very much in favour of repentance being an essential part of preaching and real religion.

Firstly, *the nature of repentance*. Real repentance is always toward God. At the baptismal service the minister uses the words, "Upon your

repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.” Notice that repentance comes first; it is towards God. In Acts 2 we have the account of the Day of Pentecost and the amazing power of the Spirit in convincing men’s hearts when they were pricked in their hearts (that is, they became repenting sinners) and were pointed to Christ and His cross. They were the ones who were baptized. I must say that repentance is an essential qualification for that sacred ordinance. It is an ordinance for sinners, but not for careless, indifferent, wanton sinners; it is an ordinance for those who have been made conscious of their sin and who have been raised up to a hope in God’s mercy as a remedy for it.

Now if you want a verse in Scripture that defines repentance you have it in Proverbs 28 verse 13, and I believe that verse is the scriptural definition of repentance: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” You will notice in that short verse three things and they are all essential to repentance. One, exposure of sin; in other words it is not covered; it is exposed; the Holy Ghost exposes it to the awakened conscience and brings it to light; no longer hidden, turned the back on, it is exposed. Secondly, it is confessed, and thirdly it is forsaken, or shall we say, abandoned; that is real repentance, exposure, confession and abandonment of it.

O what grace we need in this. Who but the Holy Ghost can rightly expose sin, rightly give confession of sin and rightly bring you and I to the abandonment of it? We have an old nature that covers sin, that will not confess it and that will fight tooth and nail to cling to it. That is what we are by nature and that is why I am saying that we must distinguish the flesh from the spirit. The flesh cannot help one iota in the matter of repentance.

When Paul went to Ephesus in Acts 19, you will remember that the effect of his preaching was they brought their curious arts and we read this word: “Many that believed came, and confessed” – there is confession – “shewed their deeds” – that is exposure, and “Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before men” – they abandoned their way of life. You ask why was it? Well as we read in the beautiful chapter Psalm 51, which is surely the Psalm of repentance, we have the words of the dear psalmist who had come under deep conviction following Nathan’s sermon on, “Thou art the man.” His sin had been exposed and he had been brought to confession and forsaken it. He said, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.”

Now perhaps the greatest preacher of repentance was John the Baptist. If you turn to Luke chapter 3 you will find how he addressed those who came to his preaching, and other than the dear Lord and

Saviour, the Prince of Preachers, there was probably no more direct preaching than that of John the Baptist. I wonder if those of us who preach the gospel are as direct as John was. We read from verse 7, listen to this: "Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Notice the fruits of repentance which are evident in the changed life. "And the people asked, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages," fruits of repentance in their life.

Then if you go to Matthew chapter 3 you have a similar exposition by John, the same theme. Particularly in verses 11 and 12, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." There we have, friends, the preaching of repentance and its fruits. And of course, our dear Saviour in His beautiful sermon, John 16, tells us the means by which God brings repentance into a sinner's heart. "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will [convince] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." It is the Holy Ghost taking the Word of God and applying it home to the sinner's heart, exposing the sin and bringing to confession and to leave those sins that he once loved so much.

I would just reiterate, dear friends, that a man who professes repentance, or a woman, or a boy or a girl, their life must show it. Victorinus was a famous Roman, and very late in life, he was converted under the ministry of the early fathers. He went secretly to another man called Simplicianus, a godly man, to tell him of his conversion, to which the godly man said, "I will not believe it, nor accept it until I see thee among the Christians in the church." In other words, where is the fruit? You may preach repentance, you may profess repentance, but, "Ye shall

know them by their fruits.” Just as at Ephesus they burned those curious arts in the market place before their fellow citizens, it was evident to be a Christian in those days was a costly matter as it is becoming so in our land. Perhaps our repentance will be tested much more closely in the years to come than it ever has been.

Many years ago I was preaching at The Halve Chapel, Trowbridge, where there was a big clock on the right hand wall from the pulpit, and during the first hymn the clock went the wrong way. Instead of going on from a quarter past seven it went back towards seven o’clock. This was very unusual, of course, but it made me think this is what real repentance is. It is a complete turn around.

Now the Bible brings before us two types of repentance that are completely distinct; a legal, and what I would call a gospel or evangelical repentance. It is the second one which is saving, and it is that repentance which our Articles emphasise the need of. Paul writing to the church at Corinth, in his second Epistle, makes this very important statement concerning the distinction between the two repentances I have just mentioned: “For godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of, but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” Sometimes school teachers, for example, have to deal with unruly classes and perhaps make a class do what they wish by severe methods. Often the pupils do what is required for a peaceable life in the classroom, but they are not sorry for their behaviour. That is not real repentance. Real repentance is to hate the sin and especially to be sorry for the grief caused to God who is offended by it.

Now we have many examples in the Word of God of those who had only legal repentance. Twice Pharoah, in the dealings of Moses with him under God’s hand, said, “I have sinned.” In Exodus 9, we read: “I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.” As soon as the plague was removed he went back to his hard-hearted ways. Again in chapter 10, “I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you.” Again, as soon as that plague was lifted, back he went to his hard-hearted ways. The reason was there was no real change of heart. His repentance was only ever of the flesh.

King Saul wasted most of his years as king hunting down a godly man, David. On one occasion he said, “I have sinned: return, my son David: I will no more do thee harm.” We know from his subsequent behaviour that was not a real repentance, because he did not mourn for grieving David’s God. No, it was only a legal repentance springing from remorse.

What about Judas? Read these most solemn words, which show the sorrow of the world Paul speaks of: “Then Judas, which had betrayed Him,” that is Christ, “when he saw that He was condemned, repented

himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.” How solemn, Judas’ repentance led him to the pit not to glory.

In the history of King Ahab, who was one of the most wicked men who sat upon a throne, we read after his treachery concerning Naboth that Elijah pronounced a solemn curse on him and his family; we read that he wept and was apparently sorry. The Lord said to Elijah, I will withhold the judgment for the present season, for I see Ahab is sorry. But it was not evangelical repentance. Ahab died an ungodly man and so did his wife Jezebel. We could add Esau to that.

In the most interesting account of the life of George Mockford, later the pastor at Heathfield, he speaks of what he called “his legal repentance” before he was called by grace. He states concerning his sorrow for sin at that time, “There was no hatred to sin, no sorrow for it; but the dread of hell and punishment of my sin often made me cry out, ‘Do save me, do pardon me, and I will lead a new life.’” He said, “I do believe that persons from the effects of natural conviction may have great sorrow and long much for mercy and yet there be nothing in it but the workings of nature.” That is a very solemn statement. I will read it again, “I do believe that persons from the effects of natural conviction may have great sorrow and long much for mercy yet there be nothing in it but the workings of nature.”

We will come in a moment to the distinction that evangelical repentance makes, but we have to search our hearts out dear friends, do we really know what real repentance is? When David was convinced of his sin under the sermon of Nathan’s, the text being just four words, “Thou art the man,” what a difference! We read in Psalm 51 and his words to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Now we come to something different: “I have sinned against the Lord,” “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.” Take the dying thief: “We indeed justly.” And what about dear Peter, when the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, after he had blasphemed, and he denied the Lord with oaths and curses? After the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, we read that he “went out, and wept bitterly.” Why did he not go and hang himself like Judas did? We could give many reasons, but one reason is this: the repentance he was then the subject of was real and it brought him to the foot of the cross by faith. He knew his need of the blood that was shed there and was brought to know it. Perhaps he could write more feelingly about repentance than any other of the apostles, having so deeply proved the necessity of it. I think of good

Archbishop Cranmer, who at first under the threat of martyrdom recanted under Queen Mary I, but later he truly repented. When he came to the stake, he put the hand that signed the recantation in the fire first, and that was great grace at a time of great trial. So here is the nature of evangelical repentance.

Secondly, we have *the necessity of repentance*. Now here is something we should never forget. The Word of God tells us again and again of the necessity of repentance and of God's displeasure at impenitent sinners. Listen to the Saviour's words: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," speaking to those who thought that those on whom the tower of Siloam had fallen were some who were more wicked sinners than others. No, said the Saviour, they are not more wicked than others. He said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." And we read in the Acts of the Apostles that men should repent. We read in Ezekiel that God takes no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. In Mark 1 verse 15 we have the words of the Saviour, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." We have the words in the Acts of the Apostles, "God commandeth all men every where to repent."

Now I like Thomas Boston's comment on that. He said, The outward call of the gospel, that is the outward proclamation of it, the setting forth before a mixed congregation of the nature of repentance, the necessity of it, and even the source of it may make man a professor, but he said that the inward call, note that, it is the inward call which makes man a possessor, and it is that inward thing that is so vital if we are to repent truly before Almighty God. And those of us who are called to preach must insist that this be at the root of real repentance; a new nature, a new heart, a new spirit, something completely different to our old nature. And what our godly forefathers meant when they wrote those Articles was that those who are called to preach and those who are concerned about their never-dying souls should weigh their repentance up. Is it just something of our flesh or is it the fruit of the spirit in our hearts?

Thirdly, we come to *the source of real repentance*. Let me make two comments here, again which need to be said. By the Fall man lost his ability to do anything spiritually good. But we must not think that lack of ability is an innocent one. It is not an innocent state; it is the fruit of the Fall. In our first father, Adam, we fell when he willingly complied with the devil's suggestions and embraced the devil's lies rather than the truth of God which had been set before him. It is not an innocent inability; remember that. Secondly, Mr. John Gosden said, "God has not lost His power and authority to command even though man has lost his ability to obey." Those two things should never be forgotten. Reading from John Gosden again as one who commented on our Articles very fully. He made a very apposite comment: "Whatever our worthy

predecessors intended by the terms used in our Articles of Faith, they certainly did not mean to minimise the sin of unbelief.” He said, Our belief is that fallen man has neither power, nor will, nor inclination to anything spiritual. But this notwithstanding, we believe that all men are under obligation to believe and to obey God. Though the Adam Fall utterly depraved and alienated human nature from God and goodness, rendering him as entirely incapable as unwilling to submit to God’s law, yet the divine Lawgiver has not lost His power to command and to judge. Man’s inability does not exonerate him. Whilst some entertain a wholesome fear of the very term *duty* in relation to God, through its frequent misapplication, both Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12 speaking of the whole duty of man and his divine Antitype in Luke 17 verse 10, He states of men: “We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”

Of course, it is the word *duty* that will stumble many because they have misunderstood it. Let me give you an illustration. It is, shall we say, a moral duty that a man should look after his own children. It is something in creation that God has given us as families and we are to look after them. Suppose that a man lived a dissipated life, with drink, smoking or drugs and has become completely incapacitated, a complete invalid. Now he is unable to do what he ought to do by virtue of his relation to his family. As the father, he ought to be providing for them, but no, because of his dissipated life he has neither the ability nor the willingness to do it. On the one hand it could be said it is his duty to look after his own; on the other hand he is unable to do so. True, it is through his own behaviour, but the word *duty* has become an impossibility and however it may be much pressed upon him that he ought to be looking after and providing for his family, he is faced with an impossibility. So what is the remedy? He must look for help outside of himself in some kind friend to take up this duty for him.

Here is man’s state. By the Fall he rendered himself unable and sadly naturally unwilling to do what is required of him by God his Creator. What is required is one who will take the responsibility for him in these great matters of salvation. So to preach to sinners as if they can believe and repent in their own strength, in their own will, is a false preaching. We are to preach in such a way that points them to where faith comes from, where repentance comes from, where love comes from and all the graces of the Spirit. These are fruits. They come down from the Spirit, by the Spirit, and they create in the heart that which is pleasing to God. To try and enjoin upon the flesh what it can never do is legality at its worse.

So what is required for real repentance? First of all, we are to notice that it is a gift, it is a covenant gift. It is one of those gifts which

is ordained in the wonderful transactions between the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost which are ordained for the election of grace. The Lord Jesus Christ is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. So if there is a poor sinner here this afternoon feeling so guilty, so exposed by sins, saying where am I to get this precious gift of repentance? You cannot create it yourself. Good John Newton never spoke a truer word in his hymn,

“I would, but can’t repent,
Though I endeavour oft;
This stony heart can ne’er relent,
Till Jesus makes it soft.”

He was the same man who wrote, “Amazing grace! (how sweet the sound!)” But you see how he knew in his own heart. Repentance is a gift, it is a gift of God and it is to be preached as such. Remember how the Lord said in the Acts of the Apostles concerning the Gentiles, the Lord granted them repentance. In other words it was given.

Secondly a new heart is essential. We could do nothing without a new heart. And even that new heart is totally dependent on the blessed Spirit for every movement within, every breathing of faith, every sorrow over our sin, every drawing to Christ. For all these gifts we are absolutely dependent upon God, the Holy Ghost. He works in the new heart, the new nature. So what our Lord said to Nicodemus is so essential: “Ye must be born again.” And I think one further thing we must say is that the sight of a once-crucified Saviour brings repentance. William Cowper’s words are so apposite:

“I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasure there.

“It was the sight of Thy dear cross
First weaned my soul from earthly things;
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

“I want that grace that springs from Thee,
That quickens all things where it flows,
And makes a wretched thorn like me
Bloom as the myrtle or the rose.”

So what is the difference between this legal repentance and this evangelical repentance? I briefly list them. A legal repentance works only under the terror of the law. If there were no law against the sin, there would be no remorse for it. Secondly, it is the punishment and the consequential fear and not the sin itself. You see, dear friends, if it is the

sin you are guilty of and you wish in the Word of God it was not condemned so you could carry on sinning it, then you have not truly repented. No, if you and I are brought to know what sin really is, you will hate sin for what it is because it is grieving to God as well as doing solemn damage to your soul. Do remember that. You will not wish there was one commandment in God's Word that was not there; you will rather seek grace to walk in the fear of it.

You may say, Does God take notice of legal repentance? In one sense He does. For example, look at the Book of the Judges. Time and time again that nation slipped into sin, they backslid, then they came into great trouble because of it, then they cried to God and He delivered them; time and time again they were delivered. It was not a lasting repentance, was it? But nonetheless God, because He had a love to the nation, did restore them again and again. Think of Nineveh. I am sure there were one or two in Nineveh whose repentance was of a gracious and evangelical nature, but I suspect for the most part it was a legal repentance and God took notice of it, but it was not saving. Two hundred years later the postponed judgments were poured out and Nineveh was destroyed.

During the last war, in Great Britain, there were prayer meetings held in the churches and chapels up and down our land and God heard those prayers. Now as soon as the war was over the chapels and churches emptied. It was not a real repentance and yet God did take notice of it in a sense, but it was not saving.

True repentance not only grieves over the consequences of sin; it also grieves for grieving God. "This sacrifice He'll not despise; it is His Spirit's doing." If you take the children of Israel, for example at Mount Sinai, we might have thought surely they would never sin again. They had heard the voice of God, had seen thunderings and lightnings, felt the mountain shaken. Surely they would never dare to sin again. You read through the chapters following: there they were as idolaters. Law and terrors did not produce real repentance. No, it is that "sense of blood-bought pardon that soon dissolves the heart of stone." You find in the very last chapter of the Book of Joshua what Joshua had to say in his last sermon. This godly man was bringing before the people their solemn responsibilities as the Lord's people and in verse 16 after his admonition we read, "And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods." Then we come to verse 19: "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for He is an holy God; He is a jealous God." Why did he say that? He knew that really deep down in the hearts of many of them there was not this vital change. Joshua was not setting himself up as someone superior. The dear man knew the difference between legal and evangelical

repentance. "Law and terrors do but harden, all the while they work alone."

There is a very clear distinction in the woman taken in adultery. Have you noticed that? There she was taken and she was put before the Lord with those men who wanted some reason to accuse her, and the Lord as well. As the Lord dealt with that matter, we read that one by one those accusers went out – note that – they went out, accused by their own conscience. The woman remained; she did not go out. There was a difference. They went out. Their conviction, of whatever nature it was, was not saving; it pushed them away from the only remedy for it. That guilty woman, she stayed; she was left alone with Jesus. "Woman, where are those thine accusers?" "There are none, Lord," she said. He answered, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Her repentance was real because she was the one who went and stayed by the Lord.

That is what real repentance is: it brings us to the foot of the cross, to the feet of Jesus. Then we must ever remember this as that beautiful hymn that we sung just now so wonderfully sets forth, it is the fruit of the blood of Christ, and it is that sight of a crucified Saviour that brings real repentance. You will never hate your sin more, never weep more over your guilt than if you are given a faith's eye view of the suffering Saviour.

I quote in conclusion four godly men. First of all Eli Ashdown. "There are four things hard to be attained to in heart and to walk in: Thy will be done; Give Me thy heart; Deny thyself; Only believe. These are four hard things," he said. "Where grace reigns then it is well," but to this we may add further the command – repent! These are those things that can only be wrought by grace.

One of my predecessors, Mr. Hammond, the pastor at Chippenham, said this on his dying bed: "I wish to live and die in the exercise of two things: namely repentance and faith, repentance toward God on account of sin that dwelleth in me and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Redeemer to save lost and helpless sinners."

Then some of you may remember Mr. Parker who was the last pastor at Hertford, who only a week or two before he died said that he prayed that the Lord would give him ten minutes of real repentance. That may sound strange from a man who had been preaching all those years. Surely he prayed every day, but he knew what real repentance was, and he wanted it. He said the Lord gave it to him just before he died; he had such a sweet softening of spirit and melting of heart that he knew where it came from. The Lord granted it.

Then Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry the commentator, said, "If I were to die in the pulpit I would desire to die preaching

repentance. If I were to die out of the pulpit I would desire to die practising repentance.”

Friends, I believe that is just what our godly forefathers meant in all the Articles they wrote about this vital matter. May God give us the witness of the Spirit that we are not strangers to that godly sorrow that worketh repentance that needeth not to be repented of. May God add His blessing. Amen.

THE RESTRAINTS OF PROVIDENCE

By John Flavel (1628-1691)

The next great advantage and mercy the saints receive from the hand of providence is *in their preservation from the snares and temptations of sin by its preventing care over them*. That providence wards off many a dreadful stroke of temptation, and puts by many a mortal thrust which Satan makes at our souls, is a truth as manifest as the light that shineth. This is included in that promise, God will “with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10. 13). Providence gives an outlet for the soul’s escape when it is shut up into the dangerous straits of temptation.

There are two eminent ways whereby the force and efficacy of temptation is broken in believers. One is by the operation of internal grace: “The Spirit lusteth against the flesh ... so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5. 17); i.e. sanctification gives sin a miscarrying womb after it hath conceived in the soul. The other way is by the external working of providence, and of this I am here engaged to speak.

The providence of God is the great *obex* [barrier] and hindrance to a world of sin, which else would break forth like an overflowing flood from our corrupt natures. It prevents abundance of sin, which else wicked men would commit (Gen. 19. 11). The Sodomites were greedily pursuing their lusts; God providentially hinders it by smiting them blind. Jeroboam intends to smite the prophet; providence interposed and withered his arm (1 Kings 13. 4). Thus you see, when wicked men have contrived, and are ready to execute their wickedness, providence claps on its manacles, “that their hands cannot perform their enterprise,” as it is (Job 5. 12).

And so much corruption there remains on good men, that they would certainly plunge themselves under much more guilt than they do if providence did not take greater care of them than they do of themselves. For though they make conscience of keeping themselves,

and daily watch their hearts and ways, yet such is the deceitfulness of sin that if providence did not lay blocks in their way, it would (more frequently than it doth) entangle and defile them. And this it doth divers ways:

1. Sometimes by stirring up others to interpose with seasonable counsels, which effectually dissuade them from prosecuting an evil design. Thus Abigail meets David in the nick of time, and dissuades him from his evil purpose (1 Sam. 25. 34).

And I find it recorded of that holy man, Mr. Dod, that being late at night in his study, he was strongly moved (though at an unseasonable hour) to visit a gentleman of his acquaintance; and not knowing what might be the design of providence therein, he obeyed and went. When he came to the house, after a few knocks at the door, the gentleman himself came to him and asked him whether he had any business with him. Mr. Dod answered, No; but that he could not be quiet till he had seen him. "O sir," replied the gentleman, "you are sent of God at this hour, for just now" (and with that takes the halter out of his pocket) "I was going to destroy myself." And thus was the mischief prevented.

2. Sometimes by hindering the means and instruments, whereby the evil itself is prevented. Thus when good Jehoshaphat had joined himself with that wicked king, Ahaziah, to build ships at Ezion-geber to go to Tarshish, God prevents the design by breaking the ships with a storm, as you read (2 Chron. 20. 35-37).

We find also in the life of Mr. Bolton, written by Mr. Bagshaw, that whilst he was in Oxford he had familiar acquaintance with Mr. Anderton, a good scholar but a strong Papist, who knowing Mr. Bolton's good parts, and perceiving that he was in some outward wants, took this advantage, and used many arguments to persuade him to be reconciled to the church of Rome and to go over with him to the English seminary, assuring him he should be furnished with all necessities, and have gold enough. Mr. Bolton, being at that time poor in mind and purse, accepted the motion, and a day and place were appointed in Lancashire where they should meet and take shipping and be gone. But Mr. Anderton came not, and so he escaped the snare.

3. Sometimes by laying some strong afflictions* on the body, to prevent a worse evil. And this is the meaning of Hosea 2. 6: "I will hedge up thy way with thorns." Thus Basil was a long time exercised with a violent headache, which (as he observed) was used by providence to prevent lust. Paul had a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. And this affliction, whatever it was, was ordained to prevent pride in him (2 Cor. 12. 7).

* Some afflictions are punishments; others are chastisements; and these are both, trials of grace and preservatives from sin. J.F.

4. Sometimes sin is prevented in the saints by the better information of their minds at the sacred oracles of God. Thus when sinful motions began to rise in David's [Asaph's?] mind from the prosperity of the wicked and his own afflicted state, and grew to that height that he began to think all he had done in the way of religion was little better than lost labour, he is set right again and the temptation dissolved by going into the sanctuary, where God showed him how to take new measures of persons and things, to judge of them by their ends and issues, not their present appearances (Psa. 73. 12, 13, 17).

5. And sometimes the providence of God prevents the sins of His people by removing them out of the way of temptation by death. In which sense we may understand the text, "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come" (Isa. 57. 1), the evil of *sin* as well as *sufferings*. When the Lord sees His people low-spirited and not able to grapple with strong trials and temptations which are drawing on, it is, with respect to them, a providence to be disbanded by death and set out of harm's way.

Now consider and admire the providence of God, O ye saints, who hath had more care of your souls than ever ye had of them! Had not the providence of God thus wrought for you, in a way of prevention, it may be you had this day been so many Magormissabibs. [See Jeremiah 20. 3.] How was the heart of David melted under that preventing providence, forementioned, in 1 Samuel 25. 34. He blesses the Lord, the instrument, and that counsel by which his soul was preserved from sin.

A LETTER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Dear —,

I have wished to send you a few lines ever since your few words to me, but have felt my inability.... What I want to call to your mind is that *one right way* that I believe has shone in your eyes from the first start (as in mine), which Mr. P. is constantly pointing out, just as the wicket gate shone in Christian's eye when Evangelist pointed him to it. That direct fleeing to Christ crucified as He is set forth in the Word is the only way of life out of our death, the way that faith always takes, and in which the Holy Spirit always leads. We are all instructed in this, but how much of our time are we taking that way? Now the faith that hangs and cleaves to this atoning work of Christ, moves the heart to follow on till perfect peace with God and holy joy are realised. But we are constantly hindered, and sometimes cannot even stir after so blessed an end set before us.

I want you to consider that it is *wrong principles* that often hinder. When we lag behind, we have been drawn away from that one foundation

truth. There are innumerable wrong principles springing from the unbelief and deceit of our hearts and Satan on every hand, and there needs to be an actual denying of them all if the efficacious power of that one truth is to prevail and overcome. The Holy Spirit secretly prompts us to have a single eye to Christ, the true Light, that our whole body may be full of light. As far as our eye is directed to His Person and full work of redemption, we are full of light as to where to go for peace and healing and all kinds of supplies, and we no longer sink in despondency and unbelief. When we so sink, we are doing what we wish not to do – yielding to unbelief of the revelation God has given of Himself in Jesus Christ. And Paul shows that this is following the dreadful example of the ten spies (Heb. 3. 7-11; 4. 11). The effect is slothfulness, a ceasing from labour to enter into rest in Christ. I feel that figure of the ten spies and the two sets forth the great difference between walking in darkness and walking in the light as children of light (John 12. 35, 36; 1 John 1. 7).

Do let us remember that the sum of the gospel, that by which a sinner lives, is the atonement (Gal. 2. 20, etc). The basis of all the mercies to be had in Christ is the forgiveness of sins and His imputed righteousness whereby we are absolutely “made righteous” (Rom. 5. 19). As we come to know more and more of our state as sinners, we must find there is no hope of walking in peace with God, but as our faith draws new life and vigour from the cross of Christ, and obtains the purging of our conscience from sin, according to 1 John 1. 7.

I do not believe that when Christ in His atoning work is the one Object sought, we are left long ordinarily without finding we are on solid ground, and shall receive great recompense of reward. I could wish I had followed this track more closely, and hope you will be led to do so, and will see its importance more than I can express. Mr. P’s ministry is to me most valuable in shedding light upon it again and again, and you know Christ said, “While ye have light, believe in the light” – as if it would not be given always in the same open manifestation of His presence. “But the just shall live by his faith,” notwithstanding.

That you may with us live by faith, having “received the promise,” and die in faith, is my hope and desire in writing this. I should like to know what you think of my chief point when you have well considered it.

Very sincerely yours,

B.

Brighton, July 4th, 1911

Mr. J.H. Gosden spoke of “the valued and lamented writer of this letter,” not disclosing who he or she was.

THE GRACE OF GOD IN OLIVER CROMWELL

What would anyone think of such speeches being delivered to Parliament today?

No man ever did more for the interest and welfare of our country, both civil and religious, than Oliver Cromwell, and perhaps no man has been more maligned, and his motives and character more assailed and misrepresented. And yet to no one person, as an instrument in God's hands, are we so much indebted for our present liberties as we are to the celebrated Protector.

Throughout the whole of the Civil War which lasted for many years, he proved to be a man of great foresight and undaunted courage; and at times, when Parliament and even the army were inclined to flag and give up, by his letters and messages from the battlefield he stimulated them to persevere, knowing that unless they conquered the king and the Romish party, the cause of religious freedom would be lost and the church of God brought to suffer bondage, persecution and in many cases death.

It was at the conclusion of this long war that the great and noble-minded defender of our liberties and real contender for the faith of the saints made his first speech before what in history is termed "the little Parliament." Our nation is very much indebted to Thomas Carlyle, who bestowed many years of ardent labour in collecting the Letters and Speeches of Cromwell. From these Speeches we will give a few extracts by which any discerning person may read the true character and see the grace and faith that God had bestowed upon this illustrious saviour of our land. The following are a few pickings from his Speeches.

In Speech I (1653), alluding to the late war, he says, "It pleased God about the middle of this war to winnow, if I may so speak, the forces of this nation, and to put them into the hands of men of other principles than those that did engage at the first. It would take more time than is allotted to me to tell you of all the strange windings and turnings of Providence in crossing and thwarting the purposes of men, that He might raise up a poor and contemptible company of men, neither versed in military affairs nor having much natural propensity to them, and bringing them into wonderful success, simply by their owning a principle of godliness and religion which, so soon as it came to be owned and the state of affairs put upon the foot of that account, God blessed them, furthering all undertakings, yet using the most improbable and the most contemptible and despicable means. For that we shall ever own.

"What the several successes and issues have been I cannot mention at this time, though I thought to have enlarged on that subject, forasmuch as considering the works of God and the operations of His hands is a

principal part of our duty and a great encouragement to the strengthening of our hands and of our faith for that which is still to come. It is fit for us to ascribe our failings and miscarriages to ourselves, yet the gloriousness of the work may well be attributed to God Himself, and may be called His strange work. Not one of the events that have taken place but what has an evident print of Providence set upon it, so that he who runs may read it. We have such a history to look back upon, the hand of God being so eminently visible that even our enemies have confessed that God Himself was certainly engaged against them, else they would never have been disappointed in every engagement."

Having briefly dilated upon some of the events arising out of the war, he now addresses the Government which he had called together in the following manner:

"Truly God hath called you to this work by, I think, as wonderful providences as ever passed upon the sons of men in so short a time. It has come to you by the way of necessity, by the way of the wise providence of God, through weak hands. And therefore I think coming through our hands, though such as we are, it may not be ill taken if we offer something as to the discharge of the trust which is now incumbent upon you. And although I speak of that which may appear like a charge, yet it is a very humble one; and if he that means to be a servant to you, who hath now called you to the exercise of the Supreme Authority discharge what he conceives to be a duty to you, we hope you will take it in good part.

"And truly I shall not hold you long to it, because I hope it is written in your hearts to approve yourselves to God. Only this Scripture I shall remember to you, which hath been much upon my spirit: 'Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints' (Hos. 11. 12). It is said before that 'Ephraim compassed God about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit.' How God hath been compassed about by fastings and thanksgivings, and other exercises and transactions I think we have all cause to lament. Truly you are called, as Judah was, to 'rule with Him,' and for Him; and you are called to be faithful with the saints who have been instrumental to your call. And again the scripture saith, 'He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God' (2 Sam. 23. 3).

"I know it is better to pray for you than to counsel you, and I am confident many thousands of saints do this this day, and have done and will do through the permission of God and His assistance. Yet I think of another scripture which is very useful, wherein every Christian man is counselled to ask wisdom from above, and we are told what that is: it is 'pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.' Parity, impartiality and sincerity, these are the effects of wisdom, and these will help you to

execute the judgment of truth. And then if God give you hearts to be 'easy to be intreated,' to be 'peaceably spirited,' to be 'full of good fruits,' bearing good fruits to the nation, to men as men, to the people of God, and to all in their several stations, this will teach you to execute the judgment of mercy and truth. The 'judgment of truth' will teach you to be as just towards an unbeliever as towards a believer, and it is our duty to do so. A second thing is to desire you would be faithful with the saints. I hope, whatever others may think, it may be a matter to us all of rejoicing to have our hearts touched as was Christ (with reverence be it spoken) 'touched with our infirmities.'

"In my pilgrimage and some exercises I have had abroad, I often read the forty-first chapter of Isaiah, where God gave me and some of my fellows encouragement as to what He would do there and elsewhere, which He hath performed for us. He said He would plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, the myrtle, and the oil tree, and that He would set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine tree, and the box tree together. For what end will the Lord do all this? 'That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this,' that it is He who hath wrought all the deliverances we have received. For what end? For the good of the saints to the end of the world.

"Therefore I beseech you have a care for the whole flock. Love the sheep, love the lambs; cherish and countenance all in all things that are good. And if the poorest Christian shall desire to live peaceably and quietly under you, and to lead a life of godliness and honesty, let him be protected. I think I need not advise, much less press you to endeavour the promoting of the gospel, and to encourage such ministers as be faithful in the land, men that have received the Spirit which Christians will be able to discover; men that have received gifts from Him who is ascended up on high, who hath led captivity captive, to give gifts to men, even for this same work of the ministry.

"The apostle in Romans 12, when he had summed up all the mercies of God and the goodness of God and discoursed in the former chapters of the foundations of the gospel and of the things that are the subject of the first eleven chapters, he beseecheth them to 'present their bodies a living sacrifice,' and that they would not think highly of themselves, but be humble and sober-minded, and not stretch themselves beyond their line; and also that they would have a care for those who had received gifts to the uses there mentioned. I speak not with regard to a ministry derived from the Papacy and pretending to what is so much insisted on, 'Succession.' The true 'succession' is through the Spirit. The Spirit is given to make proper speakers-forth of God's eternal truth; and that, is right *succession*.

"I confess I never looked to see such a day as this when Jesus Christ should be owned as He is this day in this work. God manifests this to be the day of the power of Christ, having through so much blood and so much trial as hath been upon these nations made this to be one of the great issues thereof, to have His people called to the Supreme Authority. Perhaps you are not known by face to one another; indeed I am confident you are strangers, coming from all parts of the nation as you do; but we have not allowed the choice of one person in whom we had not this good hope that there was in him faith in Jesus Christ and love to all His people and saints. Thus God hath owned you in the eyes of the world, and thus by coming hither, you own Him. That is a memorable passage in Isaiah 43. 21: 'This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise,' and may the Lord apply it to each of your hearts.

"Consider the circumstances by which you are called hither; through what strivings at Marston Moor, Naseby, Dunbar [battles that had been fought] and elsewhere, through what blood you are come hither, where neither you, nor I, nor any man living three months ago had any thought to have seen such a company being called to take upon them the Supreme Authority of this nation. Would all were the Lord's people. It ought to be the longing of our hearts to see men brought to own the interest of Jesus Christ. If I know anything that is likely to win the people to the interest of Jesus Christ, to the love of godliness, it is a humble and godly conversation, so that they may see that you love them, that you lay yourselves out for them. If I had to choose any servant, the meanest officer for the Army or the Commonwealth, I would choose a godly man that hath principles, especially where a trust is to be committed.

"Psalm 68 is a glorious prophecy, I am persuaded, of the gospel churches – it may be of the Jews only. There it prophesies that God will bring His people again from the depths of the sea, as once He led Israel through the Red Sea. And it may be, as some think, God will bring the Jews home to their station 'from the isles of the sea' and answer their expectations 'as from the depths of the sea.' But sure I am when the Lord shall set up the glory of the gospel church, it shall be a gathering of people as 'out of deep waters,' that is out of the multitudes of the nations and people of this world. All I have to say in my own name, and that of my fellow-officers who have joined with me in this work, is that we commend you to the grace of God and to the guidance of His Spirit; that having thus far served you, or rather our Lord Jesus Christ in regard to you, we shall be ready in our stations, according as the providence of God shall lead us, to be subservient to the farther work of God and to that authority which we shall reckon God hath set over us."

The Royalists and the Papists might go on for fifty years to come, as they have done for two centuries past, vilifying the character of this

good man, branding him with the epithet of “hypocrite,” “usurper,” “tyrant,” and calling his religion hypocrisy and cant, but where is there a child of God, a partaker of His grace and Spirit, who can read the foregoing and following statements without coming to the inevitable conclusion in his mind that Oliver Cromwell was a man humbled in spirit, rich in grace, strong in faith, bold in the cause of Christ, yet tender, kind and compassionate to the meanest of the Lord’s people, and indeed we may say to all others who were worthy of it?

From the *Gospel Standard* 1889

WHO WERE THE ANABAPTISTS?

We have been asked: Who were the Anabaptists? What is our connection with them?

1. At the time of the Reformation, various groups appeared on the Continent who rejected infant sprinkling as a mode of baptism and practised baptism by immersion for believers only. They were cruelly persecuted by Roman Catholics and Protestants alike, even by Luther, Calvin and Zwingli. They were found mostly in the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland. The name “Anabaptists” (meaning “re-baptizers”) was given to them. Many eventually fled to North America, where their descendants can be found among the Amish, the Hutterites and the Mennonites.

Though there was much godliness and sincerity among them, the Anabaptists were not completely sound in doctrine. They also received a bad name because of the excesses of a small group, led by John of Leyden (1510-1536), who attempted to set up an earthly kingdom, besieged Münster, practised polygamy and went to grave extremes. It is extremely unfair that the whole body of Anabaptists has been stigmatised because of one or two fanatics (numbered among those who rejected infant baptism).

For further reading, see:

William R. Estep: *The Anabaptist Story* (Grand Rapids, 1975).

Leonard Verduin: *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* (Exeter, 1966).

2. As far as can be ascertained, our churches, and our forefathers in the seventeenth century, had no connection whatsoever with the continental Anabaptists.

The General Baptists did. The first General Baptist church, 1609, had close links with the Anabaptists. The first Particular Baptist church,

1633, and those that followed were secessions from godly Calvinistic churches on the grounds of baptism alone. Their beginnings were entirely different.

It should be mentioned that often in former years the term "Anabaptist" was applied (in a way of scorn by their opponents) to all kinds of Baptists.

A MEMORIAL OF THE LORD'S GOODNESS

*The life and experience of John Smith of Islington, London,
who died in 1875.*

(Concluded from page 29)

After I was raised to some little hope in God's mercy, I was often led back in meditation to my former ways, which were not good, but evil. Amongst others, in this heart-searching dispensation I found I had, like Zacchaeus, got money by false accusation. In the disposal of my first business, I had represented it as worth more than it actually was, and I considered through that I had got £50 more than it was worth. Three years had passed away, and my successor had not complained. But now conscience complained and condemned me, and although I had not the money by me to pay it back, yet I had the conviction that the money was not got rightly, and I felt a bar in my conscience before the Lord in asking Him to grant a blessing on my labours whilst I withheld that money, for "the fear of the Lord is clean." So I was constrained to go to the person, acknowledge my sin to him, and give him a promissory note for £50, payable in twelve months, so that in case I might not be spared until that time, he might claim it out of the sale of my present business.

I continued attending the weekly class-meetings amongst the Wesleyans for the purpose of prayer and relating to each other our experience during the week, where whatever was found amiss was confessed and regretted, and admonitions and encouragement given to be more on the watch, to pray more and to "set out afresh." I recollect the minister telling us in one of the meetings to read the last chapters in the epistles, when the thought occurred to me, "Why not the first as well? Is it not all the Word of God?" When I went home I did so, and found they clearly revealed to whom they were written, viz., the saints, and also treated of the election of God by His grace. I felt this was not honest in the minister to slight any part of God's Word.

Soon after, being laid by one Sunday at home, I read Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, when it pleased the Lord to "open my eyes, that I might understand the Scriptures," especially these words: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth? Received ye

the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain?" I found I had suffered many things in vain in my endeavour to keep the law for righteousness, and that I was trying to be made perfect by the flesh. I knew I had never felt any peace in my own soul but as I had been led to see Jesus as my atoning sacrifice, and I was indeed one of those foolish Galatians who were again and again bewitched.

One Sunday evening I went to hear a Mr. H., who preached in a small chapel and had very few to hear him. He took for his text Colossians 2. 10: "Ye are complete in Him." The substance from beginning to end was a sweet testimony of Christ to me, and as being All in all to a poor, exercised and tried sinner, and a continual testimony of the truth of the text as an answer to the suggestions of Satan in my soul. The Word was with power, and in much assurance, and in the Holy Ghost, and it testified of Christ. I came out another man in my feelings. My soul was full of Christ, and I rejoiced in God my Saviour. As the sword of justice in the Garden of Eden turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life, so I saw that Jesus, as the salvation and righteousness of His children, turned every way to answer and meet the demands of divine justice on the sinner's behalf. My soul was set at liberty before God in and through Christ Jesus, and I truly felt that "none but Jesus could do helpless sinners good." "Ye are complete in Him" was my song and my strength, and I went in the strength of this meat many days.

I longed for the class-meeting night to tell them what God had done for my soul, and what joy and peace I had in realising the precious truth: "Ye are complete in Him." I happened to be nearly the last in rotation that evening. When the "leader" (who was an aged and kind man) asked me "how it had been with me during the week in the good way," I told him I found much to mourn over and confess of my shortcomings and misdoings in the week that had passed, but felt if they were enabled to experience what I had and did of the precious truth contained in these words: "Ye are complete in Him," it would turn their sackcloth into rejoicing, and their mourning into praise. I was going on, for my mouth was opened and my heart was enlarged, when he stopped me, saying, "Yes, brother; that is a very precious truth, but we must be careful that it does not lead to licentiousness, and thus make a bad use of it." I thought, how ignorant I am! I did not speak so that he could understand me. How foolish I am! Lead to licentiousness! Why, I never felt a greater desire to live and act in the fear of the Lord than I do now, while I feel I am "complete in Him."

One time, when passing up and down in my house bewailing the trouble I was in, these words were sweetly brought to my mind: "They

were stoned, they were sawn asunder," etc. (Heb. 11. 37). I said to my foreman at the time, who made a profession, "O, John! What are all my trials, if I may be favoured to join them that were so used for Jesus' sake?"

I recollect one Sunday morning I was led to Gower Street Chapel, where I heard a Mr. B. preach from these words: "Commit thy way unto the Lord," etc. (Psa. 37. 5, 6). I had gone with a very heavy heart from outward trouble and inward sinfulness. It pleased the Lord Jehovah by this discourse to send His Word and heal me, drawing my heart unto Himself, enabling me to commit my all into His hands, for Him in His own time and way to bring all to pass in grace and in providence that should be for my good. On this word I was enabled to hope, and thus I was enabled in after times to plead, and for the fulfilment of it I was enabled to wait. In about six years afterwards I was able to set to my seal that the Lord had graciously fulfilled it in every jot and tittle.

The assistant I had in the shop, a Miss S., attended the ministry of Mr. John Hobbs* of Staining Lane with her father. I sometimes heard of his texts on the Monday, but could get nothing further from her than that "she could not repeat anything he said, but that he told her all that was in her heart." I sometimes found the texts she named searched my heart more than the sermons I had heard on the previous day. This induced me to hear him occasionally in the week, but I could not receive the doctrines of election and predestination as he preached them, and I felt very prejudiced against him, especially as I found he was not connected with any other ministers, but stood, as it were, by himself. But still now and then, I believe from soul necessity, I would drop in on a week evening. I found the Lord opened up the exercises of my soul as I had never had them opened up before. Mr. Hart's hymns, which were used, were quite new to me. The first hymn I heard given out spoke all my heart: "If ever it should come to pass," etc. "And must it, Lord, be so?" and, "Mercy is welcome news indeed," were sweet to me. I soon found my ear nailed to the door, sensibly and efficaciously, and the "Word" (Jesus) enter and remain. From that time I attended his ministry for about twenty-five years until his death. Having been asked, in the absence of a former clerk, to give out the hymns for a month, I continued to do so for nearly twenty years – those sweet experimental hymns of Mr. Hart, at Haberdashers' Hall Chapel, Staining Lane.

The ministry of Mr. Hobbs was a sinner-and-soul-humbling and Christ-exalting ministry, tracing out according to the grace given unto him, which was abundant in faith and love, the work of the Holy Ghost in a sinner's conscience from first to last. It might truly be said of him that whatsoever subject he was treating of, "Jesus" was the Alpha and

* An account of the life of John Hobbs appeared in the *Gospel Standard* 1980.

Omega, the All and in all. His was a soul-searching and soul-establishing ministry, testifying of the grace and love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost to the objects of His choice; opening up and unfolding the marks, evidences and fruits of that grace wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Christ and reveals them in the heart.

I have especially desired to add my feeble testimony to the mercy, lovingkindness and faithfulness of the Lord in keeping, preserving and delivering me when no hope of deliverance appeared, preserving me by His mighty power from falling in any one act through the temptations of Satan and my own evil and corrupt nature, during the continued inward trials I passed through; saving me from bringing a discredit on the name I bore, escaping, as it were, "by the skin of my teeth." But how? God is faithful, who has not suffered me to be tempted more than I was able, but with every temptation made a way of escape.

August 1872. Aged 63 years. JOHN SMITH.

In the year 1863 the Lord laid His afflicting hand upon him. His illness was severe, not being able to move off his bed for ten weeks. In that affliction he was greatly favoured and blessed in his soul, so that he longed to depart, although from the commencement he had these words powerfully applied to his soul: "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." And to all outward appearance his recovery seemed hopeless, two medical attendants and a physician saying nothing more could be done, and giving no hope of his restoration. But when every other method failed, contrary to all human expectation, after an attack of paralysis, the Lord gradually restored him to a measure of health and added to his days twelve years.

He often looked back to that illness and said, "I have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and in truth. I find as I am now, as it were, turned round into the wilderness again, to traverse it a few more days, or months, or years, before I go hence and be no more seen, that I have as much need of His grace toward and in me as ever I had in my life, for without Him I can do nothing. Yea, I feel at times dry, barren and grovelling, thinking of anything and everything but Him who has done so much for me, and who alone is my Hope, Refuge and Hiding-place for time and eternity. I am brought to feel that I need a perfect Saviour who is able to save to the uttermost." So that he daily felt his sinnership, and realised the abundant mercy of his covenant God who was ever nigh unto him, to help and deliver in all his varied and subsequent trials.

As the winter approached in 1874, his health began rapidly to decline, and he sensibly felt his time on earth was short. He met his large

and loving family on Christmas day, when all felt that that would be the last of those favoured gatherings which had extended over thirty years. It was his custom after dinner to sing that hymn of Newton's, "Let hearts and tongues unite," etc. When he came to the verses, "Now through another year"; "And since His name we knew," etc., he stopped, and said he could never sing it more heartily than now, and burst into tears. He stayed while his children finished singing it and his sons-in-law read and engaged in prayer, and then was obliged to retire, remarking to his dear wife, "This will be the last Christmas I shall meet with my children." And so it proved. His tabernacle was gently taken down. His mind was kept peaceful, and stayed upon his God; no ecstatic joy, but a firm abiding in Him who was his All and in all. He soon was confined to his room, and often spoke of his departure, daily watching every symptom and saying, "The time of my departure is at hand." He dwelt much upon the faithfulness of God to him, often remarking, "Not one thing hath failed."

He much enjoyed a visit from Mr. S., deacon of Zoar, which church he had recently joined. In alluding to his dismissal, he remarked to one of his daughters,

"Death is a porter at the gate,
To let the pilgrim in."

To another he said, "It will not be long. 'I have fought the good fight of faith,' but I have badly fought it. 'I have finished my course; and henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness; and not for me only, but also for all those that love His appearing.'" That portion was sweet and abiding with him: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine," etc.

A fortnight before he died, he remarked, "I have done with all things here, and hope in a fortnight to be sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," again quoting the words, "I have fought a good fight." To a daughter who had come to stay with him he said, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," and requested that chapter to be read to him. Five days before his death the power of articulation was taken from him, but he retained his consciousness, and appeared quietly waiting his dismissal. Not a murmur escaped his lips, although for the last three weeks he could not lie down or sit long in one posture. His patience was great. The last words he tried to give utterance to were: "There I shall see His face," etc.

He frequently looked round at his sorrowing wife and children, and shook them by the hand, showing that he knew them. He could not bear

his dear wife away from his side, but when told she had gone to get a little rest, he quietly assented. He continued thus till his redeemed spirit took its flight early on Monday morning, February 22nd, 1875. He left all instructions written for his funeral and many other matters, and a copy for his card, adding at the bottom, "Having a good hope through grace."

He was interred at Abney Park Cemetery by his dear friend and brother in the Lord, Mr. Knill, amidst a large sorrowing family and circle of friends.

A.W.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Heart of Christ, by Thomas Goodwin; paperback; 160 pages; price £5; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

It is believed that Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) was J.C. Philpot's favourite Puritan writer, preferring him even to Dr. Owen.

We are pleased to welcome *The Heart of Christ*, originally published in 1651 with the title *The Heart of Christ in Heaven towards Sinners on Earth*. The theme throughout is "the tenderness of Christ's heart towards sinners" and "Christ's affectionate compassion for sinners in their infirmities."

The book's Editor, rightly, mourns the fact that Goodwin is so little known today, and even ventures the question why. We feel that not only is the Nichol edition (1862) of Goodwin's work so scarce, but modern readers do have problems with the set-out and small print in older books. This is completely remedied in the present beautiful production, and we are pleased that the wording is virtually unaltered.

Goodwin is certainly not difficult to read or understand. The only thing: to those unfamiliar he may appear long and somewhat laboured.

One unusual thought struck us very much: Goodwin says *how much the Lord Jesus loves His offices*. We find the offices of Christ exceedingly attractive. (See our beautiful hymns 122, 130 and 142.) But it is a lovely thought that they are precious to Christ Himself and He loves to execute them on behalf of His unworthy people. This is mentioned especially in connection with His office as the Mediator.

We are delighted that these Puritan treasures are appearing out of obscurity once more.

John Bevis, a Brother Beloved; paperback; 22 pages; no price given; copies available from Matthew J. Hyde, 5 Hawthorn, Appledore, Ashford, Kent, TN26 2AH.

This short account, with several letters, is sub-titled, "A few particulars of the spiritual exercises of the late John Bevis, of Sarisbury Green, who was called home at the early age of 19 years on March 15th, 1950." It is extracted from *Zion's Witness*.

John was a godly boy who attended Swanwick Shore chapel, and was tragically killed in a motor cycle crash. The account is very brief, but there are a number of gracious letters.

Our readers will have noticed that a new children's book in the "Miracles" series has now been published, *Peter, Disciple of Jesus*. This series has been well received in the past, and we hope the Lord's blessing will rest on this new book.

Sadly, there is such a lack of suitable children's books today. Even if the text is satisfactory, illustrations are often in the style of cartoons. *Peter, Disciple of Jesus* is beautifully illustrated but has no pictures of the Lord Jesus. The story of Peter is simply told and there is great emphasis on the Person of Jesus and reverence for Him.

OBITUARY

Rona Rose Walder, a faithful member of the church at Galeed, Brighton for 28 years, and the wife of Mr. John W. Walder, passed away on December 13th, 2011, aged 91.

She recorded the following account of some of her spiritual experiences, when she transferred her church membership to Galeed in 1983:

"From my schooldays it was my daily prayer that the Lord would grant me grace. I knew there was something to be had that I did not possess. One day Mr. Groombridge [pastor at Haywards Heath] said, 'You may not have any desire for the things of God, but perhaps you desire the desire.' That just expressed my case, and I could not produce a good desire.

"Some years later, after spending a very troubled night grieving over what I was and what I did, the hymn we sang at the morning service just expressed my feelings:

‘O Lord, with shame I do confess
My universal emptiness,
My poverty and pride....
Nor can I think one thought aright.’

"Towards the end of the hymn it says, 'Thy grace sufficed saints of old.' I longed for this same grace.

"During the following week, John wrote to me cautiously suggesting a friendship. As I walked to chapel the following Sunday morning, I thought about this letter and my feeling was, 'Have I sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness?' When I entered the chapel my heartfelt prayer was, 'Show me some token, Lord, for good, some token of Thy special love.' During that service these words were very powerfully spoken to me: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' I had not had anything like that before, and now I knew that there was an omniscient and omnipresent God. That knowledge had an effect upon me. There were some things that I could no longer do. Our friendship with a view to marriage

commenced during the following week. From the way that spiritual things had to come before providential, I felt that I would be baptized before I was married.

As I went along, I felt more and more of my sinful condition – past sins, present sins, actual sins, heart sins. I was convicted, I was accused, and I was verily guilty. One night, feeling my burden to be heavy, I knelt by my bed and freely confessed all, begging for the Lord's forgiveness. Then I opened my Bible to read, not choosing any particular portion. My eye fell on the case of the woman taken in the very act of sin. Although I had not been left actually to fall in the same way, as I read it, I was that woman. If she had been condemned I would have been condemned, and that was what I expected. But with such sweetness the words were applied: 'Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.' O the faith, the love, the sweet repentance and real godly sorrow I felt! Sometimes since I have longed for a little of the same feelings.

"One day, as I was going down the stairs, these words came: 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.' I did not want tribulation, but the words were with power and I had to accept them. Then followed: 'In Me peace.' Then I felt that I could welcome tribulation.

"At one time, being very unwell and oppressed, there was no word spoken, but I felt such nearness to Christ. I had a great desire to go and be for ever with Him, but at the same time I felt perfectly submissive to staying in a world of tribulation just as long as ever He saw fit.

"I became very cast down because I thought I did not feel my sins as I should and that I had not been brought low enough before being raised up. Eventually I came to the point: 'The way I walk cannot be wrong, if Jesus be but there.' Then I said, 'Choose Thou the way, but still lead on.'

"During one night I felt that my heart was naked and opened and God was looking right into it. There was no corner where His eye did not penetrate. I felt such awe at a sense of His holiness. I could not speak, but I just panted out, 'Thou so holy; me so vile.'

"My unbelief was a great trouble to me, also my hard, stony heart, my lack of repentance, lack of love and inability to pray. I thought I was altogether wrong as I seemed so different to other people. Then I came across Newton's hymn on conflict:

'O could I but believe,
Then all would easy be;
I *would*, but *cannot*; Lord, relieve!
My help must come from Thee.'

"The other verses too. I was pleased to find that somebody else had the same feelings as myself.

"As I was cycling to the office one day, I was praying for faith and love. I thought, 'I believe I have felt love to God, but have I ever felt love to Jesus Christ?' Sweetly the words were spoken: 'I and My Father are One.' Then came the question: 'Lovest thou Me?' I feelingly responded, 'Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.' The verse followed:

'Plainly here His footsteps tracing,
Follow Him without delay.'

"I felt so ignorant, so helpless. Shortly after, a sermon of Mr. Popham's was read from the text, 'My Beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away.' He spoke of coming away to the church. Under that sermon all my objections were answered. A few days later John asked me if I saw anything standing in the way of our being married, if we could find somewhere to live. I had to admit that I felt I should be baptized first. During the following night I felt how nice it would be if we were baptized together,* and I awoke with the promise, 'I will grant thee the desire of thy heart.'

"The following day (Sunday) before getting up I read the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of John's gospel. They were very sweet to me, particularly, 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.' Also, 'He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.' That very day I was so disappointed with the services; I seemed to lose everything. I did not walk in the path of obedience. Afterwards Mr. Walter [pastor at Scaynes Hill] preached from some verses in the 89th Psalm, including the words, 'If his children keep not My commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.' I knew that it would be so, but I went disobediently on.

"Soon I came into trouble from all directions. Affliction, distress, persecution, oppression and opposition were all in it, but the worst of all was the terrible darkness within, desertion and the dreadful atheism to which I was left. I had a case which only God could deal with and I could not believe that He existed. One night, feeling there was nothing worth living for, I again read the 14th, 15th and 16th of John. But now the chapters which had previously been so sweet were full of condemnation. 'He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings.' 'Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away.' I made excuses – I blamed God. I said I was promised that we would be baptized together and John had not gone forward. Then I read, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?' At this time I felt no love, so just continued disobediently.

"After this richly-deserved chastisement had gone on for about two years, in much mercy the Lord spoke again. He said, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.' O the delight of hearing His voice again! Faith and love sprang up, and other graces too. Now I was willing to follow Him in His ordinances. The following day I went to chapel quite expecting confirmation to go forward. But the text was, "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day." Painful though it was, I was just as happy to sit still – any way now, so long as it was in accordance with the Lord's will. For a time I walked very tenderly, fearful of grieving the Spirit. Trials continued: sometimes I called on God, and cried and shouted, but all my prayer He shut out. Afterwards I believed that He marked every tear and counted every sigh. Eventually I was sweetly constrained to walk

* God is sovereign, but we have come across people, more than once, saying, "I will never come forward to be baptized till he/she comes." The Spirit's work is "one by one" (Isa. 27. 12). We do not suggest Mrs. Walder was in this snare.

in the ordinance of baptism. I felt peace at this time. Satan was a chained foe. We were baptized together and married shortly after.

“Subsequently we came into many trials and afflictions, but for the most part I had the Lord’s felt presence. I proved that ‘In Thy presence all afflictions I can easily endure.’

“After we had been married twelve years and my husband was about to commence preaching, I had occasion to look back over some of my experience. One morning my thoughts and feelings went like this: ‘The Lord loved me and He said, “Lovest thou Me?”’ ‘He called me Beloved. I called Him Beloved.’ (On one occasion He had said, ‘Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.’ I said, ‘My Beloved spake and said unto me.’) He called me, ‘My love, my fair one.’ He said that He would go and prepare a place for me and come and receive me and we would be together. Then I exclaimed, ‘Why? He is my Husband.’ For days the verse was with me,

‘On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free;
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?’

“I particularly appreciated the freeness. I said, ‘Nothing but sin I Thee can give; nothing but love do I receive.’

“At another time, we came into an exceedingly trying circumstance. This really got on top of me; I could neither eat nor sleep. I quite appreciated the Sunday services – the evening text being, ‘My strength is made perfect in weakness,’ and I felt a little comforted. But after going to bed I was back in the same place, tossing and turning for hours. Then I came to this point: ‘Lord, show me where I am wrong; Lord, show me where I am wrong.’ Immediately came the reply:

‘Thy whole dependence on Me fix;
Nor entertain a thought
Thy worthless schemes with Mine to mix,
But venture to be nought.’

“I said, ‘Lord, forgive; Lord, forgive.’ Then I settled down and had the most restful sleep. First thing in the morning I looked up the hymn and realised it was the voice of the Shepherd to the sheep. Feelingly I said, ‘The Lord is *my* Shepherd.’ That very day the trying circumstance was completely removed.

“When we moved from the business premises, matters were exceedingly difficult. It was at the time when prices were escalating, houses were almost unobtainable and we ourselves were most unfairly treated. We had a number of disappointments. In it I did desire some spiritual benefit; I did not want merely a providential deliverance. After the trial had gone on for nearly two years, one evening I thought I would read a portion in a *Gospel Standard* which I had previously appreciated. I did not find it, but instead came across a piece written by Mr. Popham concerning the time when his son was ill, and he received the spirit of adoption by the words, ‘Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.’ I felt just a little comfort – I had been chastened as a child, and called, ‘My daughter.’ The following morning very scanty particulars of a house came. We viewed it and thought it would be suitable, but there did not

appear the least likelihood of us getting it – there were so many wanting it. On the way home I said, ‘If they say we can have it, I shall not believe it until the contract is signed.’ On reaching home, I went to my bedroom before going into the shop, intending to ask the Lord to let us have the house if it was in accordance with His will; otherwise to withhold it from us. But as I went on to my knees, I most feelingly said, ‘My heavenly Father; my heavenly Father, Thou knowest; Thou knowest,’ and I shed tears of love and joy. I felt certain the house would be ours.

“I much appreciate my husband’s ministry, and when he came here as pastor, I felt it would be right for me to transfer my membership, but having heard him say that there is a right thing to do, a right time to do it and a right way to do it, I did desire to know the right time. On the last occasion that we were at Scaynes Hill for the morning and afternoon services, as I walked up the aisle here in the evening, I felt, ‘This is my home. “Here my best friends, my kindred dwell; here God, my Saviour, reigns.”’

“All I have said that is right is of the Lord’s free grace – absolutely free to one so base – and I would glorify Him.”

Sent by T.J.P.

Note by her husband

In the afflictions that have come upon us in our latter years, my late dear wife and I have been very well cared for in the Hove Bethesda Home. My dear one was admitted to hospital on December 4th, where she passed away nine days later. Two days before her death, she had said to a visiting relative, “I have a better home.” After the funeral service on December 21st at Bethesda, her mortal remains were laid to rest in Hove Cemetery, in blessed hope of resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

J.W.W.

THOUGHTS ON HEAVEN

Lines written whilst in hospital for six weeks with a fractured thigh

Shall I reach that blest place?
There is a faint hope at times that I shall see His face and never sin.
Who shall I wish to see there?
The dear Saviour of sinners.
Shall I need company to go with me?
No, *each* must tread this path *alone*.
Shall I need a candle there?
No, it will be everlasting light, eternal noon.
Shall I need a rest?
No, there is no weariness there.
Shall I need any clothes?
No, I shall be clothed in the robe of Christ’s righteousness.
Shall I need a couch?
No, there is no night there.

Shall I need a fire?
 No, Christ's love and brightness hath more heat than the sun.
 Shall I need an instrument?
 No, all the Redeemed shall sing the song of God and the Lamb.
 Shall I be alone with the Saviour?
 No, the whole church of God, the Lamb's wife, will be inhabitants
 thereof.
 Shall I need food?
 No, He is the Bread of Life.
 Shall I need water?
 No, He is the Water of Life.
 Shall I need *anything*?
 No, I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness.
 To sum up the whole –
 This poor, weak, vile *body* will not dwell in heaven.
 No *flesh* can enter there. (See 1 Cor. 15. 50-54)

May these few thoughts lead us to consider our latter end and may we one
 day realise the sweetness of being raised from death and put off this mortal for
 immortality to enter into heaven and reign with Christ for ever, no more to go
 out, saved by His free and sovereign grace.

Heaven is that holy, happy place,
 Where saints and angels dwell.
 They see with joy their Maker's face;
 They love His service well.

Lily Oliver (1895-1980), Summer 1961

J.K. STEHOUWER

As many of our readers will know, Mr. Stehouwer, pastor at Grand
 Rapids, U.S.A., has been sorely afflicted. We are pleased that in God's
 providence he is now preaching again, howbeit sitting down. He is still
 prayerfully interested in his many friends in England, though through
 increasing age he is now no longer able to keep in contact with them.
 May the Lord still be with him.

Until the soul be united to Christ by faith, it cannot produce one fruit of the
 Spirit; any more than a branch can bear fruit of itself when severed from the vine.
 A soul out of Christ, and a branch cut off from the parent stem, must be alike
 barren and withered.

Thomas Reade

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MARCH 2012

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

DELIVERANCE BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST

*Sermon preached by J.H. Gosden at Rochdale Road Chapel,
Manchester, on September 14th, 1956*

Text: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2. 14, 15).

This declaration is with reference to the eternal Son of God, of whose glory and equality with His Father the apostle had spoken in the first chapter: “God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” One of our hymn-writers says very truly,

“Could we His Person learn to prize,
We more should prize His grace.”

The great salvation that we need, and that God has provided, is great not only because it saves sinners to the uttermost, but because of the greatness of Him who effected it. O what a great Person He is! God’s co-equal Son, eternally in the bosom of the Father, Jehovah’s Fellow, the Creator of all things, and the Upholder of all things that are.

This text and the context show us what God did in fitting His darling Son, His holy Son, to be a Saviour; that He sent Him, and that He came and took hold of human nature. The least inkling of this great matter of God’s salvation of sinners and the way in which it is effected will make everyone who by faith apprehends it say, “What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?” God is great, immense, glorious in holiness, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, just, pure, perfect. We are insignificant creatures, *not because we are creatures*. Though to God all creatures are but as the small dust of the balance, the drop of a bucket, the Creator’s handiwork cannot be insignificant: every creature was made perfect in its own kind. Man’s insignificance is not his creatureship, but his *sinnership*. And one thing is that we are full of pride, and by nature have no right thoughts of God. Of all creation, only man is vile; yet he only

is imperious. We think that God is such an one as ourselves. If we do not speak it, we say it tacitly in our lives – as if God owes us something, complain of His dealings, rebel when anything crosses us in providence. What fools we are, what sinful worms we are! It is painful, but wholesome, to feel it, for the feeling of this will enhance both the value and the wonder of that salvation which the Lord has so wonderfully provided in the Person, incarnation and work of His beloved Son.

In this chapter the apostle, by the Spirit, takes pains to emphasise the truth that it was *human nature* that the Son of God assumed into personal union with Himself, and not the nature of angels. There is a reason. God says nothing and does nothing without a reason, though He is not accountable to His creatures for any of His matters (Job 33. 13). The reason is His purpose to redeem sinful men. O what is man that God should pass by angels that sinned, and leave them locked up under darkness unto the great day of judgment, and should come forth in the interests of poor, wretched, sinful man, whose nature is of a lower order than angelic! Angelic nature is higher than the nature of man. But it pleased God from eternity to purpose and to delight in providing redemption for sinful man, and this was the way it was effected.

“It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things” – the Possessor, the Creator, the Disposer of all things – “it became Him ... in bringing many sons” – sons by adoption – “unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” And in order that He might be capable of suffering, He took our nature up, became a Man by a miraculous birth – a mystery unfathomable, yet a blessed truth, a sacred fact that is fully attested – He became Man.

“Forasmuch then as the children” – the children by adoption, and those concerning whom it is written that He, the eternal, co-equal Son of God, was not ashamed to call them brethren – “forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” No redemption without this, no forgiveness without this, no salvation without this. Sheer omnipotence could never save a sinner. Some have speculated – improperly as I feel – whether God, who can do all things, could not have saved sinners in some other way than that in which He did. But I believe it is proper for us to infer and conclude that, seeing it involved the suffering of His own eternal, darling Son, His only-begotten Son, if there were any other way whereby man could be saved, surely He would have spared His dear Son; but He spared Him not.

O this was the love of God, this was the grace of God, this was God’s love for holiness, His hatred to sin and His love to sinners! The gospel manifests that most gloriously. The gospel reveals the justice of

God even more than the law, and more than the hell that He has prepared for sinners that are lost. The condemnation under the law of impenitent sinners, and their everlasting punishment, does not discover the justice of God as gloriously as does the plan of salvation by the substitutionary sacrifice and sufferings of the Man Christ Jesus.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” “Likewise” here means He took *real* human nature, a human, reasonable soul and a true, human body. But this “Holy Thing” which He took hold of by His divine Person into a union that will never be dissolved – this Holy Thing did not partake of human sin. It was not by natural generation that the Son of God became incarnate, but it was a miraculous taking hold of the seed of the woman (Gen. 3. 15). O I am thankful I can and do believe in, admire and love the mysterious truth of the virgin birth of Christ! Men in their pride declare it is an impossibility; they deny it. But the Word of God declares it, and the declaration is not needless. If our faith lays hold of that, we shall see how that the Son of God incarnate was, and is, and ever must be absolutely sinless. If that were not so, if He were capable in His humanity of sin, of being stained with it, or committing it, then there could be no salvation in all His obedience and suffering. It is very solemn to express, or even to think, but it is solemnly true. Blessed be God for that wondrous word expressed later in this epistle, that “such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.”

Do you love the truth of Christ’s holy humanity, and has the Holy Spirit made you sometimes admire the wondrous condescension of the Son of God in taking human nature into union with Himself, not disdaining to be a Man and a poor Man, literally a poor Man upon this earth? “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” And He came to suffer, took our nature that He might suffer. In human nature He obeyed and died to remove the curse from His people, to satisfy the justice of God, to honour God’s character in the law, and to reconcile mercy with justice, peace with truth, as the psalmist says. They met together and kissed each other in the Person and suffering death of the Lord Jesus. “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.”

“That through death.” He came to die, came to obey, to fulfil – not to destroy – the law. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus said to the disciples, “I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.” He was “made under the law” (Gal. 4. 4) for this purpose. Again I might say this, it is not speculation, but scriptural and essential truth: He was not under the law by a natural necessity as we are. Being by natural generation from

Adam, Adam's sin runs in our veins. Adam being our federal head, we are born in sin and under the law of God. But He who took human nature up into union with Himself is God the Son and the Law-giver, yet even He as Man was *made* under the law in order that He might obey it, not for Himself, and suffer its penalty for sins not His own. Who can comprehend this immeasurable love of Christ? In the Ephesians, the apostle speaks about the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. It is truly immeasurable. He who is the infinite God, God's Son, was as the poet speaks, "contracted to a span." That is, He took hold of human nature, and in that holy, human nature, He obeyed the law in every jot and tittle.

If we should live and die under the law, we are damned to a man and to eternity, because the law demands perfection, cannot excuse one single trespass; and our trespasses are innumerable. O what a thick cloud you may feel sometimes of your sins between you and God, a dark, black, impenetrable cloud! And the law says that one imperfection merits the curse. The law can only demand perfection and curse a man for imperfection. The Lord Jesus fully met that demand, for He was perfect in all His human nature, and in all His holy obedience and fulfilment of the law of God. O the mercy of this! He laboured through life to work out a righteousness for His people to wear, and having done that, He died a cursed, suffering death, as it is expressed: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." And according to the 53rd of Isaiah, Jehovah "put Him to grief," He spared Him not. He came to die, to die for sinners, in order to destroy death and him that had the power of death, to take away the curse, being made a curse for us.

This was the love of God, the grace of God, the wisdom of God in a mystery, the justice of God vindicating itself in the Person of Immanuel. O how thankful I am at times to believe and feel that God in Christ is a just God and a Saviour! I can well remember in my young days, I could not conceive how a holy God, against whom I had sinned and whom I dreaded, could possibly do anything but condemn me eternally. I feared, I anticipated hell when I died; could see no way out. But this is the way out, the only way out, and when sinners are convicted of their state, and know and feel they are condemned under the holy law, and cannot in any way retrieve themselves, such people are thankful for the revelation of such a gospel, long before they enjoy a felt interest in it.

Does Christ attract you? Does this sacred, solemn truth concerning the incarnation and suffering death of Christ, influence your mind? Many of the saints of God, many people under conviction, are full of

bondage and fear about eternity and about death. Death is a solemn thing under the very best circumstances, but to an unpardoned sinner, it is terrible. To launch into eternity with sin left on the conscience is a terrible consideration, and there is only one thing can relieve the conscience from the dread of dying and the guilt of sin, and that is the *application* of the blood of Christ, faith receiving the atonement, Christ coming in the power of His Spirit and *declaring in the conscience* that all our sin is put away by His sacrifice. O how important *application* is! I do not, I would not, I cannot depreciate the value of the Object. Christ is the fountain fulness of grace and truth, of life and love. Objective religion has a great value in it, and is very helpful to poor sinners who are in bondage through looking within and seeing only darkness, and dimness, and death, and sin. A believing, objective view of Christ and His Person, His obedience and sin-atonement sacrifice, will fill you with hope and earnest desire and prayer for Him to come by His Spirit into your heart and tell you it was done *for you*. O that is an experience to be sought! The *hope* of it is worth more than the world; the *enjoyment* of it is heaven on earth. It has brought peace and satisfaction to countless dying sinners.

“That through death.” O the death of Christ, what a death it was! A suffering death, an expiatory death, a substitutionary death. He died unto sin, He died in love to His people actively. His love was never more active than when He died – His goodwill toward His people, His love to God and holiness. His love of righteousness and hatred of wickedness, His faithfulness to God in His covenant, His love and mercifulness to poor sinners, made Him die. He died a voluntary death, He was made sin, and suffered by divine justice, and paid the debt His brethren owed. If you get a discharge in your heart and conscience, get a clear conscience by the purging efficacy of that blood which did for sin atone, you will have rest, holy joy, and peace in believing. This was what Paul sought for the Romans. He says, “The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” The death of Christ is the foundation of hope.

“And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Not always *in* bondage, but from time to time feeling subject to it. But when sin is pardoned, when the blessed Spirit seals redeeming love and blood on the heart, when there is that sacred inward witness, the “earnest of the inheritance” apprehended by faith, then the dread of death is gone, then there is an anticipation of eternity, then the desire is to be with the Lord and like Him for ever.

But here below there is conflict still. None but the Lord’s people really have this conflict with sin:

“When his pardon is signed, and his peace is proclaimed,
From that moment his conflict begins”

in deadly earnest, because of Satan. Christ did not destroy his being, but his power. He is a defeated foe, but he will trouble poor believers, he will suggest all manner of *ifs*, and *buts*, and *hows*. Then what is so painful a discovery to some of us is this, that though we do hope the Lord redeemed us, and told us He had, and gave us the enjoyment of His pardoning love, we still have in us that which is contrary to Him. We have a body of sin and death. We cannot serve Him, love Him, follow Him, as we would. We are baulked by sin; that is very painful. O if you read the 7th of Romans with a spiritual understanding, you will know what wretchedness is! But it is a blessed wretchedness, for it fits a person for the Lord Jesus. It makes Him increasingly precious, and sometimes the hope of final victory is very sweet. David said, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness. As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness.” There is a prospect for these people, “who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage”; a home for them, and a Forerunner into heaven, the great High Priest set down at the right hand of God.

And there is communication. O Christ is not in heaven to leave His people alone! No, they have communion with Him sometimes at the throne of grace. “Having a great High Priest over the house of God,” says Paul, “let us hold fast our profession.” How can we do this? Why, by cleaving to Christ, as having that faith wrought within us by the Spirit, which is the evidence of things not seen, and which works by love. When by the Spirit’s power your faith goes out to the dear, once-suffering Redeemer, and you are brought to feel a measure of sympathy with Him for those sufferings, love accompanies that faith. You will love Him for those sin-atonement sufferings, for His precious death, and for being what He is and where He is now, and you will put your trust in Him, and employ Him as a great Intercessor and Mediator, the Way to God. What a life it is, the life of faith! “The just shall live by faith.” That is the only way we *can* live. If we live by sense and upon ourselves, then we do not really *live*, because we are condemned even for the sin of our holy things. But if we live on Christ by faith, then there is justification: “The just shall live by his faith.” That means dependence. I hope none of you are guilty of, and suffer as I do, with an inveterately independent spirit. O it is a dreadful thing! It means rebellion. It means sinning against your best interests. It means indifference to your only Saviour and Friend. But sometimes I am thankful to submit to Him, to trust in Him, and lean all the weight of my immortal interests upon His Person and merit and name.

True religion is a very simple thing, but a very solemn thing. It is the knowledge of sin and the knowledge of salvation; the knowledge of

self and the knowledge of God in Christ. May the Lord give us that religion. Paul said, and some of us say not infrequently, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.... That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." It will be wonderful to reach heaven, and know Him, and see Him, and be like Him and with Him for ever, where there shall be no more curse and no more sin. O my friends, if you get a glimpse of Him through the lattice of His Word, and a touch of Him in your heart, it will make you long to know Him more, be conformed to Him, and it will make sin very dreadful.

The Lord grant us His blessing, make Himself very precious, give those of you who are convicted of your sin and feel sometimes the weight of guilt to receive the atonement, to receive Christ into your hearts. If He comes and claims you, and tells you He has redeemed you, and lets you claim Him in your heart, you will be rich and happy. You will have trouble, but O heaven is before you! This is the only way of escaping hell and of reaching heaven, and this experimental knowledge of the Lord Jesus is conveyed by the blessed Spirit. His work is to produce in a sinner's soul eternal life by an experimental union with the Son of God. That union, beginning in regeneration, can never be broken. But we must die to speak of Him; we must die to know Him as He is. To know Him a little here will make one feel as it is in the 73rd Psalm: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." And when you have that enjoyment, you will not be sorry if you are feelingly infirm and getting near the end. You will be able to say at times with Asaph: "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my Portion for ever."

We are not in heaven yet. We are still pilgrims; dangers surround us, hostilities in the world; we are infested with an old man, tempted by Satan, tried by many circumstances. But Christ lives, and His work can never be undone; union to Him can never be broken, and He is able to save all them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Dear friends, I hope not a few, if not all here, may have an assured interest in this dear Redeemer, and be led by the constraint of His love to follow Him fully.

We cannot begin to lead a holy life till we first look to Christ for pardon of sin.

Thomas Cole

JESUS ONLY

A letter to a young person

Dear Emma,

I dare say you will think it rather silly of me to write to you as I see you so often, but I have been thinking about some things you said on Sunday night, and having been in the same place myself, I can sympathise with you, and I thought you would not mind if I wrote you a few lines. Well do I know the heart-sickness of hope deferred. I have said, "O could I but believe!" but could not, and have proved the truth of the words of Jesus, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." I have felt something like a poor, starving creature who saw plenty of good food just before him, yet was totally unable to reach it. I have heard from the minister just what I felt I needed, and yet could not realise any comfort from it myself. The promise has met my eyes, but did not meet my case, and I have feared that my hope was all a mistake, and thought I would give it up, which I should have done if I could, but I found I could not, for the things that had once satisfied me I did not then care about. Sometimes I wondered how it would all end, for I did not know then that

"The work His wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

At times I had a little hope, and then again all has seemed darker than before; and thus it went on, until one day these words fastened on my mind: "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." I had often read the words, but until then I had seen no beauty in them. But when I realised that my pardon was bought with that blood, which was shed that I, a poor, guilty, unworthy sinner, should be set free, I could praise Him who had shown such wondrous love as to bleed and die that I might live:

"'Twas here I stood at peace with heaven,
And felt the joys of sins forgiven."

I think there is nothing on earth more sweet than this. But I know that the waiting time is a weary time, and that hope deferred does make the heart sick; but I know too that, "when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life"; and it will come, for God is faithful. He will not – cannot – break His promise. Why, He has confirmed it with an oath, that we might have strong consolation; and has He not said He *will* fulfil the desire of them that fear Him? He also *will* hear their cry, and *will* save them. And again, "Ask, and ye *shall* receive; seek, and ye *shall* find"; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy." It does not say those who have realised His mercy, or those

who are rejoicing in His mercy, but such as are only hoping; yet He taketh pleasure in them. And will He, think you, leave one in whom He takes pleasure to perish at last? O no; He cannot do so; but He will fulfil their desires, and though they may be feeble, yet,

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

He would not implant such longings and desires after Himself if He did not mean to satisfy them; and though He has not said *when*, yet, “though it tarry, wait for it,” for in the end it *shall* speak. You see, it is positive; it is no *maybe* or *perhaps*, for,

“His promise is yea and amen,
And never was forfeited yet.”

No, nor ever shall be; therefore,

“However sinful, weak and poor,
Still wait and pray at mercy’s door;
Faithful Jehovah must remain,
Nor shalt thou seek His face in vain.”

You know it says, “Whosoever will, let him come”; and “him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.” And if you say, as I have done, that you would, but have no power to come, the same God who gave you the will (for it is not a natural will) will, I am sure, also give you the power. “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

But we must come to Him as sinners, without any goodness of our own. It has been well said, “The strait gate is so narrow that we must be stripped of everything.” Here many make a mistake. I know, to my sorrow, that I did; and yet if anyone had told me I was doing so, I should have certainly denied it. I felt that I could do nothing good, and yet it was a long time before I was divested of my self-righteousness. I thought, if I could but love the Lord Jesus, then I might trust Him, and I tried to work myself up into a good frame, or what I *thought* was a good frame; but it would not do, and I have seen since that, if I had been permitted to do so, I should have been trusting in my feelings instead of in Jesus, and this He will not have. It must be “Jesus only,” for He will not allow of co-partnership with Him. But He never was known to disappoint a praying, waiting, humble soul. Therefore,

“Wait for His seasonable aid,
And though He tarry, wait;
The promise may be long delayed,
But cannot come too late.”

“Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” That He may thus come and reveal Himself as your Saviour, and that you may realise you are “complete in Him,” and “accepted in the Beloved,” is the earnest prayer of

Yours truly,

B.

No date (probably mid or late 1800s)

GIDEON

By F.W. Krummacher (1796-1868)

Upon one occasion, when the children of Israel committed evil before the Lord, He delivered them into the hands of the Midianites – a wild and warlike nation – that by them the straying sheep might again be driven into the crook of their Chief Shepherd.

Great was the affliction at that time in Israel. A considerable part of the people, abandoning their homes and all that they had, fled into the forests and mountains, or hid themselves in dark caves and clefts of the rocks, while some sought shelter in strongholds in sequestered places or on lofty heights, and as soon as Israel had sown anything, the Midianites came immediately upon them, like a swarm of locusts, despoiling the land of its crops, and leaving nothing of nourishment behind, neither sheep, nor oxen, nor ass.

This severe scourge had its full effect. Israel perceived their guilt, smote upon their thigh, and raising their hands towards heaven, the cry of supplication resounded throughout the land: “Return, return, O Lord, to Thy oppressed inheritance!” And the faithful God hearkened, and brought them help.

In the field by Ophrah stands a solitary oak, and close to it is a threshing-floor, where a young husbandman is busy threshing. In this occupation he perpetually glances around him with anxiety and fear, lest he be surprised by the Midianites, from whom he wishes to conceal the wheat. His name is Gideon, and his father, likewise a husbandman, is called Joash. While the good young man is thus zealously employed, a Stranger, whose majestic and affable aspect shed over His countenance a something resembling the translucent splendour of the sun, comes unexpectedly upon him. He seats Himself under the oak apparently fatigued by a long journey, and so soon as He is perceived by Gideon, addresses him with, “The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour,” at which Gideon felt surprised, and thought, “What manner of salutation is this?” Recollecting himself, however, and conceiving whom he had

before him, he gave vent to the feelings of his heart: "Oh my Lord," said he, "if the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

And here the history tells us, "The Lord looked upon him." The Lord was the Son of God, and, as He looked upon him with benevolence and affability, He said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" It is not always pleasing and agreeable to be looked upon by the Lord. Once, when He looked upon the Egyptians, the whole army was struck as if by a terrible thunderbolt; the hearts of the heroes were seized with despair, and trembled, and the senses of the wise were confounded and darkened. He looketh upon the mountains and they tremble. Such a look from eyes like flames of fire fell upon the attendants of Daniel, and great fear came upon them so that they fled and hid themselves. And how lamentably do we hear Job groan, as if from out the deepest hell, "Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not. Am I a sea, or a whale, that Thou settest a watch over me? How long wilt Thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle? I have sinned; what shall I do unto Thee, O thou Preserver of men? and why dost Thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?" And there is still a looking down of the Majesty of heaven upon the worm – a peering of the only Holy One into our darkness – a gazing on the part of Eternal Righteousness upon the sinner, which is of all terrors the most terrifying that a poor heart can experience on earth. And yet it must, in a measure, be felt and experienced, or we shall never be able to bask in the sunshine of divine grace.

The look that Gideon was favoured with under the oak was a look of benignity and grace. The eye he encountered there had in it nothing terrifying or blighting, but was like a clear and serene sky, bright and lovely, and shone with pure affability and mildness. This was one of those looks of God which raise the dead and gladden the weeping, by which whole streams of peace and joy flow into hearts that are riven, and of which David sings, "Cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

Whilst viewing Gideon with this look of benignity and grace, the Lord directs him, "Go in this thy might." In what might? In the might of My countenance, Gideon, which has assured thee of My love and favour.

Truly the power of such gracious looks, by means of which man becomes convinced in his heart that the Lord loves him, is exceedingly great. Hearts which but now resembled a turbulent ocean are changed in a moment into pavilions of heavenly Sabbath rest; and souls, which but

a while ago sat lamenting on the ground in sackcloth and ashes, start suddenly like young eagles on wings of joy and rapture, when the eye of divine mercy had kindly beamed upon them.

And in such instances, what sacrifices are made, what renunciations men are capable of, what patience is proved, what contentedness and affectionate brotherly love is evinced! And whence all this? It is the power of a gracious look from the Lord; it is the efficacy of the consciousness, "My Jesus loves me!" "Go in this thy might," said the Lord to Gideon, having enlivened him with the look of love and grace. It does not imply He meant that "Thou, Gideon, shouldest vanquish the enemy in thy own strength. I refer thee to My might, not to thine own. This, Gideon, shall be thy strength – that I have looked kindly upon thee; and this shall animate and suffice for thee, that I am gracious towards thee. In this thy might go and conquer!"

O precious words! Know this one thing only – that if He is kindly disposed towards thee, then thou hast no need either to despair or tremble. If thou hast only received the testimony that He is thy Friend, neither storm nor tempest need any longer affright thee. Boldly defy, then, the menacing spears, even should they be pointed by thousands; and be not troubled that thou mightest meet on thy road mountains too steep to climb. Do not weigh thy powers; measure not thy abilities. Be thou strong or weak, be thou girt or defenceless, it matters not. The powers of thine Immanuel are at thy service, and His love towards thee is thy standard, thy sword, thy helmet and coat of mail, thy shield and protection, and everything thou lackest or standest in need of.

Wherever thou art sent – be it into the fire of temptation, be it into the waters of affliction, be it into domestic embarrassment and difficulties, be it into hot conflicts and laborious enterprises, yea, be it into peril and death, if He has looked upon thee benignantly, and if thou only knowest that one thing, "My Jesus loves me," then go – "go in this thy might" – thou hast nothing whatever to fear, nothing to apprehend. Thy Saviour will accompany and protect thee because He loves thee, and His love is stronger than death, and more jealous than hell. He will smooth every way before thee.

The Bible is a Christian's magna charta, his chief evidence for heaven. Men highly prize and carefully keep their charters, privileges, conveyances and assurances of their lands, and shall not the saints much more highly prize and carefully keep in the closet of their hearts the precious Word of God, which is to them instead of all assurances for their maintenance, deliverance, protection, confirmation, consolation and eternal salvation?

Thomas Brooks

AVOIDING STRIFE

From the Farewell Sermon of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“Be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2 Cor. 13. 11).

As you seek the prosperity of this society, it is of vast importance that you should avoid contention. A contentious people will be a miserable people. The contentions that have been among you since I was your pastor have been one of the greatest burdens I have laboured under in the course of my ministry – not only the contentions with me, but those with one another. Contention, heat of spirit, evil speaking, and things of like nature, are directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity, and do, in a peculiar manner, tend to drive away God’s Spirit from a people, and to render all means of grace ineffectual, as well as to destroy a people’s outward comfort and welfare.

Let me therefore earnestly exhort you as you would seek your own future good hereafter to watch against a contentious spirit (1 Pet. 3. 10, 11). I would particularly advise those that have adhered to me in the late controversy to watch over your spirits and avoid all bitterness towards others. However wrong you may think others have been, maintain with great diligence and watchfulness a Christian meekness and gentleness of spirit; and labour, in this respect, to excel those who are of a contrary part. And this will be the best victory, for “he that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city.” Let nothing be done through strife or conceit. Indulge no revengeful spirit in any case, but watch and pray against it; and, by all means in your power, seek the prosperity of this town. And never think you behave yourselves as becomes Christians, except when you sincerely, sensibly and fervently love all men, of whatever party or opinion, and whether friendly or unkind, just or injurious, to you or your friends, or to the cause and kingdom of Christ.

That man or woman, whatever his or her name be in the world, or the church of Christ, that never found any need for, or use of, or benefit by this throne of grace, is surely a dead sinner. People may safely and surely judge of both the state and frame of their souls by their business at the throne of grace. Never got any soul life but by an act of grace and power from this throne. No soul can be kept in life but by daily intercourse with it. It is as impossible that these bodies of ours should be maintained in life and strength without meat and drink and air as it is for the soul of a believer to prosper without daily plying the throne of grace.

Robert Traill

WILLIAM TIPTAFT'S LAST DAYS

My dear friend,

I have heard of your illness, and also of your recovery. I hope that you can bless God for the trial. You will be glad to hear that my soul was much blessed last night, and during this day I have shed many tears. I could scarcely shave myself, and my eyes are quite red with crying. A friend sent to know how I was this morning. My answer was, "Much the same in body, but well in soul." A man should have a particular religion to use such language; he should know both parts of a work of grace on his soul. I have not had such a blessing since January 1843.

I was blessed in my soul on the 18th of July, but not in the manner that I have been this time. The blessed promises were applied, and the highest hymns of assurance suited my soul, such as the 158th, Gadsby's:

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend,"

and,

"When Jesus, with His mighty love,
Visits my troubled breast."

Such proofs of the Lord's lovingkindness to me at this particular time I valued highly.

How often have I prayed that my last days may be my best! How often have I said that it is a mercy to be well-laid in the grave! A long sickness is a heavy cross, but it is in the furnaces and fires that the soul prospers and is in health. There is not much to live for in this time state. If things please the flesh, they will deaden the soul; and if they do not please the flesh, they make us murmur and fret. It is a trial to be silent, but I cannot murmur without considering that I have in my feeble way preached salvation by grace for more than the third of a century.

I keep hearing, for my encouragement, that I have not laboured in vain, either in London or the country. What a high value Bunyan set upon his seals! I trust I may say that I value them more than gold and silver. What are riches and honours compared to spiritual blessings and divine enjoyments? I do not envy those who are anxious to see all the new peep shows, or those who are labouring hard to gather together a large heap of gold-dust. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." In my present state, I have but little hope of preaching again. I was ill here twenty-five years ago. I have to bless God that I was raised up again. I wish to be grateful for the good health that I have had for twenty-four years.

Dr. Shaw of Leicester came to see me on September 24th. He called on Tuesday, when in the neighbourhood, and told me that I was not so well as when he last saw me. What a very great mercy to have a religion

of the right sort, and be made fit for the great change. I feel very grateful for this particular blessing. I have a sore throat and suffer more. May the Lord bless me with patience and resignation! Death is a solemn subject. Those who can say that they are not afraid to look death in the face should have a particular religion, and should be very grateful. How awful to be deceived in such important matters!

The real children of God like a searching ministry, that they may be well exercised whether they are right in doctrine, experience and practice. Real repentance, real faith and real love are very important matters. Both ministers and hearers must die for themselves. What a very great Friend Christ is to those who really believe in Him! Real faith and real love will produce real fruit. It will be thirty-seven years ago next January since I have professed to fear God. What mercies and blessings of various kinds I have received, and how little my heart is melted with gratitude! It was well with me this morning. I could say, "My Jesus has done all things well!"

I could not murmur this morning about the past, nor fret about the future. You and many in your ungodly city will be glad to hear that my soul has been blessed in such a manner. "The Lord trieth the righteous." "Many are their afflictions, but the Lord delivers them out of them all." "It shall be well with the righteous." Those who fear God in your large city will be tried and exercised in various ways. The fear of God is a great treasure, and those who have such a treasure should not murmur about trifles without having their consciences condemned.

May the Lord bless those who love and fear His name in town. What a warning in the earthquake for ungodly England! Give my love to Mrs. C. and any enquiring friends.

Yours affectionately,

William Tiptaft

Oakham, Rutland, October 15th, 1863

William Tiptaft died on August 17th, 1864

There were never but two sinless men in the world, the first and second Adam. Satan came to both. When he came to the first Adam, he found nothing of his own in him; but he quickly got somewhat put in him, and left it with him, and in him and all his posterity. When he came to the second Adam, he found nothing in Him and could put nothing in Him by temptation (John 14. 30). The holier a saint be, and the more gross the sin be he is tempted to, and the more hatred he have of the sin, the greater is his trouble in and by the temptation. What affliction then must it have been to Christ to be so tempted as he was? (Matt. 4).

Robert Traill

GOODLY WORDS BY A GODLY MARTYR

This letter was written to a few who were called to suffer for their faith. It was written soon after the godly King Edward VI had been succeeded by the cruel Roman Catholic Queen Mary. John Bradford himself was soon to become a martyr, being burnt at the stake on July 1st, 1555.

To my loving brethren, their wives and whole families,

I beseech the ever-living God to give you all, my good brethren and sisters, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and the continual sense of His mercy in Christ our Lord, now and for ever. Amen.

The world, my brethren, at this present, seemeth to have the upper hand. Iniquity overfloweth, the truth and verity is seeming to be suppressed, and they which take part therewith are unjustly entreated, as they which love the truth lament to see and hear as they do. The cause of all this is God's anger and mercy – His anger, because we have grievously sinned against Him; His mercy, because He here punisheth us, and, as a Father, nutureth us. We have been unthankful for His Word; we have contemned His kindness; we have been negligent in prayer; we have been too carnal, covetous, licentious, etc. We have not hastened heavenward, but rather hellward; we have fallen almost into a contempt of God and all His good ordinances; so that, of His justice, He could no longer forbear, but make us to feel His anger, as now He hath done, in taking His Word and true service from among us, and permitted Satan to serve us with Antichristian religion, and that in such sort that, if we will not yield to it, and seem to allow it in deed and outward fact, our bodies are like to be laid in prisons, and our goods given, we cannot tell to whom. This should we look upon as a sign of God's anger, procured by our sins; which, my good brethren, every one of us should now call to our memories oftentimes so particularly as we can, that we might heartily lament them, repent them, hate them, ask earnestly mercy for them, and submit ourselves to bear in this life any kind of punishment which God will lay upon us for them. This should we do, in consideration of God's anger in this time.

Now, His mercy in this time of wrath is seen, and should be seen of us, my dearly beloved, in this, that God doth vouchsafe to punish us in this present life. If He should not have punished us, do not you think that we would have continued in the evils we were in? Yes, verily, we would have been worse, and have gone forwards in hardening our hearts, by impenitency and negligence of God and true godliness; and then, if death had come, should not we have perished, both soul and body, into eternal fire and perdition?

Alas! what misery should we have fallen into, if God should have suffered us to have gone on forward in our evils! No greater a sign of damnation there is than to live in evil and sin, unpunished of God, as now the Papists, my dearly beloved, are cast into Jezebel's bed of security, which of all plagues is the most grievous plague that can be. They "are bastards, and not sons," for they are not under God's rod of correction. A great mercy it is, therefore, that God doth punish us; for if He loved us not, He would not punish us. Now doth He chastise us, "that we should not be damned with the world." Now doth He nurture us, because He favoureth us. Now may we think ourselves God's household and children, because He beginneth His chastising at us. Now calleth He us to remember our sins past. Wherefore? That we might repent, and ask mercy. And why? That He might forgive us, pardon us, justify us and make us His children, and so begin to make us here like unto Christ, that we might be like unto Him elsewhere, even in heaven, where already we are set by faith with Christ; and, at His coming, in very deed shall enjoy His presence, when our vile bodies shall be fashioned and made like unto Christ's glorious body, according to the power whereby He is able to make all things subject unto Himself.

Therefore, my brethren, let us, in respect hereof, not lament, but laud God; not be sorry, but be merry; not weep, but rejoice and be glad, that God doth vouchsafe to offer us His cross, thereby to come to endless joys and comforts; for, "if we suffer, we shall also reign"; if we confess Him before men, He will confess us before His Father in heaven; if we be not ashamed of His gospel now, He will not be ashamed of us in the last day, but will be glorified in us, crowning us with crowns of glory and endless felicity; for "blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Be glad," saith Peter, "for the Spirit of God resteth upon you." "After that you are a little while afflicted, God will comfort, strengthen, and confirm you"; and therefore, my good brethren, be not discouraged for cross, for prison, or loss of goods, for confession of Christ's gospel and truth, which ye have believed, and lively was taught among you in the days of our late good and most holy prince, King Edward.

This is most certain, if you lose anything for Christ's sake, and for contemning the Antichristian service set up again among us; and as for you, for your parts, even in prison, shall you find God's great and rich mercy far passing all worldly wealth; so shall your wives and children, in this present life, find and feel God's providence more plentifully than tongue can tell; for He will show merciful kindness on thousands of them that love Him. The good man's seed shall not go a-begging bread. You are good men, so many as suffer for Christ's sake.

I trust you all, my dearly beloved, will consider this dear with yourselves, and in the cross see God's mercy, which is more sweet and to be set by than life itself – much more than any muck or pelf of this world. This mercy of God should make you merry and cheerful, for the afflictions of this life are not to be compared to the joys of the life prepared for you. You know the way to heaven is not “the wide way” of the world, which windeth to the devil, but it is a “strait way” which few walk in; for few “live godly in Christ Jesus”; few regard the life to come; few remember the day of judgment; few remember how Christ will deny them before His Father that do deny Him here; few consider that Christ will be ashamed of them in the last day which are ashamed now of His truth and true service; few cast their accounts what will be laid to their charge in the day of vengeance; few regard the condemnation of their own consciences in doing that which inwardly they disallow; few love God better than their goods. But I trust yet you are of these few, my dearly beloved. I trust you be of the little flock which shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. I trust you are of the mourners and lamenters which shall be comforted with comfort which never shall be taken away from you, if you now repent your former evils; if now you strive against the evils that are in you; if now you continue to call upon God; if now you defile not your bodies with any idolatrous service used in the Antichristian churches; if you molest not the good Spirit of God, which is given you as a gage of eternal redemption, a Counsellor and Master to lead you into all truth; which good Spirit I beseech the Father of mercy to give to us all, for His dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom I commend you all, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to keep you, and help you all, and save you all that believe it, follow it and serve God thereafter.

And of this I would you were all certain: that all the hairs of your head are numbered, so that not one of them shall perish, neither shall any man or devil be able to attempt anything, much less to do anything to you or any of you, before your heavenly Father, which loveth you most tenderly, shall give them leave; and when He hath given them leave, they shall go no further than He wills, nor keep you in trouble any longer than He wills. Therefore, cast on Him all your care, for He is careful for you. Only study to please Him, and to keep your consciences clean, and your bodies pure from the idolatrous service which now everywhere is used, and God will marvellously and mercifully defend and comfort you, which thing He do, for His name's sake, in Christ our Lord. Amen.

John Bradford

THE HOLY SPIRIT GLORIFYING JESUS

By Henry Fowler (1779-1838)

“He shall glorify Me” (John 16. 14).

The Godhead of the Holy Ghost is made plain in the written Word of God, and is demonstrated by His work in and upon the elect. His grand work is to testify of Christ and enrich the believer with the possessions of Jesus. All His convicting and convincing operations are subordinate to this grand and glorious teaching.

The promise to the church is, “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.” This promise includes everything that a heaven-born soul can desire. God’s teaching leads him to pour out his soul in earnest supplication before Him for His most Holy Spirit to direct him unto Christ, where alone he can find relief from guilt, from the power of sin, and from fear of death and hell.

This unction from the Holy One teaches him all things. He is taught by it what the righteousness is in which he stands justified – who Christ is, and in what light he is to view Him. He is taught the virtue of Christ’s most precious blood, in whom he hath an inheritance, being predestinated according to God’s good pleasure.

And this teaching and spiritual knowledge is attended with solid peace in the conscience, which, though it may be interrupted, can never be destroyed. “Great peace have they that love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them”; or as the margin reads, “there shall be no stumbling-block.” He shall not stumble at the Person, blood and righteousness of Immanuel, nor seek another way to obtain peace. For if his peace be disturbed by the swelling corruptions of his own heart, discovering themselves in evil thinking or in evil doing, he knows he must go for a cure to the same Jesus who first looked in love upon him.

Come, Thou Holy, blessed Spirit,
Glorify the Lord in me;
Then shall I reject all merit,
And enjoy true liberty.

Once I laboured to be holy;
Thought I ought to keep the law;
Strove to keep the precept wholly,
And from thence some comfort draw.

But, alas! the ground was rotten;
All deceptive were my schemes;
Till anew of God begotten,
Then I left my fleshly dreams.

Now I long to see the Saviour
In His Godhead and His grace,

And participate the favour
Poured upon His chosen race.

Come, Thou ever-blessed Spirit,
Shed the Saviour's love abroad;
Then shall I in truth inherit
The rich fulness of my God."

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

*Some of the early spiritual exercises of Henry Fowler, the hymnwriter,
pastor at Gower Street Chapel, London*

I still went on "according to the course of this world," and with increasing delight I said, "Who will show me any good?" When I had passed my 17th year, I, with one of my companions, went in search of a commodious room in order to practise what is called country dances; but as my companion thought he could make a better bargain if alone, he left me with a very poor shoemaker in his room. While my companion was absent, which was some time, the poor shoemaker fell into conversation with me, which I will relate to the best of my recollection.

"Young man," said he, "can you read?" I said, "Yes." "Then," said he, "I shall be glad if you will read to me a little of that old book," pointing to the window where the book lay; "for, what with sickness and poverty, I have very little time for reading." I said, "I will," and immediately I took the book and read the title page. I said, "O, it is the *Pilgrim's Progress*! I used to read this book several years ago, and it is just like *Robinson Crusoe*!" "That is a choice book," he said, "but the author means more than appears at first sight." He then with his awl pointed out to me the meaning of the frontispiece. "You see," said he, "the pilgrim with a book in his hand. That book is the Bible, which, when God awakens a poor sinner to a concern for his eternal welfare, he reads with great concern to see if there be any hope for him. You see he has turned his back upon the city of destruction. That represents a sinner in real concern about his salvation; he leaves his evil ways and evil companions."

This was rather unwelcome news to me, and as soon as there appeared an opportunity I proceeded in reading the "ingenious dreamer." But frequently the poor shoemaker would stop me, and explain the different things I had read. One thing is still strongly impressed upon my memory. When the pilgrim came to the sepulchre, which was represented by a wood-cut, my instructor said, "You see by the Christian's beholding the Saviour on the cross, he loses the burden from

his back. That is designed to teach us this: the burden on his back represents the burden of guilt upon a man's conscience when convinced by the Holy Spirit of his lost condition by the fall of Adam, under the sense of which a poor sinner is made to groan and cry for deliverance. By and by he comes to Christ for salvation, and beholds the suffering Saviour by faith. This removes the burden from his mind, and he loves Christ and cleaves unto Him, and wonders at His great love in dying for guilty sinners."

As the poor shoemaker expounded, I felt something unaccountably strange working in my mind. I tried to set it all aside and forget what he said, but could not. I left him, and ruminated over what had passed, and sensibly felt that I was in a dangerous state. I know not what became of the projected dance, but I was obliged to leave my companions, and as often as I could, visit the poor shoemaker; but could not by any means open my mind to him, nor to any other person. But I imagine he suspected God had begun His good work in me by the heartfelt pleasure he appeared to have when I entered his room, which was very frequently in an evening. I used to ask him a variety of questions about himself, how he became religious, etc. He said, "By the advice of a friend I went to hear Mr. Tanner,* of Exeter, and his preaching had such an effect on me that I went home miserable, and begged of God to be my Teacher, and I got a blessing indeed in His own time," or to that effect.**

I became from this time more moral and religious; but, alas! it was chiefly in the flesh, for I knew no more of God's way of saving sinners than a Hottentot. Duty! duty! I thought, must be done, or I shall be lost. I therefore resolved and vowed, and entered into a covenant with God that I would love and serve Him. Not being able to pray, I got some ready-made prayers, but none that I had seen suited my case. After toiling some time with my dry prayer books, I threw them aside to the moles and to the bats, and tried to pour out my heart to God in unconnected and broken sentences, in bits and scraps, such as, "Lord, show me Thy way; show me Thy mercy. Save, Lord; I am lost. Pardon Thou my sins." On some occasions I used to find some liberty and meltings of heart; some encouraging promises or invitations used to come into my mind as I was in prayer; and often such scriptures as I had no recollection of having read; and I used to search the Bible, or enquire if such and such passages were in the Bible. On other occasions, and

* Henry Tanner (1718-1805). An account of his life appeared, *Gospel Standard* 1982.

** Perhaps my reader may wish to hear a little more of the poor shoemaker. He was taken ill of a typhus fever. I visited him, but he was mostly in a state of delirium. With great anxiety I watched for the lucid moment, and the Lord granted my request. I said, "Is Christ precious? Is it well with you?" He said, "Yes. My anchor's fixed, and I shall outride every storm." He died soon after. His name was William Arkwright. H.F.

perhaps the next time I attempted to pray, I was filled with such horror and trembling and confusion of mind as I cannot well describe, so that I have not known what I have been uttering, and when I had done I have thought that I have been mocking God.

I have appeared in my own eyes as the most consummate hypocrite living, the vilest sinner on earth. Yet I could not give up prayer wholly. I was often tempted to call no more on God's holy name. But when I neglected prayer, I used to be condemned and lashed in my conscience, and these words were like a piercing sword: "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Prov. 1. 24-26). O these words used to cut me through and through!

These things happened to me from the 17th to the 18th year of my age, to the best of my recollection. I had not as yet heard any gospel minister since my first concern, neither did I suppose any class of people were right and good Christians but those of our national Establishment. I hated all Dissenters, and considered them enemies both to God and the king! Still I was restless in my mind. Worldly company and pleasure I could not join in, or take any pleasure from; or if I was drawn aside by my companions, or by the wantonness and foolishness of my own heart (which, to my shame was sometimes the case), I have had the most fearful apprehensions afterwards, and have expected that judgment without mercy would certainly fall on my guilty head.

I kept to my parish church regularly, carried the *Common Prayerbook*, and with the kind assistance of an aged schoolmaster, I became tolerably well acquainted with the ritual. In this way I hoped to get peace. The clergyman was a most worthy, moral man, and his age and venerable appearance struck me with awe when I saw him in the pulpit. I listened to his sermon with all attention, but could not understand him. His low tone of voice, his indistinct pronunciation, his classical style, his apparent indifference in giving instruction to poor, ignorant sinners, grieved me much, so that I came to this conclusion: "No doubt he knows the way to heaven, being a man of learning and piety; and if he knew how anxious I am to know the way to life, he would certainly take more trouble to teach me."

About this time, as I entered the church, the remains of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, on a bench, attracted my attention, which I looked at, and was struck with some of the sayings of the martyrs; but not being able to read well the black letter, and recollecting that I had the alphabet in Dyche's spelling book, I applied myself closely to learn it, which I soon accomplished, with a view to see what the religion of the martyrs was. Accordingly, when the church door was open on a Lord's day, I used to

go and read during the whole service the *Book of Martyrs*, and certainly I received more instruction, and was much more entertained than I was by the poor old clergyman's sermons. I now began to think that the martyrs only were right, and that religion, perhaps, had died with them.

I knew not then what to do. I looked about among different classes of professors to see if I could find any persons of a heavenly and self-denying spirit, and I could discover none in Plymouth so much like the old disciples as the Wesleyans. Their very plain dress, at that time, their loving spirit, their zeal to do good, inclined me to think that they were heaven-bound travellers. I therefore, as often as I could, used to attend their place of worship, and often wished that some one of them would condescend to speak to me; but I thought they could see what a poor, ignorant creature I was, not fit to come nigh them. Had they made free and spoken to me, I verily believe I should have been carried headlong into the vortex of Arminianism, because their doctrine is so suitable to the condition of a poor sinner striving in his own strength, as I then was.

About this time a circumstance occurred which I will briefly relate. God had, a few years before, opened the blind eyes of Dr. Hawker,* so that as the light of truth gradually broke in upon him, he came forth to the light, and as God taught him, so he preached. His preaching created no small stir in the town and neighbourhood, and many poor sinners, I am well satisfied, were called under his ministry. But desperate was the rage of most of the pharisees in the town against him, and still more desperate was the mind of his dearest friend against him. His preaching was a means of stirring up several clergymen in the neighbourhood, for whom he used occasionally to preach, and the Lord evidently accompanied his word with power. Many a precious soul have I known called under his ministry. But more of this hereafter.

It fell out, but not by blind chance, that Dr. Hawker preached in the parish church in the vicinity of which I was born; for the clergyman of the parish appeared under some concern of soul, and had invited Dr. Hawker to preach for him, or, at least, he was prevailed upon to let Dr. Hawker preach. The effect was very striking, for many poor sinners were convicted under his ministry, some of whom I know died triumphing in Christ, the Friend of sinners. But the clergyman before mentioned was not, I fear, experimentally acquainted with the gospel. Hence a coolness on his part towards Dr. Hawker took place, and for many years before the clergyman's death Dr. Hawker did not visit the village, to the great grief of many, and to the rejoicing of others. However, the effect of Dr. Hawker's ministry was manifest. Many persons who had received the Word of life from that dear man of God

* Robert Hawker (1753-1827), Vicar of Charles Church, Plymouth, a champion for the doctrines of God's free grace.

used to walk to Plymouth to hear him on a Lord's day, among whom were several of my dear relatives, which brought me into their company, so that I had an opportunity of hearing the conversation, and sweet indeed it sometimes was, but I was only a listener.

These circumstances, together with the advice of one of the friends, induced me to hear Dr. Hawker, though with some degree of reluctance. But the day I heard him was indeed a memorable day to me. I remember not his text, but I thought he addressed the whole of his discourse to *me*. He described the state of blindness and darkness we were all in by nature, how ruined and helpless we were left by Adam's fall, and what refuges of lies a poor sinner tried to run into when he saw his lost condition, and spoke much of the poor sinner's fears, feelings and mistakes. I was looking through the shoulders of men that stood by me who were taller than myself, but his eye seemed to pierce me through. I was in a state of consternation, for I never knew what *power* under the preached Word was before, nor could I make a judgment of it then.

After the doctor had described our fallen state and condition, he went on to speak of Christ in the glory of His Person, and of His ineffable love to poor, ruined, undone sinners, what He suffered in the garden and on the cross, and all the fruit of His everlasting love. I found a most intense desire in my soul spring up as he spoke of Christ, for Christ's name was quite a new name to me, and a precious name also. Not that I knew that God was at work with me, but I went home with this persuasion, that I never should be happy until I knew Christ for myself.

From this time I read diligently the Scriptures, and I used to read all the religious books that fell in my way. Many of the books I read I have since known to be far enough from gospel truth, and were more calculated to puzzle than instruct the inquiring sinner; but the Word of God was opened to my believing mind to my astonishment, particularly Jeremiah 31, Isaiah 12, many of the Psalms, and the Epistles in many parts. Indeed the light that shone upon the Bible and in my heart astonished me, and I was like the hind let loose. Christ appeared in the Scriptures where I never thought to find Him. Moreover, I found Christ to be precious in all His names, offices and characters. I found much liberty in prayer, so that I became a wrestler, like Jacob, and told the Lord, with child-like simplicity, I could not live unless He blessed me. Sometimes, in reflecting on my freedom with the Lord, I have feared that I had gone too far, when suddenly scripture after scripture would come into my mind, and drive all my fears away, such as these: "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you"; "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and mourn." If I used to ask the Lord

what I had done that He should thus bless me, His Word, especially Jeremiah 31. 3, used to overpower me. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," used to run through my mind twenty times over, and I stood amazed at the sovereign love of God manifested in Jesus, and to my heart also.

I found much love and heart-cleaving to Dr. Hawker and to all that I thought were the children of God, so that I felt anxious to be acquainted with them, that we might compare notes; but I was naturally very timid and bashful. I have gone for miles after them to hear their spiritual conversation in returning from the house of God, and have had an additional blessing from their observations on this and that part of the discourse we had been hearing, for their feelings and mine exactly corresponded, which was an additional confirmation of my faith. And truly I was so knit to God's people above all the people upon the earth, that I could say with Ruth to Naomi, "Whither thou goest, I will go," etc. Such words as these were very sweet to me: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" and, "We love Him, because He first loved us." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Old things indeed seemed passed away, and all things were made new.

THE CHURCH THE GARDEN OF THE LORD

By Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

(see Review, page 92)

Use 1. If then the church be a severed portion, then *we should walk as men of a severed condition from the world*, not as men of the world, but as Christians; to make good that we are so, by feeling the graces of God's Spirit in some comfortable measure, that so Christ may have something in us, that He may delight to dwell with us, so to be subject to His pruning and dressing. For it is so far from being an ill sign that Christ is at cost [expense] with us in following us with afflictions, that it is rather a sure sign of His love. For the care of this blessed Husbandman is to prune us, so as to make us fruitful. Men care not for heath and wilderness, whereupon they bestow no cost. So when God prunes us by crosses and afflictions, and sows good seed in us, it is a sign He means to dwell with us and delight in us.

Use 2. And then also, we should not strive so much for *common liberties* of the world that common people delight in, but for *peculiar graces*, that God may delight in us as His garden.

Use 3. And then, let us learn hence, *not to despise any nation or person*, seeing God can take out of the waste wilderness whom He will, and make the desert an Eden.

Use 4. Again, *let us bless God for ourselves*, that our lot hath fallen into such a pleasant place, to be planted in the church, the place of God's delight.

Use 5. And this also should move us *to be fruitful*. For men will endure a fruitless tree in the waste wilderness, but in their garden who will endure it? Dignity should mind us of duty. It is strange to be fruitless and barren in this place that we live in, being watered with the dew of heaven, under the sweet influence of the means. This fruitless estate being often watered from heaven, how fearfully is it threatened by the Holy Ghost, that it is near unto cursing and burning (Heb. 6. 8). For in this case visible churches, if they prosper not, God will remove the hedge and lay them waste, having a garden elsewhere. Sometimes God's plants prosper better in Babylon than in Judea.

It is to be feared God may complain of us, as He doth of His people, "I have planted thee a noble vine; how art thou then come to be degenerated?" (Jer. 2. 21). If in this case we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not regard the best thing that comes from us, as our prayers (Heb. 12. 17). We must then learn of Himself how and wherein to please Him. Obedience from a broken heart is the best sacrifice. Mark in [the] Scriptures what He abhors, what He delights in. We used to say of our friends, Would God I knew how to please them. Christ teacheth us, that "without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. 11. 6).

Let us then strive and labour to be fruitful in our places and callings. For it is the greatest honour in this world for God to dignify us with such a condition as to make us fruitful. We must not bring forth fruit to ourselves, as God complains of Ephraim [Israel] (Hos. 10. 1). Honour, riches and the like are but secondary things, arbitrary at God's pleasure to cast in; but to have an active heart fruitful from this ground, that God hath planted us for this purpose, that we may do good to mankind, this is an excellent consideration not to profane our calling. The blessed man is said to be a tree planted by the water side, that brings forth fruit in due season (Psa. 1. 3). But it is not every fruit; not that fruit which Moses complains of (Deut. 32. 32), the wine of dragons, and the gall of asps; but good fruit, as John speaks (John 15). "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3. 10).

Use 6. Lastly, in that the church is called Christ's garden, this may *strengthen our faith in God's care and protection*. The church may seem to lie open to all incursions, but it hath an invisible hedge about it, a wall without it, and a well within it (Zech. 2. 5). God Himself is a wall of fire about it, and His Spirit a well of living waters running through it to

refresh and comfort it. As it was said of Canaan, so it may be said of the church: the eye of the Lord is upon it all the year long (Deut. 11. 12), and He waters it continually.

From which especial care of God over it, this is a good plea for us to God: "I am Thine, save me"; I am a plant of Thine own setting; nothing is in me but what is Thine, therefore cherish what is Thine. So for the whole church the plea is good: "The church is Thine; fence it, water it, defend it, keep the wild boar out of it." Therefore the enemies thereof shall one day know what it is to make a breach upon God's vineyard. In the meantime, let us labour to keep our hearts as a garden, that nothing that defileth may enter.

BOOK REVIEWS

Archibald G. Brown, by Iain H. Murray; hardback; 418 pages; price £16; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Some years ago we asked an old man in one of our Bethesda Homes (he was over 100 years old) where he was brought up. He replied, "Under Archibald Brown." We wish we had asked him more.

Now we have another interesting and well-written biography by Iain Murray, this time on this remarkable man. Archibald Brown (1844-1922) was a Calvinistic Baptist minister who had a congregation of over two thousand during his London pastorates (covering nearly fifty years). His last years were spent preaching in America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Apart from his public work, it appears that not much is known about Brown – though his ministry was exercised against a background of deep family sorrow.

Possibly the greatest value of this book is the way it sets out the dreadful decline in English nonconformity during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth – not only in numbers, but in departure from the truth. Prior to this, almost all nonconformist chapels would have believed in the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture and what is roughly denoted as "evangelical." But the denial of the complete infallibility of God's Word was followed by a denial of the vital necessity of a substitutionary atonement. Archibald Brown was one of the few among the Baptists who stood resolutely against these changes.

The deceitfulness of Satan appears in a most subtle way. At first there were those regarded as being very clear on the doctrines of divine truth who maintained that this position could be maintained without necessarily believing in the literal interpretation of historical passages. Some of these were eminent and much-admired men – but how the door was opened for disaster! Brown saw immediately that this false position could never be maintained. What people called progress, he called apostasy.

Two interesting points in Archibald Brown's ministry Iain Murray comments on at some length:

1. His opposition to musical instruments in the worship of God.
2. His strong opposition to what in those days were called "amusements."

The main thing which stands out in the book is the excellence of Brown's preaching and his faithfulness to the Word of God. Also, those who opposed his doctrines could not help but admire the wonderful work he performed among the poor in the East End of London. This was often commented on in the secular press.

There are a few things that puzzle us! Archibald Brown was never ashamed to call himself a Calvinist; in fact, he recommended Elisha Coles on *The Sovereignty of God*. But we cannot understand why he strongly endorsed some men of a different position. He seems also to have had no contact with Strict Baptists of any kind, and there is no mention of any connection with such societies as The Sovereign Grace Union, The Trinitarian Bible Society, The Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society, etc. We wonder why?

Much of the book does consist of Iain Murray's comments and thoughts on Brown's ministry. We were pleased and interested to find he has written strongly against the modern trend that only "expository preaching" (i.e. going through a book week by week) is the correct method. Archibald Brown always preached from "texts."

In all we found this life of a humble yet eminent preacher both interesting and profitable.

As a postscript: if anyone wishes to read a superbly-written obituary, then read Iain Murray's tribute to Hugh Cartwright of Edinburgh in *The Banner of Truth* December 2011.

The Love of Christ, by Richard Sibbes; paperback; 364 pages; price £6.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

It has often been said: if you wish to start reading the Puritans, begin with Sibbes – the point being that he is simple and direct. (Others may suggest Watson or Swinnock.)

Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), "the heavenly doctor," was one of the foremost among Puritan preachers and divines. *The Love of Christ* was first published under the title *Bowels Opened* in 1639. It is a wonderful mercy that there is a call for its republication in 2012!

The Love of Christ consists of twenty sermons on the Song of Solomon, from chapter 4, verse 16, right through to chapter 6, verse 3. For Sibbes the Song of Solomon "is nothing else but a plain demonstration and setting forth of the love of Christ to His church, and of the love of the church to Christ."

Last month we reviewed Thomas Goodwin. It is difficult to make comparisons; but perhaps we may say that Sibbes is shorter – simpler – sweeter. This is a beautiful exposition of the Song of Solomon.

Why some modern readers may find the Puritan divines a little tedious in places is because they *do* labour a point – even Sibbes. For instance, after a lovely piece about the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit blowing upon the garden of the church and of the soul, we have eight reasons why the Holy Spirit

is compared to the wind, and then eight reasons why the church is compared to a garden!

But fellow-Puritan John Dod says it all in the original preface:

“I found it, I confess, so full of heavenly treasures, and such lively expressions of the invaluable riches of the love of Christ.” He goes on to speak of “the spiritual and sweet consolations” contained in the book, and concludes:

“I doubt not but that they [‘the godly wise’] shall find their temptations answered, their fainting spirits revived, their understandings enlightened, and their graces confirmed.”

We find it difficult to review the Banner of Truth book *Setting Our Sights on Heaven* by Paul Wolfe. There are so many good things but the many clever and facetious comments mar a book on such a sacred subject.

OBITUARY

Raymond Oakley, esteemed former pastor of the church at Hope Chapel, Arcal Street, Sedgley (1980-2007), and an acceptable supply minister for many years, passed to his eternal rest on December 3rd, 2011, aged 84 years.

Our friend was a faithful minister of the gospel for sixty-two years and served the churches as a supply minister for many years before taking the pastorate at Hope, Arcal Street, where the Lord was pleased to bless his ministry over a number of years.

The following are extracts from his writings:

“In the order of the Lord’s kind providence, when I was six years old my family moved to live near a chapel called The Strict Baptist Mission Hall, Cradley Heath, Worcestershire, and accordingly I was sent to the Sunday School. On reflection I did not derive any benefit from this Sunday School, except to be taught how to behave oneself externally in a place of worship. In fact it was not until I was sixteen or seventeen years of age that I was brought to know the spiritual authority of the Word of God.

“The occasion was on December 25th when I was moved to go to chapel and for the first time came under the ministry of one, Joseph Banks, on his first visit to this place. I cannot recall the portion of God’s Word from which he spoke, but realised in an inexplicable way that there was a great difference in the teaching from that previously heard, with the result that this was the beginning of much concern of soul and spiritual conflict. Up to this time the conscience being dead, I had pursued a worldly career, having hardly a thought of God or the consequences of sin. However I was compelled to attend this preaching every time the house of God was opened, and I became a gazing-stock to many, including my own family, who could not understand the change; but then neither could I at that time. The law came and sin revived and whereas I had been dead in trespasses and sins, now was made miserable, ‘having no hope and without God in the world.’ I recall the intense rebellion of the flesh, however, and endeavoured by religious pursuits to ease conscience and the feeling of the dread of God which I felt. I endeavoured to strive against sin’s power, but as the time went on, it was shown to me that all the legal workings of my flesh availed

nothing. Still such was my proud nature, I fought against the Word of the living God and yet at times by supplication endeavoured to make my case known to Him. I desired no worldly company, and in fact when I tried to explain to my family that God knew my inmost thoughts and every action, they could not understand. However, sin became exceedingly sinful to me.

"I was in this condition for many months and sought out the company of a number of elderly, godly people, and I perceived that they had the blessing of the Lord which I so much desired. Their conversation together with the preached Word was at times a help.

"Deliverance came one morning as I was walking to work, when the Lord brought the lines of the hymn to mind:

‘Water from salvation’s wells,
Thirsty sinner, come and draw;
Grace in Jesus’ fulness dwells,
More than men or angels know.’

There was set before me the fulness of the water of life in Christ which encouraged me to plead on for the Lord’s mercy. This was the first time that I had received a little intimation of forgiving love and pardoning grace.

"After some weeks, the Lord appeared again in answer to my frequent petitions at the throne of grace with the words, ‘Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee’ (Jer. 31. 3). It was a time of love, sweetness, pardon and a felt sense of my utter unworthiness. I walked in a mourning frame with the Man of sorrows and yet rejoiced in His salvation. Still I feared to presume to walk in His ordinances until the time the Lord was pleased to confirm the Word. I am glad to be able to say that I was never coerced or persuaded by men, but knew the portion of Ruth who desired to live and die with the people of God."

During a sermon preached in 2006, when reviewing the Lord’s dealings with him, Raymond stated that the words of Henry Fowler had been very precious and a blessing to him since he was brought into liberty of soul.

"My son, give me thy heart;
Let Me thy sorrows bear;
'Tis not thy caution, power or art
Can save thee from despair."

"In due course, after going before the church at the Strict Baptist Mission Hall, Cradley Heath, and after studying and assenting to the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard Societies, a copy of which was given me, I was baptized by Mr. Joseph Banks.

"Not long after this, because of the war, I had to join the navy, and was away from home for nearly three years, cut off for the most part from people of our own faith and order. During that time my reading was from works of such as John Owen, J.C. Philpot and J. Gill, etc., from which I was spiritually fed.

"When I returned home, I found that some of the ‘old stock’ of believers at the Mission Hall had died, and that Arminian tendencies of others had come to the fore, with the result that I could no longer continue with them, and I was led to separate myself from them and attend the chapel at Hawes Lane, Rowley Regis, where I had, prior to joining the navy, often attended and where there

were, particularly at that time, some of the Lord's dear people with whom I felt at home. The Lord was pleased to favour my soul at this time at Hawes Lane, and being a people who for the most part walked separately from others, we had communion one with another in the things of God, which sadly was not to last.

"Whilst I was in the navy, solemn exercises regarding preaching the Word came at times upon my spirit, but knowing the deceitfulness of one's deceitful heart, I made no mention to anybody of this solemn matter, as I knew of those who have run and not been sent. Little did I know at that time of the way which would be opened up when the Lord made a weighty exercise of the words: 'For I will shew him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake' (Acts 9. 16). After being settled with the church at Hawes Lane for some time, our deacon, Mr. Samuel Rushton, asked me if I had any exercise regarding the ministry as the church felt the Lord was preparing me for this work. I had to reply in the affirmative, but told him of my fears, and that I begged for a sure word, especially as I felt to be a babe in grace, and there were those amongst us who were 'well-seasoned.'

"I can honestly say that I did not put my hand to the matter, having seen in earlier years in my previous causes such lightness and sinful practices in the name of God. This caused me to cry to the Lord for the matter to be right.

"I was grateful to certain of our company who took me to one side to show me, as helped, the way of God more perfectly. Ultimately in answer to my petitions, the Lord overcame my objections with the words, 'Preach the preaching that I shall give thee.' Shortly after this, feeling the weight of the Lord's fear and the burden of the Word, I was asked to preach before the church, commenting at four prayer meetings, and then as helped before the church and congregation at Hawes Lane. The church unanimously decided to send me forth and prayed that the Lord would open doors amongst His people." Raymond was 22 years old at this time.

Here Mr. Oakley makes mention of sore church troubles which broke out at Hawes Lane which resulted in the resignation and departure of Mr. Banks from amongst them. Mr. Oakley felt the Lord had bound him to the people of God that remained and for many years was the main supply minister at the chapel.

He continues:

"Over the years, trials in providence and afflictions have, I trust, been sanctified. Often I have been brought low and yet would justify the Lord in the way He has taken, for His way is perfect."

When the pastorate of the late Mr. Joseph Field ended at Hope Chapel, Raymond was unanimously asked to take the pastorate, which he did from 1980. In the later years of his ministry he had increasing infirmities which necessitated him laying down the pastorate in 2007. On the few occasions the writer was privileged to visit our friend in these last years, sweet fellowship in the gospel was enjoyed as he related many experiences of the Lord's goodness to him. One occasion in particular stands out. Several years before, Raymond had been suddenly admitted to hospital having sustained a severe reaction to a certain medication. His whole body shook violently and his state of mind was of darkness and solemn foreboding, until the Lord spoke these words: "A merciful and faithful High Priest" (Heb. 2. 17). He said that in a moment his soul was at perfect peace and he felt ready to fall into the Lord's arms whether it was for life or death.

At our last visit to him in the hospital, he said how the words, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psa. 46. 10), had been his support. It was his desire to die at home, and in the mystery of God’s all-wise providence this was so, as he was brought home from the hospital on December 3rd, passing away just as he entered the front door of his home.

Our friend was deeply concerned for the welfare of our churches and remained a staunch supporter of the principles of the *Gospel Standard* to the end.

We believe we can say, “’Tis with the righteous well.”

G.D.B.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

Looking unto Jesus,
Trusting all the way.
Looking unto Jesus,
Always, every day.

Looking unto Jesus;
He is faithful, true.
He remembers promises,
Made to even you.

Looking unto Jesus,
Always, everywhere.
Looking unto Jesus;
Casting on Him care.

Looking unto Jesus,
When life nears its end.
Looking unto Jesus,
Eternity to spend.

Looking unto Jesus,
Gazing on Him there;
Countless thousands with you,
Looking at Him there

Looking *upon* Jesus,
Heaven ’twill be to me,
When I gaze upon the LAMB,
THERE eternally.

Lily Levell

Written after hearing Mr. Jesse Delves preach at Clapham from “Looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12. 2).

Mrs. Lily Levell, the widow of Alfred J. Levell (for many years Secretary of the Trust), is 95 years old. She was baptized by old John Kemp at Biddenden in 1931, so has been in church membership for 81 years!

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
APRIL 2012

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

MARY MAGDALENE – AN EASTER MEDITATION

“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her” (John 20. 15-18).

At the beginning of this chapter we have the *fact*, the glorious fact of the resurrection. “The Lord is risen indeed.” And then right through the chapter we have these wonderful displays of the *power* of the resurrection. What a difference it made to Mary Magdalene and to the disciples and to Thomas! Now the resurrection took place almost two thousand years ago, the *fact* of the resurrection. It can never be repeated. But the *power* of the resurrection is still the same as it was when the Lord Jesus broke forth from the prison house of the grave. Paul’s desire was: “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection” – in that order: Him, the risen Saviour, and the power of His resurrection. It can be known; it can be experienced. And what a difference it made to Mary Magdalene and to the disciples and to Thomas, and what a difference it will make if we know anything of it! Now we cannot command it – God is sovereign in bestowing it – but we are not forbidden to ask for it; we are not forbidden to pray for it. The Lord waits that He may be gracious.

Mary Magdalene is a lovely character, isn’t she? It is very clear there is not anyone in the whole Word of God who loved the Lord Jesus more than Mary. He had done so much for her, and being forgiven much, she loved much. We think you will find, if you follow Mary Magdalene through, that her love was a lot stronger than her faith. O how she clung and clave to the Lord Jesus! She was there at the cross. She was the last to leave. When Peter and James and John had all fled, Mary Magdalene was still there, and she was there when Joseph and Nicodemus laid His lifeless body in the grave, and she beheld where they laid Him. She was the last to be there and she was the first to be there on the first day of the week. She felt she could only see His lifeless body, and there was that great stone in the way, and who shall roll it away?

But sweetly constrained by love to Christ, she ventured. God will always honour the sweet constrainings of His own love. If we venture, sweetly constrained by the love of Christ, it does not matter what mountains, what stumbling stones are in the way. The Lord will always remove them, will always honour the secret constrainings of His own love.

Mary was one who saw the stone rolled away, and she found that the body of the Lord Jesus had gone. Really that was a wonderful token for good. It was a mark and evidence of the resurrection. But Mary took it the wrong way round. That was where her love was stronger than her faith. Many of the Lord's tried and tempted people take some of the best evidences the Lord has given and use them against themselves. The stone rolled away is the evidence of the Lord's resurrection. "The Lord is risen indeed." The empty sepulchre is an evidence of the resurrection. But Mary took it the opposite. All she can hope for is the lifeless body of her dear Redeemer, and even that is gone! How many of the Lord's little ones take some of their best evidences, evidences of grace, evidences of life, and turn them against themselves! But if faith did not prevail, love did. "Love cannot from its post withdraw." So you find when Peter and John left the sepulchre, Mary was still there. John had believed. His faith was stronger than Mary's. Mary did not know what had happened, but love held her there. The disciples went away again unto their own homes. Not Mary. "Love cannot from its post withdraw."

"But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." There is not much of this religion about today, a sinner weeping after Christ, a sinner weeping because she cannot find Christ. "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" There may not be any words in it or any language or any prayer, but the whole of your case cries out to heaven, and such holy longings and weepings of a living soul will never be discountenanced by God.

"Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." She was a broken-hearted woman. She had lost her dearest Friend. The Lord her life was gone. But it was more than that. We do not think anyone can ever realise the depth of sorrow there was with Mary Magdalene and the immediate disciples and the other godly women that Saturday between the day when the Lord Jesus was crucified and the day of the resurrection. They knew not yet that He must rise from the dead. It was hidden from them. It seemed as if everything was finished, that they had been deceived, that they were wrong, that Satan had triumphed, that the powers of hell had triumphed. There was all the appearance of it. And more than that, with Mary she was a great sinner and she knew it, she felt it. Her hope was in Jesus. But if Jesus be dead, if His life be ended, then what of her hope? What of her sins? What of her heaven? Mary

could enter into that word: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

"Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." Blessed woman, weeping after Christ! Well, He is so near, but she does not know it. There are some of God's people, the Lord is so near them. He is risen from the dead, but they do not know Him and they cannot see Him and they have not found Him. It is the power of His glorious resurrection they need, and that will do the deed. That will put everything right. "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." It was going to be the most blessed day she had ever known. She was going to be the happiest woman on earth. It was not going to be long. "But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." If ever a person found that the end of a thing is better than the beginning, Mary Magdalene did. If ever a person walked out that truth, Mary Magdalene did: "Surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off."

"But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels." There they were, majestic sight, these holy angels, bright and glorious, who had come down from heaven. "One at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." These angels talked with her. "Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." For Mary there was not any hope, any help, any consolation, any happiness, any delight in those angels. But thousands of people today love something sensational. Wouldn't there be a cry in our churches if someone woke up in the night and said they had seen an angel? Mary Magdalene wanted something more than angels, and we want something more than angels, something more than sensational things. We want the blessed reality of a personal knowledge of the Saviour and a revelation of Christ to our souls, not these sensational things, not visions, not angels, not dreams.

"When she had thus said, she turned herself back." She was not interested in these angels. There was the Lord Jesus standing by her side. He had been there all along. He was so close to her in her sorrow. He was watching over her. His heart was overflowing with sympathy, but she did not know it. How near the Lord Jesus is standing to dear souls in sorrow, spiritual sorrow, temporal sorrow, family sorrow, the risen Saviour, with His heart full of compassion, full of love, standing by their side, watching over them. O if only their eyes were opened to see it; if only they had the blessed realisation of it, they would "enjoy a gospel day, and heaven begun below."

"And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus." Whether it was just

because of her tears, or whether her eyes were holden, as we read of some of the others, we are not told. But she “knew not that it was Jesus.” And then the risen Saviour spoke; these are the first words that the risen Saviour spoke after His resurrection: “Woman, why weepest thou?” May we hear them spoken not just to dear Mary Magdalene, but to the whole, blood-bought church of God right to the end of time. No cause for tears, seeing the Redeemer is triumphant over sin, death, hell and the grave, and is risen triumphant from the dead. “Woman, why weepest thou?” That is the antidote to sorrow.

Let us just linger here a moment, because we have something similar in the fifth chapter of the Book of the Revelation, that scene in heaven, that challenge: “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals?” – the book of God’s decrees. No man in heaven or earth or sea was found worthy to open the book. And John says, “I wept much.” You have a sorrowful man. What of God’s purposes if there be none to fulfil them? “I wept much ... and one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed.” And he said, “I beheld ... a Lamb as it had been slain.” That is the antidote for your sorrow. That is the answer to your tears, when you weep over your sins and the day of your death and the judgment day and eternity and over bereavement and sorrow in your family, over your business, your circumstances, your relationships, the church of God. “Weep not: behold...” And he says, “I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne ... a Lamb as it had been slain” – the risen Saviour, freshly risen from the dead, freshly ascended into heaven. This is the antidote, the divinely-appointed antidote for all the tears of the people of God. We read that their tears are in His bottle. We take that to mean that God cares, and He measures them, and He takes note of them, and He will deal with them. He has that blessed ability to sympathise. He is full of compassion. He knows how to deliver. He can give relief. He knows how to support. He has promised He will. “Woman, why weepest thou?”

And then the Lord Jesus, the risen Saviour, asks a second question: “Whom seekest thou?” O are there some and the angel’s word can be spoken to you: “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay?” “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee.” “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?”

“The soul that with sincere desires
Seeks after Jesus’ love,
That soul the Holy Ghost inspires.”

O to be that one whom the Holy Ghost inspires, that one who through mercy seeks after Jesus’ love.

“Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener.” Her love was stronger than her faith. She supposed Him to be the gardener. You know, in a very blessed, sacred sense, He *is* the gardener. The church is His garden. “A garden inclosed is My sister, My spouse” – enclosed by the hedge of everlasting love and with those many plants of His right-hand planting. Now it is a very precious theme: the church as the garden of Christ and Christ Himself as the heavenly gardener.

“She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir.” You notice even in the depths of her sorrow there is that beautiful, Christian courtesy and respect, speaking just to a gardener. “She ... saith unto Him, Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Did you notice that Mary does not give a hint whom she is talking about? She does not tell the gardener it is the Lord Jesus, it is the body of the Lord Jesus. She is almost incoherent. “Him.” She says, *Him*, three times. “If Thou have borne *Him* hence, tell me where Thou hast laid *Him*, and I will take *Him* away.” Now there was only one *Him* with Mary Magdalene, as if the whole world should know the anguish of her heart. There are times in the experience of a child of God when it is like that. He feels the whole world must know the depth of his sorrow, or the whole world must know the depth of his joy. O there is only one *Him* for Mary Magdalene. She does not mention His name. You find the same throughout Scripture. Job in the depths of his sorrow: “Oh that I knew where I might find *Him*!” As if Job would say, Surely you know. And the church in the Canticles: “Saw ye *Him* whom my soul loveth?” *Him*, the Object of her first desire.

“Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” If only she could find the lifeless body! But she was going to get something better. Yet this is the wonder of love to Christ. She promises the impossible. How could a poor, weak woman like Mary, all alone, unaided, carry away a lifeless body? Mary did not think of that, and love does not think of things like that. O the sweet constrainings of the love of Christ in a sinner’s heart! “Sir, if Thou have borne Him hence, tell me where Thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.”

Then the impossible takes place, and then the wonder of wonders happens. “Jesus saith unto her, Mary.” And that was everything. Her sorrow was turned into joy, her darkness into light, her bondage into liberty, and she “enjoyed a gospel day, and heaven begun below.” “Jesus saith unto her, Mary.” He claimed her as His own. She recognised His voice. Her beloved Lord and Master and Saviour was still alive, and she saw everything in it. “Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation,” and heaven at last with Him to all eternity. “Jesus saith unto her, Mary.”

And though she has been in heaven nearly two thousand years, she has never heard a sweeter word, even in heaven, than this.

“Jesus saith unto her, Mary.” It was only one word, but it did everything. “Mary, ‘Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.’” “Fear not, Mary. ‘I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.’” “Jesus saith unto her, Mary.” It is not how much religion we have: it is whether it is real. Mary had one word, but there was never a sinner had a greater blessing than that. Don’t some of you long that the Lord Jesus might call you by your name, say, *Mary* to you? What do we mean? Well, if your name was called out from the pulpit, it would single you out from everyone else in the chapel. That is what grace does, and that is what happens when the Lord speaks. “Jesus saith unto her, Mary.” “Come, and claim us as Thy portion, and let us lay claim to Thee.”

“She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni” – my dearest Master. She could not get low enough. Her heart overflowed with love and wonder and adoration and praise. “Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni” – my dearest Lord and Master. That is what we want. We want the Lord Jesus to speak to us personally, and a living ministry, under the power of the Holy Ghost, will. Somebody asked a young woman once, “Why do you go to hear William Gadsby when you could hear the refined Dr. Halley?” She said, “Well, when I was a girl, we used to pass under an aqueduct, and I used to keep shouting my name, *Betty*, and the echo kept coming back, *Betty, Betty, Betty, Betty*. When I hear Mr. Gadsby preach, it is just as if the word keeps coming, *Betty, Betty, Betty, Betty*.” That is the power of real religion and vital godliness.

“Jesus saith unto her, Mary, She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not.” Now this at first sounds strangely upon our ears, because we read of those dear women who met Him returning from the sepulchre. “And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.” Just after this we read that Jesus said to Thomas, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side.” But here Jesus said to Mary, “Touch Me not.” Now there are two things here. The first was this: it seems that Mary thought that it was just going to be the same relationship it had always been. But there was a difference. The Lord Jesus is now risen. His work of humiliation is ended. The atonement has been made. The work has been finished. It is a different relationship now, Mary. “Touch Me not.”

But secondly, I understand the root, original meaning is this: cling not to Me, Mary; do not hold Me fast. The Lord explains: “I am not yet ascended to My Father.” Mary thought He was going to continue on

earth for ever, living on earth just as He always had. She gloried in it. She was delighted in it. Mary, touch Me not. Keep Me not here on earth. My work on earth is finished. I must ascend to heaven. My place is in heaven. “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” I must go, Mary, as your Forerunner into heaven. My love is still the same. My presence will still be with you, but it will not be this human, natural relationship. It will be in spirit. “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.” But, “Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father.” It was necessary that Jesus should die. It was necessary that Jesus should rise again. It was necessary that Jesus should ascend into heaven, there to live and reign eternally as a great High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmity, ever living, ever interceding. “Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father.” I am going to ascend. For forty days I am going to show Myself by infallible proofs. But it is only for a season. I must ascend to My Father.

“But go to My brethren.” The old divines used to say the Lord appointed Mary Magdalene “an apostle to the apostles”! She was the first one to whom the Lord Jesus revealed Himself after His resurrection and she was the one appointed by the Lord Jesus personally to take that testimony of having seen the Lord, to take it even to the apostles themselves. What an honour He put on love! And the Lord Jesus always will honour the love of His people. “Go to My brethren.” O but the mercy of it! “They all forsook Him, and fled.” A doubting Thomas, a denying Peter – but the Lord Jesus says, They are My brethren. There is a relationship here that can never be broken. “Go to My brethren.” In the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle takes it up. He says, “He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” You read in the papers of some eminent, titled family; they have a black sheep in the family, a wayward son, and they are ashamed of it. They do not want to know him. They disinherit him. “*He* is not ashamed to call them brethren.” “Go to My brethren.” O the solemn point that we are sometimes ashamed of Christ! “But O may this my glory be, that Christ is not ashamed of me.”

“Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.” O that sweet assurance He gives them that Almighty God is their God and that He is their Father in Christ! “Say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father” – *your* Father because *My* Father – “and to My God, and your God” – *your* God because *My* God.

“Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.” We have

sometimes wondered if this was the most blessed church meeting that was ever held? You think of it: those wondering disciples and this dear woman with her heart overflowing with wonder, love and praise. And she bears this simple testimony. Two things: that she has seen the Lord, and that He has spoken these things to her. These are blessed church meetings, even today, when poor, trembling, unworthy, guilty sinners come with all their fears and they tell us that they have seen the Lord and that He has spoken these things unto them.

“I no more at Mary wonder
Dropping tears upon the grave,
Earnest asking all around her,
‘Where is He that died to save?’

“Dying love her heart attracted.
Soon she felt its rising power,
He who Mary thus affected,
Bids His mourners weep no more.”

THE NECESSITY FOR CHRIST’S SUFFERINGS AND DEATH

*Sermon preached by Jesse Delves at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham,
London, on December 2nd, 1951*

Text: “For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2. 10, 11).

This remarkable Epistle brings to light the nature of the blessed gospel and that divine doctrine that is fundamental, vital and essential to the salvation of our never-dying souls. There can be a great deal in religion that comes short of an experience of the soul and what is revealed here, and may be very superficial. But it will be a wonderful mercy if this were to be to us a Sabbath day of sacred fellowship with a suffering Redeemer – if it were the great mercy of the Holy Ghost to bring in holy application this wonderful gospel into the souls of some who may have greatly longed for His appearing and to some who have known a broken heart under the Saviour’s sweet love but who have had many days of darkness since, to experience a sweet renewing of that wonderful grace and thus be brought in faith unto the holy of holies to view the dear Redeemer pouring out His soul unto death and paying the ransom price that guilty man might live.

In the chapter the apostle brings to light the real reason why the eternal Son of God made such an amazing stoop as to take our nature

upon Him and to lay down His life. It must ever be to us a solemn consideration that the Saviour tasted death for every man (verse 9) and by His death, which was a bitter path, delivered "them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" and destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil. The wonderful deliverance effected by the Redeemer's condescension, suffering and death will never be fully known by His redeemed children until they fall before the Lamb, before the throne of God, and cast their crowns at His feet. O do we really know in our souls what a revealed Christ is? Have we had a moment when we have fallen flat before that wondrous cross and repented in dust and ashes? It is a wonderful thing to be brought down before God in this way so as to tremble at His majesty and yet to rejoice in His mercy and to believe under a gracious conviction that God is just and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. O fellow believer, have you had actual moments when you have loved Him, when the affections of your soul have stretched forth in holy admiration and love to incarnate Deity, when you have blushed because of your black sins and yet have rejoiced that ever that foul, black stream of guilt should have been washed away completely?

"For it became Him." The apostle here refers to the Father. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things." This great, eternal God, God the Father who is God over all, "it became Him." This God who holds the reins of providence and who was from everlasting and will be to everlasting. He is anointed and He possesses all divine perfections in their fulness and in their majesty. "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory." O that we may be among the many! "In bringing many sons unto glory," even unworthy, insignificant mortals such as we are. Contemplate this: "In bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." What marvellous condescension! Divine love taking these "many sons" into union with Him! He was not ashamed to own them, not ashamed to call them His brethren, not ashamed to take their nature upon Him, not ashamed to suffer for their sake. Have we ever thought of that? We have read of one of the Lord's disciples who was left for a moment to be ashamed of his Lord, but who afterward repented with great bitterness and wept bitterly on account of his shameful fall.

"Not ashamed to call them brethren." O what a distinct honour is conferred upon every believer; what a beauty is in that union that joins him to his living Head and what a remarkable relationship subsists here! Jesus, if we are indeed His children, is our elder Brother, born for adversity.

“For it became Him.” I would like to dwell a little upon this point as I might be helped; it is such a great point. It became the eternal Father to make His well-beloved Son perfect through sufferings in order to bring many sons unto glory. “It became Him.” That is to say it behoved Him, was necessary to Him. Necessity was thus laid upon Him in order to the redemption of His people, because it was the only way whereby God could be just and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. This reveals to us the fact that His thoughts were thoughts of peace toward His people from everlasting to give them an expected end. “It became Him” thus not to spare His only Son but to deliver Him up. He delivered Him up for our offences. This is the great point to keep before us: He was delivered for our offences and rose again for our justification. Do not look upon this as common-place, but let us search our hearts as to whether we enjoy a personal interest in this amazing mystery of an incarnate, suffering Immanuel, One made perfect through suffering.

It became the Father thus to deliver Him up; it became Him in order that all the conditions of the covenant of grace might be honoured. Under the covenant of works, you see, the conditions were in the creature, but under the covenant of grace the conditions were in the Redeemer. With respect to the church of God, it is purely a covenant of grace and it is a covenant of grace in Christ in that it reveals the wonderful grace and compassion and love that was in His heart toward His people.

“This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
He pity ne’er withdrew.”

In this covenant were conditions to be fulfilled in order that our souls might live and that there might be a destiny for us other than the destiny we deserve, which is the bottomless pit. It became Him in order that every condition might be fulfilled because the covenant was made with Christ and with His people in Him. Every one of them was eternally in Him in this union so that, if we had but faith, we could contemplate the oneness of the church in Him when He assumed our flesh, suffered, bled and died in our place and rose again and ascended up into heaven.

It is sweet at times to meditate upon this covenant which is in all things ordered well and ordered well for us, and wherein every essential condition was fulfilled and honoured in the Person of the Mediator between God and man. No other person could ever fulfil what was required; no angel could do it, no good man could do it, no mere creature could do it, even were that creature sinless. No other person than the eternal Son of God in our nature could fulfil the terms of that wonderful covenant made with the church in Him. O what a blessed day it would

be if we were favoured thus to see our names in that covenant and our eternal state secure from all the rage of hell. O wonderful covenant this –

“This covenant, O believer, stands,
Thy rising fears to quell;
Sealed by thy Surety's bleeding hands;
In all things ordered well.”

O if the Holy Spirit were to seal our interest there, we should return unto our rest feeling that the Lord had dealt bountifully with us.

“It became Him,” in order that every condition in the covenant which only He could fulfil might be honoured, to shed His own heart's blood, nothing less. It became Him in order that the law might be honoured and our justification secured in that obedience. This is a wonderful thought to a believer. I know it has been to some of you and I hope it has been to me. “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.” His dignity, His eternal affinity with His Father did not mitigate in any way the sufferings that were necessary for Him to endure in order to work a robe of righteousness to cover the naked soul. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, but there is not a rag in that righteousness the Saviour wrought; there is no tear there; there is no seam there; there is no join there; it is one spotless, perfect robe. What a mercy of mercies if that robe covers us as the hymnwriter says.

“And, lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,
And cast it all around.”

Has He ever cast it upon you? Have you had a moment in your life when as with Hart you could say, “I am clean, I'm clean”? This is what justification is. O think of it – it became the eternal Father to make His Son in this aspect perfect through sufferings in order that poor sinners whose righteousnesses are as filthy rags might have a perfect covering, such a covering to present them without spot before God, such a covering that justice would have nought against them; He would present them perfect before the throne of God.

“It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings,” in order that justice might be fully appeased and that hell might be vanquished. It became Him in order that justice could not consistently strike a sinner, a vessel of mercy for whom the Saviour laid down His life. O if we could but have the thick, black cloud of darkness and bondage and uncertainty and confusion removed from us! O that the Holy Ghost might remove the cloud between and give us to view the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings, this

Captain of our salvation made perfect through suffering! Thus it became Him in order that the mighty debt of all our black list of sins might be blotted out. O you know it is very sweet when we can freely forgive one another in any offence; but how sweet to know that forgiveness that flows into a poor, sin-burdened conscience when the blood of atonement is applied and the burden is removed. Have you had a moment when you could not find your sins? Watts said concerning the atonement,

“It rises high, and drowns the hills;
Has neither shore nor bound,
Now if we search to find our sins,
Our sins can ne’er be found.”

Perhaps some of you say, O this leaves me far behind; I do not know anything about it. But if there is a longing in your heart for the Lord Jesus, one of these days I feel persuaded He will so work in your heart as to fill you with wonderful love and praise. O the heaven of forgiveness! In order to this we have to be brought down to know ourselves as absolutely insolvent debtors, whether we be fifty pence or five hundred pence debtors, if we have nothing to pay it brings no peace. We are in a helpless condition, but this is where the Lord brings His children: He brings them to know, when they have nothing to pay with, that all their efforts can never make amends for a broken law. But this is the beauty and the glory of the gospel: “When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both,” Have you ever had a touch in your soul of that love, that brought salvation into your soul and gives you to feel, without presumption, that one day you will see Him as He is? Has His mercy ever broken your stony heart and filled you with contrition and repentance? O it is sweet to repent before the cross of Christ.

Then there is another point. It became Him in order to open up a new and living way of access to God through the merit of His blood. “Having an High Priest,” said the apostle later in this Epistle, “Having an High Priest over the house of God” (Heb. 10. 19-22). When a little of the gospel flows in, it will sanctify you more than anything else; it will wash your body as well as your soul. Do you understand what I mean? It will spoil you to everything but Him, gather you up, bring you under the apple tree which is among the trees of the wood, but they cannot be compared with it. “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons” (Song 2. 3). He has opened up this way for you, sinner, so that you must go with your burden, however great, with your load, however heavy, and with your circumstances, however painful, with your cross which may be hard to bear, and with your afflictions. O what a mercy it is that nothing, nothing of this nature can close the door to one where faith is given to view the wonders of an incarnate God and plead with the Father for Christ’s sake! He will not be ashamed to own thee. He is not ashamed to call them brethren, those

many sons. He will not be ashamed of you; come then with your case. "Come unto Me," He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour."

"Christ has blessings to impart,
Grace to save thee from thy fears;
O the love that fills His heart!
Sinner, wipe away thy tears."

It will be a mercy if we have some to wipe away, instead, alas, of having such a hard, unfeeling heart. It became Him in order that sinners might be reconciled and that there might be an approach to God.

"It became Him ... in bringing many sons unto glory." There is something rather beautiful about this word to me: "In *bringing* many sons unto glory." You see the Lord Jesus Christ through His sufferings and death has made the way whereby the lost can be saved, and the Holy Ghost coming from the Father lays hold of them and quickens them into divine life and brings them into this way. He *brings* them; every living soul must be brought that is going to heaven. All are alike dead in trespasses and sins by nature and need a living power, a divine power, and that power is the power of God the Holy Ghost. "You hath He quickened." How far is that true of any of us, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins"? (Eph. 2. 1).

He brings them here; they are poor, helpless things like to the infant cast out into the open field to the loathing of its person, but divine life, sovereign mercy, says of this poor, desolate, outcast, "I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.... Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest Mine" (Ezek. 16. 6, 8). Has the Lord ever spread His skirt over thee, sinner, has He covered thee with His mercy, with His righteousness, washed thee with His blood?

He brings these "many sons" unto glory, brings them out of nature's darkness, as stones from nature's quarry, and prepares them to be stones in the temple of God. Wonderful grace in bringing many sons unto glory, these poor, helpless things! Is there any evidence that His mercy has laid hold of thee, sinner? If you feel your need of that mercy, then it has laid hold of you, and divine love, that mighty arm of His love, is bringing you as one of His "many sons." He brings them into the narrow path that leads to endless life, brings them into it and guides their feet, their roving feet, instructs them.

"Bringing many sons unto glory." He brings them through the path of tribulation that is appointed them in this wilderness. It is a path of tribulation, more with some than with others, and in very different ways

with some than with others too, but whichever way or wherever it may be, when the cross lies heavy upon you, it is the Lord's cross that is laid upon you to bring you to glory. We may not be able to see the heaven beyond the sea of thorns and briars that attend our pilgrimage through it, but at the same time every cross and pain and grief and sorrow is in the cup the Father gives. The dear Saviour said, "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" and in bringing these "many sons" unto glory there will probably be a bitter cup, yea many a bitter cup. But if you can feel that it is a cup prepared by your Father's hand, you will drink it and can be brought to drink it willingly and not be offended at it for Christ's sake, and not be ashamed of Him either in the drinking of it.

"In bringing many sons unto glory." O how many does that mean in this congregation, in this chapel? How many sons redeemed by precious blood are there on their way to glory in this congregation, and how many who have not crossed that line from death to life, have not yet been brought into this narrow path? O may it be that none in this little company may ever be lost. O may it never be so by the Lord's great mercy to us. But divine sovereignty singles out persons; one shall be taken and the other left in bringing many sons unto glory through this tribulatory path, to that eternal haven of rest, bringing them forth by the right way that they might go to this city of habitation.

Is the Lord bringing you to glory? Is your face set towards heaven? Has the Holy Ghost brought you to say, "Give me Christ or else I die"? What a mercy! Some of us feel greatly to need teaching and we do need teaching; I need it. And if indeed the Lord has taken us in hand, what a mercy! "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isa. 54. 13). It will be well worth the struggle if the Lord is bringing you as one of His "many sons" to glory; it may be a path of suffering and of great and painful suffering, but the end will truly be well. It will be well with them that fear God.

"Many sons." These are sons by blessed adoption. God has one only-begotten Son, one eternal Son. He took our nature upon Him, but in Him and joined to Him are many sons who are members of His body of which He is the glorious Head. He is the Head of the body, which is the church, in bringing many sons unto glory. All these sons were in the divine decree of adoption in the covenant of grace, but that divine decree reveals itself by the quickening grace of the Holy Ghost, by the spirit of adoption felt in the heart of a vessel of mercy when he feels he can say, "Abba, Father."

"It became Him ... in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation" – that is the Leader, the Commander of His church, the Captain, the Head over it, whom they follow – "perfect through sufferings." Amen.

THE CRUCIFIXION

From "Bishop Hall's Contemplations" by Joseph Hall (1574-1656)

Alas! is this the head that is decked by the Father with a crown of pure gold, of immortal and incomprehensible majesty, which is now bushed with thorns? Is this the eye that saw the heavens opened, and the Holy Ghost descending upon that head, that saw such resplendence in heavenly brightness on Mount Tabor, which now begins to overcloud with death? Are these the lips that spake as never man spake, full of grace and power, that called out dead Lazarus, that ejected the stubbornest devils, that commanded the cure of all diseases, which now are swollen with blows and discoloured with blueness and blood? Is this the face that should be fairer than the children of men, which the angels of heaven so desired to see, and can never be satisfied with seeing, that is thus foul with the nasty mixtures of sweat and blood and spittings? Are these the hands that "stretched out the heavens as a curtain," that by their touch healed the lame, the deaf, the blind, which are now bleeding with the nails? Are these the feet which walked lately on the liquid pavement of the sea, before whose footstool all the nations of the earth are bidden to worship, that are now so painfully fixed to the cross? O cruel and unthankful mankind that offered such measure to the Lord of life! O infinitely merciful Saviour, that wouldst suffer all this for unthankful mankind!

Two thieves are appointed to be Thy companions in death; Thou art designed to the midst as the chief malefactor: on which hand soever Thou lookest, Thine eye meets with a hateful partner. But O blessed Jesus, how shall I enough admire and celebrate Thy infinite mercy, who madest so happy a use of this Jewish despite as to improve it to the occasion of the salvation of one and the comfort of millions? Is not this, as the last, so the greatest speciality of Thy wonderful compassion, to convert that dying thief? With those nailed hands to snatch a soul out of the mouth of hell? Lord, how I bless Thee for this work! How do I stand amazed at this, above all the other demonstrations of Thy goodness and power! The offender came to die: nothing was in his thoughts but his guilt and torment; while he was yet in his blood, Thou saidst, This soul shall live.

Ere yet the intoxicating potion could have time to work upon his brain, Thy Spirit infuses faith into his heart. He that before had nothing in his eye but present death and torture is now lifted up above his cross in a blessed ambition: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Is this the voice of a thief or of a disciple? Give me leave, O Saviour, to borrow Thine own words: "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." O faith stronger than death, that can look beyond the cross at a crown; beyond dissolution, at a remembrance of life and glory!

O blessed thief, that hast thus happily stolen heaven! How worthy hath thy Saviour made thee to be a partner of His sufferings, a pattern of undauntable belief, a spectacle of unspeakable mercy! "To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise."

O Saviour, what a precedent is this of Thy free and powerful grace! Where Thou wilt give, what unworthiness can bar us from Thy mercy? When Thou wilt give, what time can prejudice our vocation? Who can despair of Thy goodness when he that in the morning was posting towards hell is in the evening with Thee in paradise?

Lord, he could not have spoken this to Thee but by Thee and from Thee. What possibility was there for a thief to think of Thy kingdom, without Thy Spirit? That good Spirit of Thine breathed upon this man, breathed not upon his fellow; their trade was alike, their sin was alike, their state alike, their cross alike, only Thy mercy makes them unlike. One is taken, the other is refused. Blessed be Thy mercy in taking one; blessed be Thy justice in leaving the other. Who can despair of that mercy? Who can but tremble at that justice?

SUCH AN HIGH PRIEST

(Hebrews 8. 1, 2)

By J.K. Popham

Another like Him never was, never will be. The dignity of His Person, Immanuel, God in our nature; the glory of His being sent, sent by the Father; the greatness of the work that He had to do – the removal of sin, the fulfilling of the law, the bringing in of an everlasting righteousness, the sanctification of sinners, the making of a way for them to God from earth and hell into heaven itself – all, *all* this our High Priest was sent to accomplish. His presence in heaven, the work that He is doing there – all these things declare Him to be such an High Priest as never was before, as never shall be again, for He shall have no successor in this His office. "This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood" (Heb. 7. 24). And as a Priest, having "died unto sin once," He "liveth unto God" (Rom. 6. 10).

Now the apostle tells us *where this Priest is*. He is in heaven. "If He were on earth," he says, "He should not be a priest." Christ was never a priest in the old dispensation; He could not have been, because He was not of the Levitical tribe. He came of Judah, "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood" (Heb. 7. 14). But God brought Him forth, and said to Him, "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 7. 21). And now He is in heaven: "Who is

set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” So that if we ever see Him, it will be by that only medium that God has ordained, and that He gives and works in His saints now, namely, *faith*. And that eye of faith only sees as much as the Holy Ghost reveals to it. To see Christ in heaven is such a sight as affects the heart, affects the conscience, seizes the will, lays hold of the understanding, sanctifies the soul, lets the sinner see the emptiness, the shortness, the vanity of all created good. The sight of Christ, if it be not immediately accompanied by an assurance of personal interest, draws the soul out in fervent petitions for a manifestation of interest. If it be accompanied with a sense of interest, it draws the soul out in warmest gratitude, in humble adoration, in fervent desires to live to the praise of Him who has done so much for the sinner.

“In the heavens”; He is set down there. And this has its own beautiful signification in this Epistle. Farther on Paul tells us that the priest under the old law stood “daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices,” which could not take away sins. “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Heb. 10. 11, 12). There He sits to intimate that His work is done, that He has no further labour to engage in, in respect of satisfying divine justice, fulfilling the law, magnifying and making it honourable. He has no further labour, no more sorrow, no more anguish, no more to prostrate Himself in supplications, no more to go out and remain whole nights on the mountain in prayer and supplication; but having finished the work His Father gave Him to do, He now sits at His right hand.

But He was not there once, as to His humanity; no, He was a poor, broken-hearted Man, broken for you who have been brought to know Him and believe on Him, and commit the salvation and keeping of your souls to Him. He was prostrate in the dust once. He said He was not able to look up. He cried mightily to God for assistance. Sin was imputed to Him, and therefore it pleased the Lord to bruise Him, to put Him to grief. With His wounds and bruises, stripes and chastisement His people are healed. When He was suffering all that, then He was a poor Man. He cried out of the horrible pit and waited on God. The horrible pit that Christ was in was imputed sin; that was the pit. He never knew another pit; that was the pit. It was dreadful to Him. He died; He died unto sin. Your sins, O people of God, broke His heart; your sins did sink Him; your sins brought Him to that that He must say to His Father, in whose bosom He eternally had been, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

He was buried, and He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures; and having showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs,

He ascended into heaven. We are told that He entered heaven with “His own blood” (Heb. 9. 12); that He who shed His blood on Calvary entered heaven with His own blood. What are we to understand by that but this, that with His infinite merit, all the merit of His obedience, the merit of His death, He went into heaven to present it there as that all-sweet sacrifice and perfume to His Father, wherewith He will cover and sanctify and bless for ever His people? And there He is, and as He is there, He is a Minister, “a Minister of the Sanctuary.”

Now may the Lord give us grace to pause, as the apostle would have us, at this great subject: “The sum of all my teachings is this,” says the apostle: “We have Jesus Christ, a Friend in heaven; we have a High Priest before the Lord, a Minister in heaven of the true Tabernacle.” Therefore there is no ground for despair. If we look at sin, we say we shall never get through; but if we are led to look at Christ, we shall say we cannot be overcome. If we look at our weakness, we must say we must fall; if we look at His power, faith will help us to say we shall stand. If we look at our rags, we shall say we cannot think we shall be before God with joy; but if we look at His righteousness, we must say, “Here is hope for a worm polluted and ragged.” If we look at our pollution, we must say, “O this will shut us out”; but if we, led by the blessed Spirit, look at His precious blood, we shall say, “This is a ground of hope.” May God reveal this Man, this God-Man in us, and help us humbly and believingly to meditate upon Him.

THE NORTH WIND AND THE SOUTH

By Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

(see Review, page 92, March G.S.)

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon My garden” (Song 4. 16).

1. For the first point named, we see here that Christ *sends forth His Spirit, with command to all means*, under the name of “north and south wind,” to further the fruitfulness of His church. The wind is nature’s fan. What winds are to the garden, that the Spirit of Christ, in the use of means, is to the soul. From comparison fetched from Christ’s commanding the winds, we may in general observe that *all creatures stand in obedience to Christ, as ready at a word, whensoever He speaks to them*. They are all, as it were, asleep until He awakes them. He can call for the wind out of His treasures when He pleases. He holds them in His fist (Prov. 30. 4).

Use. Which may comfort all those that are Christ's, that they are under One that hath all creatures at His beck under Him to do them service, and at His check to do them no harm. This drew the disciples in admiration to say, "What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!" (Matt. 8. 27). And cannot the same power still the winds and waves of the churches and states, and cause a sudden calm, if, as the disciples, we awake Him with our prayers?

2. We see here that Christ speaks to *winds contrary one to another*, both in regard of the coasts from whence they blow, and in their quality; but both agree in this, that both are necessary for the garden: where we see that *the courses that Christ takes, and the means that He uses with His church, may seem contrary; but by a wise ordering, all agree in the wholesome issue.* A prosperous and an afflicted condition are contrary: a mild and a sharp course may seem to cross one another, yet sweetly they agree in this, that as the church needeth both, so Christ useth both for the church's good. The north is a nipping wind, and the south a cherishing wind. Therefore the south wind is the welcomer and sweeter after the north wind hath blown. But howsoever, all things are ours: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, things present and to come, life, death, etc. (1 Cor. 3. 21, 22); "all things work together for good" to us, being in Christ (Rom. 8. 28).

Use 1. Hence it is that the manifold wisdom of Christ *maketh use of such variety of conditions*; and hence it is that the Spirit of Christ is mild in some men's ministries and sharp in others; nay, in the very same minister, as the state of the souls they have to deal withal requires.

Use 2. Sometimes, again, *the people of God need purging, and sometimes refreshing.* Whereupon the Spirit of God carries Himself suitably to both conditions; and the Spirit in the godly themselves draws good out of every condition, sure as they are that all winds blow them good, and that were it not for their good, no winds should blow upon them. But in regard that these times of ours, by long peace and plenty, grow cold, heavy and secure, we need therefore all kinds of winds to blow upon us, and all little enough. Time was when we were more quick and lively, but now the heat of our spirits is abated. We must therefore take heed of it, and quicken those things that are ready to die (Rev. 3. 2); or else, instead of the north and south wind, God will send an east wind that shall dry up all, as it is, Hosea 13. 15.

Use 3. Again, if Christ can raise or lay, bind up or let loose, all kind of winds at His pleasure, then if means be wanting or fruitless, it is He that says to the clouds, Drop not, and to the winds, Blow not. Therefore, *we must acknowledge Him in want or plenty of means.* The Spirit of Christ in the use of means is a free agent, sometimes blows strongly, sometimes more mildly, sometimes not at all. No creature hath these

winds in a bag at command, and therefore it is wisdom to yield to the gales of the Spirit. Though in some other things, as Solomon observes, it may hinder to observe the winds (Eccles. 11. 4), yet here it is necessary and profitable to observe the winds of the Spirit.

A PRAYER

It would appear that this prayer was offered at a Lord's day morning Prayer Meeting at Zion Chapel, Bedworth, Warwickshire. The man praying was G.T. Congreve (1791-1861), one of the deacons. Congreve's letters were published after his death, with a preface by J.C. Philpot. His "Chest Elixir" used to be advertised on the wrapper of the Gospel Standard.

Dear Lord, if that blessing is not too great for such great sinners as we, we entreat Thee that it may be our lot and portion, according to the hymn we have been singing [possibly 357]; for our souls desired a blessed portion such as this, that we may weep ourselves away to everlasting bliss. Then we should be good for nothing for the world, and the world would be no better for us.

We entreat Thee that Thou wouldst in tender mercy regard the cry of our souls, for we need Thee in all Thy quickening influence to be near this morning to help us and bless us, for we feel we oftentimes are cleaving to the dust. We therefore beseech Thee that Thou wouldst in tender mercy come over the mountains of our sins, and grant that our captivity this day may be turned, and that nothing may prevent the flowings of Thy mercy; that this day our souls may enjoy sweet access to Thee, that we may be enabled to come and spread our case before Thee, tell Thee all our concerns, and leave the event to Thy sovereign will.

May we find peace, rest and joy in the Holy Ghost. Wilt Thou be pleased to regard the prayer of the brethren. Let it please Thee to come forth and deliver us from all evil, from all toil and cares. Give unto us a sweet day of rest, that we may this day feed on eternal; give us a keen appetite for the Bread of heaven, so that we may relish Zion's dainties. Let us, we entreat Thee, feed on marrow and fatness. Do Thou in tender mercy remember us and the covenant Thou hast made.

Remember Thy great name, and for Thy great name's sake, for Thy Son's sake, remember the poor and needy of Thy flock. Do Thou make it evident that we are amongst the blessed number, for Thou hast said, where two or three are gathered together, Thou art there, and that to bless them. Meet with and bless us. Let not all our cries be offered up in vain. Let us, we entreat Thee, be comforted with the comforts of the Holy Ghost.

Remember us in our low estate. Do Thou be pleased to let our cries come up with acceptance.

O do Thou let Thy presence, Thy lovingkindness and Thy blood purge, melt, move and cheer our hearts and souls this day. Let a sweet smile from Thy lovely face break our hearts outright. Let Thy free mercy move us in our devotion this day to worship Thee in spirit and in truth. Let not the opportunity be lost, we entreat Thee, O Lord.

We shall meet together in vain, except Thou meet with us, except Thou bless us. Where shall we obtain the favour we desire except we feel Thy sweet lovingkindness? Except Thou say, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven," how can we rejoice? How can we take our harps from the willows whilst our souls are at a distance from Thee? It is our sins that have separated between Thee and us, notwithstanding Thou hast put away our sins, else we should be put away.

O Lord God, blessed be Thy name for a Mediator in heaven who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, who, when He tabernacled on earth, was tempted in all points as we are, though He knew no sin of his own. Blessed be God, therefore Thou wast capable and sufficient to render Thyself an acceptable sacrifice. Now Justice is satisfied, the law is honoured, and God in all things is glorified. We entreat Thee, therefore, that Thou wouldst send down the Spirit of Thy Son into our hearts, that we may cry, "Abba, Father."

Let it please Thee that the remission of sin may be felt in our hearts, that it may be combined with godly repentance, that it may be made manifest in us that the tabernacle of God is with men. Say to us, "Thou shalt be My people, and I will be your God." O that Thou wouldst speak so indeed as to smile away our unbelief, overcome our suspicions and fears, and drown our sorrows in Thy sweet, forgiving love.

Will it please Thee to remember us in our low estate and condition. Regard us as we are before Thee. We are revealed, naked and open to Thine all-seeing, Thine all-searching eyes. Thou knowest us altogether. O that Thou wouldst therefore come and purify us unto Thyself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Will it please Thee in tender mercy to give unto us patience and resignation of soul to endure the chastening of the Lord? Let us, we entreat Thee, learn by experience. Let experience, which is Thy gift, which Thou givest Thy dear children, teach us that which is better than rubies, that Thy wisdom may keep us upright in our hearts, and keep us near the throne of grace, keep us near the fountain open for sin and uncleanness. Let us by faith behold Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds, for we faint oftentimes because our strength is small. We faint truly in the day of adversity. We would desire rather that it may be a day of adversity,

a day of trial, than to be at ease in Zion. Dear Lord, our souls lament and mourn over our deceitful hearts. It is Thine own act and power that can bring us forth.

In order that we may, then, be brought forth from such a state, that we may be refined and purified, go through such scenes of trouble, sorrow and disappointment, crosses and vexations, more than tongue can tell or pen can write, O Lord, therefore we entreat Thee to keep us near to the throne of grace. Let us say to everything beside, "Hinder me not."

Let us be very jealous over our own hearts, lest we should go astray. We oftentimes wander from Thee. We are prone to wander; Lord, we feel it. We are prone to every evil, liable to every sin, if Thou shouldst leave us; for such is the deceitfulness of our hearts that it is not known where they will rove when Thou leavest them. But blessed be Thy dear name, we cannot rove beyond the limits of Thy love. Thou hast said in lovingkindness and tender mercy, "Thus far hast Thou gone, but Thou shalt go no farther." And to the enemy of souls, "Here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

O thrust the enemy this day at a distance from us, that we may not be troubled with his insinuations, his suspicions and his lies.

Let us, we entreat Thee, creep into the secret place of the Most High, be beneath the shadow of Thy wings, beneath the shadow of that Rock which is the Rock of Ages, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Let us feel sweet repose this day, that we may feel our souls free from temptation, that we may receive renewed strength this day to fight the battles of the Lord. For what do ye see in the Shunammite? The company of two armies. In this tabernacle we groan, being burdened. Let us, we entreat Thee, though burdened, groaning and sorrowful, come and cast ourselves and all we have on Thee, find sweet solace, sweet rest, and comfort for our sorrowful hearts. Let the power of Thy grace and the influence of Thy love and mercy rest upon us. Let us by faith be privileged to take a supply for our need from the fulness of a precious Christ's living store, the store of all those blessings we feel our need of, for those that are sick, needy and lame, that they may take the prey.

O bring us into that disposition and into that position of soul that we may need Thy helping hand. We need Thy promises; we need to watch unto prayer. May we never give up our importunity until we have cause to sing with the Psalmist, "We love the Lord, because He hath heard the voice of our supplications."

Hear and answer the prayers of the brethren. Let Thine arm be made bare in this place, we entreat Thee, both in the salvation of sinners and in the comforting, the establishing, the edification and the building up of the brethren in their most holy faith, increasing us with all the increase of God, in anointing us with the unction of the Holy One, and

uniting us in a spirit of love and mercy, that we may be found as the heart of one man, that we may have fellowship with God and hold sweet communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be as a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot, contending for the faith once delivered to the saints and made manifest in the conscience of each one.

May our prayers come up perfumed with the smoke and incense of the Redeemer's blood.

While it has pleased Thee to remove home some from us, O Lord, those of us whom Thou hast favoured here below, let it please Thee to make up every breach and every loss. Let it please Thee to sanctify every loss, trial, trouble and cross.

Do Thou own and bless a preached gospel, we entreat Thee, in this or any place where Thy own sent servants proclaim it, where there is an elect vessel, where Thou hast any mourners to comfort, where Thou hast a people to raise up, establish and comfort.

Bless Zion's ministers everywhere. Let it please Thee to own and bless their labours.

Bless Thine aged servant whom we expect to hear this day. Strengthen him in body and comfort him in soul. Bring him forth furnished. Help him to speak, and may a blessing attend his labours this day.

Do us all the good we need, with all we should pray for.
We ask it for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

REMINISCENCES OF THOMAS HARDY (1790-1833)

From an account of his life by Matthew Hutchinson. Thomas Hardy is usually described as "an eccentric genius." He travelled extensively, preaching at Manchester for Gadsby and Gower Street for Henry Fowler. Mr. Popham used to quote his advice: "See what your poor, hard-hearted prayers can do."

Thomas Hardy was born on July 22nd, 1790, at a poor, thatched cottage, built on the waste by his grandfather in Kirby Lane, in the parish of Kirby Muxloe, a little, obscure village four miles from Leicester. His family were stocking weavers. They had thirteen children, seven sons and six daughters. Thomas was their fifth son, and being born in that state which all mankind were plunged into by the Fall of Adam, so awfully depicted in Romans 5. 12-21, 3. 9-19, lived according to the course of this present world for some years. He used to say, "I was HARDY by name, and hardness itself by nature. I had no fear of God before my eyes, no dread of His Majesty, no right thoughts of Him whatever."

He was about thirteen years of age when, occupied in making hay with others, there came on the most dreadful thunderstorm he ever witnessed. He took refuge from it under a haystack with a cousin, who said to him whilst beholding its awful grandeur, "Surely, Thomas, this is the handy-work of the Lord God Almighty." But this had no other effect upon Thomas than to excite a burst of laughter at the remark. However, the storm was so terrible, raged with such violence, and continued so long, they were obliged to go home. They got a horse, and both mounted him. On the road it increased, so that the very ground seemed as if it was one liquid flame, such was the vividness of the lightning, and there came a clap of thunder so loud and terrific that he became dreadfully alarmed, his nerves were injured, his frame shattered, and the foundation laid of those infirmities and that nervousness which abode with him to the day of his death. This was the first time he ever felt any sense of fear, any awe of God, the least dread or reverence of His glorious Majesty. I have often thought there was in this first alarm of his conscience a striking resemblance to Luther's awakening, who met with a storm like this, which killed his fellow-student by his side.

The effect of this awakening was doubtless a great change of conduct, and great efforts in the way of recommending himself to God's favour. The spirit of bondage and slavish fear were strongly working on his mind for many years. Having never heard of the way of God's salvation as wholly of grace and mercy through the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ, he sought it in that way it was never yet found, by the works of the law. During this period of his life, *The Whole Duty of Man* was his constant companion. His Sabbaths were wholly spent in reading and attendance at church.

At a very early period of his life he manifested a great desire for knowledge, which indeed only became more and more intense in the after stages of his life. Whenever his father went from home, he requested him to bring him a book, which was rarely omitted. Whilst closely occupied at the stocking-frame, he would often leave off to consult his books. His reading and study continued to increase, and as he soon began to get his living by weaving stockings, which kept him closely employed during the day, he was frequently found studying whole nights. Without any other assistance than dictionaries, grammars, etc., he acquired considerable knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages, and by close application to the words, metaphors and idioms of those learned tongues he obtained much scriptural learning which otherwise he could not have so well understood and so sweetly relished. He has told me that some of his discoveries in regard to Hebrew words, etc., have delighted him more than the finding of great treasures have done worldly

men. And in the end of his researches he turned to his Bible with increasing satisfaction, and at last read little else.

About the age of 15 he was so far enlightened as clearly to see the errors of the clergyman at Kirby. Simpson's *Plea for Religion* falling into his hands shook his confidence in the church, and led him to examine more minutely many things connected therewith. He also heard other preachers out of her pale, and at last he was forced, though with great reluctance and many a bitter pang, to leave the Establishment altogether.

Having attained much literary knowledge, and being eminently qualified to teach the rising generation, a door being opened for him in providence, he quitted the stocking-loom, and commenced as schoolmaster at Kirby. Many from the surrounding villages and in Kirby became his scholars, and he soon had a numerous and flourishing school for so thin a population. He kept up a rigid discipline with those under his tuition and care, mustering them all on the Lord's day morning, and taking them to church, until he attended Mr. Vorley's ministry at Leicester, and at length became a preacher himself of the truth and grace of Christ.

There is some difficulty and obscurity in making out the state of his mind for some time before he was brought out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the gospel. Before he was thus visited with God's salvation in the love and comforts of it, he certainly waded through many seas of affliction. He has often said no tongue could express the pain and anguish he suffered for many long years. "I may say," he would exclaim, "I was utterly consumed with terrors." The discoveries made to him of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the utter depravity and corruption of human nature, of the deceit and guile, the dreadful and desperate wickedness of the human heart, were profoundly deep and abiding. In this matter, and in ability to set it forth, he surpassed all the men of God I have heard or read of. The fountains of the great deep of man's perfect ruin and extreme wretchedness were indeed broken up to his view by long and most painful exercises, sore temptations, and the cutting convictions of the Holy Spirit.

Whilst occupied in these deep waters of trouble and temptation, and crying out of the depths of his wretchedness and misery for mercy and salvation, the Lord in His gracious providence caused many books to fall into his hands, which both deepened his convictions and were the means also of his obtaining hope and help. Boston's *Fourfold State* was greatly blessed to him for both these things. Some friends say that in reading that work he was brought into the enjoyment of the liberty of the sons of God. The impression on my own mind is that this is a mistake. No doubt many helps and much comfort flowed into his soul in reading that

most valuable book, which made Boston with him a great favourite ever after. It was in reading Bunyan on *The Two Covenants, or Law and Grace*, that his soul was filled with the comforts of the Holy Spirit, and received the Holy Ghost as the Comforter, the Testifier and Glorifier of Christ. The book was only lent to him, but the contents were so dear and precious, the blessings of God's covenant of free grace were so opened up to his astonished view and admiration, so applied and sealed upon his heart by the Holy Ghost, that he wrote the whole of the book out, just, to use his own words, as if there were not another copy of it in the world besides the one he had to return. He found in sensible enjoyment that God had completely hedged in his soul with new covenant blessings.

Some records of his first speaking in the Lord's name are here transcribed from his own writing:

"October 20th, 1816. I first began to expound the Scriptures at the house of John Spriggs, a poor shoemaker, of York Street, London Road, Leicester." This continued above a year, till at length the place was too strait for their meetings, and they were obliged to look out for a larger room.

"November 30th, 1817. Removed to the schoolroom next the Meeting house, in Milstom Street." He did not speak long in this place before it was very evident that the Lord's blessing and presence were abundantly vouchsafed to him, and the sweet savour of the name and gospel of Christ brought so many together that this place was soon incapable of containing his hearers. In 1818 the Lord opened doors for his preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ in other places.

"June 8th, 1818. After much entreaty from Deal gave up my school; cast myself on God's kind and wonderful providence." The same year a chapel was built for him at Leicester, which afterwards had to be twice enlarged. Pressing requests from hungry and famishing souls were made to him from many fresh quarters, till his "often journeyings" ceased, and his labours "in the Word and doctrine" were ended by the great Head of the church.

He left Leicester for his last Kent and Sussex campaign on May 8th, 1832, and returned on June 23rd. His health and strength appeared as good as ever. Indeed he says in a letter to his wife on May 28th, the day before his paralytic attack, "I am wonderfully well in health." I do not think he was at all aware of the formidable nature of the attack his bodily frame had sustained on May 29th, and doubtless those excessive labours he was engaged in from May 29th to June 22nd should have been altogether declined. But the appointed time that his ministerial career should close was then fast hastening on. He often said if it was the Lord's will, he should like to die preaching and praying, and would have

gladly ended his days in the pulpit. When a little revived he would most gladly enter on his ministerial labours again, though compelled by weakness to be short and slow.

He often spoke of death as altogether disarmed of its sting during his last illness. Towards the end of April 1833, he remarked, "I now think I shall never recover from this illness." On May 5th he desired his wife to read Romans 8 from verse 18. He was led in prayer to dwell particularly on the last verses, that nothing in life or in death could ever separate him from "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." From this portion the Lord caused abundant consolation to flow into his soul, so that his heart was enlarged and his soul firmly fixed on the Rock of eternal ages. On Monday, May 6th, he desired his wife to read Hebrews 1, after which he prayed, and was led to notice the ministrations of the angels on the heirs of salvation in the last verse, showing that he knew a company of those ministering spirits waited on him continually, and were in readiness when his appointed hour came to convey his soul to eternal glory.

That day he left Burton for Stamford in a friend's carriage. Whilst on the road, Mrs. Hardy saw a great change in him, and asked if they should go back. His reply was, "Forward," which was the last word he ever spoke. He arrived at his friend's house, but this attack of apoplexy was the messenger of death. He lingered only till about 2 o'clock the next morning, when his spirit was released from its earthly prison on Tuesday, May 7th, 1833, before he had completed his 43rd year.

A PASTOR'S LETTER

Thomas Hardy's letters were published in two volumes after his death, and in former days were highly valued.

To the Church at Leicester
My beloved Brethren,

I know not what to say to you, for who is sufficient for the care and charge of souls? So said Paul, who did and suffered most for the church. It is plain, therefore, that though he makes such woeful complaints of his emptiness and weakness, he had some source of sufficiency from whence he drew the astonishing ability for his exceeding labours and sufferings. He thus explains the mystery: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"; and, "When I am weak, then am I strong." To be living and acting in and upon Christ is truly a great mystery, but no more strange than true; it is the only way of being to which God gives the name of *life* – all other living is in death. "I am the Life," says Christ; the only Life, the Bread of Life: whosoever eateth Him shall live by Him,

shall live for ever, and we act in the strength of our life. We cannot act before we live, and life proceeds from grace, from the grace of Christ, for His grace is the grace of life; we live by it, and shall reign in life by it; so says the Holy Ghost, the Witness for Jesus. And this grace, says Christ, is sufficient for us against all sin, every enemy, every want, every trouble. The great art lies in knowing how to look for it, and this art Christ teaches by bitter and sweet experience.

In all the battles, trials and cross-bearing to which He calls us, we are ever learning that there is neither righteousness nor strength in us; that all we have of our own are but clogs and weights, and drawbacks, and sins that easily beset us, which do but sink, and bow, and bend us down, so that all we can do is to sink in fear, and court despair, though we hate it; or run back again towards Egypt, for melons and garlic, and think it better to be quietly roosted in a little worldly good and sinful pleasures than to make the desperate venture of getting to heaven by faith. These things teach us powerfully; we cannot totally forget them, though our hearts are like riddles at retaining what is good to be learned, and I find a need that my great Prophet should teach me these things afresh, and every day.

Christ has other lessons besides these, or it could not be said that "His mouth is most sweet." These trials show us our misery, emptiness, poverty and death. Under the law, the bitterness of sin, the enmity and strength of the devil, and the vexatious vanity of all beneath the sun, bitter temptations and hard trials, make the rest in Christ truly sweet. In all such times will Christ appear and show Himself wonderful towards us. He will manifest Himself in all His gracious properties to us, as truly All in all, giving all, and expecting nothing at all from us but what His gracious hand produces in us. We are His husbandry, His vineyard, His garden enclosed, and He ever keeps the key, and plants and dresses every plant Himself, and keeps the whole night and day, and waters them every moment. O for faith most steadfastly to believe! And may I, so wicked, so worthless, so constant in rebellion, that with my flesh I serve always the law of sin, and am nothing but a burden, and to my thoughts a scandal and disgrace to Christ, venture to conclude that I am thus blessed in Christ, thus the object of His most loving care and all-watchful attention? Yea, surely, Christ hath spoken to me so, and Himself hath done all this to me.

To save sinners, and to the uttermost, all His love, grace, power and truth are solely occupied; and all His creatures, in heaven, earth and hell are bowed by His irresistible power to help in some way or other in this most glorious work. What have we then in Christ? All He has – all His heart. He can do nothing for His, but love them. Judge it by His Word, not by His outward providence. Saith He, "As the Father hath loved Me,

so have I loved you: continue ye in My love" – continue to trust always most confidently in it; believe My love to you, and you will love Me again. To continue in His love actively requires that we do remember always His love to us. He gave Himself for us; His infinitely precious Self is the price of our ransom from the lowest hell. His death was for us, and abolished ours; His blood now cleanseth us from all sin, and we need not wonder at it, for it is the blood of God.

If He had given Himself for all worlds, they must have been saved with an everlasting salvation; how easily then can He save us! He Himself is our Righteousness. Think of His perfections: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" whose greatness is unsearchable. His almighty Spirit is in commission of His infinite love to us, to show us all things, to be our strength, and light, and joy; to mortify our lusts, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He shall be our Guide even unto death: "I am with you always," says Christ, "even to the end of the world, to uphold you in My strength, comfort you with My peace and joy; to give you all My victories, to supply all your wants, and to take you to My heaven and My glory."

So much I know Christ will do for all His, for me, for you, and the more steadfastly you believe this, the better you will serve Him for such wonderful love, and the more ashamed you will be of all your services when you have done them. Christ is no loser by such faith as this, but gets His most rightful glory, and His people the fulness of His joy. My prayer is that He would bless each of you with such faith, and all its precious fruits. O wait on Him always for it. Continue instant in prayer. Remember His commandments to do them. Diligently aim, in His promised strength, to walk in all His commands and ordinances blamelessly. Especially forgive and love one another. To hate our brethren is to hate Christ, and love the devil, and give place to him.

Pray for me, as I do ever for you. My hearty love in Christ to each of you.

I am your very unworthy but willing servant,
For Christ's sake,

T. Hardy

Faversham, November 2nd, 1824

None are so much in the school of temptation as those who are most rich in grace. There are none who are such blocks, such mountains in Satan's way, as these; none do him that mischief as these; none are so active and so resolute in their oppositions against him as these; and therefore none so assaulted and tempted as these.

Thomas Brooks

THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC

April 14th-15th, 1912

Not even the horrors of the first War seem to have shocked the nation as much as the sinking of the *Titanic*, on its maiden voyage, with the loss of 1523 lives. Though the tragic event took place a hundred years ago this month, popular interest is as great as ever and new books still appearing.

What affected the godly so much at the time was the pride and arrogance – the ship, named after a heathen god, was “unsinkable.” It was even blasphemously claimed, even after the *Titanic* had hit the iceberg, that “not even God could sink the *Titanic*!”

The *Friendly Companion* at the time contained two poems on “The Loss of the *Titanic*.” One ends:

“That ships unsinkable are *none*
 Whate’er the wisdom of design;
 At least, we only know of *one*,
 The ‘covenant of free grace divine.’

“On board of her we safely ride,
 Despite ice-floes and treacherous seas;
 And in this ship our souls confide,
 Who hope to land on shores of peace.

“Say, Christian, art thou pleased with her –
 This ‘covenant of free grace’? Come, think
 Of Captain, crew and passenger;
 Then say, ‘*This vessel cannot sink!*’”

(Alfred Dye)

OBITUARY

Richard Abbott, a faithful member and deacon of the church at Lamberhurst, Kent, was called to eternal glory on August 16th, 2011, aged 71.

When twelve to fourteen years of age, our friend and brother heard Mr. Tyler preach from, “I am black, but comely” (Song 1. 5). This sermon made a deep impression on him and he always felt this was his spiritual beginning; his soul was quickened.

Some time afterwards, he was convicted of his lost condition under the preaching of Mr. David Mulvey, when he preached from, “And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land” (Acts 27. 44). He so longed to be one of those that were safely landed in heaven.

Our beloved brother did not inform me of the time of his spiritual deliverance which was evidently after this season.

As a young married man he backslid for a season. He moved away from Lamberhurst to Wales. He was told before he left, "You are doing wrong; you will have to return." While in Wales, he had a vision of heaven which so humbled him, it brought him on his knees before God. Still determined to have his own way he moved to Nuneaton. He and his family began to attend Evington Chapel. Mr. F.L. Rowell preached one Lord's day from 2 Corinthians 5. 10-12. Under this sermon he was clearly instructed by the Lord that he was walking in a wrong path. Following this, the Lord seemed to hedge up his path with several different trials; everything seemed to go wrong. One heavy trial was his young son was knocked down by a car. This was the voice of God to him and compelled him to return to Lamberhurst. He was baptized by the late pastor, Mr. Jabez Field, in September 1979. He served as deacon for 32 years.

He told his present pastor of a very special season when passing through much temptation and trial. The words of Jesus to Peter were applied with power to his heart: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22. 31, 32). The part that was made so precious and indeed remained with him was, "I have prayed for thee." This was a great comfort to him in the many trials and afflictions that he passed through.

About ten years ago he was sorely afflicted with lymphoma, but the Lord remarkably raised him up from the very gates of death. It was at this time that I became more closely associated with our dear brother and visited him very regularly. This affliction left its mark in constant weakness. This pathway was sanctified to our late brother and produced a meek and quiet spirit. The mark of his religion, which was noticed most pointedly at the prayer meetings, was his deep sense of unworthiness coupled with humility and love to his gracious covenant God in Jesus Christ. We truly saw in him what the hymnwriter states:

"When is it brethren all agree,
And let distinctions fall?
When, nothing in themselves, they see
That Christ is All in all."

I believe this verse aptly describes our late beloved brother and deacon. He was a man that desired and strove to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and longed for the prosperity of Zion. His prayers in the last year of his life were particularly savoury, breathing the very spirit and mind of Christ, longing for the salvation of souls, pleading for mighty signs and wonders to follow the preaching of the Word.

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14. 13).

J.R.R.

Harry David Haddow, pastor at Zion Chapel, Prestwood for over 30 years, died in Harpenden Bethesda Home on February 29th, 2012, aged 87. We deeply sympathise with his widow and family and the church at Prestwood in their loss.



YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM

(*Colossians 2. 10*)

Complete in Jesus! Precious, precious word!
Transformed into the image of my Lord;
Once a poor rebel lost in guilt and sin,
But now, through sovereign grace, "Complete in Him."

O thou destroyer, I can smile at thee;
No power of thine can ever conquer me;
"Complete in Jesus" I shall firmly stand,
Nor death, nor hell, can pluck me from His hand.

"Complete in Jesus," O how sweet the thought!
Surely I do not prize it as I ought;
'Tis matchless grace, 'tis love unsearchable;
His worth and preciousness no tongue can tell.

Dear Saviour, what am I? Thou couldst not see
One spark of love or gratitude in me;
Why was I chosen, called and justified,
And made a member of the church, Thy bride?

Ah, my heart melts, my eyes with tears o'erflow!
Grace is the answer, nothing else will do;
Grace, matchless grace, unmerited and free –
Dear, precious Lord, I am "complete in Thee."

When trials and temptations round me rise,
And seem to hide my Saviour from my eyes,
Still I can rest on that unchanging word,
"Complete in Christ," my ever living Lord.

A little while, and this poor soul of mine
Shall on Thy bosom, dearest Lord, recline;
No longer by my sins to cause Thee pain,
Nor ever wander from Thy side again.

But in those mansions kept for me above,
Those mansions of eternal joy and love,
Far from temptation, from all sorrow free,
I shall for ever rest, "Complete in Thee."

Author Unknown

Some are brought to Christ by fire, storms and tempest; others by more easy and gentle gales of the Spirit. The Spirit is free in the work of conversion, and as the wind, it blows when, where and how it pleases.

Thomas Brooks

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MAY 2012

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

FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK

Sermon preached by Samuel Haynes of St. Ives at Gower Street Chapel, London, on February 2nd, 1902. Mr. Haynes was pastor at St. Ives for 45 years, dying on October 14th, 1905, aged 77. He requested that the words should appear on his gravestone:

*“E’er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”*

Text: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12. 32).

These words were spoken by Christ to His disciples to allay their anxious fears and to bring them to put their trust and confidence in God who cared for them. They were spoken by Him who had perfect knowledge of every one of His people, who knew all about them, all about their fears and anxieties, all about their wants, all about their enemies, their temptations and their trials, and therefore He was perfectly qualified to speak a word of comfort to them. They were spoken by Him who had all power and infinite wisdom, for He said, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28. 18). He has power over all flesh, giving eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. He has infinite wisdom to devise means, and He knows what is really requisite and best for His people. These words, then, were spoken by Him who has almighty power, infinite wisdom and boundless goodness.

The words, “Fear not, little flock,” express very great love and affection. They are, as it were, expressive of the tenderest feelings of the Saviour’s heart toward His disciples and all His people. He calls them a “little flock,” perhaps indicating that the church of God is but a very small body in comparison with those who have no desire toward Him. The words may also lead us to consider that those who compose this little flock, which the Saviour owns, are those who are led by the Spirit of God to think very little of themselves, as Paul did, who, though called the great Apostle of the Gentiles, speaks of himself as “less than the least of all saints.”

“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” There are two or three points which we should like to dwell a little upon this evening.

First, notice the flock itself.

Second, the encouragement which is here given: "Fear not, little flock."

Third, the prospect which is opened before them: "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

I. First, then, we will notice a few things respecting this flock. Every flock must have a shepherd, and the Lord Jesus Christ says, "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep" (John 10. 11). There must be a shepherd to see after the sheep, to lead them, to protect them, and to attend to them, because they stand in need of help, for they are helpless creatures in themselves. Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd of His flock. He takes great care of them, He watches over them by night and by day, and He will give to every one of them eternal life, and not one of them shall perish. What a mercy it is, then, to be included in this flock! And what a blessing it is to have such a Shepherd as the Lord Jesus Christ to watch over us! We need not fear if Christ is our Shepherd.

A flock also implies a number. One, two or three do not compose a flock: there must be a number. Of course, there are small flocks and large flocks of sheep, but all these smaller flocks, or churches, are included in this one flock, here called a "little flock." Jesus says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd" (John 10. 16). So there is to be one fold, one Shepherd and one flock. Now, as a number of sheep compose a flock, so a number of persons compose the church of God. They are gathered out of every nation, kindred, tongue and people. They are brought into the fold by Jesus Christ Himself. He calls them His own sheep, those His Father gave to Him, and those He laid down His life for, so they are precious unto Him. We look at them and see but few, comparatively speaking, yet when the Lord shall make up His jewels, and when they shall pass again under the hand of Him that telleth them, there will be a number that no man can number, out of every nation, kindred, tongue and people, standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, clothed in white, and with palms of victory in their hands. This then is the prospect that is held before them. "There shall be one fold, and one Shepherd."

A flock also implies variety. In a flock of sheep you will find a great variety. They are not all alike. There are some strong and some weak. There are some sheep and some lambs. There are some healthy and some sickly. There are some that require the shepherd's constant care. So in the church of God, you will find a great variety of persons. There are some who are strong in faith and have a measure of assurance of their interest in Jesus Christ. There are others who are weaklings in

faith, feeling they have hardly faith enough, as it were, to enable them to overcome. The Lord said to Simon, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. 14. 31). There are some who are healthy, who are living, as it were, in the pure atmosphere of God's grace, enjoying love and mercy, communion and fellowship with Him. There are others who are very sickly. They are too much taken up with the things of time and sense – with the things of this world – so that they cannot be said to be healthy; and yet though so much taken up with the things of this world, they often feel how unworthy they are of God's notice, and often exclaim, "O wretched man that I am!"

You will also find lambs in Christ's flock. Christ said to Peter, "Feed My sheep; feed My lambs" (John 21. 15-17). It is also written, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa. 40. 11). Is it not a great mercy to be even a lamb in His flock, to be carried in the bosom of the dear Redeemer, and to be cared for by Him? It is a flock, then, composed of different kinds of persons, of different ages and experiences, but they are all watched over, cared for and provided for by this Shepherd. Therefore He says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Another thought is implied in the word "flock," and that is unity and sociality. There is unity in a flock; there is order. In the eastern parts they follow the shepherd, but in our country the shepherd generally goes behind the sheep. Christ says, "My sheep know My voice, and they follow Me." Now there is unity and sociality in the church of God. There is a unity of the Spirit. "Endeavouring," says the apostle, "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4. 3). What is there to unite people so much as the love of the truth, the love of Jesus Christ? The power and sweetness of God's blessed truth unites heart to heart and soul to soul. What a nice time that was which we read of in the Acts of the Apostles, when they were of one heart and of one soul in the things of God. They were brought into sweet union and fellowship with one another. What a happy state of things that was! What a happy flock that was – one heart and one mind in the things of God!

Another thing is implied, and that is pasture. A flock of sheep must have pasture. We read of the Lord Jesus Christ feeding His flock upon the high mountains of Israel, for there shall their fold be. Probably that refers to the doctrines of the gospel. They are high doctrines, and yet they are low doctrines. They are high because they originate in God's eternal mind. They are low because they come down to the low estate that man is in by the Fall, and lift him up so that he is brought to feed upon God's everlasting love; to feed upon God's distinguishing grace

and mercy; to feed upon the doctrine of justification by faith through Jesus Christ; to feed upon the glorious Person of Christ, and the excellences and perfection of His work; and to feed upon the exceeding great and precious promises that God has made, and upon His manifested love and favour. That is rich pasture indeed!

The psalmist, speaking of the Lord as his Shepherd, says "The Lord is my Shepherd." That is the statement of one of the flock. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.... He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Psa. 23. 1-3). This is but the voice of all those who are brought to realise in a measure their interest in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now those who compose this little flock, dear friends, are all loved with the same love – everlasting love. They are all redeemed by the same precious blood – the blood of Jesus Christ. They are all led and taught by the same Holy Spirit. They are all led to value the truth as it is in Jesus. They are all brought to follow Christ whithersoever He shall lead them. They are all brought to see and feel their need of Him, that they cannot do without Him. He, on the other hand, prizes them, takes interest in them and delights to do them good.

II. We pass on to notice in the second place the encouragement which the Lord gives to them. He says, "Fear not, little flock." Sheep are very timid things; a little dog will frighten a flock of sheep. I believe God's people, more or less, are subject to many fears and anxieties. They may often fear when there is no cause for it. When God said to Abraham, "Fear not, Abram," there was no cause for him to fear, but he could not see it. Therefore God said, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15. 1).

There are a great many "Fear nots" scattered about God's Word for the comfort and consolation of those who are exercised by fears. We know that at times they cannot help it. It is as if Christ in our text says, "Fear not the wrath of God," for that wrath makes a sinner tremble when he realises what he is, and when he sees God's just and righteous law, and hears the threatenings of God against sin. We are told that Moses, the friend of God, said, "I do exceedingly fear and tremble," when he saw the majesty of Jehovah. But this good Shepherd says to His flock, "Fear not the wrath of God: that has fallen upon Me. Fear not the sword of justice: that sword has pierced My heart." We are told He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He died, the Just for the unjust, to bring them unto God. Well, then, if Jesus stood as a Surety for them, and the wrath due to their sin has been poured upon Him, they need not fear. But the question is: "Did He die for me? am I interested in His love?" The children of God want the Spirit to bear witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, and when they

can realise this, they can look up with holy boldness and confidence unto God.

There is an adversary whom they need not fear – Satan [because the Lord is with them]. He walketh about as a roaring lion, “seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5. 8). We know he has great power, but we also know that he is a conquered foe. Jesus Christ fought him on his own territory, and overcame him, and bruised his head and his awful power, but still he has a power and great influence at times. He is permitted to have it for wise ends and purposes, and he seeks whom he may destroy, but he can go no farther than he is permitted. He can go no farther than the length of his chain. While he is a mighty enemy, we know that our Shepherd is almighty, and while he seeks to destroy the sheep and lambs, the Shepherd has His eye upon every one of them, and says, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand” (John 10. 28). Then is there any reason for a child of God, a believer, a lamb in the fold of Jesus, to fear? No. Therefore says Christ, “Fear not, little flock.” Fear not the powers of hell, for I have them under My control.

Again, we sometimes fear men. Men have had great power and great influence, and have been great persecutors of the church of God, but the Lord says, “Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?” (Isa. 51. 12, 13). Although men may have great power, and intend to do great things, yet the Lord can turn them in a moment, for He has the hearts of all in His hands, and can hold them back. So what a mercy it is that while the church of God, the people of God, the believers in Christ, have fears because of their enemies and their trials, yet they have One who watches over them and cares for them by night and by day.

Another thing which the child of God is sometimes troubled about is his daily necessities. The Lord says, “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on ... for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Matt. 6. 25-32). Is not that a comforting word for those who are tried in providence? It is indeed for those who have many fears, who see the cloud gathering, and sometimes know not what they will do, or what will be the end of these trying things. Christ says, “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?” (Matt. 6. 27). Therefore He says, “Fear not, little flock, you have a God to provide for you; you have a Shepherd that knows just what you stand in need of.” He has all power in His hands, and can provide for you in a marvellous way and manner. He has done so, and will do so again, to the honour and glory of His name.

There is another thing we fear, and that is death. We read of some who are in bondage all their life through the fear of death; they do not know how it will be with them when they come into the chilling flood of death. They shrink at the very thought of it. Jesus, the good Shepherd, has taken away the sting of death to every believer. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15. 55). In Scripture, death, in the case of a believer, is spoken of as sleep. A mother lays her weary child's head on its pillow and comforts it, and God, our heavenly Father, lays His children to sleep.

"They sleep in Jesus, and are blessed;
How sweet their slumbers are!
From sufferings and from fears released
And freed from every snare."

The character of death is altered; the grave is sanctified and perfumed by Jesus lying there. He has risen from the grave. Death could not hold Him. No, the voice of Jesus Christ will awake His people, and they shall rise from the dead and come forth in their resurrection bodies, and enter into His rest.

"Fear not, little flock, that which is due to sin: it has fallen upon Me. Fear not the powers of hell: I have overcome them. Fear not man: he is under My control. Fear not the want of earthly goods, those that are absolutely necessary for you: I have them all in My hands. Fear not the powers of death, for I have destroyed death."

III. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." We pass on to notice the promise here made – the prospect that is before the child of God. How very nicely this word comes in, "Your Father's good pleasure"! It shows to us that God is the Father of His children, that they have the Spirit of adoption sometimes in their hearts, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father." "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." If I could always feel that God is my Father I should have no fear whatever. I cannot always see it; I cannot always feel it. I too often feel too unworthy, too sinful, too dark, and am much tried in my mind because of these things, but if I could always feel assured of it I should have no need to fear anything. Although I cannot see it and feel it, it does not alter the blessed fact; He still is our heavenly Father and we are His children. O may God give us to realise it in our souls, and to have the comfort and the blessed assurance of it in our hearts, that He is our Father and we are His children by adopting love and mercy!

Now we have to notice the gift – a kingdom. O friends, what a contrast! Just look at some of God's children in this world; O what humble cots they have to live in! You will find some of God's children in the workhouse; they are glad to go there. I have known some of the

excellent of the earth there, and God has blessed them with a contented mind, and God has been with them there, and has stood by them, and has given them favour in the eyes of those who have been over them. Here is a kingdom promised them. Here is a kingdom in store for them. What a difference! They cannot call anything their own in this world, but here is a kingdom provided for them, and by and by the Lord will say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25. 34).

There are earthly kingdoms great and mighty, but the kingdom which God here promises His children is *the* kingdom, for it is above all other kingdoms. All others will come to nothing, but this kingdom is an everlasting kingdom: it will never come to an end. It is a kingdom of glory; it is a kingdom of liberty and freedom, where there will be no bondage. It is a kingdom where there will be no fears, anxieties or troubles, and where the soul will enjoy everything that God has promised.

A kingdom implies thrones: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne," says Christ, "even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. 3. 21). A kingdom implies a crown, and they shall have a crown. Paul says, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4. 8). This is not a fading crown, but a crown of glory, a heavenly crown. We read in Revelation what these kings and priests do with their crowns: "And they cast their crowns at His feet," as though they were not worthy to wear them. It is an everlasting kingdom which God has promised His people. It is the kingdom of the dear Redeemer and the kingdom of His glory.

But notice one word more. "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." O think, friends! can the infinite God take pleasure in giving to a poor sinner a kingdom of glory, of dignity, and of riches? Yes; it is God's pleasure; it is His "good pleasure." It is a free gift. God does not sell it; He gives it willingly, freely; He gives it lovingly; He gives it from His heart. O think, friends, every mercy, every favour, every token of His love, every uplifting of the light of His countenance, is from His good pleasure!

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Then says the dear Redeemer, "What needest thou?" You may have all those fears, and all those anxieties, about what you shall eat, and what you shall wear, and how you shall get on in this world. Why! if God your Father gives you a kingdom, will He let you starve? Will He let the enemy destroy you? O no! If He gives you a kingdom, then He will give everything else you need. Therefore we may

safely commit our souls, our bodies, our estates, our friends and our all into the hands of this wise, gracious and good God.

Do not these truths contain rich consolation and heavenly counsel? May that eternal Spirit seal them upon our hearts, that we may carry them away with us, that they may spring up in our hearts, and afford us sweet meditation as we journey on. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” May God add His blessing. Amen.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

By Richard Sibbes

Use 1. That we may further improve this point, Is Christ altogether lovely; so lovely to us, and so beloved of God the Father? *Let us then rest upon His obedience and righteousness.* Build upon it, that God cannot refuse that righteousness whose whole subject is altogether lovely. Let us come clothed in the garments of our Elder Brother, and then doubt not of acceptance, for it is in Christ that He loves us. In this well-beloved Son it is that God is well pleased with us. If we put on Christ’s righteousness, we put on God’s righteousness; and then how can God hate us? No more than He hates His own Son. Nay, He loves us, and that with the same love wherewith He loves Him, for He loves whole Christ mystical, Head and members (John 17. 23). Let this strengthen our faith, that if Christ be so altogether lovely in Himself and to the Father, then we may comfortably come before the Father clothed with the garments of Him our Elder Brother, and so rest ourselves on the acceptance of His mediation, that is so beloved a Mediator.

Use 2. Again, if Christ be so lovely, “altogether lovely,” then *let us labour to be in Him*, that so we may be lovely to God, because He is the first amiable thing in the world, in whom we are all lovely. All our loveliness is in beloved Christ.

Use 3. Again, if Christ be so lovely, *here only we have whereupon to spend the marrow of our best affections.* Is it not a pity we should lose so much of our affections as we do upon other things? Christ is altogether lovely; why should we dote upon other things so much, and set up idols in our hearts above Christ? Is He altogether lovely, and shall not He have altogether our lovely affections, especially when we are commanded under pain of a curse to love the Lord Jesus? *Anathema Maranatha* to those that love not Christ (1 Cor. 16. 22). Let us therefore labour to place all our sweet affections that are to be exercised upon good, as love, joy and delight, upon this Object, this lovely, deserving

Object, Christ, who is “altogether lovely.” When we suffer a pure stream, as it were, to run through a dirty channel, our affections to run after the things of the world, which are worse than ourselves, we lose our affections and ourselves.

Let, therefore, the whole stream of our affections be carried unto Christ. Love Him, and whatsoever is His; for He being altogether lovely, all that comes from Him is lovely. His promises, His directions, His counsels, His children, His sacraments, are all lovely. Whatsoever hath the stamp of Christ upon it, let us love it. We cannot bestow our hearts better, to lose ourselves in the love of Christ, and to forget ourselves and the love of all. Yea, to hate all in comparison of Him, and to account all “dung and dross” compared with Christ, is the only way to find ourselves. And indeed we have a better condition in Him than in the world or in ourselves. Severed from Him, our condition is vain, and will come to nothing, but that we have in Him is admirable and everlasting. We cannot conceive the happiness which we poor wretches are advanced to in Christ, and what excellent things abide for us, which come from the love of God to us in Christ, who is so altogether lovely. Therefore let us labour to kindle in our hearts an affection towards Christ, all that we can, considering that He is thus lovely.

THE VITAL NEED OF THE ANOINTING

An address given by F.L. Gosden in 1954

I desire, by the help of God, to bring before you that important word in John: “But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him” (1 John 2. 27). Speaking to “little children, young men, and fathers” (different degrees of faith, “according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” Eph. 4. 7), John warns them of antichrist, and shows why some did not continue, even “that they might be manifest that they were not all of us” (verse 19). For there is nothing between truth and error, as said the Lord: “He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12. 30).

The apostle then tells these disciples the secret of their preservation from such declension, and even apostacy: “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things” (verse 20). He further says, “These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you” (verse 26).

You will remember that God gave Moses specific directions for making the anointing oil, prescribing the exact ingredients. He also solemnly threatened with excommunication or death any who should attempt to imitate that holy oil (Exod. 30). That holy oil with which Aaron and his sons were anointed was a type of the anointing in the words before us, which again refer to the anointing and teaching of the Holy Ghost. Two solemn considerations emerge, namely, the awfulness of a religion destitute of the Holy Ghost, and the fatal presumption of attempting to imitate the Spirit.

Now if we look at our own cases and the churches and the denomination according to the standard of this Scripture, would it not account for many things which should cause shame and confusion of face?

Let us examine then this important point. In individual experience, the first anointing is in regeneration, that first great work of invincible grace whereby the Holy Ghost unites a sinner with an eternal union to the Lord Jesus Christ. But I wish more particularly to speak of the effect of this anointing, this unction of the Holy One. Take the ministry. Christ said of Himself, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke 4. 18; Isa. 61. 1). There is a direct connection between Christ, the glorious Head of the church, as He was immeasurably anointed, and every minister ordained of God to preach the gospel. Each partakes in some measure of that very anointing, and such are unto God a sweet savour of Christ. Beautiful and sacred is an assembly of saints who are under this holy anointing. The 133rd Psalm expresses in type such an assembly: "It is like the precious ointment upon the Head" – Christ – "that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard" – the ministry – "that went down to the skirts of the garments" – the living in the pews. Without this "unction of the Holy One," there can be no proper authority in the ministry. And O my friends, there is need for this anointing in the heart in hearing the gospel! not the same measure, but the same oil. Thus the preaching of the gospel becomes "the savour of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2. 16).

This anointing abides. Nothing can destroy it. It establishes in the soul, in the heart, in the conscience, a standard of experience, and that will abide; not always in the exercise of it, but as conditions and circumstances may be sanctified to bring it forth. For instance, knowledge. Indeed that is in the very text: "Ye know all things.... Ye need not that any man teach you." Not that they had got beyond teaching; none are so teachable as those who have received the Holy Ghost in the heart. But this unctuous knowledge is a spiritual discernment in every faculty of the renewed soul. It will attune your ear to Christ's voice. "A stranger will they not follow ... for they know not

the voice of strangers.” You will know the joyful sound. It will establish a standard of taste: “Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste his meat?” You will know when there is discord, when there is error. Without this anointing, however correct we might be, however orthodox, our religion is just bodily exercise, our knowledge is detached, our hearing is detached; there is no communication, but a naked knowledge that receives nothing of the things we know. But the sacred power and influence of this anointing is to bring into the heart the things you know. You know what you know. The blind man said, “One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” He needed no man to teach him that.

“But the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you.” Very sacred this! You may realise this anointing as it influences your affections, brings into your heart the power of the love of Christ, the power of His resurrection, so as to draw you, gather you away from this world, and set your affections upon things above. It abideth because it is the work of the Holy Spirit; it is indestructible. It is the life of God in the soul.

Now the apostle infers in this chapter that it is the lack of this anointing which is responsible for the declensions he warns against, and that is just what I feel in respect to the churches today. O the importance of this word! “O send out Thy light and Thy truth, to reveal the glory of the Lord!” I have neither time, nor grace, nor ability to set it forth. But this unction of the Spirit will establish in your understanding a heavenly light, different from mere intelligence; a light revealing to the soul the glory, the beauty, the fulness, the grace, the mercy, the unsearchable riches of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it will abide. The influence may be suspended; we may sin the sweetness away. But nothing can destroy this unction. How sweet it is when the Lord revives the soul, gives another touch, and you find the same thing! After a long time you may be again favoured to hear His divine voice. You will say, “It is the voice of my Beloved.” It abides, this anointing.

“But as the same anointing teacheth you.” O this teaching enlarges the heart in love; there is knowledge in it; the fear of God is in it. Everything that emanates from the blessed Spirit is unctuous. The love of God when it is in the heart never really departs. O that we might be brought to what Paul prayed for the Philippians: “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge.”

“And even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.” You will abide in Him if this anointing is in your heart. Such a sacred drawing power it has. It will bring you to this: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.” The Lord Jesus says, “Abide in Me, and I in you.” This

can only be by this blessed, heavenly anointing. So with respect to the unity of the Spirit, only by this anointing can there be a right union: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard ... that went down to the skirts of his garments."

"And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." Why? Why, it will abide *then*. O sometimes you will know it, when He comes again to you! "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God"; this is the One, the anointing will tell you: "This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us ... we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isa. 25. 9).

"That ... we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." O may this vital point exercise our hearts! It will put everything else right. We hear of much that is wrong today, much that grieves the Holy Spirit in the churches. But this gracious word contains the only remedy. O may the Lord grant to us each this unction of the Holy One!

BEWARE OF LOOSENESS

*An Address given by F. Foster in 1954 on
"Hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. 5. 21).*

The first thing I would draw your attention to is the necessity for this admonition. All divine admonitions are vitally and healthfully necessary. The Lord never speaks unnecessarily. He always speaks knowledgeably, and as the psalmist said, "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust," which we alas too often forget. And knowing our frame, He knows the hurtful tendencies which are interwoven in the same. Hence such an admonition: "Hold fast that which is good," otherwise hurt and damage will result.

We have a very ready tendency to the opposite to this healthful admonition – looseness. Concerning matters where looseness should not prevail, things divine are surely first. If we can be loose about such things, the repercussion of that looseness will affect all our life. This is exemplified by what happened in Malachi's day. Priests, who ought to have been the upholders of the honour, the majesty and the truth of God, held such things loosely, and that looseness permeated the whole of the nation's life until in due course it invaded the family life, and men held their marriage bonds loosely too.

But there is a right way of obeying this admonition. The hand that rightly holds fast that which is good is the hand of love to God. There

is none good but God, and He is the source of all good, and if He has condescended to discover His goodness and saving mercy to our hearts, it can only be through the glorious Person and work of His co-equal Son, incarnate in our nature. Then that will draw up love to His Person, and faith which works by love will animate the desire to hold fast that which is good. This is something distinct from holding to one's opinion, or to one's supposed prestige or position.

"Hold fast that which is good." I would notice, first, *good doctrine*. It is customary nowadays to dismiss doctrine as a matter of little importance, and some are very loose about the doctrine of the Trinity in unity, the doctrine of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the glorious triune Jehovah, equal in essence, glory, majesty and eternity. Three Persons, one good God. Well, if we can be loose about the Fountain of all good, nothing will really be held fast. For all true doctrines are founded upon the Trinity in Unity. Doctrine means teaching, and the Lord says, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain; My speech shall distil as the dew." It shall be down-dropped blessings, causing many precious and necessary things to spring up for our good. I mention this because, since some of our worthy forefathers were brought in love to the Persons of the Trinity to make a firm stand for that good doctrine, there has sprung up the specious idea that nowadays we need not be so concerned about it as perhaps was then necessary. We can now dismiss it with a loose indifference. Well, if we have received the truth in the love of it, by the good Spirit, and have had a little of this wonderful love of the Trinity shed abroad in our hearts, we cannot be careless and loose about that. It is very, very precious. There is nothing can equal the love of the Trinity. That love is the most precious thing in existence. So the Lord give us grace lovingly, yet firmly, by faith which works by love, to hold fast good doctrine. Otherwise denominationally and personally we shall suffer damage and loss.

And then hold fast *good experience*. What is good experience? Not something novel and fanciful, that might evoke wonder and admiration from fellow-mortals as it is related to them. Good experience is Holy Ghost experience, and no other experience *but* that in the matter of salvation rightly merits the name of good. Hold fast to Holy Ghost experience. Perhaps some of you may say – and I would join with you – I sometimes wonder if I have got any such good experience. Well, seek it; be satisfied with nothing short of it. May it please the Most High to graciously work it in. We may be assured of this, my friends, nothing but Holy Ghost inwrought religion will save a sinner.

The test of our religion, the manifestation of its reality, is its origin and its fruit. The test of the validity and the true value of the currency of this realm is its origin. If it does not come from the royal mint, however

it resembles the true currency, it will not be legal tender; it is spurious. I would not say this to cast down any seeking soul who might be ready to cut themselves off as out of the secret, but I do say, seek good experience. Seek the revelation of Christ by the Spirit's power. And when I say revelation, I do not mean an airy apparition, some kind of spectral appearance in the air. I mean a discovery to the soul of the glory of Christ's Person, the all-sufficiency of His grace, His suitability as Mediator and High Priest, and the vital necessity and efficacy of His atoning sacrifice, whereby the soul is invincibly attracted to Him, drawn out to follow after Him; like the great apostle: "Not as though I had already attained, but I follow after." The next thing to being blessed with good Holy Ghost experience is to be humbly, hungrily, constantly following after it in prayer, in meditation, and in listening to the exposition of the Word.

And then hold fast *good practice*. Because a legal spirit is often interwoven in considering the practical side of the gospel, we may tend to avoid reference to it. But gospel service differs from legal service in the animating principle of it. Gospel service springs from love:

"To see the law by Christ fulfilled,
To hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice."

That is gospel service. And there is what Luther [Bunyan?] used to call the "practical part of the gospel." I sometimes wonder if denominationally we have grown loose about that, and if that is not one of the causes of our decline and what I am saying may come home to myself later, and if so, I hope I may have grace to fall under it.

Hold fast good practice, gospel practice. And that this might be rightly regulated, hold fast to the *gospel precepts*. In the epistles particularly are to be found, if the Lord give us seeing eyes and receptive hearts, precepts covering the whole of our lives personally, and all that pertains to the church of God corporately. We need no code book for the governing of our lives, or our church life, outside the precepts of the gospel. I know I am treading on delicate ground, and I know I have to plead guilty to neglect of preaching these precepts. I know what it is to feel law-condemned and gospel-condemned, though the gospel is not the ministry of condemnation – condemned under the law for default and transgression, condemned for failure in observing and complying with the precepts of the gospel; and the latter is the most cutting.

But in our *personal lives*. Shall we begin in our families? Do those about us perceive at least a humble, steadfast desire to walk in the fear of the Lord in all our relationships? Is there not a tendency to be loose

about that, lest the young people should be offended, or their sympathy be alienated from better things? A natural sympathy toward better things is very little worth. But nevertheless the Lord give us grace to hold fast to that which is good in our family life, that it might be manifest that the Lord has mercifully put a difference in our way of life from that of the world that lieth in wickedness. Samson had his hair shorn, and the Holy Ghost tells us the result – he became like any other man. O it is a sad thing when a child of God is indistinguishable from others, when he becomes like one of the world, and people looking on perceive no difference. The shearing of Samson's hair meant that his avowed separation as a Nazarite was ended, and that is when he became like any other man. May God keep us from being shorn like that. It can so easily be done. If we indulge the flesh, not necessarily after the particular manner in which Samson did, but in a way of self-pleasing, self-gratification, and self-indulgence, rather than humble self-mortification, we shall be shorn. "Hold fast that which is good" in our dealings with men, that men may take notice of us that we have been with Jesus.

And then in *the corporate life of the church*: "Hold fast that which is good." Here we begin with the ministry. Let us not be loose about doctrine; let us not be loose about any of our associations or connections, lest we should weaken our defence of the truth of God. God's doctrine is precious. May He give us grace to hold it fast in love, and not dismiss it from our ministry, or if reference is made to it, treat it as something of little account, and which may be loosely regarded and held. God help us ministerially to hold fast good doctrine. And then in church membership, order is good. The divine admonition relative thereto is: "Let all things be done decently and in order." I sometimes have wondered again if looseness in that realm of our corporate church life is not another cause of our decline. Bear with me, brethren; church membership has its privileges and obligations. To treat the same loosely, and to fail to observe those privileged obligations, is not good. "Hold fast that which is good."

And then hold fast to *the right ground of a good hope*. The Holy Ghost says, "It is good that the heart be established with grace." Grace means the sovereign, undeserved favour of the Most High God; and it means triune grace – the grace of the Father, the grace of the Son and the grace of the Spirit. The Lord help us to hold fast this good ground of a good hope through grace. Even though we might be very tremulous and very fearful, may He give us grace, with an affectionate desire, to come to this point, and keep us cleaving with the tenacity of faith to this point: "I have no hope but in Christ's blood." That is a good hope, poor sinner; hold fast to that, plead it, cleave to it, lean on it. God give us grace to die on Him, for that only will have a good issue.

CHRIST MADE A CURSE

James Fergusson (1621-1667) on Galatians 3. 13, 14

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Paul addeth a fifth argument to prove the affirmative part of the main conclusion, to wit, that we are justified by faith, and withal sheweth how faith doth justify, not for any merit or worth in itself, but as it receiveth Jesus Christ, whereby all the blessings purchased* by Him are applied to believers. For the apostle, obviating an objection which he foresaw might arise from verse 10 (to wit, if the law do curse all men, how then are any freed from the curse?) sheweth that Jesus Christ hath delivered us from God’s wrath, or the sentence of the law’s curse, by taking upon Himself the curse due to us, while He was obedient to death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2. 8); which kind of death was pronounced to be accursed, as he proveth from Deuteronomy 21. 23. This is contained verse 13. And hence he shows a double fruit did flow: the first, to the Gentiles, the blessing of church privileges, divine ordinances and of reconciliation, adoption, grace here and glory hereafter, promised to the nations in Abraham (Gen. 22. 18), being now purchased by Christ, and residing in Him as the Head and fountain, did come through Him to the unrighteous Gentiles, who before the time of Christ’s death were strangers to Christ and to Abraham’s blessing purchased by Christ (Eph. 2. 12).

The second fruit of Christ’s death did accresse [accrue] to the Jews (among whom he reckoneth himself) jointly with the Gentiles, who, being by Christ’s death joined in one, did enjoy the promise of the Spirit, or the spiritual promise, as being now denuded of these earthly and external ceremonies wherewith it was veiled formerly, and set forth in its native and spiritual beauty and lustre, both which fruits of Christ’s death he sheweth are conveyed unto and enjoyed by both Jews and Gentiles only by faith. So that the apostle in these two verses doth not only prove the main conclusion, that faith, laying hold on Christ, is that which delivereth from the law’s curse, and which conveyeth Abraham’s blessing, together with the covenant promise, unto us, and so doth justify us; but also indirectly and (as it were) at the by, hinteth at two other truths, tending also to clear the main controversy between him and his adversaries, which therefore he is to assert more directly afterwards; to wit, first, That now, after Christ’s death, the Gentiles being called by the

* The old Scottish divines and the Puritans used to speak of “purchased blessings” – as Fergusson does here and throughout. J.C. Philpot contended rather that it was the *church* that was purchased, not the *blessings*.

gospel were to be joined in one body with the Jews, and both of them to make up one seed to Abraham, and equally to partake of Abraham's blessing, whereof free justification through faith, spoken of verse 9, was a main part. And, secondly, in the covenant promise (that God would be a God to Abraham and to his seed, Gen. 17. 7) was now, after Christ's death, to be held forth more clearly and spiritually, the types and shadows of earthly ceremonies, and of that legal dispensation under which it was formerly hid, being laid aside.

From verse 13 learn,

1. The threatenings of law, denouncing a curse against those who yield not personal obedience to it, did not exclude or forbid a surety to come in the sinner's room and to undergo the curse due unto him. For though it be clear from verse 10 that the law doth curse all, yet this impeded not but Christ might come "to redeem us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

2. Every man by nature, the elect not excepted (Eph. 2. 3), is under the sentence of the law's curse, whereby in God's justice they are under the power of darkness (Col. 1. 13), slavery and bondage to sin and Satan (Eph. 2. 2), so to remain until they be cast in utter darkness (Jude 13), except delivery and redemption do intervene. For while it is said, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," it is supposed that by nature we are under it.

3. There is no delivery of enslaved man from this woeful bondage but by giving satisfaction and by paying of a price for the wrong done to divine justice, either by himself, or by some surety in his stead. God's fidelity, His righteous nature, and the inward desert of sin, do call for it. For, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," the word signifieth to deliver by giving a price.

4. It is not in the power of fallen man to acquire a ransom for himself by anything he can either do or suffer, whereby justice may be satisfied and he delivered from this state of slavery and bondage. "The redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever" (to wit) among men (Psa. 49. 8). For if man could redeem himself, Christ had not been put to it "to redeem us from the curse of the law."

5. Jesus Christ, the second Person of the blessed Trinity, hath undertaken this great work of redeeming captive man from his slavery and bondage, and accordingly hath accomplished it. The work was indeed undertaken at the appointment of all the Persons, to whom also the price was paid, only the execution of His work was by that wise design of sending the second Person in the flesh to become Man; that so He might not only have right as our near kinsman (Ruth 3. 12, 13), but also be fitted to redeem, as having a price to lay down for our ransom (Heb. 10. 5). "Christ hath redeemed us."

6. Our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, is true God, who being man's Creator, and having entered a covenant of friendship with man at the beginning by virtue whereof He had interest in man not only as His creature, but as one in a state of friendship with Himself, from which blessed state man did fall (Eccles. 7. 29), and so brought himself and all his posterity (1 Cor. 15. 21), to this state of bondage wherein he now is. For so much is imported while Christ is said to "redeem," redemption being properly of those things which once were our own, but for the time are lost. "Christ hath redeemed us," saith he.

7. This work of man's redemption, undertaken and accomplished by Christ, was a redemption properly so called, our freedom and delivery being obtained not by power or strong hand merely, nor yet coming from the sole condescension and pity of the injured party without seeking reparation for former injuries, but by the payment of a sufficient price, and by giving a just satisfaction to a provoked God, as appeareth not only from the word rendered "redeem," which, as said, signifieth "to buy with a price," but also from this, that the price is condescended upon, to wit, Christ's undergoing the curse of the law due to us; and this He did "for us," that is, not only for our good, but also in our room and stead. For by His undergoing this curse we are freed from it, so that although to buy or redeem be sometimes taken improperly, and doth signify to obtain a thing without any price (Isa. 52. 3), yet what is presently said, and other circumstances do evince, that in this work of redemption performed by Christ the word must be taken properly for a delivery obtained by a payment of a just price: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

8. The price paid by Christ in order to our redemption was no less than His undergoing that curse of the law which was due to us; whence it followeth that Christ's sufferings by way of satisfaction were not only in His body, but also in His soul. He did not only wrestle with the fear of death (Heb. 5. 7), but was also deprived of that joy and comfort, or the sense and feeling of God's favour and help, which He formerly enjoyed, and had His own sad conflicts and agonies arising in His soul hereupon (Matt. 27. 46), which though in us they would necessarily produce sin, yet in Christ they did not (Heb. 4. 15), because of His most pure nature (Heb. 7. 26). For "He was made the curse of the law for us." Now the curse of the law did reach to the terrors of the soul as well as to the pains of the body.

9. Though Jesus Christ as considered in His own Person was altogether holy and innocent (Isa. 53. 9), and always, even when He was made a curse, most beloved of the Father (Matt. 3. 17), yet being considered as our Surety (Heb. 7. 22), and sustaining our person, He was the Object of sin-pursuing justice, and no more spared than if we

ourselves who sinned had been in His place. For the text saith, He was not only accursed, “but made a curse,” in the abstract, to show how greatly He was accursed in death; neither was this execration only in respect of man, who indeed did judge him execrable (Isa. 53. 3, 4), but also in respect of God, as appeareth by the testimony alleged out of Deuteronomy 21. 23. For though the apostle, intending the sense only and not the words, omitteth the mentioning of God, yet in the place cited we have it thus, “He that is hanged is accursed of God.”

10. The malefactor among the Jews who was adjudged to end his life by hanging on a tree was pronounced by God to be a curse, or accursed; not as if everyone who died that death, even notwithstanding of their repentance, had been rejected of God and condemned (Luke 23. 39-43), but partly because that was a most odious and infamous death in itself, as being inflicted only for atrocious and heinous crimes, and partly because it was foreordained of God that Christ our Surety should end His life by that kind of death in order to our redemption and delivery from the law’s deserved curse; for which cause, mainly, God was pleased to pronounce that kind of death accursed above any other, as appeareth from the apostle’s alleging this scripture to clear that Christ was made a curse for us: “It is written,” saith he, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

From verse 14, learn,

1. So wonderful is God in working, especially in that great work of our redemption, that He bringeth about one contrary by another. He giveth life by death, and the blessing by the curse, and frequently in His way of working our choicest mercies do come through greatest miseries. For Christ was “made a curse ... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles.”

2. The blessing promised to Abraham and to the nations in Abraham, or rather in Christ, Abraham’s seed (Gen. 22. 18), was not of temporal things only, as of corn and wine, of a fat and rich soil. These were only the shell, but the kernel of that promise was blessings of another sort, even spiritual, such as grace here and glory hereafter, which appeareth from this, that before this blessing could be conveyed to Abraham’s believing seed, a price of infinite value behoved to be paid for it, a price too precious to purchase any temporal blessing by. For even Christ was “made a curse ... that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles.”

3. The spiritual blessing of grace here and glory hereafter, promised to and in Abraham, as it was purchased by Christ at a dear rate, so it resideth and is extant in Him, who is as it were the storehouse wherein the blessing is laid up (Col. 2. 3), and the Dispenser of it unto Abraham’s seed, in whom believers are truly blessed (Gen. 22. 18), and

from whose fulness we do all receive, and grace for grace (John 1. 16). For saith the text, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ," or as it is in the original, *in* Jesus Christ, so that this blessing is still in Him, as the fountain and dispenser of it.

4. Though Jesus Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13. 8) insofar as remission of sins and life eternal were bestowed upon believers under the Old Testament through the merit of His death, even before He actually died (Rom. 3. 25), it being sufficient, in order to these effects, that it was transacted between the Father and the Son that He should die (Isa. 53. 10), and that it was certainly known by God that He would die (Acts 15. 18) – yet there were some effects of His death, and those of great advantage to the church both of Jews and Gentiles, which were kept in store, and in God's wise dispensation not to be actually bestowed until the time of His death; as first in relation to the Gentiles, the real making over of Abraham's blessing unto them, whereby they were made one actual seed unto Abraham with the believing Jews, was to follow upon Christ's death, God having so provided, and not to go before it.

For Christ was first made a curse by being hanged upon a tree, before "the blessing of Abraham did come on the Gentiles." Secondly, in relation to both Jew and Gentile, the covenant promise made to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 17. 7), which before Christ's death was veiled over with many carnal ceremonies, and lay hid under the many reiterated promises of temporal blessings and an earthly Canaan (Gen. 15. 7, etc.) was after Christ's death to be made more clear, the veil of ceremonies and earthly blessings to be removed, and the promised blessings of righteousness and life everlasting to be held forth in their spiritual beauty and lustre. For upon Christ's being made a curse, he saith, "We," to wit, not only the Gentiles, but the Jews also, of whom Paul was one, "do receive the promise of the Spirit," that is, after the manner of speaking used by the Hebrews, the spiritual promise, in opposition to those external rites and shadows under which it did formerly lurk.

5. Though by the grace of saving faith a Christian believeth to be true whatever he knoweth to be revealed in the Word (Acts 24. 14), and is in some measure (especially when faith is lively) affected, and doth practise according to what each truth calleth for, yielding obedience to the commands (Rom. 16. 26), trembling at threatenings (Isa. 66. 2), and embracing the promises of God for this life (Psa. 23. 1), and that which is to come (Heb. 11. 13), yet the principal acts of faith, as it is saving and justifying, are the accepting and receiving of the promise, and of Christ's satisfaction to the Father's justice held forth in the promise. For Paul speaking of faith's part in justification setteth forth the exercise of it thus, "That we might receive the promise by faith."

6. Faith doth justify and make us blessed, not for any worth in itself, as if the work and merit of faith were reckoned to us for righteousness, but because it is the instrument and, as it were, the hand of the soul whereby we receive the promise, and Christ in the promise, whose satisfaction alone is our only righteousness before God (Rom. 5. 19). For that Paul is to be understood thus all along this dispute appeareth from these two verses, wherein he ascribeth our delivery from the curse and partaking of Abraham's blessing to Christ's merit, or to His being made a curse for us, giving unto faith only the receiving and embracing of that satisfaction, as it is set before us in the promise. "That we might receive the promise through faith," saith he.

G.T. CONGREVE OF BEDWORTH, 1791-1861

George Congreve was born in the year 1791. His father and mother both feared God. He has often spoken of his father's earnest prayers for his children, and how the Lord was pleased to answer them, as he saw his three sons baptized together at Bedworth, and entered the church at the same time with them.

In early youth George had guilty stings and conviction of sin, which, however, wore off, until "it pleased the Lord, in the year 1813," as he writes, "to send His quickening Word with almighty power into my soul, and fastened those convictions which had followed me, more or less, for years before, with such force upon my mind that they never afterwards wore off, but abode with me and increased until I was near the borders of despair. All this time I durst not reveal my mind even to my nearest and dearest friends for fear it should be all a delusion and I should be found a hypocrite, and the Lord's dear saints should be deceived in me, and my soul be deceived and lost for ever. These thoughts made me tremble, cry, groan and sigh the more, for God had now made my soul sincere and earnest, so that the Lord knows I did not want to deceive or to be deceived. I therefore concluded within myself to keep the whole matter to myself, though it should prove my death. 'Then,' thought I, 'if I should die and be lost, the Lord's people would not be disappointed or deceived in me.' This seemed now and then to give me a little relief.

"Still my aching heart, throbbing with the most intense desire to know whether Christ died for me, could not rest here, nor could I long remain unnoticed, for my constant attendance when the children of God met for prayer and praise and hearing His Word, with my countenance casting looks which bespoke the grief and the distress of my mind, soon betrayed me. One and another would say, 'I think there is something on your mind.' To which I could not make any reply, but retired as soon as I could, and burst into a flood of tears.

“Woe is me! for they are deceived in me. I am undone, and shall perish for ever! I have sinned against God; I have broken His righteous and holy law in thought, word and act, and feel the sword of divine justice within, ripping up my conscience and cutting off all my hopes from what an arm of flesh can do; and God has cast me out and barred the door of mercy against me. I see no other way of being saved, but only in and through Christ and what He has done and suffered. He died for the elect, I know, and they shall all be saved; but O I fear that I am not one of that blessed number! None but God the Spirit can tell me, and He will not. I have asked Him, yea, I have cried to Him continually; but He will not regard my prayer. What must I do? O that I were a dog, or a horse, or anything rather than a man, to lose my immortal soul and live for ever beneath the frowns of a sin-avenging and angry God. How hard I take it at His hands, for Him to bring me into being to damn me! But who can tell? Perhaps He may yet have mercy on me. None can help but Thou. Didst Thou die for me? I cannot help myself. I am willing to be saved in Thine own way, if Thou art willing to save such a worthless, hell-deserving sinner as I am. I know that Thou art able. O that I was sure that Thou wert willing. God, be merciful unto me! Lord, save! Thou must save, or I must perish!

“These were the feelings of soul which I laboured under night and day, while awake, for weeks, unknown to any but myself and the Lord. This continual secrecy made my trouble still heavier, yet I durst not open my mind to any but to God Himself. Sometimes I felt, as it were, a distant hope of better days to come, and at other times, in a fit of rebellion and fretfulness, the remembrance of which often makes me shudder, I would sit down as sullen as a bear, and give up all for lost. And what still increased my torment was, when I felt inclined to make my case known to the Lord, I felt so bound and shut up, overpowered and burdened with guilt in my conscience, that I hardly durst lift up my eyes to the place where His honour dwelleth for fear of being smitten with death; and when I ventured to do so I could only smite upon my breast, and cry, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’

“Thus was I carried on between hope and fear till the last night before my deliverance came, when I retired as full of trouble as ever, and through weariness of body I fell asleep. I awoke very early in the morning in greater distress than ever, when, lo! all on a sudden a voice sounded from heaven as distinctly as the voice of a man, and echoed in my soul, saying, ‘Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.’ That instant, my distress fled and my fears were gone; my soul was calm, composed and serene; my heart was broken, meek, peaceable, child-like, teachable, mild, and I sang for joy. My eyes were bathed with tears of heavenly

delight until my pillow was wet under my head, and my whole frame trembled beneath the bliss."

In the following year he, together with his father and two younger brothers, were received into the church, and he began to learn other lessons of painful experience. As Hart says,

"When all this is done, and his heart is assured
Of the total remission of sins,
When his pardon is signed, and his peace is procured,
From that moment his conflict begins."

He was seven years before he could be prevailed upon to engage in prayer at the meetings. The solicitation of the friends has sometimes so excited him as to produce profuse perspiration and trembling. He has often hidden himself in a loft during their meetings, though wishing to be among them, fearing they might call upon him to pray. But his absence became a greater trial to him, and at length he was delivered from the snare, and the words of Job were a great relief to him: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Though his position and circumstances were then above what is common with the Lord's people, he having a sufficient income, he was not without trials in providence. At one time he was threatened with the loss of all he had, and to be brought to poverty, being called upon to fulfil his engagement as surety for a brother, concluding his all would be taken. After a while he exclaimed, "Well, bless God, they can't take a precious Christ from me."

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

He lost much of his property, but it pleased the Lord to make a provision for him, and richly to reward his loss of temporal things by increase of spiritual blessings, with which he was favoured above many. Though not gifted with utterance, his experience was sound, his judgment deep and his heart established. He was valiant for truth. The honour of God and the prosperity of His people he sought with love, and zeal, and fervent prayer. His punctual attendance on all the means of grace was proverbial. The early Sabbath morning prayer meeting at 7 o'clock he regularly attended, even when his sight was so defective the last few years of his life that he could not recognise persons, and often said how much the meetings were blessed to him, and expressed a wish before his death that they might not be given up. His prayers frequently were fervent and unctuous, and few, either private Christians or ministers, were heard so well. It was his custom to compose a hymn for the school children to sing at the anniversary sermons in their behalf, which the Lord appears to have blessed. Four of the members of the church received their first convictions from them.

Meekness and gentleness were remarkable in him, and there was a weight and solemnity in his remarks that made them very impressive. On his way to chapel he was frequently ridiculed by the ungodly. On one occasion, as he passed by some of them, one said, tauntingly, "Mr. C., where shall I go when I die?" He made him no reply, but observed on his return, "My heart went out to the Lord: 'Lord, lay it with power on his mind.'"

Mr. Godwin [Thomas Godwin of Manchester] thus speaks of him. He says, "I have known him for many years, have had many sweet moments with him, and many sweet feelings under his prayers, and much enjoyed conversation with him upon the best things. I have ever found him to be spiritually minded, always entering upon divine things whenever I have visited Bedworth, so that I felt my heart knit to him in the bonds of the gospel of the eternal Son of God; and I believe that the grace of God which bringeth salvation taught his redeemed soul to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world; that he feared God above many; that the Lord led him and kept his soul near to Himself. The grace of God shone in his heart, life, conversation and his dealings in business. He was one of those Christians who was favoured to die daily, and was greatly blessed with the spirit of meekness and gentleness, kindness and long-suffering, and had learned this precept: 'Wherefore, my brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath.'

"On Monday afternoon, April 22nd, I had a sweet interview with him, but found him exceedingly weak in body. He had kept his bed about a month. He was very comfortable in his mind, and he told me he had not enjoyed the Lord's presence so long together for many years, that he was very happy, and the Lord Jesus very precious, and that he was watching and waiting to enter into rest. He also told me that it was forty-seven years ago that he heard the voice of God in his conscience. He took my hand, and held it fast, and the Lord kindled that sweet spirit of love and affection within my heart so that every word he spoke dropped with weight and sweetness into my soul. He also told me how much he had enjoyed the 7 o'clock prayer meetings on Lord's day mornings, and he hoped that every minister would exhort the people not to neglect them. He was not able to talk much, so I left him. Before going to bed, I went in to see him and found him much the same. I read and went to prayer with him, and felt nearness and access to the Lord, and assured that the Lord would give him an easy passage through the river of death.

"Tuesday morning, April 23rd, I went into his room to take my farewell of him in this world. I said, 'How are you this morning?' He replied, 'I am still on the Rock. I shall soon enter the kingdom, and join in the song of Moses and the Lamb.' My heart was melted within me, and we parted in the spirit of meekness and power, with my soul like

melting wax in the midst of my bowels, and with a good hope that we should soon meet again in heaven above."

March 16th: He appeared much worse, and was thought near death. Recovering a little, he said, "Happy living and happy dying in Christ! I would breathe my life out in Christ; my soul triumphs in Christ before I am freed from a body of sin and death. I should like to live to praise Him a little longer, but I am willing either to live or die; I have no fears, no doubts, no suspicions. He has been a kind Friend to me, and I have been a" Here weeping prevented articulation. He continued, "They are blessed souls that sit at the feet of Christ. I have had my doubts and fears. How anxiously I have listened to those around, to see if I had a part and lot in the matter! What empty things are all these toys! When I see so many poor mortals around us live and die careless, and sink beneath His frowns, to think that I should not be left like that!

"Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in."

After a pause, he said, "There, you can go now. I feel I am going to stay a little longer with you. The last moment has not come yet. I am singing, 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' If I am taken off suddenly, don't grieve; it will be a happy morning. It will be absent from the body and present with the Lord. The moment the breath is gone, the soul is happy in the enjoyment of Christ. I feel as though I could expand my wings and fly to His arms." At another time he said, "How often have I wished, and longed, and prayed that I might not sin any more. I would be holy as He is. I would be with Him, and be like Him. I don't want degrees in glory. I want to be like Christ; that's enough for me. The last time I was led by a friend to the prayer meeting, on account of my sight being taken away, we passed a number of men who began to laugh at me. I thought I would not change with them for all the world. I hope the Lord will forgive them."

About a week before his death, he said, "Christ is my Portion. The poorest creature on earth is rich if he possess Christ. My soul's best affections are wrapped up in Christ. Christ perfumes the tomb for His followers. They took spices to embalm Him, but His precious presence is balm enough. I shall know what heaven is before I get there. The fearing soul often sings,

"Could I but climb where Moses stood,
And view the landscape o'er,
Not Jordan's stream, nor death's cold flood,
Should drive me from the shore."

O what a blessed thing it is to have a hope beyond the grave!"

A friend made some allusion to the children's hymn which he had written a short time before for the approaching anniversary. He said,

"My soul was in heaven then. I could not help writing it. If He judges us while we are here, and we are pardoned, that will do for us when the world is in a blaze." One of the friends present expressed sorrow on the loss of such a friend. He said, "Don't fret, friends. Christ is a better Friend. Who knows but what the Lord has sent this to increase our love to Him, and show us the vanity of all things here below. They are the sweetest blessings that ever can be enjoyed. Times without number I would have given all the world to feel what I do now, but could not get it. Christ is proving now that what I have written at times has come from my heart. The bitters that are mingled in the gospel cup give me an appetite. The bitters and sweets together make them palatable. The bitters will all be done away with soon, and give place to never-fading joys. My song will be always new. When my tongue is silent in the grave, Christ will be still my song in yonder cloud. Christ will be my song for ever. O how blessed the thought of eternity to me! There will not be any end to the joys of heaven. If millions could conceive the joys! For ever safe or for ever lost! O what a thought! But O what a little impression it makes on poor sinners. It grieves my heart to see what sin has brought on poor mortals. If eternal torments were opened to their view, it would only scare them, and they would be but harder still. But who knows where the channel of mercy may flow?"

He now appeared exhausted, and as one was about to leave, he said, "Well, I could keep you as long as my strength will last. You will join me in heaven, and I shall know you there. I shall know the friends, and I shall welcome you, and sing with you. No night there; no parting. The Sabbath will never be over. Who could have thought the Lord would have favoured me thus? He has been better to me than all my doubts and fears." He then added, "Human nature sinks."

On Wednesday, the day but one before he died, he said, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; the battle's fought, the victory's won! Christ, the Conqueror! The sting of death is extracted." Mrs. Congreve observed, "We may tell the friends you are on the Rock." "Yes," he replied, "and I shall shout Hallelujah when I see them come. Those that are afraid of dying, tell them of me. I was afraid of dying once, but now I have found the Rock, and they will find it too." And then, with marked emphasis said, "I shall sing, Hallelujah, when I see them coming"; then clapped his hands, while tears of holy joy rolled down his cheeks. He then kissed and blessed his wife and daughter, and said, "I love you both. I loved my father and my mother, and I am going to join them, to sing the new song above." Seeing them weep, he said, "Don't fret; I am only going a little first. I want Christ to come and fetch me home; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." Mrs. Congreve said, "You had better have a little sleep now." He answered, "I think my next sleep will be in Jesus. Lord, give me a safe and easy passage over

Jordan. When I shall be with Him I shall be satisfied. I'll praise Him to all eternity. The Lord has spared me a long while in the wilderness, and now I have looked the monster in the face, and told him Jesus died for me," adding, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and take me home to Thyself."

About an hour before he died, Mrs. Congreve's sister, Mrs. Drakeford asked him if he wanted anything. He said, "Jesus to fetch me home," which were the last words they could understand. He tried to speak just before he died, his lips moving, but could not be heard. It is thought he was calling on the Lord Jesus to come and take him, as he had frequently repeated the words, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." He then breathed out his soul and slept in Jesus, almost imperceptibly. How truly it may be said of him, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace."

One of Mr. Congreve's public prayers was published last month.

Interestingly, many of the sermons that appeared in the Gospel Standard in the 1800s were preached at Bedworth where Mr. Congreve was deacon.

BOOK REVIEWS

John Calvin 500: A Reformation Affirmation, edited by Alan C. Clifford; paperback; 281 pages; price £12.50 plus postage; published by Charenton Reformed Publishing, 8 Le Strange Close, Norwich, NR2 3PN.

Many books were published to commemorate the 500th anniversary in 2009 of the birth of the Swiss Reformer John Calvin. This is the Report of the Amyraldian Conference held that year.

Amyraldianism is a middle way between Calvinism and Arminianism. Moise Amyraut (Amyraldus) was a French divine who taught sovereign election on the one hand but also universal redemption on the other. Dr. Clifford of Norwich, who is the leading English Amyraldian, strongly contends that what is now known as "Calvinism" was not the doctrine of John Calvin himself, but a development of his successor Beza and later the Puritans. In other words, Calvin was not a "Calvinist" (as we understand the term)! Rather, Amyraut rediscovered authentic Calvinism.

Not having studied all Calvin's works in depth, we cannot comment on this assertion – though it has been ably refuted by a number of present-day authors. Of course, we ourselves cannot accept Amyraldianism but (as Dr. Clifford himself agrees) our standard is not Calvin or Amyraut or Arminius but the infallible Word of God.

We found these conference addresses interesting and informative. Two thoughts struck us. Dr. Clifford (from his position) points out what we have always felt: the absolute inconsistency of those who claim to be "Calvinist" (in the normally accepted sense) and yet make the free offer of the gospel. Secondly,

he contends that Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones was without doubt an Amyraldian, not a “Calvinist.”

Trophies of Grace: Amazing Conversions from the Highlands of Scotland; 24 page booklet; published by The Roundwood Trust, and supplied free of charge from S. Sharpe, Book Distributor, Crowborough Hill, Crowborough, TN6 2EA (01892 655222) – *donations appreciated.*

Many are the remarkable stories which are told of the wonderful work of the Lord in past days in the Highlands of Scotland. We have always felt that four of the most remarkable and beautiful are:

Muckle Kate;

Luke Heywood – the Soldier of Fort George;

The Highland Kitchen Maid;

Yeddie – “Yon lovely Man.”

We have also felt how nice it would be to have them gathered together in one little book. This is exactly what Roundwood Trust has done. This is a lovely little book and pleasantly produced.

The idea originated with many visitors to Lochcarron enquiring about Muckle Kate’s grave, and that of the Lochcarron minister Lachlan Mackenzie.

There is a profitable short piece at the end from Murdoch Campbell’s *From Grace to Glory*, and a spiritual letter at the beginning by Robert Murray M’Cheyne (of course including the Scottish “offer”).

Though free, we are sure our readers will send a donation as suggested.

OBITUARY

Ruth Wilkins, a member at Ebenezer, Richmond for over 58 years, died on January 9th, 2011 aged 91. Our dear mother was the youngest child (of seven) of William and Ada Everett, who had been called by grace out of the world to become members at Zion Chapel, Malham Road, Forest Hill. Therefore our mother was brought up to attend chapel. As was normal for the 1930s, she left school at 14. Until she reached that age we believe she did not have any serious thoughts concerning eternity or of her immortal soul.

We understand that around this time she went to hear Mr. Windridge, mostly to mock in her heart his “quaint” manner rather than to hear for eternity. However the Lord saw fit to “cut her down” under the preached Word. (The text was taken from the Revelation and concerned the opening of “the Books.”) In her writings she recalls that in 1937 “Mr. Hayler came (to Zion Chapel, Forest Hill) in February; I don’t remember the text but he so went through all how the Lord had cut me down, raised me to a hope with a ‘Fear not,’ how He had led me in those four years (since 1933).”

In October 1988 she wrote, “1937. Mr. Jabez Field of Blackboys came to preach at Malham Road, Forest Hill. He had just baptized four at Blackboys. After speaking of them he said, ‘Come thou sinner, be baptized; follow the Lord without delay; ‘gladly all His will embracing; lo! your Captain leads the way.’ As I was exercised about it, the words laid hold of me, but I shrank from it. I used to feel such love to the members on ordinance Sundays as I looked upon them.

“That went on until Mr. Gascoigne came at the Special Service. Having to work, I could only get there in the evening. Mother said, ‘Are you coming?’ as I did not think much of Mr. Gascoigne. I had been praying that my name might be called out from the pulpit if I really was to go forward. Forgetting my prayer I said to Mother, ‘O yes, I expect to be there. Mr. Rowell will be looking for me.’ That night it was all about Ruth (text in Ruth), and before he finished he turned to the church – a word for them, that there would be a new member coming and her name, ‘Ruth; Ruth it is and Ruth it shall be.’* I felt like sinking through the floor. All these people have heard it all, but of course it was not to them what it was to me.

“That went on; still I didn’t come forward and Mr. G. came the last Wednesday in the year with the text, ‘Thou crownest the year with Thy goodness; and Thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side.’ He read the Psalm before taking his text. I felt it all a confirmation, and again he spoke to the church, saying there would be a crown and a rejoicing. No one knew of my exercises, so he was not being fed by any creature. He even went on to say it might be in January or March, this crown. I still hung back.

“When Mr. Hayler came, he finished by saying, ‘Now, poor soul, you can say, “Come, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what the Lord hath done for [me] thee,”’ and so I ventured.

“I was baptized by Mr. Hayler in March 1938 (at Malham Road Chapel), the text being, ‘If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.’ Going down into the water I felt that applied: ‘Thou shalt see Me face to face without a veil between.’ I was received in by Mr. S. Tingley. The word he gave me was, ‘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.’”

Through providence, Mother had been brought occasionally to attend Ebenezer, Richmond, with her brother (William Everett) and she and our father (Edgar Wilkins) became exercised about each other before either had spoken. In due time they were brought together, and were married at Malham Road Chapel in 1942. They had many providential trials; father was on a low wage; but they saw the hand of the Lord in providing for their needs. She has related how that on one occasion when pushing her child in its pram, a complete stranger spoke to her and left half a crown (two shillings and sixpence**) on the baby’s pillow. In common with many of her generation, she and Father were separated by the Second World War. Father was sent to the Far East but was spared from combat by the swift ending of the war due to the awful destruction caused by the use of atomic weapons. Mercifully he was returned safely.

During our father’s absence abroad, Mother encountered trials and difficulties. In 1990 she recorded, “Just came to my mind reading 4th chapter of Zechariah. Mr. Delves’ text at Clapham, or else Richmond [was 7th verse], in terrible trial in the home whilst Edgar was abroad (1945-46), but now can look back and see verse 5 to verse 10 included. The Lord appeared. When He appeared I was helpless and had to stay in bed – but the promise, verse 7, I need the same thing in my present trial (1990), for the Lord to appear, but I fear it will be in anger and hell will be the issue.”

* Those who remember Mr. Gascoigne will not be surprised by this.

** This would be about 12½p in 2012, but in those days would have supplied two or three loaves of bread.

Although she attended Richmond after her marriage, she was not constrained to join the church there until 1952. Of this she writes, "I will try to write things that are brought to my remembrance which I have been going to do for a long time. Some things have come and I haven't written it down, but the text tonight (October 16th, 1988) being Psalm 143. 10, it took me back to my being in hospital expecting my third child (1952). When I was admitted (after being at home two months not being able to eat). I was put under a drip; then, when under the drip, nothing by mouth for ten days. I was utter weakness and could not stand. When I came off the drip I was allowed sips of water. How the water was so beautiful and they gave Jesus vinegar. How I was led then to see 'His sufferings so intense, angels had no perfect sense.'

"I was then still a member at Forest Hill and I had been married ten years, and it took my third child for the Lord to teach me to do His will. When I arrived home, which was the fourth month (of my pregnancy), on going to chapel, the text was Psalm 143. 10, Mr. Collier. I am not a good one at writing but the Lord saw my heart, and, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness,' which was Mr. Foster's text at Richmond soon after. Then Mr. J. Delves came after that and I had a confirmation so was able to write to Mr. Kensett to seek to transfer my membership, which all came about and I was received in (to the church) on the first Sunday in November 1952 by Mr. Hayler who had baptized me in 1938 at Malham Road. There is a lot more depth that coucheth beneath but I am not able to write all that, but the Lord knows."

After the sudden death (naturally speaking) of our father in 1985, mother was shattered, but has recounted that soon afterwards, as she climbed the stairs to bed, every step brought the lines of the hymn, "A Sovereign Protector I have" into her heart.

In the early nineties it was suggested to her by the local council that she should move into smaller accommodation. This was an exercise with her to know the Lord's will in the matter. For many years while travelling to and from Richmond chapel she had passed a block of council flats and had felt that there was only one flat which would be suitable for her, and had previously told the council she would only be interested in this flat. Remarkably this flat became available at the right time and she felt it was a confirmation that she should move. A further confirmation was the application of the words, "I will go before thee into Galilee," and during her eighteen years in this new home, it was at times a "Bethel" to her. She has left many writings of her time there which reveal her desires after Christ and the union and communion she felt to have with Him, her burdens for her children and the cause at Ebenezer, her church membership, the controversies which arose amongst the churches and for her own soul. It is evident from her writings that at times she felt favoured with much union and communion with her God.

Our mother was a "Martha," and this became more and more evident as she became more infirm, and she was left to many anxieties and cares. These continued until her death. To her they were "burdens, thorns and snares." Her main companions were her Bible, Gadsby's hymns and Philpot's *Through Baca's Vale*.

As she became more infirm it became apparent that she needed more care, and in 2008 it was arranged that she should become a resident in the Bethesda Home at Hove. However, later she felt that she had gone without a word from the Lord and during her time there felt in much spiritual darkness and distress. She was thankful for the kindness and care of the staff but wanted and felt her

need of those greater blessings which they could not provide. On one occasion when one visited she said several times that she felt to be under the rod. One pointed her to hymn 282 verse 5. After reading that, she pointed to hymn 283 verse 4. On another occasion she telephoned one of her children and mentioned hymn 722.

As she approached her end, it became more and more difficult to converse with her on spiritual things, but on some occasions there was manifested a spark of desire after Christ and a felt need for Him to appear. On one occasion she telephoned one of her children and just said, "Hymn 853." She wanted her former blessings renewed, but feared that because she had entered the Home without a "Thus saith the Lord," she would be cut off. At times she said that she had been granted a "little gleam of hope" and "the Lord had broken through the clouds," but her mind being so weak and the Lord not granting an ability to retain what had been made known, she was unable to speak of what the Lord had said.

On May 5th, 2009, she telephoned one of her children and quoted Psalm 73. 23-26: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." She said that it came to her and that it had been Mr. C.A. Wood's text when she had lost our father.

In her last days she was very tried concerning her eternal standing and mourned over her poor profession. She felt that it "was all a poor lot," and that the Lord was dealing with her for this and for her many sins. She felt she had been left to be more concerned for her many felt infirmities in her latter years at Richmond than for the precept "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," and she was brought to acknowledge her lack of diligence concerning it. When the family visited she would speak of her unfitness to live and unfitness to die, and of her fears of being lost at last and of making a bad end.

During one's visit the week before she died she was very sleepy. When she roused she said a few things such as, "Lord, have mercy on me"; "Unfit to live, unfit to die"; "The Lord has not shone for a long time" (raising the hope in one's heart that she felt and believed He had shone in days past); and, "Black despair, black despair." One ventured to show her the hymn 1009, "Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask," etc. She just said, "But will He ever (come)?" For most of the visit she just sat with her head bowed with her lips moving but no audible sound.

She died in the Bethesda Home at Hove somewhat suddenly on Lord's day evening about two hours after being visited by a member of her family and very shortly before the arrival of another. Thankfully the staff at Bethesda kindly sat with her as she passed from time into eternity. The following was felt by one of her children: "Now the Lord loved Martha."

The funeral service was held at Ebenezer, Richmond, on January 26th, 2011, with interment in Richmond Cemetery with her beloved husband. At her request the service was conducted by Mr. P. Woodhams. He and his wife had felt to enjoy spiritual conversation with her at times when she had provided tea for them prior to his engagements at Richmond. This enabled him to feel that the Lord had taken her to Himself despite her fears and darkness in her latter years. The hymns sung, 611, 487 and 634 at the grave, had been chosen by our mother several years before, when she had felt to be in a "more favoured state" spiritually than at the close of her life.

The family

REBEKAH'S WEDDING HYMN

When godly Eliezer
 By Abraham was sent
 With golden things to please her,
 He to Rebekah went.

How great he felt the occasion,
 How ardent was his prayer,
 How sacred his persuasion
 That God had led him there!

For in Rebekah's hearing,
 The sound of Isaac's name
 Meant all that was endearing,
 And made her long for him.

So home and kindred leaving,
 She urged her happy pace,
 And in the field at evening
 She saw her bridegroom's face.

* * *

O God of faithful Abraham,
 In kindness send for me,
 And I from Padan-Aram
 Will rise and come to Thee.

O Comforter, allure me,
 Thy thoughts of peace unfold,
 And to Thyself secure me
 With costlier gifts than gold.

Then with my sun declining,
 To Jesus I shall come ;
 And in His love reclining
 For ever stay at home.

J. Alexander

WORLD WAR I

2014 is the centenary of the beginning of the First World War. The possibility has been raised of publishing a book to mark the occasion. This would include gracious letters from soldiers in the trenches; accounts of remarkable deliverances; blessing experienced by those in action; etc.

Will anyone who possesses suitable material (either published or in manuscript) kindly communicate with Dr. Philip Skelton at the Gospel Standard Trust Publications office, 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ (phone number and email address in the *Gospel Standard* on page xiii).

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JUNE 2012

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

“By Me kings reign, and princes decree justice.”

THE QUEEN’S DIAMOND JUBILEE

The important event in the nation this month is a most remarkable occasion, the completing of a sixty years’ reign by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We are grateful to the Lord for the stability of the throne when all around there is change. How many thrones have perished during the last hundred years! During these years, we have admired Her Majesty’s devotion to duty. Many hearts, also, were affected last year by the beautiful way in which the Queen spoke during her Christmas Day broadcast to the nation.

We are sad that we must say how disappointed we have been with our Queen’s enthusiastic devotion to horse racing, and her failure to honour the Lord’s day. It is extremely sad that some of the Jubilee celebrations are being held on the Lord’s day.

We are reminded how Queen Victoria pointed to the holy Word of God, saying, “That is the secret of England’s greatness.” Our prayer is that the sacred influence of God’s Word might again be known in our land in these evil, degenerate days. Amidst all the change and decay, “The Word of the Lord endureth for ever.”

“Crowns and thrones may perish,
Kingdoms rise and wane,
But the church of Jesus
Constant will remain.
Gates of hell can never
’Gainst His Word prevail;
We have Christ’s own promise,
And that cannot fail.”

We pray that Almighty God might bless our Queen, in her latter days, with the exceeding riches of His grace. That would truly be a crowning glory to her reign.

“The throne is established by righteousness.”

HEARTS TOUCHED!

*Sermon preached at Clifton Chapel on Friday evening,
April 13th, 2012, on the occasion of the Gospel Standard Society
Annual Meetings*

Text: “And there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched” (1 Sam. 10. 26).

Perhaps you feel that this is a most unsuitable word for the Annual Meetings. Well, I promise you that I am not going to give any peculiar spiritualisation or any unusual interpretation of this word. Let me come straight to the point, beloved friends, this evening. My exercise is this: our godly ministers week by week preach the glorious gospel of the grace of God. We are still favoured in this dark day to have the truth amongst us. There are our pastors who labour in Word and doctrine. There are ministers who week by week lovingly travel about the country preaching the truth. But how seldom do we hear of hearts being touched, or the Word of the Lord having a gracious effect in sinners’ hearts. That is my burden this evening.

We think again: our congregations, the dear people who gladly, willingly come week by week to the services of God’s house. They would not think of staying away. They are there in the week also, and they come and they go. But we do not hear much of hearts being touched, or a real, gracious effect, the Word of the Lord dwelling richly in sinners’ hearts, sinners being born again of the Spirit of God, sinners being raised up to a sweet hope in Jesus, longing souls being blessed with the sweet assurance of their forgiveness and cleansing in the blood of Christ. It was not always so in our congregations and, “the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”

We think again: last weekend, Easter, the many services. We remembered the sin-atonement sufferings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ at Calvary – solemn, sacred, blessed subject; the only subject that really matters. And then we thought of His glorious resurrection, leading captivity captive, taking the sting from death, the victory from the grave. But O were our hearts touched? Blessed truths, precious Saviour, but were our hearts touched, or were they hard, were they unmoved?

Think again: the various services, perhaps even today people saying, It has been a good day; or, Wasn’t it a nice prayer meeting? O but for sinners’ hearts to be touched graciously and savingly! So beloved friends, this is my burden this evening, that many might take up this burden for our churches and for our congregations, and especially that we might pray it for ourselves; that we might not be left to drift on week

by week and month by month without our hearts being graciously touched.

“A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” It is only the Lord who can touch a sinner’s heart. The preacher cannot. We cannot do it for our friends. It is the Holy Spirit’s gracious, sovereign work, but He has the ability to do it, and this is what matters. O the gracious effect when sinners’ hearts are touched by the Spirit of God, but O the solemnity when there is a true and a right order, and the sobriety, yet hearts are never touched! I want to speak very carefully here, and most certainly I do not want to speak facetiously, but when I was a boy, you used to hear and read of those wonderful attractions in popular circuses. A woman would be tied up against a wall and a man would throw twenty or thirty knives, and each one would miss her by about a quarter of an inch. It was accounted an astounding feat – people loved to see it – but not a single thing touched that woman at all. Sometimes it seems we have almost come to a day like that in religion. The preaching seems nearly to touch people, or coming personally, nearly to touch us, but it just misses the mark. This is the Holy Spirit’s work to touch sinners’ hearts, but may we pray for it; may we be burdened about it. “A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” Well, we would love to be found amongst them. We would love to be found amongst them this evening.

“A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” I am sure I do not need to remind you that in a few of our hymns we have this subject: hearts being touched. Let me just mention two.

“Never had I sought Thy name,
Never felt the inward flame,
Had not love first touched my heart,
Given the painful, pleasant smart.”

Another one:

“When Jesus’ gracious hand
Has touched our eyes and ears,
O what a dreary land
The wilderness appears!”

There is always the gracious effect. It is God’s work, not man’s. It is real religion. It is heart religion. It is the religion you and I need if we are to reach heaven at last. It will make us different from the world around and from the religious world around. It will make us different from ourselves, from our past lives.

“A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” Now sometimes people use this expression, and I am not sure they use it scripturally. They say, I just had a little touch. Well, never, never despise it; never despise the smallest thing in religion. “A little that a righteous man hath

is better than the riches of many wicked.” But when the Word of God speaks of a gracious touch, I am not sure it always means just a small thing, a little thing. It is an almighty touch. It is the touch of Him whose hand created the world. And just ponder for a few moments. How much we read about this almighty touch when our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was here upon earth! He touched a leper and the impossible took place; the miracle took place. “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” And it was an immediate cure; it was a perfect cure. Now that is the divine touch; that is the touch from the Lord’s hand. We read again, the Lord touched a blind man’s eyes, and the power, the miracle – he could see. Another one we read of was deaf. The Lord touched his ears and he could hear. We need this almighty touch, to have the hearing ear and the understanding heart, to have the eyes of our understanding enlightened that we might see the beauties and glories of Christ in the gospel, that we might see our personal interest in them. We want to feel that almighty touch concerning the leprosy of our sin. So we might go on. What about that widow’s son at Nain on the way to his burial, and Jesus touched the bier? “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” It is an almighty touch.

There is a lot about this touch in the Word of God. I feel constrained to linger on this point a moment or two. In the Book of Daniel you have it a few times. Daniel was weak. He lay prostrate on the floor. He could not get up. Perhaps some of you know something of that experience: you cannot get up; you are prostrate. And you know that experience: the Lord touched him and set him on his feet. Then again in that chapter he was so weak, and the Lord touched him, and Daniel said, “He strengthened me.” That is the kind of touch we need, that gracious touch, that almighty touch from that almighty hand.

Then of course there is that beautiful word in the Psalms which we trust we have tried and proved on more than one occasion, where the Lord touches the mountains and they smoke. You cannot think of anything more opposite than a mountain and a puff of smoke. You know what the meaning of it is. You know what your mountains are – things in your soul, your sins, a never-ending eternity, things in your life, things in providence – mountains, big, dark mountains. You cannot get over them or round them or through them or underneath them, but you think they are going to fall on you. You cannot move them. No power on earth can move them. And the Lord touches the mountains and those mountains are like smoke: you can see it one moment, and the next moment it is gone. This is a wonderful thing, this gracious, almighty touch of the Lord and the things that it accomplishes.

But here it is a sinner’s heart. “A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” Well then, this gracious touch. The Lord has the ability

to reach a sinner's heart. We cannot, but the Lord can. It is the Holy Spirit's work. When the Lord touches a sinner's heart, there is always an effect and the effect is this: that heart which the Lord in love and mercy touches is made soft. It does not matter how hard that heart was before; that touch makes it soft, whether it is right at the beginning in the new birth: here is this sinner with a hard heart, unmoved, dead in trespasses and sins, and the Spirit of God touches that heart and it is made soft; or whether it is a dear child of God mourning – perhaps some of you here this evening – the barrenness, the hardness of your heart. But let the Lord just touch that heart and it will melt. Your heart will be made soft. The ancient promise: "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." And that heart where the Lord has put forth His gracious touch will be impressionable now. The Word will make a gracious impression there. The Word will have a gracious effect there. The glorious gospel of the grace of God *will* be glorious as it does its work.

"A band of men, whose hearts God had touched." Well, He makes sinners' hearts soft *in repentance*, and that is what we need. O there is so much about repentance in the Old Testament and the New. This repentance is vital. The Lord Jesus preached it; John the Baptist preached it; the apostles preached it. And Christ is "exalted ... to be a Prince and a Saviour," to give it, and along with it, the remission of sins. O we want the Holy Spirit to touch our hearts with real repentance. We need that word to be fulfilled in the churches and personally: "I will pour upon [them] the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him." That is the accomplishment of the Lord's gracious touch.

"A band of men, whose hearts God had touched." And so the Lord makes a sinner's heart tender *in the holy, filial fear of God*. It is not there by nature. It is one of the graces of the Spirit. Whenever the Lord touches a sinner's heart, there is that holy fear, and where there is the holy fear, it is a most tender grace. It will make your conscience tender. It will make you seek the honour and glory of your God. There are things your flesh would like to do. "So did not I, because of the fear of God." There will be ways you shrink from walking, but you see, "This is the way, walk ye in it." O that conscience made tender! It will take God's part against you and against your sin and against the world. It will give you a daily religion, a personal religion, a real religion. It does not mean being frightened of God. It is that loving awe and reverence for Him. The old preachers used to speak of a filial fear. What did they mean? Well, not a slave being terrified of a cruel master who might lash him with a whip, but the love and tender respect of a child for a kind father. O we need to have our hearts touched with this holy fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom.

“A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” And the Spirit of God makes a sinner’s heart soft and tender *with the love of Christ*. O don’t we long for this! The apostle puts it like this. This is the way he describes this gracious touch: “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.” O the difference it makes, to feel the love of Christ to sinners and then to love Him in return! Don’t you long for it when you read the Word of God and when you are in prayer, or when you come to a service – O that the Lord might touch my heart with His love?

“A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” And then the Lord touches His people’s hearts *with thanksgiving*. If your heart is touched by the Spirit of God, you will know something of real gratitude. You will say, Why me, Lord? Why such favours to one so unworthy, such a sinner as I am? Why me, Lord? Because when the Lord touches a heart, then gratitude flows. Our hymnwriter says, “Awake, sweet gratitude.” Well, the Spirit of God awakens it and it flows, but this is where we come short, on this point of gratitude.

Let me give you just one illustration from the Word of God, and it is in the Old Testament, how the Spirit of God touched a sinner’s heart and it overflowed with gratitude. I am thinking of Jacob when the Lord said to him, “Arise, go up to Bethel ... and make there an altar.” It brought back a lot of memories. It was twenty years since Jacob had been blessed at Bethel, when he had seen that ladder joining heaven and earth together, where he had heard the promise, “Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” As he came back to Bethel, and as he erected that pillar there, the Holy Spirit touched his heart and he looked back over those twenty years, and if the hymn had been written, Jacob could have sung it:

“Dissolved by Thy goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I found.”

He looked back. He saw the Lord’s goodness in first finding him out, revealing Himself to him, saving him by His grace. He saw how the Lord had been with him, how the Lord had kept him. And as he raised that pillar, and as his heart, touched by the Spirit of God, was filled with gratitude, he said, “He answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.” You will come there at times. The Lord will take you back to Bethel and spiritually you will erect your pillar to the Lord, and the Spirit of God will touch your heart, and you will say, “He answered me in the day of my distress.” With Jacob it was especially when Esau came with four hundred armed men, and “Jacob

was greatly afraid.” It was certain death, destruction, disaster. That wonderful prayer where he poured out his heart to the Lord. When he saw Esau, he “fell on his neck, and kissed him.” Jacob said, “I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God.”

But you will look back. “He answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.” I did not deserve it. I provoked Him, but He was merciful to me. He did not leave me; He did not forsake me. “He ... was with me in the way which I went.” So with a heart touched by the Spirit of God, like old Jacob you raise your Ebenezer, “hither by Thy help I’m come.”

“A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” I want to come very close on this point. Sometimes the Spirit of God touches a sinner’s heart *with the atonement*, with the blood of Christ, and that is really what we need to know, what we long to know. That is what the old preachers meant by the application of the blood of Christ. It was symbolised and prefigured on the Passover night. It was not just the lamb slain and the blood shed. It had to be touched on the lintels and doorposts of the house. It had to be applied with the bunch of hyssop. O but for the finger of the Lord Jesus to touch our hearts by the Spirit of God, that touch of Calvary’s peace and pardon! And do not forget, sinner, that when the Lord Jesus touches your heart like that, it is that hand which was nailed to the cross in love and mercy for you which now condescends to touch your heart as He reveals Himself to you.

“A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” Now beloved friends, this has an effect. If the Lord touches your heart, then the work He has graciously performed will touch your behaviour and it will touch your obedience. I do not want to over-spiritualise this chapter, though I think it is right to say that here was Israel’s divinely-anointed king. I hesitate very much to speak of Saul as a type of Christ because he was a wicked man, but we can see some kind of a figure or illustration here. Many years ago I did see it most clearly and beautifully in that word that Samuel spoke to Saul, but concerning Zion’s God and King, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: “On whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on Thee, and on all Thy Father’s house?” That is a beautiful word in a spiritual sense.

But here the king of Israel has been appointed and he has been anointed and he has been proclaimed. But did you notice as we read the chapter, there are three classes of people here? A few of them were called the sons of Belial, worthless people, openly ungodly, and they said, “How shall this man save us?” And they despised him. Well, that is the world that lies in wickedness then and now. “He is despised and rejected of men.” Of course, thankfully we do not get much of that in our congregations.

Then secondly, the great majority of the people went back to their own homes. All the people went away, “every man to his house.” They had heard the king proclaimed. They had seen what happened. They were interested. They were impressed. They were not antagonistic, but when it was all finished, they went back to their own home. It did not really mean much to them. Are you one of these? You go to the house of God, you attend chapel week by week, and at the end, every man went to his own home. Does anything abide?

But there was this third little group – “a band of men” – and they were different, and the only reason they were different was because God touched their hearts. God made the difference. And if there is a difference with you, a difference from the world around you, a difference from what you once were. “Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” What was the effect of them being touched in their hearts? They were a few of the godly, the peaceable in Israel. They wanted to be where the king was. They wanted to go with him. They wanted to be at his side. They wanted his presence. They wanted to serve him. They wanted to follow him. The Lord had touched their hearts and they were constrained by love. They could have spoken the language that later was spoken to Saul’s successor, David: “In what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be.”

Now beloved friends, have you got a religion like that? Your eyes have seen the King in His beauty, the beauty of the Person of Jesus. If Saul was head and shoulders higher than anyone in Israel, what about your God and King, your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Can you feelingly sing this:

“None among the sons of men,
None among the heavenly train,
Can with Jesus then compare;
None so sweet and none so fair”?

But does it cause your feet to run in Zion’s ways? This little “band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” You see the King in the beauty of His Person, the eternal Son of God. You see the King in His beauty, His sacred humanity, the beauty of His sin-atoning sufferings and death and resurrection, the beauty of His glorious offices as Prophet, Priest and King, the beauty of His suitability to meet your deepest need, the beauty of that wonderful fulness which abides in Him, and you must go after Him. They could not go to their own home like the multitude in Israel. Grace had touched their hearts. They must go after him. And that will be your religion. You must go after Jesus now because you cannot do without Him. And then you want to be with Him eternally.

“Where Jesus is, there I would be,
And view His lovely face;
And sit to all eternity,
In chanting forth His grace.”

“A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.” Well, it is an unusual subject and text, but I have told you my burden. May we go away with those two things. With many may there be that earnest, urgent prayer for this to be made known in our congregations and attending our preaching. But then secondly and above all, O how we need it personally, whatever be our state and case, that these glorious things may not pass us by, but the Lord in love and mercy by the Holy Spirit might touch our hearts. May we be found amongst this favoured band. “A band of men, whose hearts God had touched.”

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY

*Report of the Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard
Aid and Poor Relief Society held on Friday, April 13th, 1912,
at Clifton, Bedfordshire*

PRAYER MEETING

Mr. G.W. Hyde (Pastor, Tenterden) read Psalm 12 and Isaiah 57 verse 1 and spoke as follows:

We have set before us in the Psalm and the verse we have read from Isaiah the situation as it is today. Now “the godly man ceaseth” and the righteous are removed out of the way, and there are few who lay these things to heart. But there are some of us, and I trust gathered here this morning and today, who do mourn because of the sad state that we find in our nation and also we have to say in our denomination.

The Psalm begins with a prayer. How appropriate! Now I suppose it is a meditation of the psalmist David, but his prayer seems to be brief: “Help, Lord.” “Help, Lord.” That is the cry which comes deep from the heart, and we find that such prayers are often short that come from the heart out of a sense of anguish. The woman who came concerning her daughter with “Lord, help me,” how great her need was! May we find that in seeking the Lord this morning, we may prove that urgency in our hearts.

Then we find the declaration follows: “The godly man ceaseth.” Denominationally how evident this is. We see the churches or the chapels and the many empty pews and there seem few that are concerned with coming in, and if they do, they stay but for a short time. The word of the gospel is not suited to the carnal mind, but rather the things of the

day are their attraction. How few there are who are constrained to put on an open profession. We cannot say that there are not some – how thankful we are! – but former days had numbers who were constrained to put on Christ by an open profession and to go through that sacred ordinance of baptism.

There are few faithful ministers that are sent forth. [*We are grateful to the Lord for those who have gone forth. Ed.*] No doubt you looked at the *Gospel Standard* list of ministers in June and if you know the ages of most of them, they would certainly be over sixty, many of them over seventy years of age. O how we do need the Lord to send forth labourers even at this eleventh hour of time as it would seem. Often we have heard it said at these meetings, the sad withholding of the Spirit's power felt in pulpit and in pew. How we need to beseech the Lord to send His Holy Spirit down and to revive us!

But we prove again another evidence of the godly man ceasing and the faithful failing. What a lack of discernment there seems to be of truth and righteousness! We find there is the infiltration of those things that water down the truth or give a lie to the truth. Easy-believism is something which has crept in; duty faith, duty repentance, the consideration of works as opposed to the need of sovereign grace. Then there is not the walking in a tender conscience and acceptance of the Word of God with regard to our practice. The one that will tremble at God's Word – how few they seem to be! There seems to be the serving of God on the one hand and the serving of mammon on the other, and our Lord makes it clear that we cannot serve both. O to know the sanctifying power of the Spirit in our lives.

But when we consider the godly man ceasing, it is important that we begin at home with ourselves, our denomination, but we also see it in the national church which should be guiding and leading the nation, but sadly there is a denial of the inspiration of the Word of God; there is a perverting of doctrine; there is the oppression of Christian values, so that those things which should be as a monitor to our nation are no longer regarded. So we see the breakdown of marriage, the awful perversion of what that really is, and we do not need to go into the details of it. There is the demoralising of Christian practice where we see that the way of the Christian is no longer considered but rather the ways of the materialistic society, the ways of this world, and we also find that though a Rome-ward trend has been seen over many years, yet it is this atheistic, godless way which has penetrated the whole of our society. So we may go on.

We find in the Psalm the Lord speaks: "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise." Those who mourn in Zion, sigh for the abominations done in the midst, groan in personal

and denominational bondage into which we have fallen and cry for a Spirit-induced reviving amongst us. What a mercy that there is still the sighing of the needy and the cry of the poor in Zion! But the Lord gives an answer: "Now will I arise." He will put His own dear church and people in the cleft of the rock. He will hide them in His sacred pavilion. He will spare "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," and comfort them "as one whom his mother comforteth." So shall the people of God be set in safety from the rising of troubles and of evils; though they may abound, the Lord will send His deliverances. We can be certain about that, but what we may have to endure: persecutions, hardships, sorrows. All of these things are in the Lord's balance. He knows what He will do. That is our confidence and mercy. But we also know this: that He will come, He will descend and gather His people unto Himself and for that may we sigh and cry and find with the church of the Revelation those closing words of that Book: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Hymns 1047, 374 and 349 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone), Mr. H. Hickman (Handcross), Mr. Jonathan Buss (Chippenham), Mr. A. Rayner (Luton, Ebenezer), Mr. B.P. Mercer (Eastbourne), Mr. A.J.H. Topping (Haywards Heath) and Mr. B.E. Izzard (Pastor, Fenstanton). Mr. Hyde closed with prayer and the benediction.

AFTERNOON MEETING

After the singing of hymn 517, the Chairman of the Society, Mr. G.D. Buss, called on Mr. J.R. Rutt (Pastor, Lamberhurst) to seek the Lord's blessing on the meeting.

The Chairman then read Psalm 68. 1-19.

CHAIRMAN: In the Psalm we have read, the first three words sum up so much that was set before us this morning and were on my spirit to read this afternoon before our friend spoke. "Let God arise." That is what we need: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, to arise for the defence of His church, His honour, His glory, and the extension of His glorious kingdom. And in so many things where there are mountains and valleys, crooked things and rough places, this is what is needed: "Let God arise." Every time we see this little prayer being answered, may we not forget (a) to put the crown where it belongs, and (b) to give thanks to God for mercies so undeserved. May He hear this plea: "Let God arise."

It is my privilege to welcome you to this Annual General Meeting and I pray the Lord's gracious help to be given to each who will take their part this

afternoon. The Secretary, Mr. D.J. Christian, then introduced the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society for the year ended December 31st, 2011.

MR. CHRISTIAN: Mr. Chairman, subscribers and friends: In presenting the Annual Report for 2011, we are conscious that it is a time for reflection and looking back on the Lord's mercies and dealings during another year. We live in a day of much falling away and the Committee is deeply aware of the need for a true revival amongst the churches. Our Annual Meetings usually take place just after Easter, a time when we are reminded of that resurrection power, and it is our desire that we might know something of that power in our own hearts and in the churches.

In the report, we mentioned some of our ministers who had been very ill and unable to preach. We are thankful that Mr. Philip Warren is preaching again, but Mr. John Broome is still not well enough to do so. Mr. David Haddow, pastor at Prestwood, passed away in the Harpenden Bethesda Home at the end of February this year. He had been preaching in our chapels for over fifty years and had served on the Committee for a number of years. He also edited the *Gospel Standard* for one year to relieve Mr. Ramsbottom. Mr. Raymond Oakley, who had preached for over sixty years, passed away in December last year.

We are pleased that the name of Mr. Richard Wells was added to the list of Gospel Standard ministers during the year, and trust that churches may feel led to propose other names for the list, whose ministry commends itself to them as of the Holy Ghost.

May the Lord hear prayer for those who are unwell at present and also that it might please Him to continue to send forth others into the ministry whom He has prepared for this solemn office.

A meeting for prayer, to which all ministers of Gospel Standard churches were invited, was held at Clifton in November and, if the Lord will, another meeting will be held here on Friday, November 16th, 2012 at 11 a.m.

The primary purpose of the Society is that of financial help for our poorer ministers and friends. Although there is not the extreme poverty that was known in the days of our godly forefathers, there are still those that struggle to manage and we are glad to assist where we can. We would encourage our subscribers to bring to our notice those that may be in need so that the appropriate action can be taken. Early in 2011 a review of the individual quarterly grants was undertaken and many of these were increased. This year the grants to chapels for the support of the ministry have also been increased to reflect the rising cost of travel. In Note 17 in the booklet, you will see that the income for the Aid and Poor Relief Society exceeded the expenditure by £79,876. The interest for the year increased as a result of the rearrangement of funds, but the main reason for the surplus was the sale of Zion Chapel, Dartford, when two-thirds of the proceeds were given to the Aid and Poor Relief Society and a third to the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund. The Committee is thankful for this, but it is always sad when the funds are received from the closure of chapels.

Mention has been made of the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund which enables us to make grants to those who are not necessarily in need of a quarterly grant, but for whom a little help at Christmas is much appreciated. The fund showed a surplus of £43,516 due to the receipt of £46,693 from the sale of Dartford.

We very much appreciate the support given by individuals and our churches by way of donations and collections both to this fund and also to the other funds.

We are thankful to the Lord that our Editors have been helped through another year and that Mr. Broome is continuing to produce *Perception* in spite of his illness. The work of an editor is a constant labour as each month comes round, and we would extend our thanks to them and seek to uphold them in prayer.

The Magazine Fund showed a surplus for the year of £9,379 and this was due to the generosity of our subscribers and churches in contributing over £13,000 in donations, for which we are very grateful. There were several substantial anonymous gifts and we take this opportunity to thank the donors for their kindness. This has meant that despite increases in the cost of paper and postage, we have been able to keep the price of the magazines the same for a third year.

The number of subscribers remains fairly constant and we would be pleased to receive applications from friends who attend our chapels regularly and are in agreement with our Articles of Faith. Forms are available by the door at the front of the chapel or from the Secretary. Quite a lot of forms were taken last year but very few were returned.

The Committee does have difficult matters to attend to and seeks your prayers that it may be given wisdom and grace to act in the fear of the Lord and for His honour and glory.

Often we seem to come like those women of old with that question, "Who shall roll us away the stone?" but may we have that faith to realise that the Lord God Almighty is still in control.

The solemn situation in the country and in the world causes much anxiety and the Committee does make representation to those in authority about such issues as euthanasia, gender abortion and redefining marriage, but sadly the replies are usually unsatisfactory.

We thank our friends here at Clifton for the use of the chapel once again and especially Mr. Lawson for all the work he does in preparation for our meetings.

In closing and seeking the Lord's blessing on our churches, we think of the two on the road to Emmaus when Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. May this be our blessed portion both in our churches and individually.

"Brethren, pray for us."

The Chairman thanked Mr. Christian for his report and also for all he does for the Societies. The Chairman asked if there were any subscribers who had any questions relating to the Annual Report and Accounts. There were none, and the proposal to approve and adopt the Annual Report and Accounts was put to the meeting. It was proposed by Mr. M.D. Ridout (Southampton) and seconded by Mr. J.R. Rutt (Pastor, Lamberhurst) and carried *nem con*.

The Chairman then said that Mr. Haddow had been an excellent member of the Committee, and had a very gracious and quiet demeanour which was greatly appreciated and missed when he felt led to resign. He also spoke of Mr. John Watts, saying that over the years God has raised up laymen of particular ability to serve the churches, and Mr. Watts went the second and third mile for the cause of God and truth, both in the Bethesda Fund and on the Gospel Standard

Committee. He had a great love for young people and was valiant for the truth. He is greatly missed on the Committee. The Chairman wished to put on record our appreciation of the memory of Mr. Watts and expressed his hope that the Lord would continue to raise up other men of such ability.

The Chairman also expressed appreciation for the help given at Clifton by Mr. Lawson and his family who make these meetings such a pleasurable event.

The Secretary announced the result of the election of the three members who were put up for re-election. 252 ballot papers were sent out, of which 190 were returned. All three members received in excess of 80% of the votes cast, and therefore Messrs. B.E. Izzard, D.W. Kerley and R.W. Woodhams are re-elected to serve for a further three years. Mr. B.P. Mercer had been co-opted on to the Committee during the year and he also received in excess of 80%, and so is elected to serve for a period of three years.

Mr. D.W. Kerley then expressed thanks on behalf of the re-elected members of the Committee.

MR. KERLEY: Dear friends, we thank you for your vote and may we be given grace to serve by the Lord Himself. Only the Lord knows the burden of going up to the Committee Meetings, and the Lord knows the spirit of confession we come away with afterwards when we feel we might have said things we should not have said and that we might not have said things we ought to have said. As our Secretary says, "Brethren, pray for us."

The Chairman said that on these occasions we do not forget the loyal churches abroad in Australia and the United States of America and Canada. He read greetings from Mr. G. Seymour, Mr. J.K. Stehouwer and Mr. G.L. TenBroeke. Mention was made of those ministers who hope to be going overseas in the next few months and the desire that the Lord will go before them.

The Chairman then announced that the Gospel Standard Trust Annual General Meeting would take place, if the Lord will, at Grove on May 19th.

A report of the Gospel Standard Library was then read by the Chairman.

GOSPEL STANDARD LIBRARY

1. The project mentioned last year for the scanning of the *Friendly Companion* magazine was satisfactorily completed and it is now available on DVD. The price is £25 and can be ordered from the Gospel Standard Trust Publications bookroom at Harpenden.

2. The Library will be incurring considerable expense this year since the roof of the extension needs to be replaced and also the interior of the Library has not been redecorated since it was built thirty years ago. If any friend feels inclined and able to assist in any way, the Trustees would be very grateful.

3. As previously, a greater interest and use of the Library is encouraged and the Librarians are always pleased to assist. The catalogue is available in print or on the website and books can be borrowed by post for three months. There are facilities, including a number of indices, to study various topics or for family history research. Surplus books are also for sale at very reasonable prices. Details of the opening times etc., are in the *Gospel Standard* and on the website.

Hymn 1057 was then sung.

The 5th Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund then followed (see later).

The Chairman warmly endorsed the activities of the Bethesda Fund, and then thanked Mr. Peter Hill for leading the singing at the Annual Meetings.

After hymn 23 was sung, Mr. G.D. Buss addressed the Meeting from part of John 9. 25: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." He spoke as follows.

This was the simple confession of faith of a man who had experienced the power and the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I put it to you this afternoon, it was not just the recovering of his natural sight, wonderful blessing though that was, but that by the close of this chapter, in his life and in the dealings of our Lord with him, his spiritual eye, hitherto blind, darkened with unbelief, blinded by the god of this world, had been opened to see things he never saw before.

I want with God's help to bring before you those things which he saw with his spiritual eye which under the power of the dear Saviour, working always with the dear Spirit, co-eternal with Him, made him a true believer. Sometimes we sing in one of our hymns concerning the work of grace, "He makes the believer, and gives him his crown." Friend, if our faith is to be one that will endure and will stand by us when we come down to die, one that God will acknowledge when we stand before the great, white throne of divine judgment, it must be a faith that God the Holy Ghost has wrought. This man's faith, we will notice with God's help, was of that character.

But just a side thought, concerning God's servant, the Apostle John, who was inspired to write this part of God's holy Word. It seems that the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each had a different emphasis as the Holy Ghost guided them as they recorded the ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Now the great burden upon John's spirit was to emphasise the Godhead, the deity, the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth, that He who was very evidently Man, as they saw Him with the natural eye, was none other than the second Person in the glorious Trinity, God incarnate. The great joy of John, which you can feel as he writes this epistle, the Holy Ghost moving his mind and pen, was to rejoice in this glorious truth, that truth which John Newton so aptly put in another of his hymns:

"I durst not confide in His blood...
Unless I were sure He is God."

John was sure. He had proved it. This blind man was sure. He had proved it. Friend, I ask you this afternoon, how sure are you? O, you

say, we have read it from our earliest days. We have heard it preached from our pulpits. We have learned it in the Sunday School. Our parents have told us. All that is good as far as it goes, and would to God that every home in Great Britain was such a home where the Son of God is set forth in this way. But dear friends, "Farther than this you yet must go," for the faith that the Apostle John had, and this recently converted blind man had also, was the result of revelation, and by revelation I mean this: an uncovering of the truth to the heart and the mind and the soul of this man. Has God uncovered the truth to you? This was the case before us in this holy Book, be in no doubt about it. But has He uncovered it to you? You younger ones might say, "Do we need it uncovered?" We read in 2 Corinthians 4 these words: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This is the work we desire to see in our day, that the god of this world, which is Satan, should be overcome and God would do what He did in the Acts of the Apostles, where we read God opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. So I ask you again, has God opened the door of faith to you? Trace out your path with this blind man and see whether you can go along with him, for I see four things in our chapter this afternoon which were revealed to him which culminated in this wonderful confession that Jesus is indeed the Son of God.

Remember what we read elsewhere in God's holy Word: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." That is what is needed and that is what may be pleaded. There may be some here this afternoon who long to be able to say with personal conviction and personal experience concerning this great Person, "I know Him," yet they have felt not to know Him. They feel there is a vacuum in their hearts, an emptiness in their soul and their desire goes out like Paul: "That I may know Him." Well, dear friend, beg the Holy Ghost to fulfil His word in your heart, for you are like those characters who came to Philip and Andrew: "Sir, we would see Jesus."

Let us then consider this blind man. We first of all consider his pitiable state. Here was not a man who had known sight and lost it, but here was a man who had never seen the light of day; never seen the sun rise or set; never seen the creation in God's world; he had never looked on the face of his mother or his father, or any brothers and sisters he may have had. Darkness naturally speaking had covered his sight from the very earliest days; yea from the womb. He was born blind.

I would just make two side comments here. One is, do value your sight. It is a wonderful provision God has given you. We are fearfully and wonderfully made. While you have it, thank God for it and *use it well*. Remember Psalm 101: "I will set no vain thing before mine eyes."

In this day in which the devil has got hold of the media to such a terrible extent and all the other things which are prevalent in our days, how we need to be kept that these things do not become a snare to us. Have as little to do with them as is absolutely necessary. We should ever ask, whatever we look at, whether it is a book or anything else, is it a vain thing? If it is a vain thing, turn from it. Flee from it.

“From vanity turn off my eyes;
Let no corrupt design,
Nor covetous desires, arise
Within this soul of mine.”

Friends, we are to have as little to do with the world as is absolutely necessary. If you have too much to do with it, you will damage your soul. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” So dear friends, we need to be kept. We need a watch over our lips. We need a watch over our eyes.

Let us now return to this man. He was not only blind naturally, but there was a deeper blindness pervading his heart spiritually. He was a man who until this moment, as far as we can tell, had his mind blinded by the god of this world. In the mystery of God’s providence, Almighty God determined through His dear Son to use this terrible infirmity he was born with to the honour and glory of His name, as well as benefitting by the opening of the eyes naturally and spiritually of this poor but soon-to-be-favoured, blind man. Let me just remind you of one simple thought. We have just been singing, the “same dear Man” who did this “in heaven now reigns.” He is able and willing to deal with the infirmities and difficulties of His dear people. “If Thou wilt, Thou canst,” said the leper. If you have some deep-seated problems and difficulties in your way, some great mountains, then dear friends, “this same dear Man in heaven now reigns.” May it be a comfort to you. As one good man said, “Bring all your hard causes to Jesus today.”

“Jesus passed by.” But dear friends, He did not pass on. Isn’t that a mercy! Sovereignly He determined to deal with this man’s case. Can some of you thank God for that in your souls? He passed by, but did not pass on.

“He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate;
His loving-kindness, O how great!”

There are just three things about the man’s healing I would have you notice. First of all – and I speak now of the restoring of his sight – it was

indeed a sovereign way the dear Son of God did it. He could have spoken and his sight would have been restored, or He could have just touched him with His loving hand and his sight would have been restored. But no, He chose to make clay and to anoint the eyes of this blind man and send him to the pool of Siloam, which means *sent*, and then he would receive his sight. God has a sovereign way of dealing with sinners. Each one of His dear people is dealt with sovereignly. Perhaps some of you may be stumbled because you have not been dealt with in exactly the same way as another sinner called by grace. God is a sovereign. He knows what is best for His honour and glory and the good of your soul in the work of redemption. It is a unique work that He has for each and every one of those who come to the Father by Him, which was ordained ere time began. “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

The second thing we notice is the obedience of this man. He was sent. Many sermons with God’s help could be preached from that one word, “Sent.” Concerning God’s servants: “How shall they preach, except they be *sent*?” – sent by Him; sent by God and anointed by the Holy Ghost. We could speak of the hearers too. How can they hear unless they be sent under the sound of the truth? I think of Simeon when he came in to the temple by the Spirit. What a wonderful day it was when he beheld the dear Saviour in the arms of Mary and took Him up in his own arms! He knew who it was. “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.” Simeon knew Him by divine revelation. He was sent into the house of God that day. When God sends a man into the pulpit and a sinner into the pew, working at both ends, then something is done. O may there be many who are spiritually sent to Siloam in our churches. Then we may begin to see many of those things we were seeking the Lord’s face for this morning in the prayer meeting. “Sent.” “I will work, and who shall let it?” Who shall hinder it? Who shall turn it back?

The third thing we notice about this man is his humility. It was a very humbling thing for him to walk through the streets of Jerusalem with clay on his eyes. Naturally speaking it would not have been a very pleasant sight. Yet his sight was so precious, I believe he would have done anything he was bidden. He did it in faith. He believed that what the dear Saviour said to him would come to pass. You will “never think you’re laid too low, if Jesus on you pity show,” even if you have to walk through the streets with clay on your eyes. If that is to receive the blessing you long for, I believe you would do it if your heart is made sincere by the Holy Ghost’s teaching. So he goes to Siloam’s streams

and he comes away seeing. Wonderful blessing! Can you imagine how he must have felt when for the first time he saw the light of day, seeing the beautiful colours of God's creation, the faces of his parents, things he could never imagine before? What a wonderful day to him! But it was a far more wonderful day because by the end of it he saw Him whom his soul loveth. He saw a precious Christ. One day those natural eyes would indeed be laid in the grave as ours must be, but his spiritual sight was eternal. "I give unto My sheep eternal life" – eternal sight – "and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

The next thing I would notice this afternoon hour is that any work of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether it be in the heart or the church or in the lives of God's dear people, is always opposed. We must expect it. We get so surprised by it. We should not be. When our Lord said to Peter, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against" the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, He did not mean they would not try. No; they would come, but they would not prevail. Now the blind man so recently healed found instead of those around him being thankful, rejoicing with him, giving God the honour and glory for this wonderful miracle, they began to cavil and despise and question and explain away the miracle if they could. Why was that? Because they hated – no other word for it – they hated our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To them He was not a lovely name. To them He was not a lovely Person. To them His actions were not lovely. They hated Him. And that is the spirit of the natural man. He has not changed. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Notice how the Holy Ghost put that: not that it is difficult to be subdued; it cannot be. That may perhaps explain some of the conflict which some of you are having this afternoon hour. There is a part of you that will not feel any differently. It is your old nature, friends. It is your old, fallen nature. It will not change one iota, will not get any better this side of the grave. It will be a great relief when you leave it behind you, when you breathe your dying breath. I speak, of course, to the believing people of God. But this man had to endure much suspicion and enmity. It is always the same. One of the Puritans said that wherever God builds a temple, Satan will try and build his synagogue next door.

Now, I want to bring before you four things which he saw spiritually. There are four verses we will refer to. The first one is verse 11. The Pharisees had asked him who it was had opened his eyes and how it had been done. "He answered and said, A Man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight." It is that very beautiful expression which is so attractive to me – I hope

it is to you – “A Man that is called Jesus.” What a wonderful expression that is! Who called Him Jesus first? It was not Joseph and Mary. True, they did call Him that, but it was God the Father who ordained what His name should be. Remember, He had no father in the flesh as you have and I have. He had a real mother to prove that real humanity He assumed. But it was the right of God the Father to pronounce the name that His dear Son should bear in the flesh. God the Father called Him Jesus. Why? Because, dear friends, the Son of God in our nature had a work to do, a will to perform, a covenant engagement to ratify. And what was it? That He would save His people from their sins. As it was man who had disobeyed God’s holy law and it was the church of God in Adam’s fallen race that had fallen under the curse of a holy law, if the church was to be redeemed from that curse and rescued from the just punishment of her fallen state, it needed a man – true, a God-Man – but as John Bunyan said, “It needed a Man to come to give ‘body for body, soul for soul,’ to have blood to shed, to have a life to lay down, and it is this Man Jesus.”

“This wondrous Man of whom we tell,
Is true Almighty God;
He bought our souls from death and hell;
The price, His own heart’s blood.”

“A Man that is called Jesus,” a perfect Man, a holy Man, a Man in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. And a sympathetic Man, a Man “touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” One “in all points tempted like as we are.” “A Man that is called Jesus.” Can you come along thus far with this blind man this afternoon? You have seen “yon lovely Man,” “the Chiefest among ten thousand.” No voice like His, no presence like His.

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

“A Man that is called Jesus.” The blind man was well persuaded then of the humanity of this Person Jesus of Nazareth. “A Man that is called Jesus.” I wish I had more grace and time to preach a sermon on that wonderful subject, but we must pass on.

Secondly, we turn to verse 17. “They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of Him, that He hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a Prophet.” What is a prophet? A God-sent prophet is one who bearing the Word of God in his mouth, that word is fulfilled and confirmed and thus we know that man to be a man sent of God. We are told in the Book of Deuteronomy through Moses’ pen about this glorious Prophet. Reading from chapter 18: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto

thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren” – there is His Manhood – “like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak unto them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

But did the Prophet with a capital P speak presumptuously? No, what did He say? “Go to the pool of Siloam. Wash, and thou shalt be clean.” A word from the lips of God incarnate, the God who cannot lie, the true Prophet with a capital P. And this blind man proved that word to be true. He went; he washed; and he came seeing. He could say, “I know what this Man said is true. The very effect I can see with my natural eye. He is a Prophet, a true One.” Can you come in here this afternoon? Have you proved the Lord Jesus Christ to be a true Prophet? Has He ever spoken one word of divine command and by God-given faith you have walked in it, proved Him true in it? Has He ever promised to your soul a blessing and in due season He came? Then He is a Prophet. Have you ever proved this word: “Go in this thy might ... have not I sent thee?” You have proved Him to be a Prophet. You have proved Him in this word: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And dear friends, you were given that blessed grace to come, to flee to a precious Christ, drawn by the blessed Spirit and you came to the Lord Jesus as the hymn says:

“I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.”

You have proved Him a true Prophet. You have perhaps proved it also in correction as well as in warning. Friends, how is it then? Have you proved the Lord and Saviour to be a Prophet to your soul, having personally spoken to you? And especially, O wonderful words, those

almost the last three words the dear Saviour spoke on the cross. O blessed words of accomplishment and of divine prophecy, for in them was contained all the salvation of the election of grace to the end of time.

“‘It is finished,’ said the Lord,
In His dying minute;
Holy Ghost, repeat the word,
Full salvation’s in it.”

Friends, may the blessed Prophet speak that word into your heart, a word that lifts the burden of guilt from your poor, guilty soul, sets you on the Rock of Ages firm, fixed, for evermore. He is a Prophet. Well, can you come thus far with the blind man?

Now He is the Man Christ Jesus; He is a Prophet. Now the third verse we come to is verse 33. We read these words. The Pharisees of course were denying the Godhead of our Lord and Saviour, but the man born blind said, “If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing.” The point I want to make here is when God begins to deal with a sinner, they notice and are brought to realise that the things wrought in their heart are of God. That word of conviction, only God sent it with that power that He did. All other words of conviction rolled off your back “like water off a duck’s back.” I say that reverently. You may have heard solemn sermons, convicting sermons in a natural way, but still you were determined to have your fill of the world, until that solemn, auspicious, vital moment came, and the Prophet spoke, and it was not a word of a man; it was of God. You were arrested, apprehended. You became a guilty sinner in His sight, and what were you then asking for? The word of salvation, something of God for your soul. “Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.” Nothing less would do. The word of a minister would not do. The word of a friend trying to reason with you would not do. John Newton’s language suited you well:

“O could I but believe,
Then all would easy be;
I *would*, but *cannot*; Lord, relieve!
My help must come from Thee.”

When He did speak, what a difference! It was of God, and your soul melted under the word and you were drawn by divine grace and divine love. It was of God. And that is the religion that will stand; not that of man, not that which is just of tradition; not that that is just of a creature. “Of God.” David said, “All my springs are in Thee.” Where are the springs of your religion? Are they of God, or some broken cistern which can hold no water? Happy soul it is that can only be satisfied with that which is of God. You may go many a month in barrenness, poverty, waiting for God to speak again. Nothing will do but this. “Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth.”

“Tell me, Lord, and make me feel it,
I am Thine, for ever Thine.
Take my wounded heart and heal it,
Let Thy glory in me shine.”

You want something of God and when it comes, you will know it. “Where the word of a king is, there is power.” This blind man proved it.

But finally we come to verses 35 and 36 and here we see the blessed end the dear Triune God had in view concerning this blind man. “Jesus heard that they had cast him out,” and do not be surprised if the world casts you out, whether it be the profane or the religious. “And when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.” Here he came now to put the crown on the Man Christ Jesus’ head, not just as a Man called Jesus, but as King of kings and Lord of lords, the eternal Son of the eternal Father. He is God, the Son of God. This, dear friends, is the great test. “If ye believe not that I am He,” the Lord Jesus said in this very Gospel, “ye shall die in your sins.” How vital it is to have this revealed to us. Peter made a noble confession: “We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” What do we read that Jesus said? “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” The Son of God. Well, can you say that this afternoon? “Yon lovely Man.” He is. You see in Him the Godhead and sometimes you long for that day of which good Isaac Watts speaks in one of his hymns, speaking about heaven:

“Adoring saints around Him stand,
And thrones and powers before Him fall;
The God shines gracious through the Man,
And sheds sweet glories on them all.

“When shall the day, dear Lord, appear,
That I shall mount to dwell above,
And stand and bow amongst them there
And view Thy face, and sing Thy love?”

When will that day come? Friend, if you have a view by God-given faith of this precious God-Man this side of the grave, you will see Him face to face.

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

“Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is cold and faint;
Yet I love Thee and adore;
O for grace to love Thee more!”

If you would ask this blind man, now seeing, “Do you love the Lord Jesus?” He would say, “I do. I wish I could love Him more, but I do love Him.” He would say, “None have more reason to do so.” “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind” – blind to His glorious humanity, and His being the Prophet, and His being of God and being the Son of God, but “now I see” Him as the Man Christ Jesus. I see Him as my Prophet, Priest and King. I see Him as dear Thomas saw Him: “My Lord and my God.” Blessed is that man, woman, boy, girl here this afternoon who can say Amen to that. May God add His blessing. Amen.

Hymn 500 was sung, and the Meeting closed with prayer by the Chairman.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND
4th ANNUAL MEETING

Mr. H. MERCER (Chairman, Bethesda Fund): Subscribers and dear friends, we welcome you to the fifth Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund and present the Annual Report and Accounts for 2011. We once again have much cause for thankfulness to the Lord for helping us through and up to this present time.

The year under review has been marked by changes in senior management and the introduction of a tighter financial policy. Our Managers at Harpenden and at Brighton retired during the year and we are thankful for the successful appointment of new Managers at these Homes. The General Manager has assumed greater responsibility for the running of the three Homes, and there is now a system in place by which the effectiveness of our management policies is monitored monthly. This enables us to identify where improvements are needed and to monitor progress made. It is encouraging that the high standard of compliance with regulations and of care that is required is evident in most areas in each of the Homes. We are pleased with the progress that has been made but not complacent. Our desire is to provide the best possible care for our residents.

Some of the decisions that are made by the Committee may be difficult to understand and a word of explanation may be helpful. The Committee has the heavy responsibility entrusted to it of maintaining the purposes for which Bethesda was first set up, but we live in troublesome times when increasing regulation dictates many of the policies we have to adopt. Bethesda is a denominational charity founded on clear principles and the Committee will, as enabled, maintain these. We seek at all times to act in accordance with the gospel but, as you will realise, we are subject to legislation covering our operations. Although there have been some problems with local authorities, we are thankful

to say that these have been resolved satisfactorily. We also realise our responsibility for financial prudence in these times of austerity. Difficult decisions sometimes have to be made on financial matters, but fully realising the impact of these, the Committee seeks to bring them into effect in a gracious way. We acknowledge that whilst we seek to do what is right and in the best interests of Bethesda, some of the decisions that have been made can be misunderstood but they have not been taken lightly. We seek the wisdom and grace that is needed to do what is required of us. The Annual Report identifies areas where progress has been made to reduce the losses on the Homes' accounts, and we much appreciate the co-operation of our managers and staff in this respect.

The Bethesda General Manager, Mr. Topping, then presented the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2011.

MR. TOPPING: Mr. Chairman, subscribers and friends, It is my privilege to present to you the Bethesda Annual Report and the financial statements for the first time.

It is not my intention to reiterate what has already been said in the written report; most of you will already have read a copy, but perhaps to amplify a few points of particular significance and to bridge the gap between the end of the year and now.

It must be said that 2011 was a year of change for Bethesda. There was the retirement of the General Secretary, Mr. Scott, the appointment of two new Home Managers and one Deputy Home Manager and the change from Home Committees to Home Support Groups. In addition there was the complete overhaul and bringing up to date of Bethesda's Rules of Administration and operating policies and procedures and the changes to the terms and conditions of engagement of the staff.

As the friends will be aware, Mr. Scott retired as General Secretary in April, and although he is continuing to serve as a member of the Bethesda Fund Committee and as Financial Accountant, the Trustees marked their appreciation of his many years of loyal service with a presentation of a beautiful barometer at a quarterly Committee meeting.

Miss Sarah Parish, whose appointment to the post of Home Manager at Harpenden was reported at the last AGM, was successfully registered with the Care Quality Commission as Home Manager in September, and has recently completed her QCF Level 5 qualification in Leadership and Management in Health and Social Care. She has also completed other management training courses, for which she is congratulated.

Miss Sarah Williamson, who commenced her career in Bethesda eighteen years ago as a junior Care Assistant at Brighton, was appointed to the post of Home Manager on December 13th, 2011, having held the post of Deputy Home Manager for a few months. Her appointment is currently awaiting registration with the Care Quality Commission and she is working towards completion of the same qualification in Leadership and Management that Sarah Parish has already completed.

These appointments, along with the appointment of Miss Catherine Topping to the post of Deputy Home Manager at Brighton, leave us with no management vacancies in Bethesda, for which we are thankful.

For many years the Home Managers were ably assisted in their duties by Home Committees consisting of volunteers from local Gospel Standard churches and congregations. Their duties included ensuring the welfare of the residents and assisting in the management of the Homes. The many recent changes to care home regulation have meant that all the management duties originally carried out by the Home Committees are now supervised by the General Manager, so the decision was taken to replace Home Committees with Home Support Groups. The purpose of the new Home Support Groups is to provide a vital additional layer of support for our residents by supplementing the efforts of the staff, and by filling gaps where staff may not be able to assist. Following the changes, it is pleasing to see how many of the existing Committee members were willing to continue as Home Support Group members. Our thanks are due both to those members who have remained, and to those who have retired, for all that they do and have done for our residents.

There are also many other volunteers not connected with the Home Support Groups who do so much for the Homes in many different ways. Our thanks are due to them as well.

Since last reporting, there have been a number of changes among our residents, with some passing away and others coming into the Homes to take their place. We have lost a total of fourteen across all three Homes, including seven from Harpenden, three from Brighton and four from Studley. In their place we have welcomed Mrs. Margery Woodhams, Mr. Tom Hills, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Holman, Mr. John Tucker and Mrs. Eunice Pearce to Brighton, leaving only one vacancy in this Home. At Harpenden we have welcomed Mrs. Aldwyth Palmer, Mrs. Margery Hare, Mrs. Ruth Hare and Mr. David Haddow, who has sadly since passed away, leaving six vacancies in this Home. At Studley we have welcomed Mr. Oliver Pollington, Miss Doreen Lee and Miss Philippa Hunt, leaving six vacancies.

I mentioned at the Northern Meetings in September that the Bethesda Fund Committee at that time was working on ways to ensure that our Homes are run as efficiently as possible. There is an ongoing review month by month of the expenditure compared to the budgets that have been agreed, and this is beginning to take effect. Most of the savings made came from changing weekend and bank holiday pay rates, together with changes to shift patterns at the Brighton and Harpenden Homes. As well as this, some savings have been achieved in purchasing and in capital expenditure. I wish to take this opportunity once again to thank our staff for their hard work, commitment and loyalty throughout a difficult year.

Having effected some savings in the cost of running the Homes, the Bethesda Fund Committee is faced with cuts to the amount of social care spending by the government. The fees paid for residents who are funded by Social Services do not meet our ordinary care rate and Bethesda has to make up the difference from reserves. In 2009 nineteen residents were assisted in this way at a cost of £57,344, in 2010 nineteen residents were assisted at a cost of £63,512, and in 2011 seventeen residents were assisted at a cost of £66,003. Our fees are low compared to other care homes, but even so are not met in full by Social Services. An annual increase of a modest amount has to be made, but with little increase in the level of support given by Social Services, the gap to be funded will continue to increase.

With these considerations in mind we thank most sincerely chapels and individuals for the financial support they give through collections and donations, which help Bethesda to meet the cost of caring for the Lord's dear people.

Another factor, briefly alluded to in the written report, is the Government's recent reforms to pensions in the Pensions Act 2011. The proposal here is automatically to enrol all employees into a pension scheme, to which Bethesda will have to contribute 1% in the first year, 2% in the second year and 3% from the third year onwards. Although staff will be allowed to opt out if they wish, it is anticipated that this reform could add up to £30,000 annually to our running costs, and although Bethesda will not have to bring this into effect until 2014, it does serve to illustrate to our subscribers and friends the sort of financial challenges the Bethesda Fund Committee has to face even as it tries to reduce the running cost of the Homes.

As was reported at the last April AGM, the Studley Bethesda Home was inspected by our regulators, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), in January 2011. Following this we had expected that the CQC would soon be seen at the Brighton and Harpenden Homes as well, as neither have been inspected for a number of years. This has, however, not happened as yet.

The CQC has been in the news a great deal of late, sadly, never for good reasons. As a consequence they are making changes to improve their service to the public. Bethesda can now expect to have inspections at each Home once per year instead of every two to three years. They are also changing their methods for inspection and assessment of a home. We see these changes as being an improvement to the previous policy as they do reduce to some extent the bureaucratic workload on our managers.

Turning to subscriptions for the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund, we currently have 228 subscribers, a figure that has not increased during the year; indeed, the number of subscribers has reduced through the loss of a few of our older friends. I would warmly encourage friends who do not yet subscribe to lend their support to the Homes by becoming subscribers, and to this end there are a number of subscriber application forms in the chapel porch. More can be found in the entrance halls of the Homes or obtained from me at the Bethesda General Office. I would mention that if you are a subscriber to the Gospel Standard Societies or to the Gospel Standard Trust, this does not automatically make you a subscriber to Bethesda as well.

Finally, this year sees the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Studley Bethesda Home. We hope to mark this on June 16th with an open day and service of thanksgiving which will be taken by our Chairman, if the Lord will. Certainly we have much cause to thank the Lord for the provision of our Homes, and the help that has been given over so many years. We have proved that "He is faithful that promised."

The Chairman thanked Mr. Topping for his report and asked if there were any questions, but there were none, and it was proposed by Mr. J.H. Cottington (Blackboys) and seconded by Mr. D.J. Broome (Trowbridge) that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund for 2011 be approved and adopted. This was carried *nem con*.

The Chairman then stated that the retiring members of Committee, Messrs. M.G. Bailey and M.O. Wiltshire had offered themselves for re-election, and Mr. T.H.W. Scott, who was appointed to the Committee on August 1st, 2011,

seeks confirmation of his appointment. The General Manager announced that 228 ballot papers were distributed to subscribers, of which 175 were returned, and all the members had been re-elected by a substantial majority. All three members had therefore been appointed to serve for a further period of three years.

MR. MERCER: The Committee much appreciates the confidence that our subscribers have in them in these very difficult days. We shall continue as helped to maintain the Bethesda Homes to the high standard that they have achieved over the years, and we seek an interest in the prayers of our subscribers and friends that wisdom and strength might be given for this.

In conclusion, we would also sincerely thank all those many volunteers and helpers that in so many ways support and bring comfort to our residents.

That brings us to the close of the Annual General Meeting.

LOVING SYMPATHY

My dear, afflicted Friends,

Only yesterday I found out where you are. You have been much on my mind, and sympathy has moved me to beg help and favour for you from the Lord. How much grace you need to be quiet, as clay in the hands of the Potter, the heavenly Potter! “Thy strength, thy wisdom flee.” Without special help from on high (Psa. 20), how easy will be rebellion, flying in the face of your God, asking an ancient question: “Wherefore do the wicked prosper?” May all such bitter working of the flesh be subdued. May wisdom be given you to consider in your heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord *thy* God chasteneth thee. What for? “That He may do thee good in thy latter end,” that thou mayest be a partaker of His holiness, see His good hand working wonders, hear His divine voice commanding deliverance, and behold His wonders in the sea and in all deep places.

I hope you and your dear husband may together feel God’s presence as you suffer together His distracting providence, His breaking-down hand. Some of your feelings and hopes about the Lord’s way towards you will now try your faith, and disappointments will, if allowed to work, nourish your despair. I know the bitterness of disappointment, of spilled hopes; but God has had His own way with me. Your present way – through fire and water – may lead you to a wealthy place, to more gracious discoveries of divine faithfulness, to a blessed beholding of Christ’s witty inventions (Prov. 8. 12).

I wish your husband had spoken to me last Thursday evening. He little thought how intensely I sympathised with him; for though I have not gone the heavy, rough road he is now sorrowfully and wearily

travelling, I have known many straits, burdens and sorrows in providence....

With love to you both and many desires that ere long you may see His wonder-working hand.

Yours very truly,

J.K.Popham

October 30th, 1893

THE VALUE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

By Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

If the Scripture be of divine inspiration, then be exhorted to study the Scripture. It is a copy of God's will. Be Scripture-men, Bible-Christians. "I adore the fulness of Scripture," says Tertullian. In the Book of God are scattered many truths as so many pearls. "Search the Scriptures" (John 5. 39). Search as for a vein of silver. This blessed Book will fill your head with knowledge and your heart with grace. God wrote the two tables with His own fingers; and if He took pains to write, well may we take pains to read. Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18. 24). The Word is our *Magna Charta* for heaven. Shall we be ignorant of our charter? "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3. 16). The memory must be a tablebook where the Word is written.

There is majesty sparkling in every line of Scripture. Take but one instance: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save" (Isa. 63. 1). Here is a lofty, magnificent style. What angel could speak after this manner? Junius was converted by reading one verse of John; he beheld a majesty in it beyond all human rhetoric.

There is a melody in Scripture. This is that blessed harp which drives away sadness of spirit. Hear the sounding of this harp a little: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1. 15). He took not only our flesh upon Him but our sins. And, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11. 28). How sweetly does this harp of Scripture sound, what heavenly music does it make in the ears of a distressed sinner, especially when the finger of God's Spirit touches this instrument!

There is divinity in Scripture. It contains the marrow and quintessence of religion. It is a rock of diamonds, a mystery of piety.

The lips of Scripture have grace poured into them. The Scripture speaks of faith, self-denial and all the graces which, as a chain of pearls, adorns a Christian. It excites to holiness; it treats of another world; it gives a prospect of eternity! O then, search the Scripture! make the Word familiar to you.

Had I the tongue of angels, I could not sufficiently set forth the excellency of Scripture. It is a spiritual optic-glass in which we behold God's glory; it is the tree of life, the oracle of wisdom, the rule of manners, the heavenly seed of which the new creature is formed (James 1. 18). "The two Testaments," says Austin [Augustine of Hippo], "are the two breasts which every Christian must suck, that he may get spiritual nourishment." The leaves of the tree of life were for healing. (Rev. 22. 2). So these holy leaves of Scripture are for the healing of our souls.

The Scripture is profitable for all things. If we are deserted, here is spiced wine that cheers the heavy heart; if we are pursued by Satan, here is the sword of the Spirit to resist him; if we are diseased with sin's leprosy, here are the waters of the sanctuary, both to cleanse and cure. O then, search the Scriptures! There is no danger in tasting this tree of knowledge. There was a penalty laid at first, that we might not taste of the tree of knowledge. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2. 17). There is no danger in plucking from this tree of holy Scripture; if we do not eat of this tree of knowledge, we shall surely die. O then, read the Scriptures! Time may come when the Scriptures may be kept from us.

Read the Bible with reverence. Think in every line you read that God is speaking to you. The ark wherein the law was put was overlaid with pure gold, and was carried on bars, that the Levites might not touch it (Exod. 25. 14). Why was this, but to give reverence to the law? Read with seriousness. It is matter of life and death; by this Word you must be tried; conscience and Scripture are the jury God will proceed by in judging you. Read the Word with affection. Get your hearts quickened with the Word; go to it to fetch fire. "Did not our hearts burn within us?" (Luke 24. 32). Labour that the Word may not only be a lamp to direct, but a fire to warm.

Read the Scripture, not only as a history, but as a love letter sent you from God, which may affect your hearts. Pray that the same Spirit that wrote the Word may assist you in reading it; that God's Spirit would show you the wonderful things of His law. "Go near," saith God to Philip, "join thyself to this chariot" (Acts 8. 29). So, when God's Spirit joins Himself with the chariot of His Word, it becomes effectual.

BOOK REVIEWS

Gospel Precepts: The Believer's Rule of Conduct, by J.C. Philpot; paperback; 162 pages; price £5.75 plus £1.72 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the bookroom or from agents.

As Editor of the *Gospel Standard*, J.C. Philpot, an erudite scholar, had the wonderful ability of setting forth the deepest truths in simple form – to readers, most of whom were uneducated. Over the years he produced a series of “Meditations on Various Points of our Most Holy Faith.” Some years ago, at the instigation of Mr. O.G. Pearce, a few of these were published. We consider Philpot’s *Meditations on the Sacred Humanity of the Blessed Redeemer* to be the finest work that Gospel Standard Trust Publications have published.

Gospel Precepts originally consisted of separate articles month by month in the 1865 *Gospel Standard*, entitled “Meditations on the Preceptive Part of the Word of God.” In this work Philpot insists on the vital importance of consistent Christian behaviour – not on legal ground, but as constrained by the love of Christ. He points out how the usual pattern of the epistles is: doctrine; experience; then two or three chapters on the precepts of the gospel.

As these Meditations appeared month by month, there is of necessity some repetition or the labouring of a point previously made. But Timothy Abbott has skilfully performed the editing and layout of the book.

We remind our readers that last year we published four extracts from these Meditations.

Christian Marriage, by D.M. Lloyd-Jones; 186 pages; price £7; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

The contents of this book were first published in 1973, being a series of eleven sermons originally preached in Westminster Chapel. In an age which has seen the almost total collapse of marriage, the appearance of this book is welcome at this time.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones deals with the basic principles of marriage, especially Christian marriage, as set out by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5. 22-33. The harmony of the Old Testament with the New is examined, and the conclusion reached that marriage is not a human contrivance or arrangement, but God’s ordinance, something instituted by God. Dr. Lloyd-Jones maintains that marriage can only be fully understood as we understand the doctrine of the nature of the church and the relationship of the church to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Practical issues are not avoided, the author dwelling on the natural priority of man with woman as the “weaker vessel,” but not for a moment suggesting she is inferior to her husband, but rather that she is essentially different from man. Dr. Lloyd-Jones maintains that feminism, in setting up the woman as equal, has led to aggressiveness, and an undermining of the role of the man.

Most of what has been written is commendable. However, we could not agree with the several places in which it is stated that “adultery breaks the marriage relationship” and is a valid ground for divorce. We believe strongly in the position consistently maintained over the years in the *Gospel Standard* magazine that the marriage covenant is dissolved *only* by death.

T.H.W. Scott, Harpenden

MELANCHOLY THOUGHTS SUPPRESSED*Verses are taken from this hymn for both of our hymns 209 and 230*

Why should my soul indulge complaints,
 Or sit and brood despair?
 The meanest of my Father's saints
 Are safe beneath His care.

Why should I thus desponding bow,
 Or why with anguish bleed?
 Though darkness veils my passage now,
 Yet glory shall succeed.

Why should my envious foes prevail,
 In what they most desire?
 My faith, though weak, can never fail,
 Nor humble hope expire.

A thousand promises are wrote
 In characters of blood,
 And those emphatic lines denote
 The ever-faithful God.

Through these sweet promises I range,
 And (blessed be His name!)
 Though I, a fickle mortal, change,
 His love is still the same.

Grace, like a fountain, ever flows,
 Fresh succours to renew;
 The Lord my wants and weakness knows,
 My sins and sorrows too.

'Tis not perpetual sunshine here,
 Yet I'm assured of this:
 Ocean's wild tumults shall endear
 The port of endless bliss.

My God, my everlasting Friend,
 Directs my doubtful ways;
 Will give salvation in the end,
 And His shall be the praise.

Thomas Greene of Ware, 1780

His best known hymn is, "It is the Lord, enthroned in light."

OBITUARY

Erratum: In the account of Mrs. Wilkins last month (page 159) the hymn numbers were given wrongly. The hymns sung were: 843, 720 and 741 (at the grave).

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JULY 2012

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

THE DAY OF REST

*Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton, on June 3rd, 2012, the day
of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations
(Published by special request)*

Text: "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made" (Gen. 2. 3).

Before man fell, before sin entered the world and death by sin, Almighty God appointed two sacred ordinances: marriage and the Sabbath day. And those two ordinances have never been abolished. They were given not just for the people of God, but for the whole of mankind, and they were given in the Lord's great kindness. The fall of man, the entrance of sin, man's rebellion against God, man's disobedience never disannulled those two creation ordinances. But beloved friends, both of them today are being bitterly assailed. Satan hates them, but it is right to say that the Lord loves them – marriage between one man and one woman; the Sabbath, one day in seven to be set apart completely, entirely for the Lord. And when these two things are disregarded and dishonoured, then the Lord is solemnly displeased, and then judgment comes on that nation, or that people, or that family, or that person – not always immediately, because the old saying is still true: "Though the mills of God grind slowly, they grind exceeding small."

Now this weekend is a momentous time in the history of our nation. As loyal citizens we honour our Queen; we give thanks for sixty years' reign, for the stability of the throne. Many things in our Queen we have admired – her devotion to duty, and especially last year her Christmas day address when she said so many excellent things. Our desire is that the Lord in love and mercy might remember her in her last days. So we wish to make these things clear. But our hearts are deeply saddened that our nation today should celebrate the Diamond Jubilee in open disobedience of Almighty God and in open desecration of His Sabbath day. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man" – or a nation – "soweth, that shall he also reap." And what about us here this morning? I believe we can honestly say as we think of those multitudes in London in celebration today,

"Though the world may think it strange,
We would not with the world exchange."

Well, here we have Almighty God, the sovereign Creator, at the end of six days' creation, resting on the seventh day. "And God blessed the seventh day." I know some people would cavil and say we keep the first day, but the essence of the Sabbath was never that it was just the seventh day; the essence of it, that it was one day in seven, that it was as every seventh day came round. The New Testament makes it plain that as when God created the world, the holy Sabbath was given to remember creation and an almighty Creator, the Lord Jesus, the great Head of the church, changed the day from the seventh to the first in memory of His glorious resurrection. In the New Testament we have the Christian Sabbath, the first day, the Lord's day, the day of rest, the day of resurrection.

"And God blessed the seventh day." It is precious to Him. God blessed it "and sanctified it." What does this word *sanctify* mean? It appears in various ways in Scripture, but it always has this for its fundamental meaning: someone or something to be set apart for a holy purpose, for a sacred purpose, and for that purpose alone. So even the vessels in the tabernacle were sanctified, were set apart for a holy purpose. So that is what the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." He set Himself apart for a holy purpose, and O what a holy purpose it was as it embraced the everlasting salvation of the whole church of God!

"God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it" – set apart completely from the other six – "because that in it He had rested from all His work which He created and made." So we are reminded that God is our Creator. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." God is our Creator and He has a perfect right to command, and one of His first commandments is the Sabbath day.

I would like to bring this subject before you with the Lord's help in two ways. First of all, as it is a divine commandment, a commandment given by God, and how it is given to the whole human race and given them for their good. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." But then secondly, I would like to speak about the Sabbath day, not in a legal sense or a sense of duty, but the privilege of it and the blessedness of it and how the Lord's people so dearly love it.

"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." Never forget that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. It was given before the law of Moses. When the law was given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai, the fourth commandment was, "*Remember* the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." It had already been given. The commandment of the Lord to us was to remember what God had given. It was established on Mount Sinai, but that was not the beginning. It does not just belong to the Jews.

It was an ordinance of God at the time of man's creation. So for instance, before we come to Exodus chapter 20 and the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, we have the gift of the manna, but do not forget that with the gift of the manna, there was this keeping of the Sabbath day. The manna was given six days, but on the sixth day, they had to gather twice as much. If they went out on the Sabbath, there was nothing, and there was that standing miracle. Other days it putrefied, it went bad, but not if kept for the Sabbath.

Then we find after the law how strictly the Lord commanded the keeping of His holy Sabbath. You remember a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day, and Moses enquiring, and the commandment was he must be put to death. Now mercifully we are not under those legal requirements now, but if words mean anything at all, it means two things: that the Sabbath means so much to Almighty God, and secondly, He "will by no means clear the guilty."

"God blessed the Sabbath day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." It is clear in the history of the human race that nations that have kept the Sabbath have been honoured by God. Was there ever a time when the Sabbath was so carefully kept as during the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell? Was there ever a time as those few years when England was greater in Europe? The great French empire of Louis XIV, and his chief minister Cardinal Mazarin trembled at the mention of Oliver Cromwell. This was a nation that loved the Sabbath and honoured the Sabbath, but nations that have dishonoured the Sabbath, O what disapproval there has been from the Lord!

One thing has been specially noticed, and it is this: that in times of spiritual revival when thousands at one time have been wrought upon in conviction and conversion by the Spirit of God, one sin that sinners have been specially convicted of is Sabbath-breaking. Robert Murray M'Cheyne spoke especially of that point as he sought to enforce the keeping of the Sabbath. In some of those revivings that broke out, where people were mourning their sin and guilt, with so many it was especially for the breaking of the Sabbath. And then not much more than one hundred years ago, the 1904 Welsh Revival. I do not know a lot about it, and I think there were some features in it that were not the best, but the interesting thing, that as the Spirit of God worked and people's hearts were affected, Wales became famous everywhere: "Nothing opens in Wales on Sundays!" All the shops were closed on the Sabbath, all the public houses were closed on the Sabbath, and it is only during recent times there has been this Sunday opening.

We now have the solemnity of this Sabbath desecration in our country and this terrible Sabbath desecration in high places even today.

It has not always been so. It is not too many years ago when the only defeat that Mrs. Thatcher ever had as Conservative Prime Minister was when she tried to force through Sunday opening. A lot of people here went to that meeting in Luton and our M.P., Graham Bright, laughed and mocked at the protest of Christian people. He said, "Whatever you say or do, the Bill is going through." To their amazement, it did not go through. The Lord answered the prayers of His little remnant, but it seems not so much so today, the prayers of the little remnant not being answered the same.

But there is one thing that comes very close. In former days the Lord's people very, very dearly loved the Sabbath day and very, very dearly honoured it, and very, very carefully and graciously kept it. We knew people who would not even clean their teeth or shave on the Sabbath, they were so concerned about not dishonouring the Lord. I want to say this lovingly and affectionately, but there is a careless spirit concerning keeping the Lord's day that has now come into our chapels and our congregations. Things are not the same as they were fifty years ago, and if the Lord's people, or those who profess to be the Lord's people, or those who meet with the Lord's people are not so concerned about Sabbath keeping, is it any wonder that the Lord allows the wicked to take away some of the last restraints? The Lord has made it very clear in His Word. I would say this: that Sabbath keeping is a lot more than just coming to the house of God on the Lord's day.

Well, those few thoughts in a general sense about the keeping of the Sabbath. It is a divine appointment, a creation ordinance, and binding on the whole human race, inviolable right to the very end of time.

"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." Now I want to come to it, secondly, not in any legal sense or in a sense of duty, but the way the Lord's people count it a privilege, and how they are brought to love it. There are some of you here and you love the Lord's day. There are some of you here who can say with the Psalmist, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." Many things make you sad, but, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." The eighty-fourth Psalm: "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.... For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

"One day amidst the place
Where my dear God has been,

Is sweeter than ten thousand days
Of pleasurable sin."

But it was not always so, beloved friends, was it? It was not always so with you; it was not always so with me. We can trace a change coming, can't we? And it is a good mark of grace if we can trace this change that took place through grace in our attitude to the holy Sabbath, the Lord's day. What I mean is this. When we were children or young people, perhaps you remember those times. You woke up and there was a sense of disappointment. It was Sunday, and you could not be meeting your friends, and you could not be out playing your games, and all these things. You were looking forward to when Monday came. But some of you know a difference taking place. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." And one thing is this: we have it in the prophecy of Isaiah: to "*call the Sabbath a delight.*" O those early days with us spiritually when we longed for the Lord's day to come, when we could hardly wait for it, and when we woke up on the Sabbath morning, and O what a thrill!

"There I have been, and there would go;
'Tis like a little heaven below."

And the sadness when the Lord's day came to an end and we had to go home. I cannot remember very clearly, but I rather think there was a time in my early days at our chapel when we did not have any week night services at all for a time. I know what it literally was to walk back into chapel after I had left to have a last look. O we know this:

"Jesus, how heavenly is the place,
Where Thy dear people wait for Thee!
Where the rich fountain of Thy grace
Stands ever open, full, and free."

Perhaps some of you say, Well, you are not talking about the Lord's day; you are talking about chapel; you are talking about the services of God's house. Well really, we cannot separate the two, because God blessed the Sabbath day, and what is the blessing of the Sabbath day? Well, we are to cease from our daily work and activity. We have to cease from pleasure whether it is lawful or not. It has always been agreed by the godly that works of necessity and mercy are permitted, and even blessed by the Lord on the Sabbath – works of necessity and mercy. But the godly Puritans said, Be careful how you stretch it, works of necessity and mercy. The Puritans called the Sabbath "the queen of all days." The Puritans called the Sabbath "the market day of souls." So you cannot separate the keeping of the Sabbath from the services of the sanctuary.

"God blessed the seventh day," and what has He blessed it with? "In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will

bless thee.” The many assemblies of His people. “God blessed the seventh day.” The glorious gospel of the grace of God. “God blessed the seventh day.” “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst,” and that to bless. “God blessed the seventh day.” You cannot separate thinking of the Sabbath day from the services of God’s house. O but if your religion is real, it is not just an outward keeping of the Sabbath; it is not just an outward obedience to the command; it is not just a duty. O it is a privilege! The wonderful privilege, one day in seven, a day of rest! What a blessing it was to our forefathers when they were engaged in manual labour and some even little children going to work in the cotton factories at four or five o’clock on the Monday morning and there until late on the Saturday evening. Didn’t they even outwardly value the Sabbath day! But, “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,” and that is what we want: God’s blessing on the Sabbath day, God’s blessing on His holy Word; God’s blessing on us as sinners; God’s blessing on our families.

“God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.” Tell me, if you were to think carefully, what is the greatest blessing that a longing, living soul looks forward to on the holy Sabbath? Isn’t it this: to hear of the Saviour, to listen to the preaching of the cross, to hear of Christ crucified, to be told about a risen, almighty Saviour, willing and able to save even to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him? Isn’t this it? Isn’t this the blessedness of the Sabbath: to know that there is a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness in the blood of Christ? “And sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.”

We love the Lord’s day and we love the Lord’s house. “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.” And we love the gospel. There are times in our life when we are tried and sorely tempted by Satan, but sometimes we come back to this: “Lord, I *have* loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.”

“Could I joy His saints to meet,
Choose the ways I once abhorred,
Find at times the promise sweet,
If I did not love the Lord?”

“God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,” and we are glad He did, but when the Sabbath comes, we want Him to bless us. O to be a Jacob: “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.” O to be a Jabez: “Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed.” We do not want to be left just to come and go. We do not want the Sabbath to pass without our hearts being touched. We do not want the Word to go over our heads. We are like Bartimaeus when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by: he did not want Jesus of Nazareth to pass him by. When we come and it is

the Lord's day, what is the promise of the Lord's day? That Jesus of Nazareth passeth by, O but we do not want Him to pass us by. We do not want Him to be silent to us. "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

"God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." So when we come right to the closing Book of holy Scripture, we have the Apostle John: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." It was the Lord's day. Sadly, we are not always in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and we cannot put ourselves in the Spirit. Only the Lord can put us in the Spirit. But under the New Testament, it is not just the day of creation; it is the day of the resurrection, and it is the power of the resurrection we want to feel, the power of the resurrection attending the Word, the power of the resurrection taking our affections, setting them on things above, the power of the resurrection putting us in the Spirit on the resurrection day.

"God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." O to be found "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." With John, he was not even favoured to meet with the Lord's people. He was in exile on the rocky Isle of Patmos "for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Ancient writers say that because of his witness to the truth he had been sent to work in the silver mines there. He was all alone. He could no longer preach. He was separated from the people of God. It was the Lord's day. What a mercy the Lord is not confined to places! There have been quite a few from Bethel, when they have been in hospital the Lord has favoured them, the Lord has met them there. That is what we long for when we come on the Lord's day. "May we our loved Redeemer meet." But John met his Redeemer, and that is what we need, what we long for – not just to meet one another. "May we our loved Redeemer meet."

"God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." He certainly blessed it with John. He says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." And there were two things, and really we want these two things, not in the same measure as John, because much of it was a vision to him, but he saw the King in His beauty. Is that the blessing you long for on the Sabbath day, to have a glimpse of the King in His beauty? It is no wonder John said, "I fell at His feet as dead." He had leaned on His breast; He had seen Him crucified; but now he sees Him in all His glory.

"This is the Man, the exalted Man,
Whom we, unseen, adore."

John saw Him and we long to see Him in all His wonderful fulness of grace, in all His blessed suitability to meet our deepest need.

"God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. But the other thing with John: he heard His voice. When we come on the Lord's day, we want to hear the Lord's

voice, the Lord's voice speaking through the ministry of the Word. What did John hear? It would be a wonderful thing if anyone in this chapel heard it this morning. Then it would be a real spiritual Sabbath to you. You would "enjoy a gospel day, and heaven begun below." "Fear not ... I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." May we know more of seasons like this.

So there are the two sides to it. There is the divine commandment to the whole human race for their good, part of the holy law of God, and yet given at creation, but then with God's people, the privilege of it, constrained by love, that love to the Lord's day.

"Day of all the week the best,
Emblem of eternal rest."

"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made." And so the emphasis here and the emphasis under the law and the emphasis under the gospel is this: that it is a day of rest. And then we have it opened up so sweetly in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 – not just that resting from the toil and labours of the week, but "there remaineth therefore a rest" – in Christ – "to the people of God." If your religion is real, when it is the Lord's day, the day of rest, you think of that rest, that spiritual rest, that rest which is symbolised by the Lord's day, and so your heart says,

"O that I now the rest might know,
Believe and enter in!"

A rest for weary sinners, those who are weary and burdened with sin and their soul's concerns and a never-ending eternity and the judgment day, and that rest in Christ symbolised in the Sabbath, gloriously set forth in the gospel on the Sabbath.

"It welcomes the weary to come and be blessed
With ease from their burdens, in Jesus to rest."

That voice still sounds forth: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As Bunyan's Christian found it at the cross as his burden rolled away, and he looked up into the face of a crucified Saviour, and he cried, "He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." And then he sang, and Bunyan said, I listened to the song:

"Blest cross! Blest sepulchre! Blest rather be
The Man who there was put to shame for me."

Now this is the glorious rest symbolised by the Sabbath and it is this rest that you and I long for, that you and I want to know.

And then there is that everlasting rest. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may *rest* from their labours; and their works do follow them." That everlasting Sabbath "where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths have no end."

So we see the divine institution and we honour it, and we are grieved by the dishonouring of God's Word and the desecration of His holy Sabbath. But then the love we feel towards it, and how on the Lord's day we want to feel these Sabbath blessings and we want to know something of this rest in Christ which remains for the people of God.

"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."

GLEANINGS FROM HENRY FOWLER

Henry Fowler (1779-1838) was pastor at Gower Street Chapel, London. The following extracts are taken from comments he made in a little book of hymns and poems he produced.

I find daily in myself that I am a composition of contradictions. Faith sometimes carries me to Christ as my only blessed Refuge from the storm, and that brings solid peace. But faith is not at my command. I am indebted to the Lord for every outgoing of my heart by faith in Him. My fits of unbelief are many, and my reasonings against my interest in covenant love appear to my sense well founded: I am such a sinner; my base and beastly heart can never be a dwelling place fit for God. Thus I reason, till Christ comes to set the captive free.

The heart's deceitfulness is a deep that none but Omnipotence can sound: "Who can know it?" The knowledge I have of my heart, I fear, is but very shallow after all. Why I think so is, I am often surprised when its evils bubble up anew. If I knew my own heart better, I should not be so often beguiled and cheated by its hypocrisies and fair promises. "He that trusteth to his own heart is a fool." How often have I acted like that fool!

My soul, trust in the Lord, and patiently wait for His salvation. Sore broken as thou art, and borne down under a sight and feeling of thy many backslidings and daily infirmities, still grace reigns.

Were it not for the mercy of God revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, I should go to black despair. I cannot find any ground for my faith and

hope in anything that I possess or have done. I am worthless, wretched, miserable. My hope alone is in free grace.

It has been frequently noticed that it is generally in the last extremity that God appears for the help of His people, both in providence and grace. It was so in Israel's case, and this is handed down to us to encourage and strengthen our faith. As Paul says, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through comfort and patience of the Scriptures might have hope." It was a most wonderful display of God's power to bring Israel through the Red Sea, but He had respect to the promise He had made with Abraham, and He, as a faithful God, will fulfil the promise spiritually to all Abraham's seed. O that my faith were more strong and fixed in the faithfulness of God!

Having found the promise the firm ground of my faith, I would tell it to the Lord's family, that they may be constrained to rejoice in tribulation and venture boldly to call on their covenant God and Father amidst all the hissings of the old serpent, as well as under the dreadful load of indwelling sin which they will carry with them down to the grave. O how sweet to have a promise of complete victory!

The poor, sin-burdened soul will find all legal duties, all his fleshly strivings, all his vows and tears, all his best resolutions, all his pious zeal and sincerity, insufficient to bring any real peace into his heart. But in this wilderness most poor, condemned sinners wander until they are utterly lost in their own apprehension. Then Christ comes by and fulfils the word: "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper."

While many talk of their goodness and inherent holiness, and appear to make these the ground of their hopes for heaven, I sicken at the sight of all my best doings, and as for inherent holiness in my flesh, I know I have no such thing. But though I cannot hope for heaven by virtue of my merits, yet I am frequently encouraged to hope that I shall enter in at last through the blood-shedding of Christ. His blood is my only fountain; His righteousness my only covering. Lord, increase my little faith.



If we are building upon any other foundation, in whole or in part, than Jesus Christ and Him crucified, we are neglecting His great salvation. To be saved from the dreadful consequences of sin, we must build simply and entirely on that foundation which God has laid in Zion, without daring to bring any of the materials of corrupt nature to mix with it. On this foundation we must pray for grace to build gold, silver and precious stones.

Thomas Reade

A DISAPPOINTED MAN SATISFIED

“And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning...” (Acts 8. 27, 28).

Many, many things have been said about this most beautiful account. The point we wish to make is this: the wonderful way by which the Lord in love and mercy supplied the Ethiopian eunuch’s need.

The Ethiopian eunuch “was returning.” He had travelled all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem. It seems that he had a certain measure of divine light; he felt an aching void the world could not fill, and he was not satisfied. He had a measure of light, sufficient light to discern his need, so much so that he travelled that arduous journey all the way from Ethiopia to Jerusalem with a desire to worship God, to find Him, to know more about Him. Yet it seems that he was destitute of the real knowledge of the gospel. And he “*was returning.*”

O there seems to be such a solemn emphasis here, as if there was a dark cloud over the poor eunuch. He was returning; he had gone all that long journey in vain. He had been to Jerusalem, the holy city. He had met there with the scribes and the Pharisees and had seen all the ceremonies, all the outward worship, and he was returning, and he had not got what he wanted; he had not found satisfaction for his soul. *He was returning.*

There seems to be such a dark cloud over that eunuch, the disappointment of that poor man! We know he was still in the depths of ignorance. He read Isaiah 53. He was seeking after the truth, but he was a complete stranger to the meaning of what he read.

When Philip had spoken with him, he asked the question, “Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?” O this dark cloud over his soul, the bitter disappointment, all that journey to the holy city. He had heard and seen so much in Jerusalem where God had appointed worship, and was his journey to be completely in vain? He had been there and tarried, and had sought to worship, and now he was returning disappointed. The wonderful thing is this: that while all this was going on, the Lord was working down in Samaria. He was working in the hearts of the people there, and He knew all about the eunuch; He saw his disappointment, his darkness. “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” This eunuch had a heavenly Father although he did not know it. O but his heavenly Father knew his disappointment, his darkness, his great need, and the appointed time was rolling on apace in which Christ was going to be revealed to his soul, the hope of glory.

Perhaps some of you find the Sabbath evening comes and you too are returning to your own home, and you have liked what you have heard – O but really there is a dark cloud over you; there is a sense of disappointment; you have not really got what you wanted, and Satan tells you you never will get it. O do some of you know this experience? He “was returning.” You have perhaps come up to the sanctuary with such longings, such prayer, as if your very heart was going to burst, and you felt surely the Lord would meet your case, whatever your case is, whether it is your body or your soul, and then you are returning and there seems this dark cloud, this deep disappointment. You have not got what you longed for; you have not received what you expected. O but “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”

And whilst the poor eunuch was so dark and so disappointed, at that very time there was a stranger making his way across the desert. “My God shall supply all your need.” Where ever was there a minister to preach to this eunuch, and how ever could he come to preach to one man? How ever could he come into contact with him? Well, the Lord was already working. He knew how to manage these things. The eunuch got what he wanted, everything he wanted, because he found a precious Christ, and he went on his way rejoicing. He did not find it in the way he expected, or the place he expected. A strange meeting place this for a gospel minister and a needy sinner in the middle of a desert!

We have often thought of Philip. The Lord told him to leave these things in Samaria and go down to the desert of Gaza. “And he arose and went.” That is the obedience of faith. “He arose and went.” He had a clear leading and he obeyed and went into the desert. But the Lord did not tell him what was going to happen. Then he saw this chariot. “Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” And when he got there, he heard the eunuch was reading Isaiah 53, and this was to be his text; his text was waiting for him, and he had to speak on it unexpectedly, and “the place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before His shearer, so opened He not His mouth.” If the Lord should ever send us in some strange circumstance and gave us a word from which to speak to some stranger like the eunuch, we should love it to be a word like this: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter.”

“Then Philip ... began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” And this was it. The Lord most wonderfully and lovingly supplied the eunuch’s need. He sent Philip all the way from Samaria to this desert that the eunuch might be brought to know Christ and be blessed with peace and gospel liberty. O the time of love did come – a strange place, a strange meeting. And it will come with you, those of you who so often have returned from the sanctuary disappointed, with the

dark cloud hanging over your head. You have not got what you wanted, what you expected, but “the time of love will come,” in God’s time and in God’s way, not yours, even if a Philip has to come down from Samaria to preach Christ unto you.

There was one thing that met the eunuch’s need, and that was the preaching of Jesus in His glorious Person and sin-atonement sufferings and death, and this did the deed. Perhaps some of you do not understand your case, but you say,

“Something yet will do the deed,
And that dear something much I need.”

Well, you have that “dear something” here in the preaching of Christ. And the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing.” The dark cloud was gone; he was no more disappointed. He did not find what he wanted at Jerusalem, but he did find it in Christ.

TRUE BELIEVING

By William Guthrie (1620-1665)

1. Believing on Christ must be personal. A man himself and in his own proper person must be brought to receive Christ Jesus. “The just shall live by faith.” Unless a man with his own heart is brought to be pleased and to acquiesce in that device of saving sinners, he cannot be saved. I grant this faith is given unto him by Christ; but certain it is that it must be personal.

2. This faith must be cordial and hearty. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness.” A man must be sincere and without guile in receiving Christ, judging Him the only Covering of the eyes, not hankering after another way. The matter must not swim only in the head or understanding, but it must be in the heart. The man not only must be persuaded that Christ is the way, but affectionately persuaded of it, loving and liking the thing, having complacency in it; so that it is all the man’s desire, as David speaketh of the covenant.

If a man be cordial and affectionate in anything, surely he must be so here in this one thing that is necessary. It must not be simply a fancy in the head. It must be a heart-business, a soul-business; yea, not a business in the outer court of the affections, but in the flower of the affections, and in the innermost cabinet of the soul, where Christ is formed. Shall a man be cordial in anything, and not in this which doth comprise all his chief interests, and his everlasting state within it? Shall the Lord be said to rejoice over a man “as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride,” and to “rest in His love” with joy, and shall not the heart of man go out and meet Him here? The heart, or nothing; love, or nothing;

marriage-love which goeth from heart to heart, love of espousals, or nothing. "My son, give Me thine heart." "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

I will not say that there is in all, as soon as they believe, a prevailing, sensible love which maketh sick. But there must be in believing a rational and kindly love, so well grounded and deeply engaging that "many waters cannot quench" it. It is "strong as death," and jealousy in it burneth as fire.

3. The third property or qualification of believing, as it goeth out after Christ, is, it must be rational. Hereby I mean that the man is enabled to move towards God in Christ in knowledge and understanding, taking up God's device of saving sinners by Christ as the Scripture doth hold it out; not fancying a Christ to himself otherwise than the gospel speaketh of Him, nor another way of relief by Him than the Word of God holdeth out. Therefore we find knowledge joined to the covenant between God and man as a requisite. "And I will give them an heart to know Me." "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." I mean here also that a man be in calmness of spirit, and as it were, in cold blood, in receiving Christ Jesus; not in a single fit of affection which soon vanisheth; as in the stony-ground hearers, and in the children of Israel, nor under a temporary interest, as Simon Magus was when he believed. A man must be brought to act here rationally, as being master of himself; in some measure able to judge of the good or evil of the thing, as it stands before him.

4. As it goeth out rationally, so it goeth out resolutely. The poor, distressed people in the gospel did by the Spirit most resolutely cast themselves upon Christ. This resoluteness of spirit is in order to all difficulties that lie in the way. Violence is offered to these. The man whose heart is a shaping out for Christ Jesus cannot say, "There is a lion in the way." If he cannot have access by the door, he will break through the roof of the house with that man. He often doth not regard that which the world calleth discretion or prudence; like Zaccheus climbing up on a tree to see Christ, when faith was breeding in his bosom. This resoluteness of spirit by God's power looketh towards what inconveniences may follow, and waiveth all these. At least, it resolveth over all these, like a wise master-builder, who reckoneth the expense beforehand.

This resoluteness is also in order to all a man's idols, and such weights as would easily beset him, if he were not bent after Christ over them all; like that blind man who did cast his garment from him when Christ called him.

This resoluteness in the soul proceedeth from desperate self-necessity within the man; as it was with the jailer, and from the sovereign command of God, obliging the man to move towards Christ Jesus. "This is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ." And it proceedeth from the good report gone abroad of God that He putteth none away that come unto Him through Christ; but doth commend such as do adventure over the greatest difficulties, as the woman of Canaan did. But above all, this resoluteness doth proceed from the arm of Jehovah, secretly and strongly drawing the sinner towards Christ. "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him."

I will not say that every one receiving Christ hath all the foresaid thoughts formally in his mind. Yet upon search it will be found, if he be put to it, or put in mind of these things, they are then aloft in the soul.

A MINISTER'S BURDENS

My dear John,

Thank you for your most welcome letter. We both are very sorry to hear of your painful affliction. May it be only temporary! All your good wishes I desire may be granted to me. My long life has been full of changes, and I must say according to the Lord's direction I am an unprofitable servant. Yet countless mercies have been heaped on me, among them the many godly friends in the churches.

Yesterday was not quite a bad day to me. In the night I was asking for a blessing, a good portion, when John 1. 14 came to my mind, and I thought a glimpse of "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" came too; but it soon was lost in other thoughts. Instability has been a great enemy to me. "Unstable as water." Reuben's lack has marred me.

Yes, I am near the end of the turmoil of sin and many sad events. But often my own sins and the confusion of my mind make me wonder how it will be with me. Recently Jeremiah 14. 7 was made something to me: "Do Thou it for Thy name's sake," afforded a plea for one so ruined every day by his sins as I am; and verse 21 I again felt, a wonderful word only understood by faith in the light of the Spirit's teaching. Pray for me. You little think of how extreme a sinner I am, and how I need the "abundant mercy" of 1 Peter 1. 3, and the "plenteous redemption" of Psalm 130.

What a sight for a believing heart is the sight of the carcasses in the wilderness (Heb. 3. 17; 1 Cor. 10. 5)! The admonition of them is only heard by such a heart. "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe," is my prayer often. "I am weak, but Thou art mighty."

As I have felt so exhausted lately and wondered whether my life was ebbing, the question has been a solemn one with me: how it would be with me. Many fears fill my mind about the future. Providence is the fulfilling of infinite purposes, eternal decrees, both in the church and the world. We need a watchful, tender, believing, humble heart. Humility appears to me a beautiful, excellent grace.

Yours affectionately,

J.K. Popham

1926

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

My dear friend,

We shall be happy to see you to dine with us on this day week, and I hope we may have the sweet presence of the Lord in our mutual communication. There is a meeting together for the better and a meeting together for the worse, and usually when it is not for the one it is for the other. There is such a thing as carnalising each other's mind, and with God's help and blessing there is also a spiritualising of it.

Paul desired to come to Rome that he might impart unto the people a spiritual gift, not only to the end that they might be established, but that he also might be comforted together with them by the exercise of their mutual faith. Those that feared the Lord in ancient times "spake often one to another," and the Lord graciously heard and put them down in the book of His remembrance.

There is very little real spiritual conversation in our day, and one would hardly think that persons had heaven much in their hearts who have the things of heaven so little in their lips. It is a sad mark of the cold and lifeless state into which the church of God has sunk, that whilst there is so much bitterness and strife, there is so little real union and love. It is said of Naphtali that "he giveth goodly words," but why? Because he was "satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord." For though many years separated the blessings pronounced upon him by Jacob and Moses, yet he was the same character in the eyes of each, as instructed and inspired by the Holy Ghost.

I hope that you may come up from Brighton with Naphtali's experience as "a hind let loose," and may give goodly words both at Oakham and Grantham.

Yours very affectionately,

J.C. Philpot

Stamford, April 12th, 1861
To John Grace

THE DEVIL'S MISSION OF AMUSEMENT

By Archibald G. Brown (1844-1922)

Following our review of the new biography of Archibald Brown (March, p. 91), a minister in Canada kindly sent us the following article. We print it both for its intrinsic value, and also to show the difference between a leading evangelical minister 100 years ago and much that goes today.

Different days demand their own special testimony. The watchman who would be faithful to his Lord and the city of his God has need carefully to note the signs of the times and emphasise his witness accordingly. Concerning the testimony needed now, there can be little, if any, doubt. An evil is in the professed camp of the Lord, so gross, so brazen in its impudence, that the most shortsighted of spiritual men can hardly fail to notice it.

During the past few years it has developed at an abnormal rate, ever for evil. It has worked like leaven until now the whole lump ferments. Look which way you may, its presence makes itself manifest. There is little if anything, to choose between church, chapel or mission hall. However they may differ in some respects, they bear a striking likeness in the posters that figure upon and disfigure their notice boards. *Amusement for the people is the leading article advertised by each.* If any of my readers doubt my statement, or think my utterance too sweeping, let them take a tour of inspection and study "the announcements for the week" at the doors of the sanctuaries of the neighbourhood; or let them read the religious advertisements in their local papers. I have done this again and again, until the hideous fact has been proved up to the hilt, that "amusement" is ousting "the preaching of the gospel" as the great attraction. "Concerts," "Entertainments," "Fancy Fairs," "Smoking Conferences," "Dramatic Performances," are the words honoured with biggest type and most startling colours. The concert is fast becoming as much a recognised part of church life as the prayer meeting, and is already, in most places, far better attended.

"Providing recreation for the people" will soon be looked upon as a necessary part of Christian work and as binding upon the church of God as though it were a divine command, unless some strong voices be raised which will make themselves heard. I do not presume to possess such a voice, but I do entertain the hope that I may awaken some louder echoes. Anyway, the burden of the Lord is upon me in this matter, and I leave it with Him to give my testimony ringing tone, or to let it die away in silence. I shall have delivered my soul in either case. Yet the conviction fills my mind that in all parts of the country there are faithful men and women who see the danger and deplore it and will endorse my witness and my warning.

It is only during the past few years that “amusement” has become a recognised weapon of our warfare and developed into a mission. There has been a steady “down grade” in this respect. From “speaking out,” as the Puritans did, the church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she has tolerated them in her borders, and now she has adopted them and provided a home for them under the plea of “reaching the masses and getting the ear of the people.” The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church of Christ that part of her mission is to provide entertainment for the people with a view to winning them into her ranks. The human nature that lies in every heart has risen to the bait. Here now is an opportunity of gratifying the flesh and yet retaining a comfortable conscience. We can now please ourselves in order to do good to others. The rough old cross can be exchanged for a “costume,” and the exchange can be made with the benevolent purpose of elevating the people.

All this is terribly sad, and the more so because truly gracious souls are being led away by the specious pretext that it is a form of Christian work. They forget that a seemingly beautiful angel may be the devil himself, “for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11. 14).

I. My first contention is that *providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in holy Scripture as one of the functions of the church*. What her duties are will come under our notice later on. At present it is the negative side of the question that we are dealing with. Now surely, if our Lord had intended His church to be the caterer of entertainment, and *so* counteract the god of this world, He would hardly have left so important a branch of service unmentioned. If it *is* Christian work, why did not Christ at least hint it? “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” is clear enough. So would it have been if He had added, “and provide amusement for those who do not relish the gospel.” No such addendum, however, is to be found, nor even an equivalent for such, in any one of our Lord’s utterances. This style of work did not seem to occur to His mind. Then again, Christ, as an ascended Lord, gives to His church specially-qualified men for the carrying on of His work, but no mention of any gift for this branch of service occurs in the list. “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Where do the “public entertainers” come in? The Holy Ghost is silent concerning them, and His silence is eloquence.

If “providing recreation” be a part of the church’s work, surely we may look for some promise to encourage her in the toilsome task. Where is it? There is a promise for “My Word”; it “shall not return unto Me

void." There is the heart-rejoicing declaration concerning the gospel: "It is the power of God." There is the sweet assurance for the preacher of Christ that, whether he be successful or no – as the world judges success – he is a "sweet savour unto God." There is the glorious benediction for those whose testimony, so far from amusing the world, rouses its wrath: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for *great is your reward in heaven*; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people, or because they refused to? The gospel of amusement has no martyrology! In vain does one look for a promise from God for providing recreation for a godless world. That which has no authority from Christ, no provision made for it by the Spirit, no promise attached to it by God, can only be a lying hypocrite when it lays claim to be "a branch of the work of the Lord."

II. But again, *providing amusement for the people is in direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ and all His apostles*. What is to be the attitude of the church towards the world according to our Lord's teaching? Strict separation and uncompromising hostility. While no hint ever passed His lips of winning the world by pleasing it, or accommodating methods to its taste, His demand for unworldliness was constant and emphatic. He sets forth in one short sentence what He would have His disciples to be: "Ye are the salt of the earth." Yes, the salt: not the sugar-candy nor a "lump of delight." Something the world will be more inclined to spit out than swallow with a smile. Something more calculated to bring water to the eye than laughter to the lip.

Short and sharp is the utterance, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but *because ye are not of the world*, but I have chosen you *out of the world*, therefore the world hateth you." "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have *overcome the world*." "I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them, *because they are not of the world*, even as I am not of the world." "My kingdom is not of this world."

These passages are hard to reconcile with the modern idea of the church providing recreation for those who have no taste for more serious things – in other words, of conciliating the world. If they teach anything at all, it is that fidelity to Christ will bring down the world's wrath, and that Christ intended His disciples to share with Him the world's scorn and rejection. *How did Jesus act?* What were the methods of the only perfectly "faithful Witness" the Father has ever had?

As none will question that He is to be the worker's model, let us gaze upon Him. How significant the introductory account given by

Mark: "Now, after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." And again, in the same chapter I find Him saying, in answer to the announcement of His disciples that all men were seeking for Him, "Let us go into the next towns that I *may preach* there also; for *therefore came I forth*." Matthew tells us, "And it came to pass when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He departed thence to *teach and preach* in their cities." In answer to John's question, "Art Thou He that should come?" He replies, "Go and shew John those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor *have the gospel preached* to them." There is no item in the catalogue after this sort. "And the *careless are amazed*, and the *perishing are provided with innocent recreation*."

We are not left in doubt as to the matter of His preaching, for "when many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door, He preached *the Word* unto them." There was no change of method adopted by the Lord during His course of ministry, no learning by experience of a better plan. His first word of command to His evangelists was, "As ye go, preach." His last, "Preach the gospel to every creature." Not an evangelist suggests that at any time during His ministry He turned aside from preaching to entertain, and to attract the people. He was in awful earnestness, and His ministry was like Himself. Had He been less uncompromising, and introduced more of the "bright and pleasant" element into His mission, He would have been more popular.

Yet when many of His disciples went back, because of the searching nature of His preaching, I do not find there was any attempt to increase a diminished congregation by resorting to something more pleasant to the flesh. I do not hear Him saying, "We must keep up the gatherings anyway: so run after those friends, Peter, and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow. Something very short and attractive, with little, if any, preaching. Today was a service for God, but tomorrow we will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it, and have a happy hour. Be quick, Peter; we must get the public somehow; if not by gospel, then by nonsense." No, this was not how He argued. Gazing in sorrow on those who would not hear the Word, He simply turns to the twelve, and asks, "Will ye also go away?"

Jesus pitied sinners, pleaded with them, sighed over them, warned them, and wept over them, but never sought to amuse them. When the evening shadows of His consecrated life were deepening into the night of death, He reviewed His holy ministry, and found comfort and sweet

solace in the thought, "I have given them Thy Word." As with the Master, so with His apostles – their teaching is the echo of His. In vain will the epistles be searched to discover any trace of a gospel of amusement. The same call for separation from the world rings in every one. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed," is the word of command in the Romans. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate ... and touch not the unclean thing." It is the trumpet call in the Corinthians. In other words it is *come out – keep out – keep clean out* – for "what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?"

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the *world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.*" Here is the true relationship between the church and the world according to the Epistle to the Galatians. "Be not ye, therefore, partakers with them. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them," is the attitude enjoined in Ephesians. "Sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world: holding forth the Word of life," is the word in Philippians. "Dead with Christ from the elements of the world," says the Epistle to the Colossians. "Abstain from all appearance of evil," is the demand in Thessalonians.

"If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use," is the word to Timothy. "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him *without the camp*, bearing His reproach," is the heroic summons of the Hebrews. James, with holy severity, declares that "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Peter writes, "Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." John writes a whole Epistle, the gist of which is, "Love not the world, *neither the things that are in the world.* If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Here are the teachings of the apostles concerning the relationship of the church and the world. And yet, in the face of them, what do we see and hear? A friendly compromise between the two, and an insane effort to work in partnership for the good of the people. May God help us, and dispel the strong delusion. How did the apostles carry on their mission work? Was it in harmony with their teaching? Let the Acts of the Apostles give the answer.

Anything approaching the worldly fooling of today is conspicuous by its absence. The early evangelists had boundless confidence in the power of the gospel, and employed no other weapon. Pentecost followed plain preaching. When Peter and John had been locked up for the night for preaching the resurrection, the early church had a prayer meeting directly they returned, and the petition offered for the two was, "And now, Lord, grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they *may speak Thy Word*." They had no thought of praying, "Grant unto Thy servants more policy, that by a wise and discriminating use of innocent recreation they may avoid the offence of the cross, and sweetly show this people how happy and merry a lot we are."

The charge brought against the apostles by the members of the council was, "Ye have filled Jerusalem with *your doctrine*." Not much chance of this charge being brought against modern methods! The description of their work is, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." Then, if they "ceased not" from this, they had no time for arranging for entertainments; they gave themselves continually "to the ministry of the Word." Scattered by persecution, the early disciples "went everywhere preaching the Word."

When Philip went to Samaria, and was the means of bringing "great joy in that city," the only recorded method is, "He preached Christ unto them." When the apostles went to visit the scene of his labours it is stated, "And they, when they had testified and preached the *Word of the Lord*, returned to Jerusalem, and *preached the gospel* in many villages of the Samaritans." As they went back to Jerusalem directly they had finished their preaching, it is evident they did not think it their mission to stay and organise some "pleasant evenings" for the people who did not believe.

The congregations in those days did not expect anything but the Word of the Lord, for Cornelius says to Peter, "We are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." The message given was, "Words whereby thou and all thine house shall be saved." Cause and effect are closely linked in the statement, "Men of Cyrene spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus; and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord." Here you have their method – they preached; their matter – the Lord Jesus; their power – the hand of the Lord was with them; their success – many believed. What more does the church of God require today?

When Paul and Barnabas worked together, the record is, "The Lord gave testimony unto the Word of His grace." When Paul, in a vision, hears a man of Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us," he assuredly gathers that the Lord had called him to preach the gospel unto them.

Why so? How did he know but that the help needed was the brightening of their lives by a little amusement, or the refining of their manners by a collection of paintings? He never thought of such things. "Come and help us!" meant to him, "Preach the gospel." "And Paul, *as his manner was*, went in unto them, and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures" – not about the Scriptures, mark, but out of them – "opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and rise from the dead." That was the "manner" of evangelistic work in those days, and it seems to have been wonderfully powerful, for the verdict of the people is, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Just now the world is turning the church upside down! That is the only difference.

When God told Paul that He had much people in Corinth, I read, "And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them." Evidently then, he judged that the only way to bring them was by the Word. A year and a half, and only one method adopted. Wonderful! We should have had a dozen in that time! But then Paul never reckoned that providing something pleasant for the ungodly was part of his ministry; for, on his way to Jerusalem and martyrdom, he says, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, *to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*" This was all the ministry he knew. The last description we have of the methods of this prince of evangelists is of a piece with all that has gone before: "He *expounded and testified* the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening, *preaching* the kingdom of God, and *teaching* those things which concern the Lord Jesus." What a contrast to all the rot and nonsense now being perpetrated in the holy name of Christ! May the Lord clear the church of all the rubbish that the devil has imposed upon her, and bring us back again to apostolic methods!

III. Lastly, *the mission of amusement utterly fails to effect the desired end among the unsaved, but it works havoc among the young converts.* Were it a success, it would be none the less wrong. Success belongs to God; faithfulness to His instructions to me. But it is not. Test it even by this, and it is a contemptible failure. Let that be the method which is answered by fire, and the verdict will be, "The preaching of the Word, that is the power."

Let us see the converts who have been first won by amusement. Let the harlots and the drunkards to whom a dramatic entertainment has been God's first link in the chain of their conversion stand forth. Let the careless and the scoffers who have cause to thank God that the church has relaxed her spirit of separation and met them half-way in their worldliness, speak and testify. Let the husbands, wives and children,

who rejoice in a new and holy home through “Sunday Evening Lectures on Social Questions” tell out their joy. Let the weary, heavy-laden souls who have found peace through a concert, no longer keep silence. Let the men and women who have found Christ through the reversal of apostolic methods declare the same, and show the greatness of Paul’s blunder when he said, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” There is neither voice nor any to answer. The failure is on a par with the folly, and as huge as the sin. Out of thousands with whom I have personally conversed, the mission of amusement has claimed not one convert.

Now let the appeal be made to those who, repudiating every other method, have staked everything on *the Book and the Holy Ghost*. Let them be challenged to produce results. There is no need. Blazing sacrifices on every hand attest the answer by fire. Ten thousand times ten thousand voices are ready to declare that the plain preaching of the Word was, first and last, the cause of their salvation.

But how about the other side of this matter – what are baneful effects? Are they also *nil*? I will here solemnly as before the Lord give my personal testimony. *Though I have never seen a sinner saved, I have seen any number of backsliders manufactured by this new departure.* Over and over again have young Christians, and sometimes Christians who are not young, come to me in tears, and asked what they were to do, as they had lost all their peace and fallen into evil. Over and over again has the confession been made, “I began to go wrong by attending worldly amusements that Christians patronized.” It is not very long since that a young man in an agony of soul said to me, “I never thought of going to the theatre until my minister put it into my heart by preaching that there was no harm in it. I went, and it has led me from bad to worse and now I am a miserable backslider, and he is responsible for it.”

When young converts begin to “damp off,” forsake the gatherings for prayer, and grow worldly, I almost always find that worldly Christianity is responsible for the first downward step. The mission of amusements is the devil’s halfway house to the world. It is because of what I have seen that I feel deeply, and would fain write strongly. This thing is working rottenness in the church of God, and blasting her service for the King. In the guise of Christianity, it is accomplishing the devil’s own work. Under the pretence of going out to reach the world, it is carrying our sons and daughters into the world. With the plea of “Do not alienate the masses with your strictness,” it is seducing the young disciples from “the simplicity that is in Christ.” *Professing to win the world, it is turning the garden of the Lord into a public recreation ground.* To fill the temple with those who see no beauty in Christ, a grinning Dagon is put over the doorway.

It will be no wonder if the Holy Ghost, grieved and insulted, withdraws His presence; for "what concord hath Christ with Belial, and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?"

"*Come out!*" is the call for today. Sanctify yourselves. Put away the evil from among you. Cast down the world's altars and cut down her groves. Spurn her offered assistance. Decline her help, as your Master did the testimony of devils, for "He suffered them not to speak, because they knew Him." Renounce all the policy of the age. Trample upon Saul's armour. Grasp the Book of God. Trust the Spirit who wrote its pages. Fight with this weapon only and always. Cease to amuse and seek to arouse. Shun the clapping of a delighted audience, and listen for the sobs of a convicted one. Give up trying to "please" men who have only the thickness of their ribs between their souls and hell; and warn, and plead, and entreat, as those who feel the waters of eternity creeping upon them.

Let the church again confront the world; testify against it; meet it only behind the cross; and, like her Lord, she shall overcome, and with Him share the victory.

A UNIQUE MEMORIAL

At the front of Ebenezer Chapel, Ripley, there is a most unusual memorial tablet. This year (actually this month) is the 200th anniversary of the opening of the chapel.

This tablet was raised as a love token to the memory of William Meryett, who departed this life on the 18th January, 1845, aged 78 years. He erected this chapel in the year 1812.

The first text the Lord gave in Ephesians you'll see (Eph. 2. 21),
 And his last in Galatians was a great charge to thee (Gal. 1. 9).
 We bless God this dear man was raised from the fall,
 And sent (first to Woking) God's people to call.
 But his declaration was faithful and free,
 Some felt a close union: some could not agree.
 The Lord gave him freedom, and led him to see
 That in little Ripley his chapel should be.
 God helped him to build it and preach in it too,
 For thirty-three years, and then bid adieu.
 His work being ended he was raised above,
 Where we hope to join him, and sing of God's love.

BOOK REVIEWS

Prayer: A Biblical Perspective, by Eric J. Alexander; paperback; 94 pages; price £5.75; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We found this book very profitable and helpful, one of the better books by a modern writer (even despite the use of a modern version of Scripture).

The subject is one of vital importance for the child of God. We felt that some chapters were better and more important than others. The chapter on “the priority of prayer” is excellent, based on the example of the apostles and the text: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word” – prayer mentioned first.

We know nothing of the author, who has been a minister of the Church of Scotland for over fifty years, but he writes as a man of prayer.

Thoughts on Parts of Leviticus, by Benjamin Wills Newton; hardback; 402 pages; price £15.95 (but currently at an introductory price of £13 plus postage); published by The Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony, and obtainable from 1 Donald Way, Chelmsford, Essex. CM2 9JB.

Years ago we were lent “Jukes on the offerings,” and found it a most profitable and enlightening book. We believe it was recommended by Mr. Foster of Nottingham. It dealt with the offerings of the opening chapters of Leviticus.

This book is in similar vein and also from a “Brethren” background, but with Benjamin Wills Newton (1807-1899) there is none of the later Arminianism that permeated Brethrenism. Here we have a lost, guilty sinner and a great Saviour.

Thoughts on Parts of Leviticus deals with the burnt offering, the meat offering, the peace sacrifice, the sin offering and the trespass offering – all pointing to Christ as explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The chapters are two-fold: first dealing generally with the theme; second, explaining in detail point by point. B.W. Newton was an extremely learned man and there are various references to the Hebrew.

We have never been sure just how carefully every detail of the ceremonial law and its significance needs to be (indeed, can be) understood by us. But there certainly are some lovely truths at the beginning of Leviticus. Especially there is the two-fold view of the sacrifice of Christ: the burnt offering, revealing Him in all His glory as acceptable to the Father; the sin-offering, Christ made sin for His people (2. Cor. 5. 21).

We specially like the account of the sinner laying his hand on the head of the sacrifice: “And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” (Lev. 1. 4).

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

Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry, selected and introduced by James M. Garretson; clothbound; Vol. I, 792 pages; Vol. II, 616

pages; £34 the set; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

From the days of the Pilgrim Fathers, there was a strong tradition of Presbyterian godliness in North America. This was continued, and strongly contended for, when in 1812 Princeton Theological Seminary was founded. These two books contain a cross-section of sermons and articles from 1812 to 1921 in connection with Princeton.

Here you will find “the great names” of North American Calvinism – Archibald Alexander, W.B. Sprague, Samuel Miller, Gardiner Spring, J.W. Alexander, W.S. Plumer, Charles Hodge (whose *Systematic Theology* was recommended to young people by J.K. Popham), A.A. Hodge, and in later years, B.B. Warfield and J. Gresham Machen.

What was this group famous for?

1. A vital insistence on the utter, absolute and complete sufficiency of infallible Scripture. There can be no compromise here.

2. A defence of the doctrines of grace, commonly called Calvinism. This is what the gospel is.

3. A very high conception of the work of the Christian minister and the vital importance of what the books consistently call “piety” – what we would call a gracious experience of the truth and godly living. There is not a shred of levity throughout these works.

The two books, *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry* are very intellectual works – obviously so, as they are college or university lectures by professors or even to them. We feel that their interest will be especially in the U.S.A. and with ministers. But we did find a few profitable things.

It was very enlightening, in reading the defence of truth against error creeping into the church, to realise the depths of Satan’s craft and subtlety, and the ingenious and deceitful arguments which were being opposed. The position is the same today – and error often makes its appearance under the semblance of truth.

Though we felt there was too much emphasis on academic learning, all through there was this foundation: nothing of value without the Holy Spirit’s work.

One thing which specially struck us was in Charles Hodge’s address on “The Character Traits of the Gospel Minister.” Some of his remarks are quite disturbing under the heading of “a sacred regard for all moral obligations” (Vol. II, p. 133 ff.). A minister can be guilty of dishonesty by not clearly stating where he stands lest he be thought too light/too harsh. Some men are clear when alone, but in a group are carried along with the opinions of others. Some exaggerate to make sure of their point. Some even set out what they do *not* believe in order to bring out the contrast – and then deny it. As he goes on, we can see how often this kind of thing takes place, often almost sub-consciously, but it is something to be watched and dreaded. May we be clear, conscientious, consistent – in the fear of God under His all-seeing eye.

There are portraits of the ministers concerned and short sketches of their lives.

There is a third, companion volume: *Pastor-Teachers of Old Princeton: Memorial Addresses for the Faculty of Princeton’s Theological Seminary: 1812-1921*.

The Scottish Reformation, by David Hay Fleming; paperback, 144 pages, Price £6.99; published by Reformation Press on behalf of Isle of Lewis branch of The Scottish Reformation Society. This work is a reprint of the book first published in 1903 and contains additional maps, photographs and footnotes, and a short biography of the author.

The Reformation, which began when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the church door at Wittenberg in 1517, affected all of Europe. Eleven years later Patrick Hamilton, the first Scottish Protestant martyr, was burned at the stake, and for the next thirty years the Protestant cause in Scotland grew despite fierce opposition. But it was the preaching of John Knox who returned from the continent in 1559 which God especially used, and despite many trials and set-backs, the Scottish Parliament finally abolished papal authority just over fifteen months later.

This book is mainly about the thirty-five years from 1525 when Luther's works were forbidden in Scotland up to the time when the Protestant cause became firmly established in 1560. It is written with a historian's attention to detail and accuracy, but first-time readers may find the number of people and places referred to somewhat bewildering. The book ends somewhat abruptly with the events of 1560 and those wishing to know more may find it helpful to read other works as well, such as *The Life of John Knox* by Thomas M'Crie.

John A. Kingham, Luton

OBITUARY

Irene Naomi Cooper, a member of the church at Clifton, Bedfordshire, for 68 years, passed to her eternal rest on January 28th, 2012, aged 95.

She was born Irene Naomi Ingrey on December 28th, 1916, in the village of Stotfold, Bedfordshire. Her father and mother attended Hope Strict Baptist Chapel, Stotfold, where her mother was a member for sixty-six years. She had two brothers, one elder and one younger. When she was four years old her mother gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. The girl lived only a few months, and the boy died when he was four. The loss was a great grief to her.

One night there was a great fire in the town about two miles away, and she was terrified that it was the end of the world. Her father had to comfort her, but she never forgot it. At the age of thirteen a friend in her school class died. This was made a great trouble to her as she thought of eternity. "Where would I go if I was called to die?"

Going to sleep one night, in her mind's eye she saw a great fire and she could not get away from it. She was terrified and she thought it was hellfire. She tossed and she turned, but it would not go away, until eventually she did fall asleep. This left a lasting impression upon her. She began to listen more intently to the ministry of God's Word. She began to pray more earnestly. She records that her prayers as a young girl had been very formal, but now she came to an earnestness in prayer to be delivered from hellfire. On the following Sunday at the chapel services, the lines of a hymn came to her:

"If ever my poor soul be saved,
'Tis Christ must be the way."

Lines of various hymns were used with much gracious effect in the exercise of her soul.

She began attending the week night services at Stotfold Chapel, but at first she received no benefit to her soul. She only felt that she was a guilty sinner. She felt the following lines very applicable:

"And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

However a little later, the lines of one of John Newton's hymns were sweetly applied to her:

"'Tis He, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God."

She was brought to be a praying, seeking soul, looking earnestly to Jesus for her salvation.

In her mid-teen years she had a friendship with a boy which came to an end. She was upset by it, but was then made resigned to it through this scripture being made applicable to her: "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." She was married at the age of nineteen years, at Hope Chapel, Stotfold, by Mr. R.J. Morris to Walter Cooper. Her husband was twelve years her senior and a member and deacon at Clifton Strict Baptist Church, Bedfordshire. She considered this provision of marriage was amongst "all these things" that the Lord grants to His people.

She continued to seek for the sweet assurance of the salvation of her soul, but had to wait a further eight years. The early years of the Second World War were a time of great spiritual exercise to her. She records in her diary in February 1940, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" She was much cast down and prayed, "Lord, do come and put some warmth into this heart of mine!" The short prayer of the Syrophenician woman was also evident with her: "Lord, help me." One Lord's day the text was: "Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee." That sermon was a comfort to her, but it did not bring her deliverance. In the year 1941, she had to spend time in a hospital at Aylesbury, having lost a child which was born prematurely. Whilst there, being in a low state spiritually, the following lines came to her:

"I, though so unworthy,
Still am a child of His care;
And His Word teaches me,
That His love reaches me
Everywhere."

(These are lines of part of a "chorus" on the love of God.) And she thought, "Even here, on this hospital bed, I am a subject of His never-changing love; even here!" The time in hospital was made a sweet time in her soul. Yet a year later she writes, "I do wish I felt better, both in body and in soul. But if I am in the right way, all will be well at last, and that is what really matters."

The preached Word was made a great help to her, and on the first Lord's day in November 1943, following the preaching of Mr. Rootham (minister from Kettering) she felt she had to cast in her lot with "those few meeting around the Lord's table." She feared, "O how could I be worthy?" Yet she knew her need of Christ and how blessed the truth and the promises of God had been made to her. The Lord gave her this word at that time: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." That became her special verse throughout the remainder of her life, knowing its application in her circumstances and in her spiritual exercises.

She spoke to her husband, who was deacon, of her desire and she went before the church at Clifton to give her testimony of the hope that was in her through Jesus Christ, on Lord's day December 19th, 1943, after the morning service. The minister on that occasion was again Mr. Rootham. She records concerning the sermon: "I felt it was for me." Her testimony was received and she was baptized and received into the church at Clifton by Mr. J.S. Green on Sunday, January 2nd, 1944. Mr. Green's ministry had also been a help to her over the time. She was his first baptism, and he preached from the text, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." She writes, "I did feel that the Sun of Righteousness shone in my soul and gave me peace and showed that that which I was about to do was right." She continues, "My dear husband and I did feel that we had had a very good day.... I felt my Jesus has done all things well." The next Lord's day she was disappointed through not having the power of the Spirit to hear profitably. However the following Lord's day Mr. Jarvis's text in the afternoon was Isaiah 41. 10. She remained a member of Clifton church for sixty-eight years.

From the beginning of her marriage she helped her husband in the Sunday School work at Clifton Chapel. Present members of the church at Clifton remember her taking the youngest class and playing the organ. She was also organist at the chapel for several years. She supported her husband too with his Young People's Bible Study group in their own home at Woburn Sands, where her husband was then a school teacher. When the "Bible Searching Almanacs" went out of print, he prepared his own Bible Study scheme which she typed out for their use. During the war years she and her husband cycled a distance of nearly twenty miles together from Woburn Sands to Clifton for the chapel services. They later moved to live in Clifton.

She lost her dear husband through a stroke in 1974. The Word of the Lord in Isaiah 41. 10 was again a great help to her: "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." And so it was through the many changing scenes of her days as a widow, both spiritual and providential. She often mourned her sad state by nature, feeling grief on account of her sin within. At one time she was staying with a dying friend and was very upset and distressed. She felt to have no hope and nothing to die with. All was dark for some hours; then at between one and two o'clock in the morning these words were spoken to her: "But go thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." She writes, "It calmed me; I then slept."

Naturally, she was a woman with some quaint ways and of a determined spirit. At the age of eighty years, she was determined to go to a family wedding

in Australia (the first time she had flown) and to see her older brother who had lived for many years in Perth. She travelled with her nephews, who were her closest relatives. But what shone through in all her manners was a tender, godly, gracious spirit. She was never able to have children, yet I never found her of a complaining spirit all the time I knew her. Although she was not a mother naturally, I believe firmly she was a true mother in Israel. She loved children and laboured in prayer for them and their souls. She did not cease when they grew older. She told me more than once that one who is presently deacon at Clifton chapel is "her son in the faith."

When in her nineties, her mental faculties began to weaken. In March 2008 she fell in her garden at Clifton and lay there for some hours before being found by a neighbour. She was taken to hospital, and afterwards entered the Harpenden Bethesda Home. There she was cared for lovingly throughout the remainder of her days. Following a very short illness she died quite suddenly, yet quietly, on January 28th, 2012. It was the "end of her days" and the Lord had come to take her to her eternal rest. Up to the time of her death she was using the Bible, by then well used and much repaired, given to her by her husband in 1937. It contained notes on scraps of paper recording the times of blessing under the ministry.

The funeral service was held at Clifton Chapel on Monday, February 6th, conducted by Mr. G.E. Hadley (Pastor, Hope Chapel, Stotfold). She had chosen the hymns to be sung at her funeral: "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide," and "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah." Interment was in Stotfold cemetery.

G.E.H.

CHRIST PRECIOUS

Jesus is precious, says the Word;
 What comfort does this truth afford!
 And those who in His name believe,
 With joy this precious truth receive.

To them He is more precious far
 Than life and all its comforts are;
 More precious than their daily food;
 More precious than their vital blood!

Not health, nor wealth, nor sounding fame,
 Nor earth's deceitful, empty name,
 With all its pomp and all its glare,
 Can with a precious Christ compare.

If light is precious to the eyes,
 If learning's precious to the wise,
 Whatever things men precious call,
 Christ is more precious than them all.

If alms are precious to the poor,
If dying patients need a cure,
If captives precious freedom need,
Then Christ most precious is indeed.

He's precious in His worthy name,
He's precious in His heavenly fame,
He's precious in His faithful Word,
He's precious as He's Christ the Lord.

He's precious in His precious blood,
That pardoning and soul-cleansing flood;
He's precious in His righteousness,
That everlasting, heavenly dress.

In every office He sustains,
In every victory He gains,
In every counsel of His will,
He's precious to His people still.

In every trial by the way,
In every dark and stormy day,
In all their sorrows and complaints,
He's precious still to all His saints.

As they draw near their journey's end,
How precious is their heavenly Friend!
And when in death they bow their head,
He's precious on a dying bed.

This sleeping dust shall, one day, rise
All glorious to their wondering eyes;
And, when they at His bar appear,
A precious Christ will bless them there.

Then with Him they to heaven shall go,
And all His precious glory know;
And all eternity along,
"A precious Christ" shall be their song.

Among them, Lord, may I be found,
And, with Thy precious mercy crowned,
Join the sweet song, and there adore
A precious Christ for evermore.

Samuel Medley (1738-1799)

Grace is a ring of gold, and Christ is the sparkling diamond in that ring.
Thomas Brooks

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
AUGUST 2012

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

CHRIST WALKING AMONG THE CANDLESTICKS
A WORD TO OUR CHURCHES TODAY
Revelation chapters 1 to 3

John, the aged apostle, was on the Isle of Patmos for the testimony of Jesus Christ. He was banished; he was an exile. Many years had passed since those favoured times when he had leaned on Jesus' breast. Now he was an aged man, persecuted, but the Lord Jesus did not forget him, and in that lonely condition, the Lord most graciously made Himself precious to John. It was on the Lord's day, and John was found in the Spirit. He was suddenly given such a sight of the glory and majesty of his risen, exalted Saviour. In this sight, he saw this glorious Christ, His hair as white as snow, clothed with a golden girdle, and walking in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, and holding seven stars in His hand.

It was made quite clear to John what this meant: that the seven candlesticks were the seven churches of Asia Minor, and the seven stars in Christ's hand were the angels (that is, the pastors) of those churches. Now notice this, that there is a most intimate connection between that view that John had of Christ and the messages that he was given to deliver to the seven churches. He saw Christ, His eyes as a flame of fire, those eyes that see everything, every intention, every thought; everything is naked and bare to them. His feet were as fine brass, those feet that were to crush down all opposition, all evil and all apostasy. A sharp, twoedged sword went forth out of His mouth, and with it He would slay all that should oppose.

Now this is the Christ who still walks among the churches in all His glory and all His majesty: "His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ... and out of His mouth went a sharp twoedged sword." So you see the blessedness and also the solemnity of this subject.

How blessed that this glorious Christ is the church's Head, and how blessed that He holds the seven stars in His hand! That is a sweet point to gospel ministers, that they are in the hands of Christ. How kindly does He speak to most of those churches, despite their failures and their sin! How kindly does He commend those that are faithful in a few things, and with what love and compassion does He remind them of His care for them, and His knowledge of all their difficulties, trials and temptations!

And we too in this solemn, latter day are found in the same condition that the churches of Asia Minor were, surrounded by an opposing, gainsaying world, and with a multitude of temptations and evils appearing within as well as without. May we by faith view this glorious Christ, the risen, exalted Head of the church, who is still blessing the churches with His gracious presence, and still walking among the candlesticks.

But then there are so many solemn things that Christ speaks to the churches, and what a mercy if we are made willing to hear these solemn things that Christ speaks! Remember that the seven churches are represented by seven candlesticks, and the point there is very clear: that is, that *the great purpose of gospel churches is to shine as lights in this dark and evil world*. If there is no gospel light, no obedience to Christ, no honouring and glorifying His name, then the churches are no longer candlesticks. May we lay hold well of this solemn point that the seven churches are described as candlesticks. Now as He whose eyes are as a flame of fire walks in the midst of the churches and examines them, what is revealed? That in two of the churches the candlestick shines brightly, that in most of them the flame is dimming, and that in one or two there is just a little flickering light left. How applicable to our condition today!

Notice also that each of the seven letters is addressed to the angel, that is, the pastor of that church. When the solemn reproofs are given, they are given first of all to the angel, to the pastor. What a most solemn accountability is laid on the pastors of gospel churches! You see, there are two sides essentially to the pastoral office. One is the preaching, the feeding of the flock, but there is also a God-given authority to rule the flock in the fear of God, and according to the testimony of God's holy Word. It is exceedingly solemn if we are content to preach, and to feed the flock, with no gracious, living exercise and concern over godly rule and discipline. What a point is made here that the seven solemn letters are addressed to the seven angels, the seven pastors of the churches!

Let us just touch on one or two things that He, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, sees amiss in the churches. One thing that He especially speaks of is *false doctrine and disorderly practice*, and these things were permitted! There were some of the churches that had the sins of the Nicolaitans, and they made excuses. Another church suffered that woman Jezebel to teach, and she was not reproved. Another church had the error of Balaam in it, and these things were displeasing to Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, whose feet are as fine brass, from whose mouth goes out a sharp, twoedged sword, as He walks in the midst of the candlesticks. So there are these solemn calls to repentance.

Another thing the great Head of the church specially reprove is this: there were some of these churches that did not hold these dreadful errors, nor countenance disorderly practice, but there was *no reality*. The

vital point personally and in the churches is *reality*. “Am I made a *real* Christian?” The doctrine was sound, outwardly everything was right, but there was no reality. “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” How solemn to have all the appearance, and to have no reality!

And then also the great Head of the church speaks of this. You notice the church at Ephesus had so much to commend, and the Lord did not reprove that church for unreality or for laxity in doctrine or in practice, but, “I have somewhat against thee, because *thou hast left thy first love*.” You know, we believe that a mistake has crept in among us on this point. We often hear people speak in our chapels of “the first love” as if it is something to be enjoyed once, and then not known again; but the Lord Jesus solemnly reproved the church at Ephesus. Though there was so much commendable, yet because they had left their first love, He says, “Repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Now this is exceedingly solemn, to be free from outward failures, and apostasy, and laxity in doctrine and practice, and also to be delivered from unreality, and yet to be lukewarm. What a need to have a soft heart, a repentant heart, to know more of holy zeal, to know more of the sweet constrainings of the love of Christ, to know more of living to His honour and glory!

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Our own churches are not guiltless in these things. How are our candlesticks? What is the light? Does the flame burn, or does it grow dim?

Now what is the answer to this? What is the antidote? There is a beautiful answer to this in that vision that Zechariah had in chapter 4. He saw a candlestick, a dimly burning candlestick, but it did not go out; it still burned. Why? He saw on the left hand and on the right hand there was a living olive tree, and from each olive tree there was a living supply of oil which flowed through golden pipes to the candlestick to keep it alive. These candlesticks in the Word of God were not like our candlesticks. Rather were they lamps needing to be supplied with a continuous supply of oil. Zechariah said, “What are these two olive trees?” And the angel replied, “These are the two anointed ones,” that is, Christ and the Holy Ghost.

Now, this is the answer, that there is a fulness that dwells in Christ, a fulness that is communicated by the Holy Ghost; that though we constantly, in our preaching, in the churches, and personally, ask that solemn question, “Who is sufficient for these things?” yet there is *an absolute, utter and complete sufficiency in Christ*. And so the golden oil flowed continually from the two olive trees, the two anointed ones, to keep the candlestick, the lampstand burning.

The great point is *union and communion with the church's living Head*, dwelling close to Him, living on His fulness, depending on His all-sufficiency of grace. If there is not that union experimentally, that communion, that living near, that dependence, then where are we? Then the light begins to dim, the candlestick begins to flicker. How easy it is, through our sin and unbelief, coldness and disobedience, to clog up those pipes that unite the churches to Christ, the church's Head! Of course, true, eternal union between a believer and Christ can never be broken, but that pipeline that links the gospel church to the church's Head, how easily it can be clogged and blocked up by our coldness, deadness, hardness and unbelief!

What is the remedy? How is it possible that these pipes can be kept free? As the Holy Ghost brings us to this:

“Daily I'd repent of sin,
Daily wash in Calvary's blood.”

To have nothing between, to live upon His fulness, to depend on Him.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

BE CAREFUL FOR NOTHING

*Sermon preached by J.K. Popham at Galeed, Brighton,
on June 11th, 1933*

Text: “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4. 6).

This is a very blessed, heavenly direction, given to a church which had not given the Apostle Paul cause of grief or called for reproof from him. It is a direction which every child of God stands greatly in need of. We are naturally apt to follow the practice of the heathen, the unbeliever, the atheist. How much care you bestow on the things of this life; how much anxiety you feel with respect to what you should eat, and what you should drink and wherewithal you should be clothed, God knows. What fear you may feel today, seeing that things are in such utter confusion, that the nations of the world are in a turmoil, jealousy. Full of talk of peace, endless, useless conferences, and yet all the time God's poor people are more or less affected by such things and so there is a certain untender, ungracious, unbelieving care with respect to temporal things. Who can plead innocence in this regard?

There are some things that the Scripture tells us we should do, or tells us that doing them is good. One is, that the people of God are to

keep their heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Diligence here is expressed constantly by the people of God who obey that word in prayer and supplication, "Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." Keep me in the fear of God. Thou hast blessed my soul; bless me again. Thou hast given me Thy Spirit; give me a good supply of the Spirit unto the end of my pilgrimage. And this is one blessed way of observing that scripture: "Keep thy heart with all diligence." A gracious jealousy lest you should depart from the living God, a gracious fear lest sin should harden you as the nature of sin is, "Lest ye be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"; a fear lest you should become a prey to the enemy, either his deceit or his violence.

Christ has promised, it is promised concerning Him, that He shall deliver His people from deceit and violence. Deceit is more to be feared than violence. Violence puts you on your guard; deceit closes your eyes, hardens your heart. May the good Lord help us to look diligently, lest we fail here. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." The apostle in the Hebrews desires that the Hebrew Christians then, and surely today Gentile Christians and all the Lord's people anywhere and everywhere, should obey that word: "Give diligence unto the end." Diligence to the full assurance unto the end. You say, I have an assurance. You need it to be kept if you have it.

There is also this in the holy Scripture addressed to the people of God: "Pray without ceasing," which is, bring your cases to God. Seek communications from Him, help, teaching, guidance, unction, blessing, the blessing of the Spirit, the blessing of power, the blessing of unction, the blessing of light in your understanding, that you may be kept from the deceitful lies of the devil; and blessing in your soul with a tender conscience; blessing with communications from God. Prayer is not vocal necessarily. It may be, but mostly it is unuttered, the trembling of the soul, a feeble desire, an earnest longing.

There is also in the Scripture and in this Epistle direction as to separation. What are we to beware of? Dogs, the concision; dogs, making a barking noise to frighten us; the devil also. In another place we are told to be vigilant respecting him, for he walketh about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. These scriptures tell us, and God makes us know it, some of us can say, that we are in constant danger. Pilgrims need the pillar by night and the cloud by day, and the ceaseless care of God. The water flowing, and following them, from the smitten rock; the manna rained down from heaven day by day for their nourishment.

And it is thus that the people of God are to be more or less, and are made by the Spirit more or less, constant in their seeking God, fearful of

coming short; fearful of missing “that prize such numbers never seek, such numbers seek in vain.” Christ’s word is not confined to the beginning, but carries on all through as the Spirit is with us: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Seek His rule, the rule of grace; seek His guidance that you may not mistake the way; seek Him for communion, for communion with God is one of the most gracious and blessed means of making and keeping us lively in the things of God. Communion means at least two persons. Communion with God is God speaking to a soul and the soul’s response to that speaking. The communion that the Lord indulges some with is a poor, hungry soul receiving the bread of life; a sensibly ignorant creature seeking the guidance of the Spirit. O it is a blessing to have communion; eating the bread of life and giving thanks for the food provided, that rich food provided.

Now all those things are consistent with the text, “Be careful for nothing.” It does not mean casting off a care about your souls, about the name and honour of the Lord God. No, the more faith, the more care about your souls; the more faith, the more desire, the stronger the desire to be right with God, and to have a clean conscience, a confidence that is kept alive by gracious communications. The manna corrupted when kept, when more was gathered than necessary, but day by day it fell. Day by day we need to be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

It is a mercy for a church to be careful about its spiritual standing. What is a gospel church but a gathering in God’s order of poor sinners, believing in and hoping in the Person and work of Jesus Christ? A church, professing church, may be very well organised and all its outward concerns be very well attended to, while yet there is death within. But when God is with a church of Jesus Christ, the outward things are not neglected, but the inward conditions of the heart and seeking the honour of God, to walk according to the truth, as the truth is in Jesus, will mark that church. My brethren, take heed to this: not only are we individuals as we trust, many of us, concerned about eternity, and how we shall stand before God; concerned about our daily walk; concerned lest we should in any way dishonour the name that is named upon us, but many of us are united in church membership. It is not a little thing to be a member of a church. It means a great deal; and this you may gather from the seven letters sent to the seven churches in Asia, and the particular notice that Christ took of each church, noticing what was good and acknowledging the same, and reproving the discovered sins, and exhorting each church, commanding it to repent and do the first works, with this solemn word, “Lest I come.” Lest I reprove and remove

the candlestick out of its place. Do any of the members here fear that we shall get to that state, that God will remove the candlestick? Do you ever feel afraid of it?

I am not now to enter particularly upon that wonderful, mighty subject, but I just name it to you. If you do fear it at any time, one effect of that fear will be, you will seek the presence of God and the walking in the midst of us of Jesus Christ.

But this word, "Be careful for nothing," appears to have a particular reference to externals, that is, to the natural things which are calculated to fill us with care. Christ speaks in the gospel of Luke thus: "Take heed lest your hearts be filled with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life." Take heed to that. What we shall eat, what shall become of us; whether God will continue to us what we possess, or whether the day is approaching when there shall be such an upheaval, such an earthquake as never was before, as never shall be afterward. We may be very near to that, my friends. An earthquake gives no notice. Christ will come as a thief, and yet we have before us, if we look at all the nations of the earth, sad evidence that God will gather them together to pour out the fierceness of His indignation upon them. What shall we do should persecution come in some form? What will become of us should we witness the silencing of the witnesses, when there will be a severe silencing of the ministry and the ministers shall lie unburied in the streets three-and-a-half days, three-and-a-half years (Rev. 11. 9)? What will become of us should we see the famine, not of bread, nor of thirst of water, but of hearing the Word of God, when men shall go from the east to the north seeking it and shall not find it; when Israel shall be many days without a priest, without an ephod, without a king (Hos. 3. 4)? That is, there shall be many days a silence of God, and the enemy shall prevail, and the nations of the earth rejoice over the slain witnesses who lie unburied in the streets.

The dreadful state of things moves me, as I see them, to speak this morning in this manner. We know not what is to take place and when, but apparently the day is not very distant from us; substance will be made as water to flow away from us. The name of Christ will be disgraced in the eyes of the world. What shall we do, on whom it is named, when the godless movements today shall have prevalence? What then? I put this question to you as Protestants, and more, as many of you, true children of the living God.

Now the Word of God answers these questions. "Be careful for nothing." Do not turn into yourselves and see if you have strength enough, if you have got today strength enough for a year or two hence. Do not turn into yourselves to see if you are wise enough to make provision, so as that you will escape that day. Do not turn into

yourselves to ask if you have grace enough to resist in the evil day and having done all to stand, resisting. God's blessed teaching never leads a child of His to look into himself for support, protection, wisdom and resources. The text tells us what the Spirit leads the people of God to do. Be careful, that is, be not over anxious in anything.

"Be careful for nothing" – not for bread, nor water, nor clothing, nor protection. Then what? O, says the atheist, there is no God; things will happen by chance; or the communist will come with his godlessness and none will be able to stand against him. What shall the church do? "In every thing by prayer and supplication," "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

"Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designed to give.
Long as they live should Christians pray;
For only while they pray they live."

Prayer in secret.

There is, as I have often said to you, no substitute for secret prayer. This may be carried on sometimes when you are lively in the ways of God from morning to night as you are about your duties as well as the times that you turn aside from all things and enter your prayer closet and shut your door about you. Prayer is the moving of the soul after God. Is danger apprehended? O, says a praying soul, spread the wings of Thy healing righteousness and of Thy protection over me. May I know that the eternal God is my refuge and feel that underneath are the everlasting arms. That is the best, my friends. "In every thing by prayer," secret prayer. The Psalmist says in one place, "I give myself unto prayer." A wonderful occupation that was to him at that time. O it is a blessing when the Holy Ghost enables one who often lies hard and cold and as dead as a stone to rise and go to his heavenly Father and pour out his confessions of weakness, of sin, and all his fears, and pray for forgiveness and protection unto the end. It was God's appointed way. "Pray," He says, "without ceasing."

When you have an unceasing pressure, then prayer will be given by the Holy Spirit, that you will pray without ceasing in that. When you have an abiding sense of your ignorance, prayer will be moved in that direction by the blessed Spirit. When you are sensibly apprehensive of coming danger, nature will say, Do this or that, but the Spirit will say, Pour out your heart before God.

"In every thing" – everything relating to you, every providence. Providence is God's rule in the world; providence is Christ's motion in the nations of the earth, for He is King of kings, Lord of lords. He has in the hollow of His hand the heart of the kingdom. He turneth that heart whithersoever He will as He turns rivers. Providence? Ah many a man

has thought himself secure till God's providence like a net has taken him. Many a child of God has said, What shall I do, Lord, in this? And the Holy Ghost helps his infirmity and he casts his care and his burden on the Lord, and he finds the Lord arising for him, saying, "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; the battle is the Lord's and not yours."

You may be tried in circumstances particularly. An income that has been sufficient may be made insufficient. Yes, you say, my investments are all sound. Yes, that may be true. You may have put your things into a bag and the bag is sound to your own judgment, and what if God pierces it, what if He makes holes in it? "Be careful for nothing," not for this. You may take a proper course as a reasonable person, but when you have done that, may God the Holy Ghost help you to do what Jacob did when he was alone. He prayed. The Man came to Jacob; may God come to us in any perplexity of this nature. We are not secure, my friends.

"In every thing." In temptation, when you may be tempted to infidelity; when reason begins to work about omniscience. Does God see this? Is this minute matter open to His gaze? Temptation to infidelity may be a great snare and a great trouble for a time. Then the direction as in the Scripture and in the Holy Spirit's grace is this: "In every thing by prayer and supplication." Prayer, approaching the Most High God. Supplication when you reach His divine throne. Supplication means the very opposite of indifference. You are not indifferent when you have the Spirit of grace and of supplications in your hearts. "Lord, help me." And it is not an indifferent cry, nor a parrot cry, but the language of a needy, weak, fearing saint. "In every thing," even in temptation.

When trouble comes, perhaps in the family, real trouble. What then? "In every thing." When the parent has the Spirit of grace and of supplications poured into his heart, O how he brings his children; he brings them to the Lord. Children do not know what friends they have in praying parents unless God makes them know it. You children here who know not God, let me say this to you: you do not know what friends your parents are to you. When you are asleep they are awake, praying for you, committing you to God and perhaps often saying, O let them live before Thee.

"In every thing by prayer and supplication." Prayer is one of the sweetest employments you can ever be engaged in; one of the holiest exercises that we can ever have put into our souls; one of the most solemn engagements upon which we can ever enter. Prayer is the approach of a sinner to the Holy God; it is the language of a needy soul before Jehovah; it is the confession of sin, the petition for pardon; it is the acknowledgement of ignorance and the prayer for divine teaching; it is the sense of need and the supplication for a supply out of the fulness of the Lord Jesus. It is the coming of a vile leper to be healed by God;

it is the coming of one who does not know what to do, either in his circumstances, or his soul, and he is brought by the eternal Spirit to pray with all prayer and supplication. This is the direction; may the Holy Ghost give it a place in us. I believe we need it. I need it myself; I know I do, and I am persuaded you need it, and I believe some of you know your need of it.

And this is to be accompanied with something which is quite consistent with it: "With thanksgiving." What, when a man of God is pressed and oppressed, troubled, anguished, full of affliction, circumstances adverse, must he then, in such a case, give thanks? So says the Scripture and so works the Holy Ghost. What am I to give thanks for? one says. Well, I would say first, thank God you are out of hell; you deserve to be there. I do; I know that. I can say sometimes there is not a day passes in my life when I do not, over and over again, confess I deserve hell. Thank God, my friends, that you are out of hell. Hell is awful, everlasting punishment.

What have I to thank God for? Are you convinced of sin? Give thanks for conviction. Are you pierced with a sense, painful and deep of your utter vileness? Bless God that you are thus kept from uttering the hypocrisy of the Pharisee: I am not as other men. Are you a poor, ragged, naked wretch, unjust? Thank God that you are stripped, that you know that you must have a better righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees. And give God thanks then also for the throne of grace to which He calls His poor, dear people. "Come boldly to the throne of grace." Not only come to it; thank God there is a throne, but O thank Him that He has said, "Come boldly"; come with liberty. It is free; no toll; no tax at all here; come boldly. On what ground? The ground of the high priestly work and sympathy of the Lord Jesus. That is the ground. O how it suits a sinner! No good works; no good tempers; no pleasing frames, but just a poor, sinful, undone wretch, guilty and conscious of his guilt – come boldly, with thanksgiving. God knows that the Holy Ghost has made some of us here thankful that there is a throne of grace. How often has He helped us to go there with our troubles and desires and needs. This beautiful throne; this tabernacle in which God dwells and will dwell with men, Jesus Christ.

"With thanksgiving" for any encouragements that have been given to you, any scriptures that have dropped upon your heart, any power that you have felt to go to God, any openness of mind, any sincerity of heart, any contrition of spirit, giving God thanks that you have had such blessings. "With thanksgiving." Ah, where this is, trouble is not an unmixed evil; where this is, trouble is not sent for destruction; where this is, you may be sent to Babylon, but it is that you may be delivered from a worse condition (Jer. 24. 5). Good figs were sent to Babylon that they

might be delivered from corruption; gracious people have trouble that they may be preserved in a gracious condition, yea and increase in that gracious condition.

“In every thing with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” One word here: do not put all your troubles on your coat sleeve for your friends to see; do not make them known. I have found it best in my own case to make the thing known to God and not open it to a creature.

“Let your requests,” your request to be saved, your request to be helped, your request to be preserved to the end, your request to be made a good soldier of Jesus Christ, your request to be enabled to build up yourself on your most holy faith, “be made known unto God.” “In all things.” This is it that the Spirit does in the heart. He says, “Cast your burden on the Lord.” “Pray in secret.” You will get an open answer. So may the Lord help us; may He help us to regard this important scripture: “Be careful for nothing.” Take the matters, whatever they may be that you have to trouble you, whatever may yet come to trouble you, take them to this blessed Lord God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, who knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, who has said, “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” who has said, “God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly”; who has said also this: “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” The peace of God is first by the blood of Christ. The peace of God next may be this: the sweet persuasion in your heart that God loves you, and will take care of you, provide for you, give you bread to eat, raiment to put on and power to keep you believing to the end, unto the salvation of your souls.

May the Lord give us grace to regard this blessed scripture. I have found it abiding in my own mind, and therefore I have brought it before you. May the Lord make it something to you, even His own Word and His own power. Amen.

Man is naturally anxious about tomorrow. He sees all dark before him, and imagination conjures up a thousand fears. He suffers more from imagined than from real evils. He creates a world of misery to himself by dire forebodings and anxious glances into future days. Not so when faith, love and filial confidence in God, his heavenly Father, fill his breast. This gracious promise is then fulfilled: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.”

Thomas Reade

CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE

By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2. 1).

Methinks by these words the apostle seems to triumph in his Christ, saying, My brethren, I would have you study to be holy; but if your adversary the devil should get the advantage of you, and besmear you with the filth of sin, you have yet, besides all that you have heard already, “an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,” who is as to His Person, in interest with God, His wisdom and worth, able to bring you off to the comforting of your souls.

Let me, therefore, give you an exhortation to believe, to hope and expect, that though you have sinned (for now I speak to the fallen saint), that Jesus Christ will make a good end with thee. “Trust,” I say, “in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.” I know I put thee upon a hard and difficult task for believing and expecting good, when my guilty conscience doth nothing but clog, burden and terrify me with the justice of God, the greatness of thy sins, and the burning torments is hard and sweating work. But it must be; the text calls for it, thy case calls for it, and thou must do it, if thou wouldst glorify Christ. And this is the way to hasten the issue of thy cause in hand, for believing daunts the devil, pleaseth Christ, and will help thee beforehand to sing that song of the church, saying, “O Lord, Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; Thou hast redeemed my life” (Lam. 3. 58). Yea, believe, and hear thy pleading Lord say to thee, “Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of His people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of My fury; thou shalt no more drink it again” (Isa. 51. 22).

I am not here discoursing of the sweetness of Christ’s nature, but of the excellency of His offices, and of His office of advocateship in particular, which, as a lawyer for his client, He is to execute in the presence of God for us. Love may be where there is no office, and so where no power is to do us good; but now, when love and office shall meet, they will surely both combine in Christ to do the fallen Christian good. But of His love we have treated elsewhere; we will here discourse of the office of this loving One.

And for thy further information, let me tell thee that God thy Father counteth that thou wilt be, when compared with His law, but a poor one all thy days; yea, the apostle tells thee so, in that he saith there is an Advocate provided for thee. When a father provides crutches for his child, he doth as good as say, I count that my child will be yet infirm; and

when God shall provide an Advocate, He doth as good as say, My people are subject to infirmities. Do not, therefore, think of thyself above what, by plain texts, and fair inferences drawn from Christ's offices, thou art bound to think. What doth it bespeak concerning thee that Christ is always a Priest in heaven, and there ever lives to make intercession for thee (Heb. 7. 24, 25), but this, that thou art at the best in thyself, yea, and in thy best exercising of all thy graces too, but a poor, pitiful, sorry, sinful man; a man that would, when yet most holy, be certainly cast away, did not thy High Priest take away for thee the iniquity of thy holy things? The age we live in is a wanton age; the godly are not so humble, and low and base in their own eyes as they should be, though their daily experience calls for it, and the priesthood of Jesus Christ too.

But above all, the advocateship of Jesus Christ declares us to be sorry creatures, for that office does, as it were, predict that some time or other we shall basely fall, and by falling be undone, if the Lord Jesus stand not to plead. And as it shows this concerning us, so it shows concerning God that He will not lightly or easily lose His people. He has provided well for us – blood to wash us in, a Priest to pray for us that we may be made to persevere, and in case we foully fall, an Advocate to plead our case and to recover us from under and out of all that danger, that by sin and Satan, we at any time may be brought into.

ENOUGH IN CHRIST FOR THE WORST OF SINNERS

By William Bridge (1600-1670)

It is said of Christ that “in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2. 9), and there is enough in God to supply all our wants. As there is enough in heaven to pay for all at the last, so there is enough in God to supply all at the present. He is too covetous whom the great God of heaven cannot suffice. When David was in the greatest strait that ever he met with in his life – his wives and goods taken and carried away by the enemy, and his own men and soldiers mutinied, and ready to stone him – how did he comfort himself but in God? “David encouraged himself in the Lord his God” (1 Sam. 30. 6). There is enough in God to comfort in all conditions, and the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily in Christ. Therefore there is that in Christ which may afford sufficient comfort and relief in the worst of times and conditions.

If you look into Scripture you shall find that the promises and prophecies of Christ are calculated and given out for the worst of times. It was usual with the prophets to prophesy of Christ, but mark how their prophecies were calculated for the worst of times. In Jeremiah 23. 6, you

have a prophecy of Christ: “In His days, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Well, what time doth this prophecy relate to? A very evil time: “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture” (verse 1). “Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed My people; Ye have scattered My flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them” (verse 2). And then comes in the prophecy of Christ.

So in Isaiah 28. 16, you have a great prophecy of Christ: “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation ... a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation,” a plain prophecy of Christ. Well, but how comes this in? Why it was calculated for an evil time (verse 14), “Hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through.... Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone.... Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand” – a prophecy concerning Christ calculated for the worst of times.

So in Ezekiel 34. 23, you have another prophecy of Christ: “And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd,” plainly speaking of Christ. Well, but when doth he speak this prophecy of Christ? Look into the beginning of the chapter, verse 2: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.” Now in this time comes out the prophecy of Christ; you make mention of *aquavitæ* [water of life: an archaic name for brandy] at other times, but when there is special mention made of *aquavitæ*, and the *aquavitæ* bottle in a fainting and dying time, what doth this argue but there is a cordiality in it?

The first time that ever Christ was prophesied of, what time was it? Adam fell, and all the children of men were in a most sad condition, what cordial was then brought forth but this? The Seed of the woman shall break the serpent’s head (Gen. 3. 15), and this is ordinary; the promises and prophecies of Christ are calculated for the worst of times. Why? but to teach us that there is enough in Christ to comfort, succour and relieve in the worst of times.

If there was enough in the types of Christ to comfort and relieve the saints and people of God under the Old Testament in the worst of their times, then there must needs be enough in Christ Himself to relieve and comfort the saints and people of God now in New Testament times, in the worst of our times. Now so it was, in the times of the Old Testament, in case they had sinned, what relief had they? A sacrifice to make an atonement (Lev. 4. 20), and so a type of Christ the great Sacrifice (Heb. 9. 26). In case they were in the wilderness and wanted bread, what relief had they? They had there, manna, a type of Christ, the true bread that came down from heaven (John 6. 50, 51). In case they wanted water, what relief had they? The rock opened, and "that rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10. 4). The rock followed them, and the rock was Christ. In case they were stung with the fiery serpents, what relief had they? They had the brazen serpent, and that was a type of Christ (John 3. 14, 15). Now, I say, if the people of God in Old Testament times had relief in the types of Christ, surely there is relief enough for us now, in New Testament times, in Christ Himself.

If all the promises of good things made to us were originated in Christ, and if all the promises that were made unto Christ of good things to come do descend and run down upon us, more or less, then surely there is enough in Christ to relieve and succour in the worst of times. For what are the promises but divine conveyances? Now all the promises of good things that are made to us, they flow from Christ, for all the promises are yea and amen in Christ (2 Cor. 1. 20). Yea, that is affirmed; amen, that is confirmed. All the promises made to us are affirmed and confirmed by Christ. And on the other side, all the promises that are made to Christ do descend upon us. Look into Psalm 2. There is a great promise made to Christ at verses 8 and 9: "Ask of Me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." A promise plainly given to Christ, and see how it descends and falls upon us. "He that overcometh, and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of My Father" (Rev. 2. 26, 27). Even as I received of My Father; look what promise I have received of My Father, the same doth descend and fall down upon you. Now then, if all the promises of good things made to us were originated in Christ, and if all the promises that are made unto Christ of good things to come do descend and run down upon us, surely there is enough in Christ to succour and relieve in the worst of times.

One thing more. If that all our want of comfort and satisfaction doth arise from the want of a sight of Christ's fulness and excellency, and all

our satisfaction and comfort doth arise from the sight of Christ's fulness and excellency, then this doctrine must needs be true. Now look into Revelation 5 and see how John weeps, and upon what account: "I saw," says John, "in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a book written within, and on the back side sealed with seven seals." And at verse 2, "I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? and no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth was able to open the book." Then at verse 4 says he, "I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon." What stilled him? What quieted him? The sight of Christ, at verse 5: "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book." So he goes on opening the excellency and the fulness of Christ, and John weeps no more. So that, I say, all our want of comfort doth arise from our want of a sight of the fulness and excellency that is in Christ. Therefore certainly there is enough in Christ to comfort, succour and relieve in the worst of times.

WONDERS SHOWN TO THE DEAD

By J.C. Philpot

"Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise Thee? Selah. Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or Thy faithfulness in destruction? Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark? and Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Psalm 88. 10-12).

In these verses we find mention made of four things on the part of God: "wonders," "lovingkindness," "faithfulness," and "righteousness." These were four attributes of the blessed Jehovah which the eyes of Heman had been opened to see, and which the heart of Heman had been wrought upon to feel. But he comes, by divine teaching, into a spot where these attributes seem to be completely lost to him, and yet (so mysterious are the ways of God!) that was made the very place where those attributes were more powerfully displayed, and made more deeply and experimentally known to his soul.

The Lord led the blind by a way that he knew not into these spots of experience, that in them He might more fully open up to him those attributes of which he had already gained a glimpse. But the Lord brought him in such a mysterious way that all his former knowledge was baffled. He therefore puts up this inquiry to the Lord, how it was possible that in those spots where he now was, these attributes could be displayed or made known?

He begins: "Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead?" He is speaking here of his own experience; *he* is that "dead" person to whom those "wonders" are to be shown. And being in that state of experience, he considered that every act of mercy shown to him where he then was must be a "wonder." "Shall the dead arise and praise Thee?" What! the dark, stupid, cold, barren, helpless soul, that cannot lift up one little finger, that cannot utter one spiritual word, that cannot put forth one gracious desire, that cannot lift up itself a hair's breadth out of the mass that presses it down – "Shall it *arise*?" and more than that, "*praise Thee*?" What! can lamentation ever be turned into praise? Can complaint ever be changed into thanksgiving? Can the mourner ever shout and sing? O it is a wonder of wonders if "the dead" are to "arise," if "the dead" are to "praise Thee"; the dead are to stand upon their feet, and shout victory through Thy blood!

"In the grave." Here is a striking figure of what a living soul feels under the manifestations of the deep corruptions of his heart. All his good words, once so esteemed, and all his good works, once so prized, and all his prayers, and all his faith, and hope, and love, and all the imaginations of his heart, are not merely paralysed and dead, not merely reduced to a state of utter helplessness, but also in soul-feeling turned into rottenness and corruption. When we feel this we are spiritually brought where Heman was when he said, "Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?" What! wilt Thou manifest Thy love to a stinking corpse? What! is Thy love to be shed abroad in a heart full of pollution and putrefaction? Is Thy lovingkindness to come forth from Thy glorious sanctuary, where Thou sittest enthroned in majesty, and holiness, and purity – is it to leave that eternal abode of ineffable light and glory, and enter into the dark, polluted and loathsome "grave"? What! is Thy lovingkindness to come out of the sanctuary into the charnel-house? Shall it be "declared" *there* – revealed there – spoken there – manifested there – made known there? For nothing else but the *declaration* of it there will do. He does not say, "Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared in the Scriptures?" "Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared in Christ?" "Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared by the mouth of ministers?" "Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared in holy and pure hearts?" But he says, "Shall Thy lovingkindness be *declared*," uttered, spoken, revealed, manifested, "in the *grave*?" where everything is contrary to it, when everything is unworthy of it, the last of all places fit for the lovingkindness of an all-pure God to enter.

"Thy faithfulness in destruction." You will see God's faithfulness to have been manifested most, in destruction. You will see God's faithfulness to His covenant most clearly evidenced in destroying your

false religion, in order to set up His own kingdom in your soul; in destroying everything which alienated and drew away your affections from Him, that He alone might be enshrined in your hearts; and you will say, when the Lord leads you to look at the path He has led you, in after years, Of all God's mercies His greatest have been those that seemed at the time to be the greatest miseries; the richest blessings which He has given us are those which came wrapped up in the outside covering of curses; and His faithfulness has been as much or more manifested in destruction than in restoration.

"Wilt Thou show Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" – where I have forgotten Thee, where I turned aside from Thee, where I have let slip out of my memory all Thy previous dealings with me – and shall Thy righteousness be manifested even there? Wilt Thou prove Thine equity in showing forth mercy, because for me a sacrifice has been offered, Thy righteousness running parallel with the atoning stream of Christ's blood? When I have forgotten Thee and forsaken Thee, and turned my back upon Thee, can Thy righteousness be there manifested? What! righteousness running side by side with mercy, and righteousness still preserving all its unbending strictness, because this very backsliding of heart, this very forgetfulness of soul, this very alienation of affection, this very turning my back upon Thee, have all been atoned for; and righteousness can be still shown "in the land of forgetfulness," because all my sins committed in the land of forgetfulness have been atoned for by redeeming blood!

DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH

By Archibald Alexander (1772-1851). See page 255.

Another thing very necessary to a correct division of the Word of truth is that the promises and threatenings contained in the Scriptures be applied to the characters to which they properly belong. How often do we hear a preacher expatiating on the rich consolations of the exceeding great and precious promises of God, when no mortal can tell, from anything which he says, to whom they are applicable! In much of preaching, there is a vague and indiscriminate application of the special promises of the covenant of grace, as though all who heard them were true Christians and had a claim to the comfort which they give. This is not a skilful division of the Word of truth. In such a division, the saint and the sinner are clearly distinguished by decisive Scripture marks, so that everyone may have a fair opportunity of ascertaining to which class he belongs, and what prospects lie before him.

Rightly dividing the Word of truth includes, therefore, what may be termed characteristical preaching – that is, a clear and just delineation of character by using the pencil of inspiration. For if, in this business, men follow their own fancies, and lay down marks of godliness not authorised by the Word of God, they will often cry peace to those to whom God has not spoken peace, and will give unnecessary pain to the children of God by obscuring their evidences, and perplexing their minds with fears and scruples by a false representation of the true characteristics of genuine godliness.

It is much to be regretted that this accurate discrimination in preaching has gone so much out of use in our times. It is but seldom that we hear a discourse from the pulpit which is calculated to afford much aid to Christians in ascertaining their own true character; or which will serve to detect the hypocrite and formalist, and drive them from all their false refuges. In the best days of the Reformed churches, such discriminating delineation of character, by the light of Scripture, formed an important part of almost every sermon. But we are now more attentive to the rules of rhetoric than to the marks of true religion. How do Owen, Flavel, Boston and Erskine abound in marks of distinction between the true and false professor! And the most distinguished preachers of our own country – the Mathers, Shepards, Stoddards, Edwardses, as also the Blairs, Tennents, Davies and Dickinsons, were wise in so dividing the Word of truth that all might receive their portion in due season. But certainly the Word of truth should be so handled, that every person who does not turn away his eyes may see the lineaments of his true character, reflected from the Word as the image from the glass.

This, indeed, requires something more than a fertile imagination and a ready utterance – more than the learning of the schools or profound, critical acumen. It requires that the preacher study much upon his knees, that he examine his own heart with unceasing care, that the Word of God dwell in him richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and also that he converse frequently and freely with experienced Christians.

In these matters there are many private persons who are wiser than their teachers; and a preacher of true humility will be often glad to learn from those who have had longer or deeper experience than himself. While others are seeking his counsel in regard to their spiritual condition, he is learning from them, for these are lessons which we can best learn from the living subject.

When the case is even desperate, yet then private prayer can do much with God.

Thomas Brooks

THE NEW BIRTH

Sermon preached by Benjamin Beddome (1717-1795), the author of several of our hymns. He was one of the best known of the old Particular Baptist ministers. At Bourton-on-the-Water, where he was pastor for 52 years, he was blessed with much spiritual prosperity.

Text: “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3. 7).

No subject in religion is of greater importance than that of the new birth, and yet none has been more misunderstood. Some have supposed that we are regenerated by baptism, made children of God and heirs of the kingdom of heaven; but baptism is “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.” Sin lies too deep to be thus removed, and can only be put away by the sacrifice of Christ. A person may be baptized in infancy or in riper years, and yet, like Simon Magus, remain in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, and know no more of the new birth than those did of the Holy Spirit who had not so much as heard whether there was one. A change of moral conduct, especially if attended with some light in the understanding and warmth of affection, has also been mistaken for the new birth, but it is possible for a person to become “another man,” like Saul, and yet not be a new man. Ahab humbled himself, and yet was not truly humble, and Jehu drove on furiously, but not towards heaven. A man may perform a multitude of duties, and yet have an unholy heart; be honest and fair in his dealings, and yet be an enemy to God. He may be of a generous, and yet not of a gracious disposition; may go through the round of all religion, and yet have no religion. He may be able to say with the young ruler, “All these things have I kept from my youth up,” and yet want the one thing needful.

Let us then enquire into the nature of the change intended in our text, notice some of its evidences, and consider its necessity.

I. Enquire what it is to be born again.

In general, it is that change in which sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, are made alive to God. He who was once darkness is now made light in the Lord, and he who was a child of wrath now becomes a child of God, and heir of the kingdom of heaven. It is a change which brings him into a new world, a new state of existence, and gives him a new capacity for action. The temper of the heart is renewed as well as the outward conduct; a spiritual and vital influence is felt, and a spiritual and vital principle imparted. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5. 17). More particularly,

1. It is a divine and supernatural change, effected by the agency of the Holy Spirit. When out of stones, as it were, children are raised up to

Abraham, we may well say, This is the finger of God. He who gave man his being at first can alone create him in Christ Jesus unto good works. Ministers may be the instruments, but God is the Agent. He alone can enstamp His own image, and make us partakers of a divine nature. He everywhere assumes this work to Himself, and all who are born again ascribe it to Him. "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth" (Jas. 1. 18). "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1. 13). "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God" (2 Cor. 5. 5). "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2. 1). "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts" (2 Cor. 4. 6). In the spiritual as well as in the natural world, it is He that brings to the birth and gives strength to bring forth. To give life to the dead, and to bring a clean thing out of an unclean, is the work of omnipotence and the effect of sovereign grace.

2. It is an instantaneous change, the work of the Spirit of God. He who took up six days in creating a world, performs this work in an instant. He says, Let there be light, and there is light; let there be life, and there is life! When men undertake a curious piece of workmanship, they require much time to bring it to perfection, but it is not so with the Lord. He needs no previous preparation, nor is He circumscribed in His actions. He is wonderful in counsel and mighty in working. The temple at Jerusalem was forty-six years in building, but the spiritual temple is built at once. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, God can transform Saul the persecutor into Paul the preacher, and make the chief of sinners the most eminent saint. The operations of the Holy Spirit in this wonderful work are compared to the wind which bloweth where it listeth: its effects are secret and powerful, yet sudden and surprising (John 3. 8).

3. It is an internal and invisible change, yet may be known by its effects: "Ye are dead, and *your life is hid* with Christ in God." Yet it is not fictitious, but a real life; it is "truth in the inward parts," the life of God in the soul of man. It is thus expressed by the prophet: "A new heart 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" (Ezek. 36. 26, 27). Regeneration cleanses the corrupt fountain of the heart and demolishes the strongholds of Satan. It is a change from internal wickedness to internal goodness, from lukewarmness to zeal, from enmity to love, and from the image of Satan to the image of the living God.

4. The change is universal, extending to the heart and life. Universal beauty spread over the whole man, and universal rectitude

influenced all his powers, and ran through all his actions, at the first creation. And in regeneration the new man is said to be “created after God, in righteousness and true holiness.” Not only the mind, but the man is renewed: “Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” There are not only new thoughts and desires, hopes and fears, aversions and inclinations, but also a new conversation and course of action. The former is expressed in Scripture by “newness of spirit,” and the latter by “newness of life.” The tree is made good and its fruit is good. The soul is beautified with salvation and its glory is seen. The flesh is crucified, with its affections and lusts, and the spirit is renewed and sanctified. The old man is put off and the new man put on. The dark understanding is enlightened, the obstinate will subdued, and carnal affections are mortified. Sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither do they yield their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Rom. 6. 12, 13). Had they a thousand hearts, they would yield them all to Him, or a thousand necks, they would bow them all in subjection to His authority. They take for their motto the words of Paul: “Whose I am, and whom I serve” (Acts 27. 23).

5. It is an abiding change. The saints are begotten by an immortal Father, born of incorruptible seed, and designed for a life that shall never end. The grace of God in them is a well of water springing up to everlasting life, a spark of fire that shall never be extinguished. Unconverted men may have their good moods and religious pangs, but they are not lasting. “O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.” “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4. 18). Those who are brought into a state of grace may fall into sin, reproach and trouble; but they shall not return to a state of nature. If they leave their first love, they shall not lose it. God will neither destroy His own work, nor suffer others to destroy it. “The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the work of Thine own hands” (Psa. 138. 8). Grace is not indefectable in its own nature, but it is rendered so by the purpose and promise of God.

II. Notice some of the evidences of the new birth. These we shall chiefly select from the first Epistle of John.

1. Those who are born of God “do not commit sin”; *yea*, “they cannot sin, because they are born of God” (1 John 3. 9, 5. 18). This however is not to be understood in the most extensive sense, for “there

is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccles. 7. 20), and, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1. 8). Those who plead for sinless perfection in the present life shew their unacquaintedness with Scripture and their own hearts. Yet those who are born of God do not commit sin as others do, contentedly, obstinately and perseveringly, nor as they themselves once did. Sin has not the dominion over them, nor has it gained their full consent; it dwells in them, but does not rule over them. It is the object of their hatred, even while they commit it; and when committed, it is the matter of their grief. There is something within them which opposes the temptation, though there is something which complies with it. If they fail in the contest, they are recovered, and the contest is again renewed. The principle of grace will be always rising up against sin, and at length will triumph over it (Rom. 7. 14-25).

2. They have "overcome the world" – its frowns and smiles, hopes and fears (1 John 5. 4). Neither prosperity nor adversity, preferment nor abasement, can drive the believer from his duty, nor draw away his heart from God. The world is not the object of his pursuit nor, as far as he acts in character, has he any anxious or disquieting cares about it. He neither inordinately thirsts after it, nor is much concerned to part with it. He has learned to weep as though he wept not; to rejoice as though he rejoiced not; to buy as though he possessed not; and to use this world as not abusing it, knowing that the fashion of it passeth away (1 Cor. 7. 30, 31). His language is in a good degree like that of Paul: "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).

3. They have a sincere love to all the saints, for "every one that loveth is born of God" (1 John 4. 7). The existence of holy love is the effect of the new birth, and its various exercises are the evidence of it. True believers love God and all mankind; they also love one another for His sake, and this shows that they are born of God and made partakers of a divine nature. There may be some difference of sentiment among Christians in lesser matters, and some of them are less amiable than others, yet it belongs to their character to love as brethren, to be kind and tender hearted one towards another, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven them. And when those are highest in our esteem, however low in circumstances, who most adorn their profession and bring most honour to religion, it is a happy evidence that we are passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation.

4. All their hope of salvation is founded on the mediation of Christ. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5. 1). Believing Jesus to be the Christ, however, includes not only a knowlege of Him as the Saviour and an admission of Him under that

character, but an actual reliance on Him as such, and a committing of our souls into His hands. We cannot indeed believe aright concerning Him, but we shall also trust in Him, and this is proper to the soul that is born of God. No sooner does the light shine into it than it discovers its lost and perishing condition, its utter inability to help itself, and the insufficiency of all creatures to afford relief. At the same time Christ is revealed as a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour, and the soul is brought to an absolute resignation of itself to Him, to be sanctified by His grace, directed by His Spirit, and pardoned through His blood. Christ lives and reigns in the new creation. In every emergency, danger and distress, the soul applies to Him and finds safety. Its language is, "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

5. Their walk and conversation is holy and exemplary. "Every one that doeth righteousness is born of God" (1 John 2. 29). This is not merely to do the thing which is right in itself, but out of regard to the rectitude and propriety of it, or from the love of righteousness for its own sake. True obedience also respects not only what God has commanded, but *because* He has commanded it. What we do must not be to gratify our inclination, promote our own interest, or please either the good or the great, but in obedience to the will of God. To be acceptable it must likewise be universal and persevering; not from mercenary, but grateful motives; not *for* life, but *from* life; not that God may love, but because He hath loved us. As no one doth righteousness without a righteous principle, so neither without renouncing all our own righteousness in respect of dependence. For that righteousness which does not submit to the righteousness of God must be the greatest instance of unrighteousness, assuming to itself that which does not belong to it, and denying both to the Creator and Redeemer that to which they have the most equitable claim, robbing one of His glory, and the other of His crown.

III. Consider the reasonableness and importance of this change: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Nicodemus seemed to marvel at this doctrine, as if it were liable to great objections, supposing it to be new and strange, and altogether impracticable and absurd. "How can these things be?" said he. "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Thus ignorant was this master in Israel of one of the first principles of the oracles of God! Let us also beware that we do not stumble at this stumbling stone. We *must* be born again.

1. Do not marvel at it as if the doctrine were new and strange. Or if it had been so, yet seeing that Christ Himself expressly declares it, and urges its importance, it becomes us to receive it. But if we search the Old Testament, we shall find that the doctrine of the new birth is no new

revelation, though expressed in somewhat different terms. What is here called a being "born again" is there denoted by "circumcising the heart to love the Lord our God"; "taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh"; "giving them a heart to know the Lord"; "putting His fear in their heart," etc. These and many other similar terms were fully expressive of the renovation of the soul by divine grace, and contained the same doctrine for substance as that which our Lord inculcated. He might therefore well say to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things!" Had he been an Israelite indeed, he would have known these things; and being himself a teacher, His ignorance was still more inexcusable.

2. Marvel not as if the doctrine were unintelligible. Mysterious it may be, as to the manner in which this change is effected, but its nature and necessity are plain and obvious. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We see and feel the effect, but know not the cause. So is it respecting divine influence. The formation of Christ in the heart may be as difficult to comprehend as the formation of a child in the womb, but the fact itself is as easy of belief in one case as in the other. "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all" (Eccles. 11. 5). Great is the mystery of godliness, as well as of iniquity. But though mysterious, yet it is highly rational; and though not fully known, yet so much of it may be understood as to justify and demand our belief. Whatever difficulties may arise in our mind, or objections be made by others, yet "if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way." If there be anything perverse or perplexing, it is in us and not in the Scriptures. "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge" (Prov. 8. 8, 9).

3. Do not consider this new birth to be impossible. With men and with angels it may be so, but not with God. Nothing is too hard for omnipotence. He who created man at first can new create him, and He who raised dead bodies can quicken dead souls. Though the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, yet God can change them. There are no habits so rooted, but He can alter them; no corruptions so strong and prevalent, but He can mortify them; no difficulties so great, but He can surmount them; and no disease so inveterate, but He can cure it. Let the awakened sinner remember that his help is in Him who made heaven and earth, and whose grace is all-sufficient. "Son of man," saith the Lord, "can these bones live?" To

which he answered, "O Lord God, Thou knowest." The prophet might despair of it but, "Thus saith the Lord unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live" (Ezek. 37. 3, 5). This is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes. "Great are Thy works! and Thy thoughts are very deep." But if it be marvellous in our eyes, "should it also be marvellous in Mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 8. 6).

4. Marvel not at this change as if it were unnecessary. "Ye *must* be born again." Whatever may be your mental attainments or moral qualities, yet something is still wanting, and which God only can supply. The grosser pollutions may have been escaped, and various duties performed, and yet after all you may still be dead in trespasses and sins, and walking according to the course of this world. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." While the heart is unsanctified, and our nature unrenewed, we can have no meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, nor capacity for its enjoyment. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Their nature is corrupt, the principle of action is depraved, and their sacrifice is an abomination in His sight. The soul must be prepared for heaven, as well as heaven be prepared for it. Heaven is a place of perfect purity, and nothing that is defiled can enter there. God gives grace and then glory, and the one to prepare for the other. Christ's loving His church, giving Himself for it, and then sanctifying and cleansing it, is in order that He may at last "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. 24-27).

Conclusion

1. What has been said upon the subject may convince us of the evil of sin, and its baneful effects upon mankind. None have escaped the pollutions of it, and without a thorough change of heart, none can escape its awful consequences. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," and must for ever come short of it unless the evil be removed.

2. Let us not rest satisfied in any thing less than this entire renovation. We hope to be saved, is the language of everyone, but you cannot be saved except you be born again. Then what meanest thou, O sleeper! Arise and call upon thy God. Pray for the teachings and influences of His Spirit to show thee the way of life and to guide thee in it. Pray that He would wound thee deeply and heal thee thoroughly. Rest in nothing short of being begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and by thine own resurrection from the death of sin, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away (1 Pet. 1. 3, 4).

3. The less marvellous it is that we must be born again, the more surprising it is that we should be careless about it. O that I had an eye to

weep, and a heart to bleed over the miserable, the awful state of unconverted sinners, and a voice like thunder to warn them of their danger! Great God, stir up Thyself, and stir us up, that we may come to Christ, live to Christ, die in Christ, and be happy for ever! Amen.

“Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth
Can raise a soul to heaven.

“The sovereign will of God alone
Creates us heirs of grace;
Born in the image of His Son,
A new peculiar race.

“Our quickened souls awake, and rise
From the long sleep of death;
On heavenly things we fix our eyes,
And praise employs our breath.”

“BLACK BARTHOLOMEW”
LORD’S DAY, AUGUST 24TH, 1662

St. Bartholomew’s Day, 350 years ago on August 24th, was one of the saddest days in the history of the church of God in England. On that day up to 2000 ministers, for conscience sake, were compelled to resign their livings in the Church of England.

The Act of Uniformity required that every minister should give “unfeigned consent and assent” to every detail in the new, revised Prayer Book. This it was impossible for many to do.

It is clear that this was a deliberate effort of the Bishops and the Cavalier Parliament, following the Restoration of the monarchy after Cromwell’s Interregnum, to abolish Puritanism for ever from the established church. It has been described by one writer as the “quintessence of arbitrary malice” and by another as “persecution of Protestants by Protestants without parallel in seventeenth century Europe.”

There is a long background to what took place. Following the Reformation, there were many who felt that things had not gone far enough and that there were still too many relics of Popery remaining. From the reign of Queen Elizabeth I those who fought for further reformation became known as “Puritans.” The struggle continued during the reign of James I. We think of the Millenary Petition and the Hampton Court Conference, and especially the (Puritan) Pilgrim Fathers sailing for America to be free to worship according to Scripture.

In the reign of Charles I there was much cruel persecution, ending in the Civil War and the execution of the king. During the kingless period (1649-1660) Puritanism became more established than ever before. In fact, the Prayer Book and episcopacy were abolished, and Presbyterianism and Independents, and even a few Baptists, were able to hold office in the established church.

But the years after 1660 were a time of revenge. Though discussions were held, the Bishops, especially Sheldon, were intransigent. The culmination of all this was the 1662 Act of Uniformity. Complete submission was required by St. Bartholomew's Day, Lord's day, August 24th.

Why could not the godly submit? They were not unreasonable. Moreover they knew that non-agreement would mean, not only loss of their position as ministers, but home, livelihood and nothing but persecution before them. One named Lawrence wryly remarked: "I have eleven arguments for conformity," pointing to his wife and ten children, "but Christ said, 'Whoso loveth wife or children more than Me, is not worthy of Me.'"

What then were the things which made conformity impossible for the godly?

1. They had to swear non-resistance to the King (looking back to the rebellion against Charles I).

2. They had to disavow the Solemn League and Covenant (which established Presbyterianism and the Westminster Confession).

3. If already ordained, they had to accept Anglican re-ordination.

4. They had to profess "unfeigned consent and assent" to everything in the revised Prayer Book (which had 600 or so changes).

Indeed, the new Prayer Book was only issued a few days before August 24th, which meant that most of the 7000 clergy who *did* conform could not even have seen the text!

What was even more cruel was the timing. St. Bartholomew's Day was the time when they would have received most of their income for the past year, tithes, etc.

Following the Act of Uniformity, The Conventicle Act forbade more than five persons to meet together for reading and prayer, while the Five Mile Act forbade a minister to go within five miles of where he had previously preached. The next twenty-five years were years of deep suffering for those who could not conform to the Church of England. Some even died in prison. Many of those who were dispossessed were some of the most godly and learned divines that our country has ever known.

The week before St. Bartholomew's Day witnessed many heart-rending scenes as ministers bade farewell to their beloved flock. John Stoughton wrote (*Religion in England*, Vol. III, p. 267):

“No Sunday in England ever resembled exactly that which fell on the 17th of August, 1662. In after years, Puritan fathers and mothers related to their children the story of assembled crowds, of aisles, standing-places and stairs filled to suffocation, of people clinging to open windows like swarms of bees, of overflowing throngs in churchyards and streets, of deep silence or stifled sobs, as the flock gazed on the shepherds – ‘sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more.’”

It was for Christ and His truth that they suffered. We need to remember this.

As we write we have by us a fascinating book, published anonymously (not even the name of the printer!) in 1663: *England's Remembrancer: being a Collection of Farewell Sermons*. A very ancient hand has added in ink the names of the men who preached the sermons (obviously of necessity concealed).

As a result of the Great Ejection, Nonconformity (or Dissent – or “chapel” instead of “church”) was forced into being, even if there was a desire still to maintain unity. We feel these things ought to be known. These were our spiritual forefathers.

PART OF RICHARD ALLEINE'S FAREWELL

Preached at Batcombe, Somerset, where he had been minister for twenty years, “a pious, prudent, diligent and zealous, but meek instructor of his flock; much respected in those parts.” He died December 22nd, 1681.

The sun is setting upon not a few of the prophets; the shadows of evening are stretched forth upon us; our work seems to be at an end; our pulpits and our places must know us no more. This is the Lord's doing; let all the earth keep silence before Him. It is not a light thing for me, brethren, to be laid aside from the work, and cast out from the vineyard of the Lord.... I know that some will add to the affliction of the afflicted by telling the world it is their own fault, and that they might prevent it if they would. Whether this be so or no, God knoweth; and let the Lord be the judge. Blessed be God, whatever be laid to our charge, this is not – that we are secluded from insufficiency or scandal.

You are not ignorant what things there are imposed upon us as the condition of continuing our ministration; which, however lawful or expedient they may be in the judgment of many, yet have the most specious arguments in their favour left me utterly dissatisfied with them. I must profess before God, and angels, and men, that my non-submission is not from any disloyalty to authority, nor from pride, humour, nor factious disposition; but because I dare not contradict my light, or do anything concerning which my heart tells me the Lord says, “Do it not.” After all my most impartial enquiries, after all my seeking counsel of the

Lord, I find that I am plainly put to this choice – to part with my ministry or my conscience. I dare not lie before God and the world, nor tell you that I approve, I allow, I heartily consent to what I neither do nor can; but must choose rather that my ministry be sealed up by my sufferings than lengthened out by a lie. Through the grace of God, though men reproach me, my heart shall not reproach me while I live. “If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.”

Since matters stand so that I must either lose my place or my peace, I cheerfully suffer myself to be thrust off the stage. And now, welcome the cross of Christ; welcome reproach; welcome poverty, scorn and contempt, or whatever else may befall me on this account. This morning I had a flock, and you a pastor; now, behold a pastor without a flock, a flock without a shepherd. This morning I had a house, but now I have none. This morning I had a living, but now I have none. “The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Beloved, I am sensible of many weaknesses and disadvantages I am under, which may render a suffering state the harder to be borne; help me by your prayers, and not me only, but my brethren also, with whom my lot must fall. “Pray for us: for we trust that we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.” Pray for us, that God may make our silence speak, and preach the same holy doctrine that we have preached with our lips. Pray for us that He would give us supports answerable to our sufferings, and that according to our earnest expectation and our hope, Christ may be magnified in us, whether it be by life or by death.

And thus, brethren, I bid you farewell in the words of the apostle: “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.” And that “the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

He that fights against Satan in the strength of his own resolutions, constitution or education, will certainly fly and fall before him. Satan will be too hard for such a soul, and lead him captive at his pleasure. The only way to stand, conquer and triumph is still to plead, “It is written,” as Christ did. There is no sword but the two-edged sword of the Spirit that will be found to be metal of proof, when a soul comes to engage against Satan.

Thomas Brooks

BOOK REVIEWS

Katherine Parr: England's Godly Queen, by Matthew J. Hyde; booklet; 36 pages; price £4.45 including postage; published by The Huntingtonian Press, and obtainable from 72A Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, Hants., SO30 4EB.

Most people have heard that Henry VIII had six wives, and that his last wife Katherine Parr survived him. Not so well known is that she was a godly woman.

This is a very interesting and spiritually profitable booklet. The first half gives an account of Katherine's life; the second, her spiritual experience with lengthy extracts from her own writings (which have been republished as recently as last year). This booklet could be interesting to our young people.

There is a replica of her signature, and a portrait on the front cover.

The Men of 1662, by Matthew J. Hyde; booklet; 52 pages; price £3.45 including postage; published by The Huntingtonian Press, and obtainable as above.

This booklet deals with events leading to the Great Ejection of 350 years ago this month, when up to 2000 ministers were compelled, for conscience sake, to relinquish their position in the Church of England. *We need to remember them.*

Special emphasis is given to some of the godly men who suffered – notably, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Goodwin, Thomas Hardcastle and Philip Henry and his wife Katherine.

On the front cover are portraits of Thomas Jacomb, John Owen, Stephen Charnock and Henry Jessey, with Richard Gilpin, Thomas Goodwin and Thomas Hardcastle inside.

Both of these booklets are based on addresses given for The Protestant Alliance.

Pastor-Teachers of Old Princeton, selected and introduced by James M. Garretson; hardback; 572 pages; price £17; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a companion work to the two volumes reviewed last month: *Princeton and the Work of the Christian Ministry*. It contains lots of smaller pieces gathered together in connection with the old Princeton Seminary (to mark the 200th anniversary of its founding). These include funeral sermons, memorial addresses, magazine articles, etc.

There are some lovely pieces here and there (see an example on page 242), but, for instance, some of the many funeral addresses, though good, are concerning persons we do not know. Also (is this common with funeral addresses?) these people are the godliest, the most learned, etc!

Though we found quite a lot of this book both interesting and profitable, we wonder if it is essentially for academics and theologians, but especially those who are interested in the Alexanders, the Hodges and the other great names associated with Princeton.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

Once, as the Friend of sinners dear,
A Man of sorrows sojourned here;
Eternal love ordained it so,
That through Samaria He must go.

But what could His dear feet incline,
Unless compelled by love divine,
From whence salvation's blessings flow,
That He must through Samaria go?

There, wandering from the fold of God,
He saw the purchase of His blood;
And o'er this wretch, to lust a slave,
Did sovereign grace her banner wave.

Herein discriminating grace
Shone with a bright, refulgent blaze;
While dead in sin ten thousands lie,
Grace brought this rebel harlot nigh.

Roused from her fond, delusive dream,
As Israel's God she worshipped Him;
Drank of that living water pure,
That shall to endless years endure.

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

Jesus, our Shepherd, God and King,
Thy guardian care and love we sing,
And hail that grace both rich and free,
That brings Thy wandering sheep to Thee.

Glory to God, till this takes place,
Bulwarks of fire and walls of grace
Keep all His blood-bought flock secure,
Till calling proves election sure.

John Kent (1766-1843)

A WORD TO MINISTERS AND CORRESPONDENTS

It will be very much appreciated if ministers and correspondents will return the engagement forms for 2013 (which they receive this month from Mr. David Cooper) as soon as possible – and in any case not later than the requested date.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
SEPTEMBER 2012

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

TO THE HONOUR AND GLORY OF ELIJAH'S GOD

Very wonderful has been the way in which the Lord, in days of great darkness and distress, has sovereignly raised up a man whom He has used for His people's deliverance. We have only to think of Luther, raised up from a monastery in Erfurt, or Whitefield, taken from a Gloucester inn. But no case is more wonderful than that of Elijah. What a remarkable man he was by the grace of God – so much so that when the people witnessed the ministry and miracles of the Son of God, they said, "This is Elias."

Strangely, the whole history of Elijah begins with the word, "And." "And Elijah the Tishbite." But there is a reason for it. This word "and" sends us back over the previous years to think of the awful depravity in Israel, and also to remind us of what its dreadful state was when Elijah appeared.

It was now fifty-eight years since the kingdom of Israel had been torn in two following the death of Solomon. During that time the ten tribes had been ruled over by seven different kings, all of them without exception wicked men. And at this time Ahab, the worst of them all, was ruling. We are told he "did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him."

So the land abounded with idol worship, altars to Baal, a wicked priestcraft, while evil seemed to reign. The worship of Jehovah was forgotten, and there were few that feared His name.

But when the Lord wants a man, He knows where to find him. It was in an insignificant village, Tishbe, in the wilds of Gilead, the other side of Jordan, that Elijah was found. And he was what he was by the grace of God.

Gilead has been described as "wild and rugged. Its hills were covered with shaggy forests. Its awful solitudes were only broken by the dash of mountain streams. Its valleys were the haunts of wild beasts."

Elijah suddenly appears like some meteor in the sky, but it seems clear that he must have had godly parents – because in that dark and apostate day, they gave their son a name meaning "Jehovah is God," or, "Jehovah is my strength," truths Elijah was to prove throughout his remarkable life.

We must not, dare not, surmise; but it seems clearly implied that this man Elijah was deeply concerned about the dreadful state of Israel. But what could he do? What was it possible for one man to do? The Word of God does not leave us without an answer. "And Elijah prayed." One word which Elijah spoke at a later date summarises his feelings and thoughts: "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts." And in many ways it was a terrible prayer – that God's judgment might fall on the land in afflicting it with a terrible drought. "He prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5. 17).

It seems that Elijah's thoughts were something like this. With a desire for the glory of his God, and also longing desires for the real prosperity of Israel, this would be the only way in which they would be brought to repentance, and greater judgments avoided. Most of the godly writers have suggested that he had in mind the verses: "Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; and then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit" (Deut. 11. 16, 17). What if God were unmindful of this threatening? What of the honour of His name? "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

And Elijah's prayer was answered.

Now it must be declared to Israel that divine judgment was imminent. And to whom must the solemn tidings be announced but to wicked King Ahab himself? In this we see the wonders of grace showing in the man of God's choice – a man who never feared the face of any man because he feared the Lord. He seemed to be rushing into certain death. How could he escape? What would that wicked, cruel Jezebel do? But the secret of it all is revealed in the words which Elijah spoke: "*As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand*, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

Elijah knew that his God was the true and living God – not like the heathen gods of Ahab and Jezebel. Like David he could say, "The Lord liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted." And when David uttered these words he was thinking especially of this point: *deliverance*.

Elijah was true to his name: "Jehovah is my God." Through grace he knew the blessed experience of it. Also he sweetly proved, "Jehovah is my strength." So he went in the strength of the Lord.

We pause here. These things which were written aforetime were not written as history or interesting stories, but as the inspired Word of God

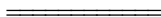
“written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scripture might have hope.” God is still His people’s God. He is the strength of all His people. His Word still stands: “The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever.” Not Ahab, not Baal! “The Lord will give strength unto His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.”

God’s people, like Elijah, at times have a meeting they dread – whether at school, at work, in the church of God, or when meeting sore affliction, or harassed by Satan, or the last great enemy death. But “He that hath loved them bears them through.” What blessed divinity there is in that one line! So they go in the strength of the Lord, weak in themselves but “strong in the strength which God supplies, through His beloved Son.” So they prove His faithfulness and love. “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

For years we have seen a special beauty in that little word, “Before whom I stand.” We believe this was the foundation of the whole of Elijah’s ministry and work. And this is the standard for every true believer, and especially for ministers of Jesus Christ. We stand before Him – in His fear, with singleness of eye, seeking His honour and glory, desiring to do His will, constantly depending on Him, and seeking all our help and strength from Him. “The Lord God of Israel ... before whom I stand.” This will affect the whole of our behaviour. “Whose I am, and whom I serve.” “’Tis mine to obey, ’tis His to provide.”

A sinner first *falls* before God; then *stands* before Him. O to have a standing in Christ, through grace, in His righteousness and blood alone! Then, “Bold shall I stand in that great day.” Then, “Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt ... stand in thy lot at the end of the days.”

So may we, through mercy, prove that Elijah’s God is our God. “*This* God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death.”



Assurance saith, I believe my sins are pardoned through Christ; faith’s language is, I believe on Christ for the pardon of them.

William Gurnall

Sin can never quite bereave a saint of his jewel, his grace; but it may steal away the key of the cabinet, his assurance.

William Jenkyn

Affliction is God’s flail to thresh off our husks.

Thomas Watson

A THANKSGIVING SERMON

*Sermon preached by James Dickens of Rotherfield on
October 20th, 1903. We publish this as an example of the unctuous
preaching of some of our uneducated ministers 100 years ago.*

Text: "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (Psa. 126. 3).

This Psalm is believed to have been written at the return of the Jews from captivity, probably the Babylonish captivity. And they said, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." Although they had groaned in their captivity and were most anxious to be delivered from it, yet when the Lord did deliver them, it seemed too good for them to believe; they were ready to think they were like those who dream. Sometimes when we have had exceedingly good news, it seemed so good, so great, too good to be true. Perhaps someone has said to you, "Do you not believe it?" "O yes, but it is so good; more than I could have expected." God gives exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.

"Then was our mouth filled with laughter." By this we understand *with rejoicing*. "And our tongue with singing." The Lord's people are fond of singing, and we have reason to believe that the chief occupation in glory will be singing the Lord's praises. "And they sang a new song." How sweet, how loud, none can tell but those who have reached heaven.

A great many of the Lord's people feel they shall sing the loudest, because they feel they are the greatest sinners, and that it will be the greatest wonder if they get safely to heaven. That is a family feeling; thousands have felt that who are now in heaven, and thousands who are still on the earth. The desire of God's people will be to glorify the King of kings: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father," to whom be all the praise, all the honour, and all the glory.

"And our tongue with singing." This referred to the deliverance from literal, national captivity. Ah, but that is small compared to the deliverance of the Lord's people from death and hell!

"Then said they among the heathen." *The heathen*, not the Israelites. When the children of Israel were brought out of Egypt, Moses once used this plea before God, when the Lord said, "Let Me alone; they are a stiffnecked people, and I will destroy them, and make of thee a larger nation. There shall be a nation, Moses, but I will destroy these people that I have brought up from the land of Egypt." Moses said, "Then the Egyptians shall hear it. The nations round know that Thou broughtest them out of Egypt, and promised to bring them into the land of Canaan, and now, if Thou destroyest them in the wilderness, the

nations round will know it.” Balak, the son of Zippor, that wicked king, saw Israel, and knew that they were a very remarkable people, though the fewest of all people. So God’s spiritual people are the fewest of all people, but when gathered all together they are a multitude that no man can number. All that God has called by grace since He preached the gospel to Adam in Eden have been few compared with the mass of the human race.

I remember at the jubilee of the *Gospel Standard*, held at Farringdon Hall, London, there were about three thousand present. That was the largest congregation I have ever seen. I thought, “Well, we may believe that there is a good sprinkling of God’s people here.” When they stood up and sang it was very sweet. They sang that hymn, “Mighty to save is Christ the Lamb.” I felt to enter into that hymn, and when they came down to the verse, “A mighty Saviour suits me well,” I said, “Amen.” I need a mighty Saviour, for I am a great sinner. What a mercy that God has provided a mighty Saviour! He said, “I will send them a Saviour, and a great One.” And He has done that. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of His Word shall never pass away; all shall be fulfilled. I wish I could believe this more. I agree with the poet:

“O could I but believe,
Then all would easy be;
I *would* but *cannot*; Lord, relieve!
My help must come from Thee.”

“Then said they among the heathen.” Not God’s chosen, national people, but the heathen. Since that day the Lord Jesus has called many from amongst the heathen; the time that Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost thousands were called by grace, and many have been called since – multitudes, I believe. We were heathens; we are not of God’s chosen, national people. Our forefathers hundreds of years ago were idolaters; they worshipped gods of wood and stone; they did not know the one true, living God. It is said He would be found of a people who had not sought Him. That means the time would come when the Gentiles would seek Him, and He would bless them with His grace. And has He not been found by some of you? If ever you have found Him, He found you first.

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

“Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them.” And they said truly, did they not? The heathen did not say that the Jews had done it, but that the Lord Himself had done it. It seems

to me that men today in a profession of religion are sunk, in some respects, into a lower state than these heathen. Now it is what they have done for the Lord. Although this country is well supplied with Bibles, yet men generally speak of what they have done, and hope to do. This is proof that they have not been taught of God; if God had taught them they would be brought to know their helplessness, and that they can do nothing that is right without the help of God.

“The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.” Has He done great things for you? I dare not say that He has not done great things for me. What has the Lord done for poor sinners? He chose them before the foundation of the world, and in a book, called the Book of Life, wrote the names of the men and women whom He chose. The apostle tells the Philippians to help certain people, and he speaks of them in this way: “Whose names are in the Book of Life.” How did the Apostle Paul know they were there? Had he seen the book? No man ever has. Gabriel never has. Dr. Watts says,

“Nor dares the favourite angel pry
Between the folded leaves.”

Then how did the Apostle Paul know that these people’s names were written in the Book of Life? By their fruits, by their works, by their walk and conversation, by their love to the gospel, and by their love to him as the servant of God, by the sacrifices they made because they cleaved to the truth of God. That was the way he knew, unless the Lord specially revealed to the apostle that these people’s names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. I have asked the Lord if mine is there.

Be very anxious about your own salvation. I am persuaded in these days that thousands of people who profess to be very anxious about the salvation of other people never had one hour’s trouble about their own souls. You cannot really be anxious, not in reality and truth, about the salvation of others, unless you have been made anxious about your own.

“In Thy fair book of life and grace
O may I find my name
Recorded in some humble place,
Beneath my Lord the Lamb.”

If you have been blessed with grace to choose the Lord, it was because the Lord first chose you. Some quarrel with the doctrine of election. Unless you were elected of the Lord by His sovereign choice, unless Jesus Christ is your Mediator, your Atonement, your All in all, you cannot say from your heart, “I do want Jesus Christ.” I like Toplady’s verse,

“Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I’d burn;

Chosen of Thee ere time began,
I'd choose Thee in return."

I hope I can say that I did choose Jesus Christ, and if so it was because Jesus Christ had first chosen me.

Sometimes we do not know whether we love Jesus Christ. I could not always say positively I do, but I know I would love Him. I could say that I have loved Him, and that He has been to me the Chiefest amongst ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. There is no name under the sun, or in glory that has been so sweet and precious to me as the name of Jesus Christ.

"Sweet name, when once its virtue's known,
How weak all other helps appear!
The sinner trusts to it alone,
And finds the grand specific there."

If Jesus Christ is your Refuge, your Rock, your Foundation, your All in all, His heaven will be yours when you have finished your course here below. I look back sometimes to the spot and place where I told the Lord that I did love His precious name.

"But ah! when these short visits end,
Though not quite left alone,
I miss the presence of my Friend,
Like one whose comfort's gone."

Ah but He knows where I live, and He knows where you live! We must pass through tribulation. It must be a thorny way; there is no other way to heaven. We must know the tribulation that the people of God are subject to; this is the way the fathers trod, the way to heaven. My flesh kicks against it; it wants a smooth way to heaven; but when faith is in exercise, when the love of God is shed abroad in my heart, I am satisfied with it. The Lord has chosen you if you have chosen Him.

God has given us His dear Son to be our Saviour. There is no other way to heaven than through and by the Lord Jesus Christ. I think we do not talk half enough of the mercy of God. It is a wonderful subject. But He is a just God as well as a merciful God. We are breakers of the law given to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and to Moses at Mount Sinai. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Out of the mouth of God we are judged. God in His foreknowledge foresaw the Fall, and provided a Saviour in the Person of His dear Son.

What a wonderful thing is the salvation of God! In what a wonderful way He saves His people! No natural man can love it until he is born of the Spirit. A natural man wants to do the best he can, and then

for God to take him to heaven, and perhaps he may just cast in the name of Jesus Christ as a make-weight, but that is not God's way of saving sinners. Jesus became the Substitute. He took a body like yours and mine, sin excepted. Adam, when he was tempted in the garden, very soon fell; but the second Adam, the Saviour, stood for all His dear people when the devil tempted Him, which for one season lasted forty days and forty nights. Yes! He stood; He did not fall; the devil came and found nothing in Him. Jesus Christ, spoken of as a Rock, withstood the temptations of the devil, though they pained His holy soul. He suffered being tempted.

I did not years ago believe that the devil is such a devil as he is, and as I have found him to be since I have been brought into gospel liberty. For the first three months after God revealed His love and mercy with power to my soul, scarcely an evil thought worked in my mind. Now I am sometimes bowed down to the earth because of the temptation of the enemy. I listen to it because it suits my flesh. The devil knows what to present to a man's mind; he knows with what to beset us, and our flesh loves it. When he has presented it to my mind, I have found myself giving way.

These things make us value Jesus Christ. He stood for His people, because He did not stand in need of any salvation for Himself. I do, and you do; and if God has called us by His grace we want His salvation, and no other salvation. How glad we should be that after forty days and forty nights He came out of the battlefield victorious. That is my salvation and your salvation. Do you ever think of that? That is the righteousness I stand in, if I stand at all; that is the righteousness that you stand in, if you stand at all.

By the eye of faith look at the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and what He endured for guilty men. Evil things were said of Him, yet He went about doing good; He fed the multitude, most of whom did not know nor love Him. Paul says, "Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." That is Christ-like. I want, as enabled, to do good, first of all to the Lord's people, and then to men in general. When here upon earth, the Lord Jesus Christ sometimes offended the men of the world because He told them of their evil deeds.

Jesus bore that wrath of God for us which you and I must have borne. That sorrowful, that solemn time in the Garden of Gethsemane; how nicely Hart speaks of it:

"Come, all ye chosen saints of God,
That long to feel the cleansing blood;
In pensive pleasure join with me
To sing of sad Gethsemane."

O I have felt the solemnity of it when the Lord has led me in meditation into the Garden of Gethsemane, and I have seen the Innocent suffer for the guilty, and I knew that I was that guilty one; when as my Substitute He was so troubled that He sweat great drops of blood falling down to the ground. He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." His Father sent an angel who ministered unto Him. Perhaps the angel brought a message from His Father to encourage Him amidst His awful agony. Have you ever felt forsaken of all? Look how acceptable the ministration of the angel was to His pained soul.

Jesus finished the work His Father gave Him to do. He paid the mighty debt for the chosen sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty when He was nailed to the rugged tree and He said, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost. Full salvation is in those words, "It is finished." You can never be saved any other way. Peace and comfort come through Jesus Christ. I know what I am talking about. I remember when I was a young man that these blessed words were spoken to me, "*It is finished.*" I had been trying to finish the work of Christ with my own works, and I only got worse and worse.

"The more I strove against its power,
I sinned and stumbled but the more."

When Christ revealed Himself in that way to my soul, and spoke with divine and sovereign power, there I found salvation, there Christ showed me that He had finished my salvation, and I have never found any true spiritual peace or comfort to my soul from any other quarter. I had been looking somewhere else for it, and sometimes now I am not much better. Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after." I used to feel so differently. I used to feel more love to God, more love to His people, more submissive to His sovereign will. If things are like this with you, and the Lord were to come and touch your heart, you would say, "The Lord hath done great things *for me.*"

Religion is a personal thing. You believe that God has done great things for His church, for His ministers, and for some that you know, but you are anxious to know whether God has done anything for you. It is just possible that He *has* done great things for you, and yet you cannot say so, but your salvation does not depend upon what you can say, but upon what God has done. Has He opened your eyes? That is as wonderful a miracle as when Christ opened the eyes of the man that was born blind. When they asked him how he had received his sight, he said, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." The Pharisees, his questioners, were learned men, educated men who understood the law. They cast him out, but the Lord found him, and asked him a

question, "*Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*" He said, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" He was willing to be right. That is a good mark – *willing to be saved in God's own way*, willing to be taught of God. Jesus said, "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee." Have your eyes been opened to see your ruin? Do you see things differently from what you did some years ago? Do you see and feel yourself a sinner, and confess yourself a wretched sinner? I do not mean sins committed openly and outwardly to be ashamed of before men. Has God opened the eyes of your soul? If He has blessed you with life and opened your eyes, you will feel lost, ruined and undone; you will be brought to be deeply concerned about your soul, and you will never find a solid place to rest your foot upon until you find the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's people are spoken of in the Word under the figure of a dove. Noah sent a raven out of the ark; it was an unclean bird, and it wandered over the waters and never came back into the ark. Then Noah sent out a dove. "But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark."

You may say, I wish I could believe that my name is written in heaven. You will believe it when the Lord speaks with sovereign power to your heart. As surely as He has spoken to you in a way of conviction, as surely as He has spoken to you in the way of condemnation, so surely will He speak to you through the gospel. There could have been no gospel but for God's dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. You have kept praying to the Lord for it, pressing through the crowd with ten thousand fears. I can speak with confidence; as sure as you are concerned about your soul He will reveal Himself. He opens His mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed unto death. When you are brought thus far, you will want to love and honour the truth, and then you will support the truth; you will not find fault with it. You will say, "The truth is right, and the preaching right, but I am wrong." You are in a good place when you bend to the Word. What a blessing, by divine teaching, to be made to bend to the truth, to love the gospel, and to need the gospel as it has been taught you! Your mind will run out to the people of God wherever they are, whether they are in good circumstances or poor. They are your people; your mind will move to those persons; there will be a knitting together.

"The Lord hath done great things for us." Is it not a great thing to be quickened into life, to have the eyes of your soul opened? Is it not a great thing to be brought to love the gospel and the people of God, and to desire to love God and hate yourself? Yes, it is a very great thing. The time will come, as sure as you are seeking His face, that you will find Him, for He has not said "unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain." He is a sovereign; He leads His people the way He chooses, and

He brings them into liberty when He will. You cannot break forth of yourself; He must bring liberty. He brings to the birth, and gives strength to bring forth. The Lord is determined that He will save His people, and not His people save themselves.

Do you know this path, these sighs, these sorrows? The people of God know something of casting down and of lifting up. They that have no changes fear not God. It is a mercy if God has taken us out of the world by His almighty grace. If the Lord has spoken to your heart and given you a concern about your soul, you will be persuaded,

“If ever my poor soul be saved,
'Tis Christ must be the way.”

As regards God's providence, when I remember the way the Lord has led me, how ashamed I am of my grumbling and peevishness. The good hand of God has brought me along to the present day, and it is not because I have been so thankful and so obedient, or because I have been a faithful servant to Him. O no! But because He could [would?], because He had determined to do me good, and so it has been with some of you. May He give us grace to be humble at His blessed feet.

“For mercies countless as the sands,
Which daily I receive
From Jesus, my Redeemer's hands,
My soul, what canst thou give?”

Why, I am pained at heart that I am not more thankful. I tell the Lord sometimes that I am a base man. God searches the reins and the hearts of the children of men. I have loathed and abhorred myself before God, not because of my outward walk, but because of that which works in my heart; God knows that. It is by His light, His teaching, that we know and feel ourselves to be so lost, so ruined, so unworthy of the least of His many, many favours.

May He help us by His grace to live to His honour and glory, to deny the flesh, to mortify the deeds of the body. He has said, “But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” And we want to live to God; we want to be with God when we have finished our course here below. I hope we may be able to say through the Lord's favour, “The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”

May the Lord grant His blessing.

James Dickens was pastor at Rotherfield from 1897 to 1922. He was dearly loved throughout our churches. His own pathway was one of deep tribulation, having an ungodly wife and family. David Pollington of Rotherfield (whom many affectionately remember) said he never knew a nicer man. David was only a boy when his pastor Mr. Dickens died. He said he was so upset, he went for a walk and sat down in a field and cried. “The memory of the just is blessed.”

A WARNING AGAINST FAILING TO STAND

The conclusion of the farewell sermon preached by John Collins before his ejection from the Church of England in 1666. (See the article, August page 251.) This warning against failing to stand is as needful in principle now as then, though the times are different.

Truly, Christians, you had need be armed with resolution; for the world is always counting for very little the things God's people have suffered, and they count it prudence not to meddle therein. Some who profess Christ's name are for easy and soft compliance, as if Christ gave them leave to agree to anything. I believe that some Christians are of the opinion that the saints of God are ill-advised to venture their all upon those truths they see others died and suffered for.

It is a sad thing, many Christians study to draw out the lines of obedience as far as the honesty of the times will give them leave, but no farther. They would go on with the Lord Jesus to the high priest's hall, and there deny Him. They are willing, they say, to do anything for Christ, but they are willing to suffer nothing for Christ. To all such I say, you do very little honour Jesus Christ in this, and you will very little honour yourselves at the last. It is upon this account that some Christians, if they see, even against plain conviction of conscience and the Word, that there are super-instituted things broken in, such as in conscience they cannot submit to, yet they can comply. Why? They reply that they may be used lawfully, though not superstitiously. But the Apostle Paul says, "Do I yet strive to please men?" (Gal. 1. 10). "Am I then the servant of Christ?" You cannot be the servants of Christ if you strive to please men. Woe be to you that please men, and displease God. "He that would be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross." What is that? Deny wife, children, relations, comforts – he must be willing to forsake all. Those duties in which the Lord Jesus Christ is most glorified are either those our slothful hearts are most unwilling to do, or those our fearful hearts are most unwilling to suffer for. Therefore arm yourselves with resolutions to suffer.

There are four appearances and coverings that saints usually take up to hide themselves, as under a covert, so as to evade the gospel-warrants, and the Lord's commands to suffer for the faith delivered.

1. The first is the notion that to a Christian there are things which are indifferent, mere toys and trifles, which they may do or may not do. It is not my work to tell you what is indifferent, or name anything in particular. As I remember in the *Book of Martyrs*, the usual argument was, Why cannot you worship the idol? Why cannot you bow down as well as others? It is a small matter. Cannot you show your outward reverence, and keep your heart to yourself? Indeed if there were

anything that is indifferent, a Christian has a marvellous latitude in point of doctrine, and in point of worship. I would caution you therefore.

The term *indifferent*, I suppose, is devised as a pillar to rest the conscience on, which otherwise would be startled. Things that come under this notion had need well to be weighed and considered. If they told you plainly that they came out of Rome, and had the plague of popery upon them, that they came from hell, were hatched there, and that the curse of God was upon them, nobody would entertain them. They must pretend they came from the church, from the apostles, descending from the Scriptures; and hence they are entertained with such freedom and willingness that most Christians take no notice, but fall down under them; and so the very power and life of religion and holy practice is eaten out.

The devil has three ways by which he makes men seek after him. First, commonly he covers holiness with other names. Secondly, he persuades men that sins are but little. Thirdly, that they may be repented of hereafter. The first is suitable to my purpose, that virtue or grace is covered with other names. If a man is holy, he is called precise; if zealous, he is said to be rash; and if it is really a sin, it shall come under the name of indifference, a toy, a trifle, and things of that nature. Therefore you had need be cautious; for it is not so much what name the sin has, or what title it goes under, as what it is really. As to things of doctrine and worship, every man must give an account to the Lord of what he does. Therefore I do not tell you what is indifferent and what not; but search the Scripture, and take heed what you receive as indifferent.

2. The second thing Christians will say is, I hope I may comply with these things without danger, seeing that I bear them as my burdens. This is very much like the young man in the gospel; he came to Christ and would have Him come up to his terms, and when Christ told him that yet he lacked one thing, and must go and sell all, he went away sorrowful. Likewise, many Christians would follow Christ, but they cannot because there is not such security in it, so they go away sorrowful. You hypocrites! are you willing to forsake all for Christ, yet cannot leave life, liberty, and some of these small things? Will you wound the name of Christ and pretend to be sorrowful for it? Your pretence shall not excuse you, for so was Pilate loth to crucify Christ, and as a means and expedient, he calls for water and washes his hands, saying, "I am innocent from the blood of this just Man." But do you think God excused Pilate? No more will He you. Whatever is brought to you is either forbidden or commanded by God. If forbidden by God, why do you meddle with it? If commanded of the Lord, why are you burdened with it? Why do you do it heavily? For the Lord loves one that is cheerful in His service. Neither man nor God is pleased with such.

3. A third thing which satisfies many is that they may follow in some things the opinions of wise men, holy men and good men, that they may do as they do. I shall say but these two words: first, many men are reputed good, wise and honest, that are not so. A man may be accounted an honest man who yet may be covetous. He may be accounted a very good man, yet be really corrupt in heart and in his lusts. Therefore it is good to try men. I dare not trust mine own heart (unless God gives strength, grace and assistance every moment) lest I should betray the truth of Christ for some worldly advantage. When the devil would set abroad an evil opinion or practice, it is his common way to present it to view in some clean vessel, in men of civil honesty and goodness. You read how the old prophet drew the young one in, though expressly forbidden of God Himself (1 Kings. 13. 11-19). It may be the example of an old minister shall draw you. Therefore it is good to mind whom you follow.

Secondly, granted that they are all good and real, that they are men fearing God (as there are some), yet God will not let His people know all His mind. There are some that would, but cannot know all His mind and will. The Lord is free and sovereign; He reveals things necessary to salvation, but other things He may withhold. But what is your rule? Call no man master. You are to follow no man further than he follows Christ. Indeed for a man to follow the examples of others, who sin and do not know it, it is just like the case of holy Noah (who was a gracious man) who knew not the strength of the grape, and was drunk with his own vineyards. But what was the fruit of it? His son Ham saw his nakedness and made it known. If good and holy men taste of the intoxicated wine that is too strong for them and know it not, will you sip after them? If you do, you will display your nakedness and proclaim it from generation to generation; you will make yourselves Hams, not sons of the prophet. I know not what warrant you have to follow such examples.

4. The fourth thing which some Christians say is that it does no good by standing out. I answer, whether we get good, or do good, or no, we are to do our duty. The Lord will honour you for suffering for the truth (2 Thess. 1. 2-5). And by suffering you shall confirm the saints, and bear testimony; you shall witness against all false doctrines and false worship before the whole world. By your humility and patience, when you suffer not as evil-doers but as those that suffer for the Word of righteousness, the Word of truth, for holding fast the Lord Jesus and His faith – that is more precious than heaven and earth, than any created thing. This will make your name a sweet savour to all generations. As for those that apostatise, persecute and oppose Jesus Christ, their memories shall be left as a curse to the people of God.

THE LORD'S DAY

Following the publication of the Editor's apposite sermon on the keeping of the Lord's day as the Christian Sabbath in the July *Gospel Standard*, the Committee of the Gospel Standard Society, at its meeting on July 13th, 2012, voted unanimously to pass the following declaration confirming what should be the position of our churches on this important matter. The Lord's day has been a hallowed institution in our churches and there is deep concern lest by a loosening of practice this precious heritage should be lost, and with it the Lord's favour upon us as a group of churches. Especially those who are members of our churches are exhorted to set a sober example to others.

"We believe that the keeping of the Sabbath day is, like marriage, a creation ordinance and command. It was ordained of God for all time, and for all men, and its neglect is one of the sins for which God will visit a nation and His church. This was confirmed at the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, by the command to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The word "remember" implies that it had already been observed even before the giving of the law. The Christian Sabbath is the first day of the week, called the Lord's day, Christ who is the Lord of the Sabbath having the divine authority to remove the day from the seventh to the first day of the week. It especially commemorates the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour, who sanctified this day by His resurrection from the dead. By His own example He also sanctified it by His appearing to His disciples on the first day of the week on several occasions. It was confirmed by the practice of the apostles in the New Testament church. Also it was on this day, the Day of Pentecost, that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the New Testament church. It should be viewed as a part of the law of liberty, the gospel rule; as a precious gift from God for the benefit of body and soul and ordained of God to be regularly observed. It should be a day set apart for the whole family for worship and devotion, both of a private and public nature, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. All secular pursuits, activities and employment should be refrained from, the only exception being works of mercy and necessity." (See Matthew 12. 8; John 19. 26; Acts 20. 7; 1 Corinthians 15. 1, 2 and Revelation 1. 10.)

G.D.B.

Though the scorpion be little, yet will it sting a lion to death; and so will the least sin, if not pardoned by the death of Christ.

Thomas Brooks

THE SINFULNESS OF SIN

By William Bridge (1600-1670)

This is the "application" at the end of a long sermon on Romans 7. 13

If there be so much evil and sinfulness in sin, behold the power of the grace of God, the grace of God without you, the grace of God within you. If a spark of fire should be preserved alive in an ocean of water, you would think it is some strong hand that did it. If a candle should be kept alight in a great wind and storm, you will say it was a strong hand that kept it alight. There is an ocean of sin in our hearts, and that a little spark or candle of grace should be preserved in us in the midst of this ocean of sin, O the power of the grace of God!

If this be true, behold the riches and the freeness of the grace of God, that you should be delivered from all this evil; sin sinful, and so sinful, and evil, and you delivered from all this evil. O the riches and the freeness of the grace of God!

Be sure of this, that you look much upon Christ crucified. Christ on the cross is a glass wherein you may see the sinfulness of sin. Study Christ crucified much.

Labour more and more to walk in the presence of God, the shinings of God's countenance, for as when the sun shines into the room, you see little motes, so when God shines into your heart, you see little sins. The beams of God's countenance do discover sin in the sinfulness of it; therefore labour to walk more in the presence of God, and in the shinings of His countenance.

Labour more and more to examine your own souls; be much in private examination. Hardly an ungrowing Christian that is much in private examination; hardly a proud man that is much in private examination. Do you desire to see sin in the sinfulness of it? Go alone, call yourself often to account, be much in private examination.

Take as much pains to keep the sense of sin upon your heart as ever you did to get it. Some take pains to get themselves into a good frame, but take no pains to keep themselves in it when they have gotten it. As the apostle speaks, they view themselves in the glass of royal liberty, and go away and forget what manner of men they were.

In case you find any particular sin, go round about it; consider the circumstances thereof; aggravate it upon your own soul.

Improve your afflictions this way. God sends afflictions sometimes to give you the sight of some sin that lay hid before; and sometimes your afflictions have your sin written on their forehead. Improve then your affliction for the discovery of the sinfulness of sin.

Be sure you judge of sin as the Scripture judgeth of it, and not as men judge of it: the Scripture judgeth of sin by the consequence thereof,

as our Saviour Christ says, "I was an hungred, and ye fed Me not; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; naked, and ye clothed Me not." How so? "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of these, ye did it not to Me" (Matt. 25. 42-45). Christ judgeth of sin by the consequence of it; therefore if you would see sin in the sinfulness of it, judge of it as Christ judgeth of it and as the Scripture judgeth of it, and not as men judge of it.

If you desire to see sin in its own colours, in the sinfulness of it, then look upon the commandments of God as great things. The more the commandment of God is greatened to you, the greater will sin be in your eye; if the commandment of God be great in your eye, the sin, contrary to the commandment, will be great in your eye too.

Never think anything small betwixt God and you; there is nothing small betwixt God and us, for God is an infinite God.

Never look upon sin in the time of temptation, for then you are in the dark, and not fit to see the greatness of sin. Labour to know the difference betwixt temptation and corruption, and betwixt the sins of God's people and others; but never look upon sin in the time of temptation, for then you are in the dark, and cannot see the sinfulness of it.

If you would see sin in the sinfulness of it, then go unto God for the coming of the commandment, that God would set on the commandment upon you, as Paul here. Says he, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Some, it may be here, never yet had the commandment set on upon their hearts. O then go to God, and pray for the setting on of the commandment upon you; then shall you see sin in the sinfulness thereof.

Now let me add two or three cautions to this, and so conclude.

Take heed that you do not so think on sin as to forget Christ. If you think on sin without Christ you will despair; if you think on Christ without sin you will presume; never think on sin without Christ. Labour to get the sight of your sin, but never think on sin without Christ, but look on your sin in the wounds of Christ, and read your sins written out in Christ's blood.

Humble yourselves for sin, though it be never so small, but do not question your condition for sin though it be never so great. I do not speak this to those that are unconverted, for they have cause to question their condition for every sin, though never so small; but being converted and turned unto God, I say, humble thyself for every sin, though never so small; but never question thy condition for any sin, though never so great.

The more sense you have of sin and the sinfulness thereof, the more labour to maintain your assurance of the pardon of it; and the more assurance you have of the pardon of your sin, the more labour for a sight

and sense of it. Let not your sense of sin quench your joy of pardon; let not your joy of pardon hinder your sight of sin. If both these be true and genuine, the one is an help unto the other.

And to conclude, the more sense you have of sin, the more do you come to Christ. For in Scripture you shall find that every good work is not for itself, but some good works are in order to others, as for example, to instance in the keeping of the Sabbath, you are to rest on the Sabbath, and it is a good work, but not for itself, but in order to prayer, hearing, sanctification and other duties. So here, sense of sin is a good work, but it is not for itself, but in order to going to Christ. Therefore now go to Christ, and say, Lord, now I see the sinfulness of sin, let me also see the graciousness of grace, and the fulness of Christ. Yea, now I do come to Thee for righteousness, because I see my sin is out of measure sinful.

POWER ATTENDING GOD'S WORD

By Henry Fowler (1779-1838)

We may observe,

First, without the power of God, the gospel Word cannot profit them that hear it.

Second, that the testimony of God by His servants shall be made effectual to the regeneration of blind, dead, ignorant sinners, and to the building up of saints in their most holy faith.

First, without the power of God, the gospel Word cannot profit them that hear it. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isa. 53. 1). No man ever preached the gospel more evangelically than Isaiah, and it appears that Isaiah preached many years, even in four kings' reign, yet with but little success; especially during the reign of Ahaz, for the ways of God were forsaken, and the doors of the house of God were closed, till Hezekiah came to the throne, and the first thing he set about was to reform and restore the pure worship of God which had been grievously abused and neglected during the reign of his father Ahaz. Had Uzziah truly believed the report of Isaiah, he would not have assumed the priest's office by going to the altar to offer incense, neither would he have been in a rage when opposed by the Lord's servants, but would have humbled himself. God marked his arrogance and presumption with infamy: he was a leper all his days, lived apart, and was shut out from the house of God. This should serve as a check to all presumptuous mortals.

Had the people in Jotham's reign believed truly the report of Isaiah, they would not have corrupted the public worship of God, as it appeared they did: "And the people did yet corruptly" (2 Chron. 27. 2); for where the Word is mighty in the heart of a poor sinner, it will inspire him with

the feelings of David: "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes." Had Ahaz believed the report of the prophet, he would not have sacrificed and burnt incense to idols, nor have profaned the vessels of the sanctuary, and trampled under foot the authority of Jehovah. But Isaiah's preaching was lost upon him, and the far greater part who heard him, and "except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah," as he saith (Isa. 1. 9). As it was in Israel's days before that time, so it was in Isaiah's time: "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Our Lord's personal ministry upon earth was received but by few, and He spoke as never man spake; multitudes took offence at His doctrine, and many left Him after they had professed attachment to Him. According to His striking parable, there was but one out of the four classes of His hearers that brought forth fruit to perfection! Peter and Paul were both more successful in the work of the ministry than their Master; but still, it was His power working in them and by them mightily, or they would have preached in vain had they lived and preached till this day. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord."

God's servants are commissioned to preach the gospel to every creature. That is, they are to give a full and clear statement of the mind and will of God as revealed in His own blessed Word, to warn the ungodly, and point out the only possible way for a guilty, ruined sinner to be justified before God; to show by the Word of truth what that justifying faith is that brings sweet peace into the sensible sinner's troubled bosom. In the most solemn manner they should point out the danger of taking up any religion, or trusting to any fleshly feeling, duty or performance of the creature, and men should be faithfully warned to trust not to a head-knowledge of Christ, but look after a heart-acquaintance with Him.

This is all the minister of Christ is called upon to do, except *living the gospel* he preaches, that the ministry be not blamed, for that man's ministry will have little weight with his hearers if his life and deportment be one continued piece of inconsistency. He may be ingenious, he may split and divide a text methodically, he may learn the art of speaking experimentally as well as doctrinally, he may please giddy-headed professors by working upon their natural passions, and they may set all down for the mighty power of God; but let it be remembered, "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

Secondly, that the testimony of God by His servants shall be made effectual.

We have a striking proof of this by the preaching of the apostles among the Thessalonians: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;

as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thess. 1. 5, 6). Here we see a blessed fulfilment of the Lord's word by Isaiah: "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." Observe, reader, the Thessalonians received the Word in *much affliction*; affliction went first, then came the joy; not as those described (Matt. 13. 20, 21) who received the Word with joy, but having no root, in the day of trial withered away. So it will be with all whose religion stands in the letter of truth, and not in the blessed teaching of the Holy Ghost. It was divine teaching that constrained the Thessalonians to follow the apostles and the Lord in the regeneration, and the same mighty power attends the preaching of God's truth by His faithful servants now.

How is it evidenced? First, by the removal of that thick veil of ignorance which is on the minds of men by nature; ignorance of sin as respects its exceeding sinfulness is the prevailing disease of all men in their first-born estate. Through the preached Word, as conveyed to the heart by the Holy Ghost, the sinner is enlightened, so that he sees where he stands, a condemned sinner before God, and deserving His utmost wrath. He cries for mercy, but often fears he shall be eternally lost! This state is strikingly described by that man of God, William Huntington, in a poem of his called "The Spiritual Birth," and I believe it begins thus:

"How keen are the pangs of a spiritual birth,
When its dreadful attendants invade;
The soul is a stranger to music and mirth,
A companion for none but the dead."

I do not for a moment suppose the author meant to say that such a tried soul was a fit companion for poor, dead sinners. No! for he knew by sad experience that the company of such to a tried soul is like hell upon earth.

Here it is a man learns that the commandment is exceeding broad, that his righteousnesses are filthy rags, and the more the holy Lawgiver goes forth in the brightness of His majesty as a just God, revealing Himself in His fiery law, the more the poor culprit trembles, while his heart remains as hard as a millstone, and love God he cannot. But the same power that kills makes alive. He that makes the deep and dangerous wound to appear will most assuredly apply the healing plaster. O how mighty is the gospel word in the hand of the Spirit!

How sweet is the gospel of Jesus the Saviour!
How dear was the price that He paid for our life!
He loved, notwithstanding our crooked behaviour,
And shedding His blood put an end to the strife.

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST

46th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at the Strict Baptist Chapel, Main Street,
Grove, Wantage, Oxon., on Saturday afternoon, May 19th, 2012*

After the singing of hymn 1139, the Chairman, Mr. G.D. Buss, read from the prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 1, and Mr. G.W. Hyde (Pastor, Tenterden) prayed. The Chairman welcomed the friends to the Meeting and then called on the Secretary, Mr. Playfoot, to introduce the Annual Report and to report on the work of the Trust.

The Secretary acknowledged the help of the Lord through another year. He drew attention to a number of items in the printed Report. As indicated in the Objectives and Activities, we do what we can for the churches in these days of much legislation. We also assist the churches by the publication of good books. The main items of books sold during the last twelve months were stated in the Report, and the total sold was 6,613. Grants had also been made for the printing of 6,000 *Bible Doctrines* in Urdu in Pakistan and 2,000 *Gadsby's Catechisms* in Zambia. The latter was in connection with the work carried out by the Free Grace Evangelistic Association. The main-stay continued to be the *Miracles* series, *Bible Doctrines* and *Pilgrim's Progress* which together provided over 40% of the sales. Available in 2012 is the *Friendly Companion* on DVD going right back to 1875. All the articles had been indexed and cross-linked. The price was £30 which was good value bearing in mind that the cost of scanning and production was over £12,000. The printed Report had mentioned the new book published already in 2012, *Gospel Precepts* by J.C. Philpot, and the Secretary displayed a draft copy of another J.C. Philpot book containing his expositions of Holy Scripture which should be available later this year. This has been compiled by Mr. J.E. North and Dr. Matthew Hyde. There is an appendix designed to show a complete Philpot service consisting of one of his expositions, the prayer that followed, and then the sermon from the same service. In the prayer he noted the reality of the dear man's confessions and pleadings before God, which should touch the heart.

The finances of Publications had shown an operating deficit of over £34,000 although this did include a one-off item of almost £10,000 for arrears of royalty payments which covered a period of over ten years. The Trust sold a significant number of books to retailers and other distributors and after the discounts there was very little to contribute towards running costs. Over 35% of sales by value went to the U.S.A. Sales there had increased, but sadly in the U.K. there had been a gradual decline over the last five years. It was now part of Publications' policy to subsidise the translation, publication and distribution of our books

both at home and overseas in situations where people cannot afford commercial prices.

On the general side, the Secretary reported that the usual work continued, helping trustees with their responsibilities, legal documentation with the help of our solicitors, trustee changes, first registrations of chapel property and managing charitable funds. There had not been so many grants to the chapels during 2011, but the Trust was pleased to continue to help with the cost of drainage, heating improvements, new toilets, chapel re-roofing, etc., and applications for help from the churches were welcomed. The Trust had the funds to help and it was good to be able to help needy cases. The Committee sought to weigh up all the factors affecting each case to reach an impartial decision. The Secretary reminded chapel trustees that where new trustees are appointed, unregistered land must be registered with the Land Registry.

Consideration of the Trust's draft model constitution for churches' working funds by the Charity Commission was in abeyance. The workings of the Charities Act 2006 were currently subject to an independent review which was due to report to the minister for the Cabinet Office in the summer. This review should include further consideration of the current £100,000 threshold for the registration of excepted charities which includes churches, so the model constitution may still be needed if that threshold is reduced.

The Trust had suffered an overall deficit in 2011 of £34,650. The situation had been much helped by us being kindly remembered in the Will of the late Rhoda Kershaw from Ossett, from whose estate a legacy of over £22,000 was received. The balance sheet position is strong. However there were risks to the funds held by banks in the current upheavals in the European banking system. Using power in the Charities Acts, resolutions had been passed during 2011 to remove restrictions on spending capital in some of the charities managed by the Trust. The total of funds in the Ely, Rainham and Robertsbridge charities was over £186,000, which was now available for distribution to the beneficiaries in those areas and these funds should prove very helpful for chapel repairs and improvements.

The Report of the Library Trustees had been included as usual in the printed Report. The Secretary drew attention to this very valuable resource for both personal reading and research, and also to the annual deficit. Additional income was required to maintain the work of the Library and to encourage those who work so hard in maintaining it. The roof had to be repaired in 2012 and internal painting carried out for the first time in thirty years. The Trust had agreed to pay for these works.

Finally, Mr. Playfoot thanked members present for their loyal support and encouraged others who were not members to join.

There were no questions on the Report. The Chairman expressed warm thanks to the Secretary for his unstinting service over many years. Likewise he thanked Dr. Philip Skelton and Mr. John Kingham for all they did for Publications and the several authors who had so kindly written for the Trust. He hoped that the Lord had blessed the truths that had been disseminated in that way. The members present then passed the resolution to receive the 2011 Annual Report and Financial Statements. By separate resolutions each of the three Committee members retiring in rotation, Messrs. M.G. Bailey, G.D. Buss and H. Mercer, were re-elected without dissent. Two new Committee members had been appointed in 2011, Mr. Andrew Crowter of Attleborough, who was appointed partly because of his knowledge of buildings, and Dr. Matthew Hyde from Tenterden, whose denominational historical background and his knowledge of books had been very helpful already. Their appointments were confirmed by separate resolutions without dissent.

The Chairman mentioned three more things about the books. First, the Trust hoped to publish shortly the diary and poetry of the late Mrs. Rhoda Gosden, the wife of the late editor of the *Gospel Standard*, Mr. J.H. Gosden. He said this was an excellent spiritual book, very heart-warming. For a lady who he understood was very quiet in her natural life, there was obviously a lot going on spiritually, which is a real treasure to read. Secondly, J.C. Philpot's *Gospel Precepts*, now available, was an excellent treatise which showed the full breadth of what the gospel rule is. Thirdly, he mentioned that the Trust was making available some of its books for electronic download.

He warmly thanked the friends at Grove for making us so welcome at their chapel. Hymn 285 was then sung, following which Mr. T.J. Pocock (Pastor, South Moreton) addressed the meeting on "The ministry of Jeremiah and its relevance today."

Jeremiah had heavy tidings to declare and as a result is often known as the weeping prophet. But Mr. Pocock believed there was no other prophet more Christ-like. He was endued with the Spirit of the Lord; he was Christ-like in his faithfulness to his God and in the sufferings which he endured and in his weeping over the sins he had to reprove. Then we see the love of Christ shining through as he declared words of mercy and grace. He prophesied over a period of between forty and fifty years, beginning in the reign of good King Josiah and continuing through the reigns of subsequent ungodly kings. In the work to which God called him he felt to be a child as every true servant of God feels. But God gave him the grace needed to declare what God had commanded him.

Jeremiah had at first to remind Israel that the Lord still remembered their first love and to enquire why, after all He had done for them, they had turned from Him to walk after vanity. The word of the Lord was,

“Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate.” And he declared their two evils: “They have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2. 12, 13).

Mr. Pocock applied this to our present day and the need for searching of hearts. Do we continue in sin? Is there a fear of the Lord’s judgments? Does the Lord make us “horribly afraid” and bring us to call upon Him to “turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved” (Psa. 80. 3)? How essential it is to maintain personal communion with God, secret prayer, for what we receive direct from Him is living water and, “it pleased the Father that in [His dear Son] should all fulness dwell” (Col. 1. 19). When was the last time, he asked, that the Lord granted an answer to the prayer of our soul?

If we have forsaken the fountain of living water, it is inevitable that we shall have committed the second evil of “hewing out broken cisterns that can hold no water.” That is, we look somewhere else for our help, comfort and relief. Sin will come in, worldly temptations and distractions, the work of the devil from which the Lord’s people are not immune. But there are also lawful things – in a religious sense, he said, we may draw comfort from the work we are doing in the Lord’s name. But the comfort must be in Christ as Samuel Rutherford said, “Anwoth was not heaven, and preaching was not Christ.” He warned of the dangers of living on past experiences rather than the Lord’s mercy when He brings a past experience back to us with renewed freshness. He warned also about being satisfied with attending the Lord’s house, holding the doctrines of our faith and with reading good books. The key point in these things was, were we personally brought to Christ and to receive living water? Without these living waters, ministers cannot speak aright and neither can the churches and congregations live aright. The way we walk and talk will declare whether we are receiving living water.

The ministry of Jeremiah, as of every sent servant of Christ, was to set before the people their sins and to speak of the promise of deliverance and restoration. He referred to the good figs and the bad figs in chapter 24. The good figs, the Lord’s little remnant which He would acknowledge and restore (chapter 24. 6, 7), they would return wounded and chastened, which is how poor sinners are found coming to Christ, to the fountain of living waters. Brought away from all trust in broken cisterns, the desire will be with the Apostle Paul for the knowledge of resurrection power (Phil. 3. 10).

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Pocock dwelt on Jeremiah 31 and the everlasting love of God and asked, “If He loves us with an everlasting love, will He not bring us to experience that love?” He drew

attention to the promise of the Messiah in verse 22 and concluded with the desire that “we might know something of the blessed work of the Spirit bringing us from all our gaddings, from all our cisterns, to the fountain head.”

The Chairman expressed thankfulness to the Lord for the address and the desire for the Lord to grant fruit and especially Christ formed in our heart, the hope of glory. The meeting concluded with hymn 631 and the benediction.

D.J.P.

RIGHT AT LAST

An account of Thomas Boorne of Greenwich, by “W.B.” He died on February 8th, 1850, aged 21. J.C. Philpot included this account in the early days of his Editorship as an encouragement to those who feel their beginning is not too clear

The following brief account is written in the hope that, under the blessing of God, it may prove profitable to the household of faith, wishing grace and peace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

The mortal disease which ended the career of our dear young pilgrim was spinal consumption. For some months before his death he had been ailing, and was thought to be in a decline. Medical advice being procured, a change of air was recommended, the result of which was a hope that a favourable change had taken place in his health. He went for a few weeks to his employment as a clerk, but about five weeks before his death he was obliged to relinquish his situation, when the doctor informed his parents that he was in a consumption. Afterwards he daily grew weaker, till his illness terminated in death.

At an early age he was under serious impressions, and though he did not consider this any part of his experience of a change of heart, nor could he determine upon any exact time, yet it was certainly manifest to some who knew him that grace (however imperceptible to him) had at an early period taken hold of his heart, and constrained him to remember his Creator in the days of his youth. His own words, in a letter written a few years back to Mr. Shorter, whose ministry had been much blessed to him, are these. Speaking of eternal things he says, “There was a time when I did not have such thoughts, I know; and that I have them now, I know; but when they began I cannot tell.” “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh,

and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3. 8). Perhaps it may not be deviating from the analogy of faith to say that our dear, departed friend, in his experience, came in at the south gate, and went out at the north, but not without a sweet persuasion that he was a freeman of that celestial city, concerning which it is said, “Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise” (Isa. 60. 18).

About four years ago, at the death of a relative, his mind was particularly arrested with these words: “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him” (Psa. 45. 10, 11). By these words, he said, he was first encouraged to hope that the Lord would show mercy to him, of which he deeply felt his need.

After this, he was much tried in his mind to know whether the foregoing words were really from the Lord, and when entreating the Lord about it, he had the following words given him with much sweetness, which he considered an answer to his prayer: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3. 9). He was a diligent and earnest seeker in all the appointed means of grace, and manifested to all that knew him that he desired a better country, that is a heavenly one, of which his conversation at times savoured. He was also an attentive hearer of the Word preached, and would often relate a considerable part of what he had been hearing, and in many instances he wrote the substance of several sermons, not having notes to assist his memory. One of these productions appeared in the *Gospel Standard* in August 1847. Moreover, he made it clearly manifest by his life, walk and conversation that he was no friend to the world, but that he possessed the spirit of the fear of the Lord, which Mr. Hart says is

“A fence against evil,
By which we resist
World, flesh and the devil,
And imitate Christ.”

Though he was the subject of many fears as to whether he had ever experienced a real change of heart, yet it was clearly manifest that he was joined in heart to all the living in Jerusalem, and of such there is good hope. His own words in the letter before cited on this point are these: “One thing I cannot deny, that is, that I do love and feel a union to the Lord’s people”; and we believe he was rooted and grounded in that most excellent grace (charity, or love) which “is not puffed up, doth not

behave itself unseemly ... rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ... hopeth all things, endureth all things"; and that "never faileth," as the day of trial hath declared.

Reader, do thy desires heavenward spring from such a root as this? And art thou, from a felt sense of thy need, saying with the poor leper who came to Jesus, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean?" Then be assured He will fulfil the desire of them that thus seek Him; He will come and save you.

"Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek."

He often thought, because he had not experienced such a deep law work as he had heard some speak of, that he lacked an essential evidence of life, on account of which he was the subject of many tormenting fears. In a letter written by himself, referred to before, he says respecting the law, "One thing that puzzles and perplexes me is that I have not passed the fiery law of Mount Sinai. For when I have heard the children of God speak (or read their experience), they generally notice this as the first thing. In this I seem to be excluded, for never have I felt that depth of such trouble as if hell would swallow me up, or that every moment would be my last. These things I know have been experienced by some of the Lord's family, more or less." The dear friend to whom he wrote kindly replied to this part as follows: "You may be as much puzzled to find a law work in you as to find in yourself a clean heart, and a pair of pure hands to come to Christ with; and you may be equally at a loss to find within yourself a proper sense of your need of Jesus in any way to save you; and yet for all that, whether you have these things or have them not, you must come [to the Saviour], and come you do, I believe, when you can find none of them."

In another letter to a friend (of a later date), he thus writes respecting a law work: "I fear I have not had a real law work, that I have not sunk deep enough, that I have not had a sense deep enough of my lost estate and corrupt heart." Then speaking of a variety of fears, etc., he adds, "These things make me cry to God to make the work genuine, to show me, if His will, that it is His work in my soul." Now we have no hesitation in saying that though he was thus perplexed and exercised, yet the voice of God in His law had been powerful in him, by the effects produced, and a sense of this truth he possessed, viz: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help" (Hos. 13. 9). And this he was seeking, from life received, but from want of mature understanding to see his calling clear, his case was as Mr. Hart has described of many others:

"Daily we groan and mourn
Beneath the weight of sin;

We pray to be new-born,
 But know not what we mean;
 We think it something very great,
 Something that's undiscovered yet."

During his late affliction he passed through a severe and fiery trial, which was so terribly felt by him that he exclaimed at one time, in great anguish of spirit, "I shall surely go to hell." But God, who is faithful to His promise, did not suffer him to be tempted above that he was enabled to bear, and we may say of him in the language of Scripture, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." During his affliction the life of God was manifest at intervals, so that our dear young friend bore sweet and satisfactory testimony that

"The feeblest saint shall win the day,
 Though death and hell obstruct the way."

One night, when much disturbed by reason of a violent cough which caused him to weep, the following words came into his mind with comfort:

"The lash is steeped He on thee lays,
 And softened in His blood."

He was often overheard praying earnestly, though he could not be prevailed on to speak in prayer so as to be heard, if he knew anyone was present, but was desirous to hear others. At the commencement of his affliction, he found particular sweetness in the following hymns, which seemed like a preparatory intimation of his after conflict:

"Brethren, those who come to bliss,
 Come through sore temptations."

Also, "Come, ye backsliding sons of God," also,

"Jehovah hath said, 'tis left on record,
 The righteous are one with Jesus the Lord;
 At all times He loves them, 'twas for them He died!
 Yet oftentimes He proves them, for grace must be tried."

For several days and nights he was much disturbed with wandering thoughts, which at times were very distressing, but they were removed a few days before his death. One night he was so horribly beset with blasphemous thoughts, he feared he should be left to utter what he felt within; and O what trembling he felt, and alarming fears lest he had committed the unpardonable sin! But the Lord preserved him, and made Psalm 116 very sweet to relieve and comfort his mind, thus fulfilling His own word: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am

thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness" (Isa. 41. 10). There were several portions of Scripture that had been sweet to him at times in answer to prayer, for like Jacob of old, the language of his heart was, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me."

One time when in much distress, feeling himself such a great sinner, truly wretched and miserable, he had these words sweetly applied: "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." At another time: "The election hath obtained it." At another time: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." At another time, when sorely oppressed by Satan, he had these words applied: "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." By these scriptures he was comforted and encouraged to hope, thus proving that "what was written aforetime was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

At another time, after a long season of darkness and barrenness of soul, and fearing on this account he was never in the right way, and begging of the Lord to appear for him, these words came powerfully into his mind from Psalm 107. 4-6: "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way, they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses." These words raised his hopes so high that he could say with all his heart he believed all would be well with him at last, that he should be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and he was comforted by hearing the 103rd Psalm read.

After this he complained of darkness and fresh discoveries of inward evil, but was again encouraged by the application of these words: "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." After this, at times, he expressed a satisfaction of rest and peace, and of a good hope that he was fixed on the Rock Christ Jesus, and said, "Precious, precious Jesus!" He also expressed himself resigned to the Lord's will, having no wish to live.

A day or two before his death, he wished a hymn to be sung that he made choice of: "Hail, mighty Jesus! how divine!" He was too weak to hear it sung, but he enjoyed hearing it read. He was asked if he was happy; he answered, "Very happy." The day before his death he seemed to be longing to leave the body, and said, "Come, Lord." After this he was too weak to converse. About five o'clock the next morning, a little before his death, his dear mother, who was still anxious to know how he felt, asked him if he was happy. He was too weak to speak, but endeavoured to move his head, by which we understood "Yes." Soon

after this, he breathed his last, without a struggle, sigh or groan. Thus our dear young friend, Thomas Boorne, fell asleep in Jesus on Friday, February 8th, 1850, aged twenty-one years and seven days.

He was a dutiful and loving son, a kind and affectionate brother, and his walk and conversation as a Christian was well worthy of imitation. His earnest prayer on his deathbed was, as also before, that the Lord would sanctify his death to his dear parents, that He would also support them in the trial, and sanctify it to the family, especially his brothers and sisters, and also that the Lord would bless and prosper Zion. From what he felt at times, he was desirous that some of these things might be written down.

His remains were interred in the Nunhead Cemetery, on Friday, February 15th, 1850, where, by his own request as well as that of others, Mr. Shorter spoke suitably on the occasion, when a goodly number of Christian friends attended.

BOOK REVIEWS

Christ is Best, by Richard Sibbes, small paperback in the Pocket Puritan Series; 68 pages; price £3.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We love the Puritans, not least Richard Sibbes, finding their writings exceedingly profitable. It is good to find that they are being republished as they originally appeared, and we hope some of our younger, godly people especially may profit by reading them.

Christ is Best is a funeral sermon preached in 1632 on the text: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1. 23, 24).

We think it only fair to say we do not consider this to be Sibbes at his best. Was he swallowed up by the occasion – the funeral of an eminent man, Christopher Sherland? Mr. Sherland was clearly a very godly man, but coming to the conclusion of the sermon it hardly appears that he was a sinner needing to be saved by grace!

The Death of the Saviour, by Richard D. Phillips; paperback; 92 pages; price £5.75; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

The Death of the Saviour consists of seven reverent chapters on the crucifixion. It is written by an American Presbyterian minister.

We are pleased to see that there is a new emphasis in some recent publications. The author writes: "As a Christian of strongly Reformed convictions, I wish to be known not so much for my doctrines as for a passionate absorption with and in Jesus Christ." And again: "The Reformed faith we need

to recover is one composed of doctrinally-strong convictions, the aim of which is knowing, communing with, and glorifying our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Pages 58-63 form an excellent section on redemption being particular and limited. In making the free offer, though, we cannot understand the consistency of the author saying, "The Saviour died out of love for you."

We were very pleased, in the chapter on "A Garden Burial" (pages 86-87) to read how Scripture sets out burial and not cremation. "Our view of the afterlife will always influence how we handle the bodies of those who have died. Whereas cremation results from a pagan view of the body and the afterlife in which matter is released into spirit, Christian burial is shaped by the hope of a bodily resurrection."

The Publishers' recommendation states: "The author especially delights in drawing the readers' attention to the small details surrounding the crucifixion." We must confess that this was what we found confusing. Again we are sorry that our Authorised Version is not being used.

All in all, though there is much that is good in the book, we much prefer Banner of Truth's republication of Krummacher's superb classic *The Suffering Saviour*.

The Face of Jesus Christ: The Person and Work of our Lord, by Archibald G. Brown; paperback; 286 pages; price £8; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Until recently the name of Archibald Brown was just a name to us. We must confess, however, how interested we have become in reading his biography, and now with pleasure we have read his sermons (twenty-two in the book), and commend them to our readers.

It will be said, "There is not the depth that we find in J.C. Philpot and J.K. Popham." There certainly is not – either in doctrine or experience. But there is a beauty and an attraction in these sermons.

Though there is a simplicity, yet there is a faithful contending for:

1. The glory of the Person and finished work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And Mr. Brown speaks as one who knows and loves Him personally.

2. The absolute authority and infallibility of Holy Scripture – and this in the face of many attacks from "the new theology."

3. An abhorrence of any form of worldliness or lightness in the things of God.

It may be felt that Archibald Brown is a little flowery in some of his expressions, and, though he uses the Authorised Version, he does in places refer to the new Revised Version.

But there is the gracious experience. In preaching he often refers to what he himself feels – so different from so many modern preachers. Especially (page 168), preaching in deep sorrow [probably following the death of his wife], he says:

"I only wish that it [the text] might come to you with one tithe of the power it came to me. It came to me the other day, or rather, I should say, the other night, in deep depression that I cannot describe. I was sitting alone in a house that has been stripped of everything that made life bright – sitting utterly alone, in a deep depression which, as I say, I cannot describe in words. I sat in a stupor

till past the midnight hour, thinking about the past, and about one o'clock in the morning, I mechanically took this Testament in my hand, and opened it without a thought. It opened on this 22nd chapter of Revelation, and my eye fell on two words: 'I, Jesus.' They were enough. The darkness vanished.... Though children die, though wives be cut down, though husbands go to the grave, though fortunes break, though all depart, yet in the darkness, and through the storm, there comes a voice, and it says, 'I, Jesus – I live still. Whatever else thou mayest have lost, I, Jesus, am with thee yet.'"

We commend this book.

ONE SPIRIT

"He who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6. 17).

One spirit, O Redeemer, and can it ever be,
That Thou in tender mercy hast made me one with Thee?
Is there a bond of union reaching from heaven to earth?
Hast Thou in me accomplished a new, a second birth?

Dost Thou, celestial Spirit, rest in this heart of mine?
Has it become Thy dwelling, O Visitant divine?
In spite of all my vileness, dost Thou assent to stay?
Will not my sin and folly soon banish Thee away?

One Spirit with the Holiest, the high and lofty One!
One with the spotless Saviour, God's well-beloved Son!
Unto such matchless union scarce can my soul aspire,
So great appears the blessing, surpassing all desire.

And yet without Thy Spirit I can be none of Thine;
Then may His gracious influence within me ever shine.
O sanctify me wholly, from guilt and sin set free,
So shall I taste the sweetness of being one with Thee.

Since by Thy blessed Spirit are all Thy children led,
Since all must be united unto a sinless Head,
The mystery of this union unto my soul make known,
And make my heart Thy temple, Thy dwelling place, Thy throne.

Bought with a price, Thou Saviour, the ransom didst not spare;
Thou for unworthy sinners the veil of flesh didst wear;
Thou hast a cleansing fountain from Thy heart's blood supplied;
The robe of Thy preparing will all pollution hide.

Then not my own, Redeemer (if Thou wilt stoop to me),
But Thine by right of purchase, and Thine by choice I'd be.
Body and soul and spirit, to Thee alone belong,
And Thine be all the glory in heaven's eternal song.

Ruth Hammond, January 1881

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
OCTOBER 2012

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

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton, on June 17th, 2012

Text: “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, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow” (2 Sam. 23. 5).

These were the last recorded words of David the man of God. He was a great man. He was an eminent man. He was king in Israel. But he had to die, and death is the great leveller. When he came to the end, there were a few things that were troubling him, and it is left on record for us. He said, and he painfully felt it, that his house was “not so with God,” not so as it should have been, not so as he would have had it to have been. “Although my house be not so with God.” It is very clear that outwardly speaking he was thinking of things in his family. Some of you here know what it means in all kinds of different ways to have things in your family that trouble you. Well, David had many things in his family. You think of Absalom. He murdered his brother; he conspired to kill his father; he was suddenly smitten in death without hope, without mercy. You have Absalom. You have his brother Amnon that he slew, guilty of that dreadful crime, raping his own sister. You have Adonijah seeking to seize the kingdom. David’s family was in a terrible state, and it was a trouble to David.

“Although my house be not so with God.” Mercifully he was enabled to turn another way and this is one of these blessed *yets*. Here there are really two things: although, yet. And David speaks of this “everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure,” and of course, in all its fulness, he spoke of the covenant of grace made between the eternal Father and His eternal Son and all His people in Him.

“Ordered in all things and sure.” Let us just remember in passing that there was a covenant and that covenant had been personally made with David. That covenant concerned his own family, and the covenant that God made personally with David was that from his family would come the promised Messiah, the Son of God, He who would be King of kings and Lord of lords, He whose kingdom would exist for ever and ever. So do not forget as we so often speak of this word concerning that glorious covenant we have been singing about (Gadsby’s 411), that there was this personal covenant, the covenant of an everlasting kingdom in the

family of David. What, this sinful family, this dreadful family, this disorganised family? And David saw that. “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, and all my desire” – looking forward to the Messiah, David’s greater Son – “although He make it not to grow.” He could not see much sign of godliness in his own family or the fulfilment of a promise like this, or the likelihood of it in his own family. He says, “He makes it not to grow.” Well, He did not. But David rested on the promise and the covenant and the faithfulness of God.

So let us be clear, and let us remember, beloved friends, that essentially, immediately here David was thinking of all the confusion and all the sin and all the trouble and all the grief in his own family personally. He wished it were different. “Although my house be not so with God.” But there was more than that with David. There was something even more important than that with David. You say, Even more important than all these things, this trouble with his family? Well, he looked into his own heart. He looked back over his own life, and if anything described it, it was “not so with God.” It was stained, it was dyed with sin. There were many sins that David knew and felt. We read of more than one in the life of David, but especially that great sin when he committed adultery and then he arranged for Uriah to be put to death. And David could not forget this. He had a sweet hope the Lord had forgiven him – “The Lord also hath put away thy sin” – but he could not forget it. And he comes to the end: “Although my house be not so with God.”

Well, how do you and I stand this evening, whatever there is in our family or in our circumstances or in the unknown way? What about when we look into our own hearts and when we consider our past lives? Don’t we have to come in guilty? Don’t we find this word finds us out, it embraces us: “Although my house be not so with God” – not as it should be; not as I would have it? Looking back, even now looking within, the falls, the failures, the sin, the stain. “Although my house be not so with God.” We have to come in and we have to plead guilty. But here David was blessed with living faith which triumphed over sin and death and hell, and by that living faith he was enabled to look another way, shall we say, to Jesus and His blood. “Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” And he saw Christ in it, and he said, “This is all my salvation, and all my desire.” It is a wonderful thing if by precious faith we are enabled to look the other way.

“Pore not on thyself too long,
Lest it sink thee lower.”

But as Mr. Frank Gosden used to say, make sure you have pored upon yourself long enough. Some people never do. They never solemnly realise that their house is not so with God. But those of you who have been enabled to look within and to look back, and you can say, "My house is not so with God" –

"Pore not on thyself too long,
Lest it sink thee lower;
Look to Jesus, kind as strong –
Mercy joined with power."

"Although my house be not so with God." It is like a great mountain. "My house be not so with God." But there is something that can level the mountain. There is something that can cancel the sin. There is a resting place for faith, whatever there may be wrong in your circumstances. "Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

It is a sad thing. We do not hear so much in our pulpits of the covenant. At one time it was the glory of the pulpits of England and Scotland – the covenant of grace made between the eternal Father and His Son from everlasting in which the plan of salvation was undertaken and everything put into the hands of Christ. Covenant theology viewed Adam as being under covenant to his Maker. Really the covenant was, Obey; do this and thou shalt live; do it not, and dying thou shalt surely die – the covenant between the eternal God the Creator and Adam His creature and the whole human race in Adam. And Adam broke that covenant, and there is no salvation for a lost, ruined, guilty sinner through that broken covenant. Do this and live. There is no hope, no salvation, no heaven there. But the covenant of grace, not made directly with the sinner, but made by the Father with His own Son, and all His beloved people in Him, Christ on behalf of His people.

Now what were the terms of this covenant? Well, it was not what man could do, not what the sinner can do; it was what the Son of God could do, the Son of God undertaking to bring in an everlasting righteousness, and then to die for His people, to do everything necessary for them to bring them to heaven, to be their Surety, their Substitute, their everlasting All, and then to seal the covenant with His blood. These were the terms, the conditions of the covenant, what Jesus could do, and on the grounds of that, the Father's part in the covenant was to bless all His beloved people in Christ on the grounds of what Christ would do, and when the dying Saviour cried, "It is finished," every term of the covenant of grace was fulfilled, and the covenant was sealed with blood, and every blessing, the ten thousand blessings, every blessing God could give or a sinner could need, treasured up eternally in that covenant. It all flows to lost, ruined, guilty sinners through the Person and finished work

of Jesus. So in a sense the covenant is the charter of salvation, and the great point is the faithfulness of God and the faithfulness of His beloved Son and the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit in applying it, and it acts in a way of a gracious promise to a lost, ruined, guilty sinner.

How much of this David saw, we dare not say. Christ had not yet come. He had not yet died on the cross. This was still the old dispensation. The veil of the temple was not yet rent in twain. But these old, godly saints of the Old Testament saw a lot. Thinking about Job, what did Job see? He said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." There are many of the Lord's dear people in gospel days who dare not aspire so high as Job did then. He said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." You have only to read through the Psalms of David. Did he see Christ in the twenty-third Psalm, or did he not? And what about those suffering Psalms, 22 and 69? Who is he speaking of? "They pierced My hands and my feet." Who is he speaking of? "Reproach hath broken My heart." Who is he speaking of? "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We believe David, if he did not have the clear views there are under the gospel, he saw a lot here, because one thing – he could die in peace. He could say, "This is all my salvation, and all my desire." He saw the covenant of grace and he saw it in Christ and he found a resting place.

And beloved friends, this is my desire this evening. Those of you who are painfully feeling, My house is not so with God, whether you are thinking of family things, or whether you are thinking of the inward concerns of your soul, and you cannot help seeing these things, but may the Holy Spirit (as we sing),

"Turn your eyes another way,
To Jesus and His blood,"

and may you know this resting place: "Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me" – even such a sinner as me, through Christ – "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

Well then, beloved friends, the great point surely is this: what is there treasured up in this everlasting covenant for sinners who feel their house is not so with God? It is all of mercy; it is all of grace. But what is there there? What is there treasured up? Well, first of all, *everlasting love*. It is in the covenant of grace. It is from all eternity. It sent the Saviour to suffer, bleed and die. It is made personally to the sinner. It is "without money and without price." So it is covenant love. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an

everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." It is all there in the covenant. It is "ordered in all things, and sure." As old John Warburton said, "The cords of God's everlasting love are fastened in eternity at both ends." And whatever there be in your house and your circumstances and your soul and your sins, it can never touch the bonds of the everlasting covenant. It can never break the cords of everlasting love. And we believe David felt it. "Although my house be not so with God." There is everlasting love here, despite all my sin and all the wanderings of my heart and all my circumstances, loved with an everlasting love, even "though my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant."

What else is there there? An *eternal union* in bonds of sovereign grace which can never be broken. It is there from all eternity in Christ, unworthy sinners united to Him in bonds of grace, and that union made known in time. David knew it, made known to him. You read his Psalms. As a sinner he had to flee for refuge; he had to cast himself into the arms of his Saviour; he had to flee to the clefts of the rock; he had to enter in; he had to find a hiding place, a refuge there. What about that word, "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant"? That is what we want. When the Lord takes a sinner in hand He brings him under the rod. That does not just mean He is smiting him all the time. It is the shepherd's rod. He is teaching him; He is guiding him; He is disciplining him. He will bring you out of the world. He will hedge up your way. "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." Let us be clear tonight, even tonight, beloved friends,

"Those bonds can never break,
Though earth's old columns bow;
The strong, the tempted, and the weak,
Are one in Jesus now."

It is a wonderful theme, union with Jesus. It is covenant union, and David knew it, and he had that sweet hope he was in it, and he knew that union could never be broken. Satan could never break it; all the powers of hell could never break it; and though you will be humbled for your sin and backsliding and hardness of heart, and though you will be brought to grieve over it, these things can never break that everlasting union.

"Here, O my soul, thy trust repose;
If Jesus is for ever mine,
Not death itself, that last of foes,
Shall break a union so divine."

Now do you believe it?

“Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” What else is there in the covenant? *Salvation* in all its fulness, salvation by grace, everlasting safety and security. “They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” “Saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation,” in the Lord Jesus, for Jesus’ sake. It is covenant salvation. It is “ordered in all things, and sure.” It is sure because it is in the hands of Christ, and it is ordered in all things because He has done it. There is not anything missing. There is not a stitch missing from the robe of Christ’s righteousness.

“Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant.” Toplady puts it like this:

“Safety on earth, and, after death,
The plenitude of heaven.”

But what else is there? Well, *the blood of Christ*. You say, Are you sure this has anything to do with the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure? Are you familiar with how the wonderful Epistle to the Hebrews closes? Can you remember it? “The God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.” So the precious blood that Jesus shed is spoken of as “the blood of the everlasting covenant.” There are a lot of covenants in the Old Testament and they were always sealed and confirmed and ratified with blood, the blood of bulls and goats and lambs and calves. What about the everlasting covenant? “The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed,” as He took the cup, He said, “For this is My blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” It is the blood of the covenant because everything God had decreed, everything God had ordained, everything God had promised, hung on this one point: would the Surety of the covenant be faithful? Would He be able to do all that was necessary, especially the last great act, willingly to give up His life, to die on the cross, to shed His precious blood for sinners? And when the Lord Jesus died, the covenant of grace was sealed with that precious blood. So there is not a blessing in that covenant ordained for sinners but now comes freely to them through the blood of Christ. So this is covenant blood, and it atones for sin, and there is pardon and forgiveness in it, and it opens up a living way to heaven, and it is even though your house is not so with God. It is not just at the beginning when you come as a sinner to Jesus, but when you are coming to the end and your whole life is stained with sin, your house is not so with God, but the blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son, that covenant blood, still cleanses from all sin.

“Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me,” even me – “On my unworthy, favoured head, its blessings all unite” – “an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” It is no wonder that David said, “This is all my salvation, and all my desire.” He did not need to look anywhere else. There was nothing in himself or in others. His house was not so with God, but there was an answer here. There was the gospel here. There was Christ here. “This is all my salvation, and all my desire.” O what else is there in it? Heaven at last for all those who are bound up in covenant love and covenant union and covenant security and covenant blood. All of them will surely reach heaven, even though their house be not so with God. It is through weakness, helplessness, unworthiness, coming short, but it is all there in Christ, in His faithfulness, in His power to save.

“Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” It leaves me only one thing to say, and that is *until* the believer reaches heaven, *until* he is safely landed, while he is here on earth, *everything he needs* is provided in the covenant of grace for him, for his pilgrimage, for his journey. It is “ordered in all things, and sure.” They used to have a saying in the Highlands of Scotland in the days of real prosperity, “You will get the last sixpence if there is one ordained for you in the covenant.” Well, it is all the earthly wealth you need, but it is all the help you need. “I have laid help upon One that is mighty.” That is speaking of the covenant. It is all the help you need. It is all the grace you need, abounding grace. It is all the strength you need. It is everything you need. In a word it is this: “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Now that is in the covenant, and it is one of the great promises of the covenant, and David proved it. That promise had not been written when David lived. There was another covenant promise: “Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide.” It is the promise of everything that the sinner needs, and all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus. They are all covenant promises. One of our hymns, seldom sung, says this:

“The solemn oath of God
Confirms each promise true;
And Jesus, with His precious blood,
Has sealed the covenant, too!”

Every promise confirmed with the solemn oath of God and sealed with the blood of Christ.

So, “ordered in all things, and sure.” Although your house be not so with God tonight, as you go home and as you think of tomorrow and this coming week and the rest of the year and things in your family and in your home and in your health and in your business and in your

circumstances and in the church of God and in your soul, never forget it: “ordered in all things,” and that comes down to your smallest detail as well as your greatest matter. “Ordered in all things, *and sure.*” “My God shall supply all your need” – great and small, providence and grace – “all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Covenant provision, covenant fulness. And David said, “This is all my salvation, and all my desire.” He was completely satisfied. There was nothing else he wanted. He could die in peace, even though his house was not so with God.

So there are two sides to this *although* and this *yet*. But the *yet* is a lot greater than the *although*. Unbelief never saw that, but faith does. So when you wake up tomorrow morning, some of you are going to wake up with this solemn reminder that your house is not so with God, not as it should be, not as you would have it. But may you be blessed with that living faith to look to Jesus, to depend on Him, and to be able to say, “Yet” – even yet – “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.”

“HOW SHALL WE DO?”

Prayer Meeting Address given by J.K. Popham on October 5th, 1928

Reading: 2 Kings 6. 8-17

Text: “Then the king of Syria warred against Israel.... And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host encompassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?” (2 Kings 6. 8, 15).

This passage of Scripture tells us two things:

1. *The dangers that surround God’s people*, the difficulties, the trials, the insurmountable obstacles, the enemies, devils, men, heresies, errors; errors of spirit, doctrines of devils, and all such things. And these enemies are *seen*. You who fear God and know yourselves see your enemies. You see the difficulties, the impossibilities to you, because of your weakness and their strength, and feel exactly in your cases, as this servant of the prophet felt in his case: “Alas, my master! how shall we do?” These sins, corruptions, passions, tempers, self-will, self-righteousness, devils, providential troubles, difficulties, stand in the way. “How shall we do?” We cannot live with these things; we cannot get rid of them; “how shall we do?” We cannot humble ourselves before them; “how shall we do?” We cannot get rid of them, yet we cannot live under them; “how shall we do?”

Very solemn is the trial of faith; very heavy is the trial of faith, and very real. And nature in the child of God says, “How shall we do?” We want to get out of this and that, but cannot, and feel at times ready to faint. The discouragements are so strong; temptations about us are so many, so persistent; and ignorance of the things of God, of what is right to do or not to do, so great, that we can see nothing because of it. A black cloud is over your heart. God also dwelleth in the thick darkness to you in such and such trials, not revealing Himself, not opening His mind to you; and you, feeling that He is not regarding you, are ready to say with Jeremiah, “Also when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer.” “The Comforter, which should relieve my soul is far from me; therefore my heart is faint.”

This poor man’s heart must have been faint when, looking up in the morning, he saw the great host that the King of Assyria had sent. Horses and chariots and a great host, and they had come upon him unawares. Now said this man, “How shall we do?” Destruction is inevitable. So he thought; so he felt. You know your cases, your difficulties, and how you are surrounded. Something that you want is not given, and something that you do not want is given; the way you would like to go is shut, and the way you have to go, you resist; and these things are so many deaths. “How shall we do?”

2. Now here we prove the second thing: that *we need God to open our eyes to see our Protector*, our safety in Him. “Safety is of the Lord.” “An horse is a vain thing for safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.” Resolutions to do this or to abstain from that will not stand here; one thing only, and this servant got it: “*Lord*,” said the prophet, “*open his eyes, that he may see.*” Not, “Send protection”; he knew there was protection, but, “Let this man see it.”

God is about His people: “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people.” “Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt Thou compass him as with a shield.” Promises surround them, divine protection surrounds them, divine faithfulness surrounds them, only they do not see it until it is revealed to them. That is the point in religion, as it is the point in this so interesting account that we have of the prophet and his servant. You do not need another religion if you have got grace; do not need another Protector if you believe in the Lord Jesus; do not need another Saviour if your faith hangs about Him and His atonement. All that was needed here was, “Open his eyes, that he may see.” Let him see that there are more with us than there are with our enemies. They have earthly power; we have a heavenly Protector.

“A sovereign Protector I have,
Unseen, yet for ever at hand.”

Well, how suitable this may be to some. I can say to the people of God, "You need not fear," but the truth is, we do fear, often where no fear is, or no ground and reason to fear. We *do* fear; that is the truth. You fear some trouble in your families, some affliction in your persons, perhaps, or in some near to you; fear consumption may be decreed on your businesses, and fear that sins in you will prevail, and that devils will prevail over you, and doctrines of devils may deceive you. There is fear. And taught of God, a man of God cannot say, I am determined to hold on. No, he says, I am too weak for that. He cannot say, I will never give way to a wrong spirit; he is in such a spirit too often to let him say that. And he cannot say, I will never follow error, because he knows his heart is full of error. There is no error in the world, there is not an error today, taught by false teachers, of which we have not the root and seed in our own nature. If I believe anything about the world and sin, I believe this: that I have the whole of it in my nature. The devil would never prevail as he does if the doctrines he teaches were not, first of all, ready to his hand in our hearts and minds.

So this poor man, seeing his danger, exclaims, Lord, what am I to do? And the Lord says, "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?" "Wherein is he to be accounted of?" But you say, O Lord, I *am* afraid of him. Then if the Lord open your eyes, if He should come and say, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding"; "Commit thy way unto the Lord," that would be the same opening of your eyes as this man's, opening them just to Himself, setting them on His power. And the point is this: that God in Christ is round about His people, and will never leave them nor forsake them.

"And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." O think of it – full of chariots of fire and horses surrounding the prophet! And what of poor sinners, made believers here? Looking at self, at difficulties, at sins in their nature, what is to be said? Lord, open the eyes of these tried people. It is not needful that you should be rid of your trouble and of your sin to feel safe and secure; all that is needful is for the Lord to reveal Himself, His holy promises; to reveal to you your interest, to show you that there is nothing impossible with Him, that these chariots and horses and great host [of the enemy] are nothing more than wind, and chaff driven before the wind, to Him.

It is great to believe in God. I have been a believer, I trust, for many years, but it was not as much to me when I was a young man to believe in God as it is today. O it is great to believe in God! Faith will bring Him to you, will give a good report of Him in your heart, will tell you to commit your way to Him. Faith as His servant in your heart will give a

good report to God. Do not listen to the lies of an unbelieving heart, and to the murderous lies of the devil.

“To trust Him (who is your God) endeavour,
The work is His own;
He makes the believer,
And gives him his crown.”

And the young man beheld, and saw the mountain full of horses. And if you behold the Saviour, you will see Him full of power, full of goodness, and see His hand of omnipotence, and see the world full of instruments, out of which He can make what choice He will to do you good, and to help you through. O my friends, what a God we have! A sovereign Protector, a gracious, compassionate Saviour, a never-failing Friend, an infinitely-wise, omnipotent God in our own nature. And this is the God who says, “Fear not.”

The prophet said to his servant, “Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” And the apostle John says, “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” All devils, all sins, all providences, may be seemingly against you, but if the dear, crucified Saviour comes and says, Cast your care on Me, cast your sinful soul on My atonement, cast your unjust soul on My righteousness, cast your weak case on My power, then, then you can sing, “It is well, it is well.” *It is well*, my friends. “Say ye,” is God’s word to the prophet Isaiah, “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.” He shall get good out of his struggles, life shall come by death, strength by weakness. He shall be instructed to walk in the way of faith, and find in that way a good God who says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Now meditate on this. May we go home and think of this beautiful passage of Scripture and the petition of the prophet for his servant: “Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.” Let me close with this. You need not, as I have already said, be out of your trouble to feel safe; you need not be out of your difficulties to feel you will get through well. All you need is – with your troubles, with your sins, with your fears – to have your eyes opened. O the blindness in which we often walk! But to have the eyes opened, to see God a great, a sufficient, a loving, a faithful, an ever-present God – this, this is a mercy.

May the Lord give us to see Him, and we shall know then that greater is He that is in us and about us than all that can be against us.



He who hath found God present in one extremity may trust Him in the next.
John Trapp

THE AGED MAN'S STAFF

By William Bridge (1600-1670)

Comforts against the natural infirmities of old age are very many.

Christ Himself did bear them, and still, as our High Priest, doth sympathise with us under them. Such did He single out for His care and cure when He was here on earth. There were many that lay by the pool of Bethesda (John 5). Among the rest there was one that had lain sick and diseased thirty-eight years – a young man, therefore, he was not. He would have stepped into the pool, but others stepped in before him, and he had no man to help him in. A poor, neglected man he was, whom others minded not. Yet this was the man that Christ came to cure, whom Christ minded, and sought out, and cured. What, then, though you be a poor, neglected, old person, and have lien long under your infirmities, yet Christ hath a cure for you. The blind men cried, and their cries put Christ to a stand for mercy (Matt. 20. 31, 32).

Though your infirmities be never so many and great, yet you have a peculiar honour that is twisted with your infirmity, for it is called the crown of old age. In times of the Old Testament they were to rise up and bow before the ancient; yea, it is our duty to honour them, for this honour is joined and commanded with the fear of God. “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God,” saith the Lord (Lev. 19. 32). The fear of God and honouring the old man is commanded with the same breath and linked together in the same sentence.

Though you be very aged yet you may be very good. Was not Eli very good, yet very aged? Was not David [Simeon?] very good, yet he was very old when he said, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace”? Was not Anna very good, yet she was very aged? Who doth not know what a good man Paul was, yet, saith he, “Paul the aged.” Good John was aged John. Possibly, then, you may be very good, though you be very aged, labouring under much infirmity.

And though your flesh be weak, yet your spirit may be willing. “The flesh indeed is weak,” said Christ, when His disciples slept through natural infirmity, for it was late at night, and they were full of grief; “but the spirit is willing,” said He also, and where the spirit is willing, He will pass by the weakness of the flesh and accept the willingness of the spirit.

These infirmities of old age are such as are not the fruit of our own sin. The more any infirmity is caused by sin, the more afflictive it is, for sin is the sting of death. I confess, indeed, they may be sometimes, for the sins of youth do sometimes bite sore in age. I ate so much of the forbidden fruit, said a good man, when I was young, that God was fain

to give me wormseed to kill the worm. But the infirmities of old age are generally the decays of nature, not of grace.

They are good warnings of our change approaching, and by them we die daily, that at last we may die graciously and comfortably.

And who are those that God doth reveal Himself unto, but to His old friends, those He will acquaint with His secrets, and make known His mind unto. "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding" (Job 12. 12).

And though your legs be weak, yet they may be strong enough to carry you to heaven, that better country, which you are now going to, and are very near. Indeed your own present country is a good country, but the country you are now going to is a better country (Heb. 11. 16).

Better in regard of buildings: "Whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11. 10).

Better in regard of inhabitants: where no unclean thing doth enter (Rev. 21. 27).

Better in regard of quietness and freedom from trouble, where all tears shall not only be wiped from our cheeks, but out of our eyes, as the Greek word bears it (Rev. 7. 17), insomuch as the eye shall never breed a tear again, nor be the womb of tears.

Better in regard of riches: where you shall have "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away."

Better in regard of pleasure, for saith the psalmist, "At Thy right hand are rivers of pleasures, and that for evermore."

Better in regard of largeness, for if the whole earth be but a pin's head in comparison of the heavens, then surely there is room enough in heaven for everyone to enjoy a greater kingdom than all England doth amount unto.

Better in regard of self-subsistence. Here one country doth depend upon another, but heaven is that country alone which doth depend upon no other country.

Better in regard of our freedom from needs and necessities. It was Augustine's prayer, Deliver me, O Lord, from my necessities. It is a great mercy now to have bread to eat when we want it, but it is a greater mercy to have no need of it. A great mercy it is to have a good bed to lie on, and so to sleep quietly, but it is a greater mercy to have no need of bed or sleep. This is the state of that heavenly country, where you have not these blessings, but where you have no need of them.

Better also it is in regard of continuance, where every mercy and blessing glows upon the stalk of eternity. And if it be a good thing to have a lease of a good house and land for a hundred years, what a blessed thing then it is to have a glorious mansion and inheritance lying in the fields of eternity! When you come to a great palace, and see fair

barns and stables and outhouses, you say then, if the outrooms and stables be so costly and sumptuous, how costly and glorious is this palace within? Yet this is that country, that better country that you are going and drawing nigh unto, and your passage thither is very short, for no sooner do ye step out of this world, but, if godly, gracious and in Christ, you step immediately into that country.

There is no sleeping of the soul after death. Some have dreamed of such a sleep, but Solomon tells us that the body upon death goes to the dust, and "the spirit unto Him that gave it" (Eccles. 12. 7). Christ said to the thief, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise," and the Apostle Paul tells us that paradise and the third heaven are one and the same thing (2 Cor. 12). Yea, saith Paul, "I am in a strait betwixt two," not well knowing whether I should desire to die for mine own enjoyment, or to live for the service of the churches (Phil. 1. 22-24). Whereas if the soul did sleep in the grave with the body, he needed not to have been in that strait. "I desire," said he, "to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." If with Christ presently, how can the soul sleep with the body in the dust? "For we know," says he, "that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5. 1).

What, then, though your turf house now be ready to fire into a fever with every spark of distemper, is there not enough in that house above to pay for all? Surely there is. Why, then, should ye not lift up your heads, ye old men, and be of good comfort under all your natural infirmities?

And as for your moral infirmities, if you would strengthen yourself against them, and root out these weeds there, be sure that you study and think much on Christ crucified, who alone is our righteousness and our strength. Temptations or sins blown out by reason or resolution will easily light again; but quenched in the blood of Christ, they light no more. When the Israelite was stung with fiery serpents, he did not stand looking on his swollen arm or leg, but on the brazen serpent, and so was cured. Christ lifted upon the cross is our brazen serpent, and He hath said, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Then by way of consideration, think, and think much with yourselves what an evil thing it is to sin when a man is ready to die. Thus you leave not your sin, but your sin you.

Be sure that you do not chew the cud of your former sins by musing on them with delight, for thereby you justify your former practice, but rather mourn over them, for the way to keep from future sins is to mourn for former, and the way to be kept from sins of old age is to mourn for the sins of our youth.

But above all things, under your study of Christ crucified, be sure that you strengthen your love to God in Christ, for if the boughs of the

tree be weak, the way to strengthen them is not to carry up dung to the boughs, but to lay the dung to the root, for by strengthening the root, you strengthen the branches. Now the root of all our mortification is love, for love is the cause of hatred. "Ye that love the Lord hate evil." Love to God eats out our love to sin, as the fear of God eats out our fear of men, and your love to God is strengthened by the sight of His love to you. For love is the cause of love. The more we see God's love to us, the more we love Him and do hate our sins. Would you, therefore, take up your sinful weeds by the roots? Then strengthen your love, and this shall be a staff in your hand, to strengthen and bear you up under all your infirmities, both natural and moral.

CHRIST PLEADING AGAINST SATAN

By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Christ as Advocate pleadeth against this enemy (Zech. 3), that malice and enmity that is in him, and upon which chiefly his charge against us is grounded, to the confusion of his face. This is evident from the title that our Advocate bestows upon him, while he pleads for us against him: "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan," O enemy, saith He; for Satan is an enemy, and this name given him signifies so much. And lawyers, in their pleas, can make a great matter of such a circumstance as this, saying, My lord, we can prove that what is now pleaded against the prisoner at the bar is of mere malice and hatred, that has also a long time lain burning and raging in his enemy's breast against him. This, I say, will greatly weaken the plea and accusation of an enemy.

But, says Jesus Christ, Father, here is a plea brought in against my Joshua, that clothes him with filthy garments, but it is brought in against him by an enemy, by an enemy in the superlative or highest degree. One that hates goodness worse than he, and that loveth wickedness more than the man against whom at this time he has brought such a heinous charge. Then leaving with the Father the value of His blood for the accused, He turneth Him to the accuser and pleads against him as an enemy: O Satan, thou that accusest My spouse, My love, My members, art SATAN, an enemy.

But it will be objected, that the things charged are true. Grant it; yet what law takes notice of the plea of one who doth professedly act as an enemy? because it is not done of love to truth, and justice, and righteousness, nor intended for the honour of the king, nor for the good of the prosecuted; but to gratify malice and rage, and merely to kill and destroy. There is, therefore, a great deal of force and strength in an

Advocate's pleading of such a circumstance against an accuser; especially when the crimes now charged are those, and only those for which the law, in the due execution of it, has been satisfied before; wherefore now a lawyer has double and treble ground or matter to plead for his client against his enemy. And this advantage against him has Jesus Christ.

Besides, it is well known that Satan, as to us, is the original cause of those very crimes for which he accuses us at the bar of God's tribunal. Not to say anything of how he cometh to us, solicits us, tempts us, flatters us, and always, in a manner, lies at us to do those wicked things for which he so hotly pursues us to the bar of the judgment of God. For though it is not meet for us thus to plead – to wit, laying that fault upon Satan, but rather upon ourselves – yet our Advocate will do it, and make work of it too before God. “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22. 31, 32). He maketh here mention of Satan's desires, by way of advantage against him; and doubtless, so He did in His prayer with God for Peter's preservation. And what He did here while on earth as a Saviour in general, that He doth now in heaven as a Priest and an Advocate in special.

I will further suppose that which may be supposed, and that which is suitable to our purpose. Suppose, therefore, that a father that has a child whom he loveth, but the child has not half that wit that some of the family hath, and I am sure that we have less wit than angels. And suppose also that some bad-minded neighbour, by tampering with, tempting of, and by unwearied solicitations, should prevail with this child to steal something out of his father's house or grounds, and give it unto him; and this he doth on purpose to set the father against the child; and suppose, again, that it comes to the father's knowledge that the child, through the allurements of such an one, has done so and so against his father; will he therefore disinherit this child? Yea, suppose again that he that did tempt this child to steal should be the first that should come to accuse this child to its father for so doing, would the father take notice of the accusation of such an one? No, verily, we that are evil can do better than so. How then should we think that the God of heaven should do such a thing, since also we have a Brother that is wise, and that will and can plead the very malice of our enemy that doth to us all these things against him for our advantage?

I say, this is the sum of this plea of Christ our Advocate against Satan. O Satan, says He, thou art an enemy to My people; thou pleadest not out of love to righteousness, not to reform, but to destroy My beloved and inheritance. The charge wherewith thou chargest My people is thine own (Job 8. 4-6). Not only as to a matter of charge, but the things that

thou accusest them of are thine, thine in the nature of them. Also, thou hast tempted, allured, flattered and daily laboured with them, to do that for which now thou so willingly would have them destroyed. Yea, all this hast thou done of envy to My Father and to godliness, of hatred to Me and My people, and that thou mightest destroy others besides (1 Chron. 21. 1).

And now, what can this accuser say? Can he excuse himself? Can he contradict our Advocate? He cannot; he knows that he is a Satan, an enemy, and as an adversary has he sown his tares among the wheat, that it might be rooted up; but he shall not have his end; his malice has prevented [gone before] him, and so has the care and grace of our Advocate. The tares, therefore, he shall have returned unto him again, but the wheat, for all this, shall be gathered into God's barn (Matt. 13. 25-30).

Thus, therefore, our Advocate makes use, in His plea against Satan, of the rage and malice that is the occasion of the enemy's charge wherewith he accuseth the children of God. Wherefore, when thou readest these words, "O Satan," say with thyself, Thus Christ our Advocate accuseth our adversary of malice and envy against God and goodness, while he accuseth us of the sins which we commit, for which we are sorry, and Christ has paid a price of redemption. "And (thus) if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

EXTRACTS FROM "HILL'S DEEP THINGS OF GOD"

Sir Richard Hill (1732-1808) was the elder brother of the well-known minister and hymnwriter, Rowland Hill. He was not a minister but a Member of Parliament, and a staunch contender for the truth. He is remembered for his love and loyalty to Toplady.

His Deep Things of God was well known and loved in former days. It consists of bits and pieces that he jotted down at various times. They are numbered (137 altogether). We include a few.

There is not a moment in which every believer does not appear before God as pure and spotless as the blood of Christ can make him; yea, as pure as the immaculate Lamb Himself; nor is there a moment in which the holy law can find the smallest fault with him, seeing that the righteousness in which he stands was as much wrought out by him in Christ, his second and spiritual Head and Representative, as the commandment was broken by him in Adam, his first and natural head

and representative. The righteousness of Christ, therefore, is as much his as the sin of Adam was his, and this righteousness always remains the same under all the various cases, states and circumstances a believer can be in.

Does an apostle say, “Pray without ceasing”? Then what a condition must those souls be in who never pray at all! But what is meant by the exhortation? Certainly it does not suppose that we should be always on our knees; yet it undoubtedly supposes that whatever be the posture of the body, the heart be constantly kept in a praying frame, and that in everything we be ready to give thanks, or to supplicate, as circumstances may require. I would boldly pronounce that man to be a stranger to the spirit of prayer who confines it merely to times and places, for sure I am that whosoever is made sensible of his own weakness and of Christ’s all-sufficiency, as well as of the continual blessings which he has received, is receiving, and hopes to receive from above, can never be long without a silent, mental ejaculation at least, and such will find its way to the throne of grace, be the posture of the body what it may.

Every real Christian knows well what it is to lift up his heart to God whilst he is walking, travelling, working, lying on his bed, and even when he is in company, and often is he holding an intercourse with heaven whilst those about him are busied only with the world.

Every believer’s prayer must be answered – not always agreeably to his own wishes, but always in the way which shall be best for him. When Paul had the thorn in his flesh, the messenger of Satan sent to buffet him, he prayed the Lord thrice that it might depart from him, but the Lord’s answer was, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

But a poor soul may say, O, prayer to me is all lip-labour! I am only a speaking carcase before the Lord. I am wholly dead. I have no spirit of prayer; no access with boldness and confidence to the Majesty on high. These very complaints are proofs that thou knowest what no one but a believer can know – *viz.* the difference of addressing God from behind the cloud, and when He unveils His face and shines with full lustre upon the soul. Press on, then, though it be in the dark. Soon shall “the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing under His wings.”

Saint Paul says, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.” Yea, that he “hath reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ.” After which he adds, “We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5. 18-20). But if reconciliation took place when the Godhead was in the Manhood of Christ crucified – if the church of Corinth was already pardoned and justified – why doth he now beseech any, much less why doth he entreat believers, to “be reconciled

to God"? Can they at the same time be reconciled and unreconciled? Is not this a contradiction.

There is no contradiction, but much beauty, and more comfort, in the passage. Although reconciliation, pardon and justification be one, and only one, complete act, yet in Scripture it bears a kind of threefold aspect. First, from all eternity, as the elect were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world. Secondly, when Christ hung upon the cross, and cried, "It is finished." Thirdly, when the pardon and reconciliation which Christ hath obtained are applied to the believing sinner's heart and conscience by the Holy Ghost. It is in this latter sense that those who already have reconciliation are prayed to be reconciled. And in the same sense it is that our Lord teaches those to whom He has forgiven all trespasses, to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." So that a believer is always reconciled, yea, always perfectly reconciled, and not less so at one time than at another, as he may be apt to suppose, when his corruptions show their ugly, gigantic heads, yet he stands in need of fresh applications of the blood of sprinkling, to comfort his conscience and to draw out his heart in a way of love and holy obedience.

What will that religion do for me that will not teach me to face death, and to meet the king of terrors with confidence? As a sinner, I am under condemnation, but, as a believing sinner, there is no condemnation for me. I am as much out of the reach of the law's curse as if I had never broken it. Sin can no more hurt me (*penally*) than if it had never entered into the world. Death has no more sting for me, even when I pass through its dark vale, than it had for Adam in innocence. The grave has no more power over me than it had over Christ Himself. Can this be true? Read, believe and suck the honey of these Scriptures: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "He hath abolished death." Yea, "He hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." "O death, I will be thy plagues. O grave, I will by thy destruction." ("Repentance shall be hid from my eyes.") "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The key of prayer opens the gate of heaven, and there is not a state which a believer can be in, that there is not deliverance treasured up for him in Christ, which deliverance shall be given in the very moment that it is best for the believer it should be given. In the meanwhile, how earnestly will the soul plead with God! how will it search for Scripture

promises and Scripture examples, and bring them to the throne of grace! Though perhaps, after all, it will be saying, Surely there never was such a case as mine, never such a temptation as I am exercised with. Granted; yet it must be included in the general promise: "There hath no temptation taken you but what is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

O, says the soul, but this promise is come to an end with regard to me. I have fallen by the temptation; I have not been able to bear it; God hath not made a way for me to escape. Not perhaps by removing the temptation, nor by preserving thee altogether from being overcome by it; still the promise is sure, and though thou mayest not escape a fall – yea, many grievous, foul falls – yet thou shalt certainly *escape ruin*; as the vessel that is tossed and battered by storms may still escape shipwreck.

But remember that sincere prayer is absolutely incompatible with known sin – yea, with any, the least allowed evil. Far be it from me, however, to say that the soul who prays sincerely may not be overcome by the very sin against which he prays, but this I say, that he cannot approve the sin by which he is overcome; his will cannot consent to it. "The evil that I would not, that I do," is his language, and when victory over a bosom idol is given, he rejoices, and is thankful.

LETTERS TO A FRIEND IN AFFLICTION

These letters were written to Clement Dobell, later pastor at Hanover Chapel, Tunbridge Wells. His widow, the well-known Bethesda matron, has recently died.

My dear Friend,

We are glad to have heard through your parents that the Lord in His great mercy is restoring you, and trust your restoration as well as the affliction may be sanctified by the God of all grace.

To know that He bringeth down to the grave and raiseth up, one must pass through it; indeed all truth is only known really by handling, tasting and feeling. How often we pray to be taught of God, and as the hymnwriter puts it, "We know not what we ask," for our wonder-working God takes His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

I remember when I was ill in 1954, as I lay in bed with this heart-searching question: Why is it, Lord? Why is it? I reached for my hymnbook, and it fell open on number 618 which proved an answer to the burden of my heart so that I had to thank Him for bringing me down. It

was especially the third verse of this hymn ["Christians oft pray for faith."]

My heart goes out to you and for you that you might have a similar experience at this time, and that ere long you may be completely restored that in you may be manifest what the power and mercy of God can do. "For though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies," for He loves His children too well not to chasten them for their profit.

Please excuse this typewritten note as it is my only means of writing now that I have lost my sight. We unite in warmest, tender regards to both you and your good wife, and may the Lord smile upon you both and enable you quietly to rest in the will of God,

"Who cannot do but what is just.
And must be righteous still."

Also, would you please accept this as a visit from me. We think a lot about you both, and as enabled remember you in our prayers. Grace, mercy and peace be with your spirit. Amen.

Yours very sincerely, I hope for Christ's sake,

P.O. Laver

Rotherfield, July 2nd, 1962

My dear Friend,

It is on my mind to pay you another visit by way of a few lines, hoping the Lord will direct me to write something which shall be to your profit. We were pleased to hear of you on Saturday by your parents, who kindly called on their way home from the hospital. You have need of patience, and we are told of two things which work patience. In the 5th chapter of Romans: "Tribulation worketh patience," and in the 1st chapter of James: "The trying of your faith worketh patience." The Lord be with you in all your tribulations and trying of faith at this time, that your precious soul may be much profited. "Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies."

When I was very ill in 1938, the 3rd chapter in Lamentations was made especially good to me where it is said, "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" and, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," and, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." These words caused me to put my mouth in the dust, if so be there might be hope. May the Lord bless your soul in this chapter if His will, bless your soul in faith to be still and to know that He is God, that you may be made fruitful in the land of affliction, and that in after days you may be restored to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." May the

church of God be enriched by your being enriched of God at this time. You are constantly on my mind and I cease not to pray for you and yours in my humble way, trusting you may be restored soon.

Please give our love to your good wife. May the grace of God be her sufficiency, and may you each be favoured to kiss the rod, believing it is steeped and softened in His blood, for there is no curse but blessing where the precious blood of Christ is.

Will not weary you with more. Please accept this little note as a visit from me. May the sure mercies of David be yours is my desire.

Yours affectionately,

P.O. Laver

Rotherfield, July 9th, 1962

THE FAIREST OF TEN THOUSAND

Part of a letter by Henry Fowler

Dear P.L.,

.... I would tell you something worth your reading respecting Him who is the fairest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely! Christ, whose name is as ointment poured forth. In Christ's glorious robe we are clothed, in His blood we are washed white and clean. His promises are made to the *poor* and the *needy* who seek water and there is none; none in the creature, none in duties, nor in any place, but in Him who is the fountain of life!

The most Holy Spirit, the Glorifier of Jesus, lead our poor hearts more and more into the fellowship of His sufferings, for nothing will crucify a man to the empty baubles of this vain world and the turbulent lusts of our depraved flesh like it. Here true humility is learned and practised. Tenderness of conscience and filial fear are the man's sweet companions when he is led to trace the goings forth of everlasting love toward him in the adored Person of Immanuel.

Here I would delight to gaze,
From all creatures turn away;
Till my heart is in a blaze,
Longing for redemption's day.

Grace, and much of its blessed influence, rest upon you and your's.

Henry Fowler

March 13th, 1835

THE HEAD COVERING

It was with much pleasure we read an article by Bart Elshout (whom we do not know) in *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* magazine on “The Wearing of Head Coverings by Women during Public Church Worship Services” – the best we have ever read on the subject. The article emphasises that this is *not* a matter of little or no importance, as many modern evangelicals insist.

The article is lengthy, and the author very carefully expounds the teaching of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11. 1-16. He shows that Paul is writing on order in the church, the relationship of men to women, the question of Headship, and above all that Christ is the Head of the church. This is His loving commandment to His people, the head covering being a token of obedience to His revealed will in this matter, and it is sad and solemn to disobey. The writer concludes:

“It is with apostolic (and thus divine) authority that Paul teaches that one of the ways in which godly women display their godliness is by willingly covering their heads in public worship. Failure to do so is disobedience, and therefore dishonouring to God and grieving to His Spirit.”

And again:

“A careful study of 1 Corinthians 11. 1-16 teaches that God’s precept regarding head coverings is binding for the New Testament church until Christ returns.”

Popular objections to the head covering are dealt with.

1. The first objection is that the verse at the end (v. 16) simply means that if people do not wish to be convinced it does not really matter. (“We have no such custom in the churches.”)

Mr. Elshout aptly writes:

“Such an interpretation of verses 15 and 16 ignores what Paul has written in verses 1-14. To hold such a view would create the impression that Paul has been arguing about something that does not really matter and that in verses 15 and 16 he apologises for any confusion he may have created. Such an argument would mean that 1 Corinthians 11. 1-13 has little or nothing to do with the New Testament church today. This obviously cannot be the case! Paul, who so brilliantly lays out his points, being inspired by God, in all his letters, is not suddenly theologically inept here by contradicting in verses 15 and 16 what he has convincingly stated in verses 3-13.”

What, then, does Paul mean when he says, “If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God”? Mr. Elshout clearly answers that Paul is saying, “If any man, after all the solid arguments I have advanced, still wants to argue (be contentious) about something that is God’s revealed will, we (the churches) have no

such custom; that is, we do not debate endlessly about what is taught in Scripture. In the churches, God's truth is not up for debate."

2. The second objection raised is that Paul's teaching is just cultural, was only meant for the circumstances of that day, and has no relevance for us now.

Mr. Elshout points out that this is a most dangerous position to hold. How do we know which parts of the New Testament are relevant to us today and which are not? (Incidentally, in *The Life of John Murray*, published by The Banner of Truth Trust, Professor Murray makes exactly the same point when answering a letter from an enquirer on 1 Corinthians chapter 11.)

But let it ever be remembered that in the whole chapter Paul is dealing with two things, both important in the church of God, and there being problems about both at that time: the head covering and the Lord's supper. Is it to be said that the Lord's supper was only needful in the infancy of the church of God (as Quakers and the Salvation Army would suggest)?

Moreover, the apostle uses so many arguments, even going back to creation, that it is foolish to suggest that he is merely dealing with a temporary or cultural matter.

Bart Elshout's conclusion, clearly and forcibly expressed, is:

"Given the fact that Paul expresses himself in a clear and logical fashion (as he does in all his epistles), devotes one half of a chapter to this subject, and supports his argument with fundamental biblical principles, the only sound conclusion is that Paul's explicit insistence that women wear a head covering in public worship is because in God's wisdom the head covering represents biblical truths that are of fundamental importance."

With all the confusion at present about women officers in the church, women ministers, women priests, the first step in moving from the scriptural position of women has always been to disobey 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and the Lord's clear teaching there. It is a simple and undeniable fact that no church allows women priests that still supports the wearing of the head covering in public worship!

MINISTERS' PRAYER MEETING

A meeting of our ministers for prayer will be held, if the Lord will, at Clifton chapel on Friday, November 16th, at 11 o'clock. All ministers who are members of Gospel Standard churches are warmly invited. Refreshments will be served. Kindly let the Secretary, Mr. Christian, know if you hope to come.

DAYS OF TRUE PROSPERITY

By Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

A great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and the eternal world became universal in all parts of the town [Northampton, U.S.A.], and among persons of all degrees and all ages. The noise amongst the dry bones waxed louder and louder. All other talk but about spiritual and eternal things was soon thrown by. All the conversation, in all companies and upon all occasions, was upon these things only, unless so much as was necessary for people carrying on their ordinary secular business. Other discourse than of the things of religion would scarcely be tolerated in any company. The minds of people were wonderfully taken off from the world; it was treated amongst us as a thing of very little consequence. They seemed to follow their worldly business more as a part of their duty than from any disposition they had to it; the temptation now seemed to lie on that hand, to neglect worldly affairs too much, and to spend too much time in the immediate exercise of religion. This was exceedingly misrepresented by reports that were spread in distant parts of the land, as though the people here had wholly thrown by all worldly business, and betook themselves entirely to reading and praying, and such-like religious exercises.

But although people did not ordinarily neglect their worldly business, yet religion was with all sorts the great concern, and the world was a thing only by the bye. The only thing in their view was to get the kingdom of heaven, and every one appeared pressing into it. The engagedness of their hearts in this great concern could not be hid; it appeared in their very countenances. It then was a dreadful thing amongst us to lie out of Christ, in danger every day of dropping into hell; and what persons' minds were intent upon was to escape for their lives, and to fly from wrath to come. All would eagerly lay hold of opportunities for their souls, and were wont very often to meet together in private houses for religious purposes, and such meetings when appointed were greatly thronged.

There was scarcely a single person in the town, old or young, left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world. Those who were wont to be the vainest and loosest, and those who had been disposed to think and speak lightly of vital and experimental religion, were now generally subject to great awakenings. And the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner, and increased more and more; souls did as it were come by flocks to Jesus Christ. From day to day for many months together might be seen evident instances of sinners brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and delivered out of an horrible pit, and from the miry clay, and set upon a Rock, with a new song of praise to God in their mouths.

This work of God, as it was carried on, and the number of true saints multiplied, soon made a glorious alteration in the town, so that in the spring and summer following, in the year 1735, the town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It never was so full of love, nor of joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought unto them; parents rejoicing over their children as new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands. The goings of God were then seen in His sanctuary. God's day was a delight, and His tabernacles were amiable. Our public assemblies were then beautiful. The congregation was alive in God's service, every one earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth. The assembly in general were, from time to time, in tears while the Word was preached, some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbours.

Our public praises were then greatly enlivened. God was then served in our psalmody, in some measure, in the beauty of holiness. It has been observable that there has been scarce any part of divine worship wherein good men amongst us have had grace so drawn forth, and their hearts so lifted up in the ways of God, as in singing His praises. Our congregation excelled all that ever I knew in the external part of the duty [service] before, the men generally carrying regularly, and well, three parts of music, and the women a part by themselves, but now they were evidently wont to sing with unusual elevation of heart and voice, which made the duty pleasant indeed.

In all companies, on other days, on whatever occasions persons met together, Christ was to be heard of, and seen in the midst of them. Our young people, when they met, were wont to spend the time in talking of the excellency and dying love of JESUS CHRIST, the glory of the way of salvation, the wonderful, free and sovereign grace of God, His glorious work in the conversion of a soul, the truth and certainty of the great things of God's Word, the sweetness of the views of His perfections, etc. And even at weddings, which formerly were mere occasions of mirth and jollity, there was now no discourse of anything but religion, and no appearance of any but spiritual mirth. Those amongst us who had been formerly converted were greatly enlivened, and renewed with fresh and extraordinary incomes of the Spirit of God, though some much more than others, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Many who before had laboured under difficulties about their own state, had now their doubts removed by more satisfying experience and more clear discoveries of God's love.

BOOK REVIEWS

Brought Unto the King, The Diary and Writings of Rhoda A. Gosden, edited by Matthew J. Hyde; paperback; 166 pages; price £6.50 plus £1.10 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom or from agents.

Rhoda Gosden (née Fenner) was the wife of J.H. Gosden, pastor at Priory Chapel, Maidstone, and Editor of the *Gospel Standard* from 1935 till his death in 1964. She was born near Worthing, Sussex, and for much of her early life up to the time of her marriage attended J.K Popham's ministry at Brighton, which she highly valued. The book contains extracts from her diary, a few poems and letters, a sermon of Mr. Popham's preached at the time she was received into the church at Brighton and notes by Mr. Gosden on the remainder of her life.

Perhaps it seems strange in the case of one so long married to an esteemed minister that what has remained of her life, and breathes such a gracious spirit, is what was recorded in secret whilst she was still largely unknown to those around – just as Samuel Rutherford's Letters written in his younger days have far outlasted his later works. Yet how often those early days in the life of a Christian, when the fear of God is so evidently in exercise and our affections are after the Lord Jesus, are looked back on in longing desire in later years. We hope other readers will find the same savour.

John A. Kingham, Luton

Some Welsh Ministers, by J.R. Broome; paperback; 105 pages; price £5 plus £1.10 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom or from agents.

The 18th century Revival in Wales was remarkable, with able preachers raised up to proclaim the gospel in churches, chapels and the open air. This book deals with six of these ministers beginning with Howell Harris (born 1714) to John Elias (born 1774). Three of the men were born within four years of each other (Howell Harris, Daniel Rowland, William Williams), the other three in the latter half of the century (Thomas Charles, Christmas Evans, John Elias). Many interesting details of their lives are given, with quotations from their own writings. The accounts vary in length according to the material available.

At the time of the Revival, the doctrines of grace had largely disappeared from the pulpits of Wales. More than one of these men came only slowly to embrace those doctrines we hold dear, having been born into a system of Arminianism or, if not, dry morality. Howell Harris, for example, felt he knew nothing of true faith or the work of the Holy Spirit until he came into contact with George Whitefield. In his diary he expressed his prayer: "All knowledge comes from Thee; and as I have no time to read, I know Thou canst instil into my heart clearer and purer knowledge than I could ever suck from books." Daniel Rowlands's congregation numbered two thousand. Many were brought under deep conviction. He wrote: "There is such power as I have never felt before given me in preaching and administering the Lord's supper. The Lord comes down among us in such a manner as words can give no idea of. They cannot help crying out, praising and adoring Jesus, being quite swallowed up in God."

The majority of the ministers remained within the fold of the Church of England, although Daniel Rowland had his licence revoked by the Bishop of

St. David's. After such a time of blessing, how sad to see the spiritual desolation now so apparent in Wales, a land of empty chapels! The booklet is attractively produced, with good-sized print, and is very reasonably priced.

T.H.W. Scott, Harpenden

A Memorial of the Late Mr. Isaac Lewis; paperback; 96 pages; price £5.99 including postage; available from Matthew Burgess, 19 Clandon Road, Lordswood, Chatham, Kent, ME5 8UN.

In the 2005 *Gospel Standard*, the autobiography of Isaac Lewis appeared month by month under the title of "Through Many Dangers." Mr. Lewis (1823-1896) for over twenty years was pastor at Staplehurst in Kent. He was a well-known, gracious minister, and also his life, at one time as a sailor, is of great interest.

We are, therefore, very pleased to see that this has now been published, as a facsimile edition of the original memoir (1896). On the glossy front cover there is an excellent portrait of Isaac Lewis. We are sure this book will be welcomed and well received. We trust it will have good sales. It is gratifying to see reprints of the lives of our old, faithful ministers.

Scraps for the Household of Faith, by Henry Fowler; 148 pages; hardback; price £12.95 plus £2.50 postage; obtainable from John Crowter, Haystacks, Green Lane, Potter Heigham, Norfolk, NR29 5LP.

We are very pleased to welcome another work by Henry Fowler. Like all John Crowter's publications, it is very beautifully bound, and the only reason for the price is that the books are prepared as there is demand.

Scraps for the Household of Faith was first published in 1834, and contains short meditations (almost sermonettes), concluded with verses composed by Fowler himself. For instances, there are pieces on Christ the Sinner's Surety; Consolation from the Everlasting Covenant; The Believer's Death and His Hidden Life, etc. The word a former generation would have used to describe this would have been "savoury." In all, there is that complete sense of the sinner's helplessness and need, and yet a looking to Christ alone, in whom everything may be found. There is also one of his letters and one or two poems (see page 310).

Over the years a few pieces have been included in the pages of the *Gospel Standard*, such as "Power Attending God's Word" last month (which we included before hearing of the re-publication of *Scraps for the Household of Faith*.)

Graciously-exercised readers will appreciate Henry Fowler's writings, even as they love his hymns. His *Travels in the Wilderness* is also available (£11.50 plus £2.50 postage).

The Doctrine and Practice of Holiness, by Erroll Hulse; paperback; 368 pages; price £9.99; published by Evangelical Press, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We have been specially requested to review this book. It has been written about it: "This is unquestionably one of the most important books on the subject of sanctification and holiness by any modern author to be published in the last few years."

This is a very serious book. The author takes the subject of holiness very seriously, emphasising the point, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,"

and deploring the carelessness on the subject today, even in evangelical circles. There are profuse quotations from the Puritans.

The Doctrine and Practice of Holiness needs extremely careful reading. For instance, the great theme of the book is *progressive sanctification*, which is counted vital. Our Article 19 boldly states: "We reject the doctrine of progressive sanctification"! This is explained as: "That a child of God experiences such a gradual weakening, subduing or rectification of the old nature ... as shall make him at any time less dependent upon the communications of the Spirit and grace of Christ for all goodness, or less a poor, vile, wretched, helpless sinner in himself, and in his own estimation." We feel Mr. Hulse would agree with this. What appears to be intended in the book by "progressive sanctification" is the soul's growth in grace, seeking to walk worthy, mortifying the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, the constant warfare, etc.

We do not accept Mr. Hulse's view of the position of the law in the believer's sanctification (chapter 14). Our view (much misunderstood) is that the gospel as a rule of life is *a much higher standard than the law*. Also, we must say that we did not like the use of the New International Version of Scripture.

Clear disapproval is expressed of the Roman Catholic view of sanctification, and also the teaching of Wesley and Finney, and the Higher Life Holiness Movement and the Keswick Convention.

Very deep and learned, this is a book of quality. We sympathise with the author's longing for more godliness in the churches and with individual believers. Though not agreeing with all, we found it profitable. But, again, we would say it needs very careful reading.

Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, by J.C. Ryle; new clothbound series; seven volumes (each between 312 and 432 pages); price £12.50 each volume (for a limited time £45 the set); published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a beautifully produced set of an old favourite, J.C. Ryle on the Gospels – now regarded as a Christian classic.

Ryle's great virtue as a writer is his simplicity and clarity. Each chapter is divided into sections with profitable, spiritual comments, almost a little sermon, rather than a verse by verse commentary. (With the Gospel according to John, in addition to the usual style, at the end of each section there *is* added a detailed verse by verse commentary – which makes this even more valuable.)

J.C. Ryle (1826-1900), first Bishop of Liverpool, stood unflinchingly for evangelical truth, opposing the introduction of ritualism and anglo-Catholicism into the Church of England on the one hand, and the new view of "the Holiness Movement" (and the Keswick convention) on the other hand.

Obviously, with an Anglican Bishop we do not agree with every word (Ryle is not clear on the extent of the atonement), but in recommending this work we can do no better than use J.H. Gosden's words (when including pieces by Ryle in the *Gospel Standard*): "Would to God there was but one Bishop like him in the Church of England today!"

OBITUARY

George Brooks, a beloved member of the church at Zion Chapel, Brabourne Lees, Kent, for 30 years, and a deacon for 28 years, passed peacefully away on March 31st, 2012, aged 98. He was brother to the late Miss Naomi (Nancy) Brooks who was at one time Matron at several of the Bethesda Homes.

George Brooks was born at Capel-le-Fern, Kent. His father was killed in the first world war when George was only four years of age, and so his mother had a very hard time bringing him and his two sisters up. The Lord wonderfully helped them through these difficult times. George did all that he could to help his dear mother, and as soon as he was old enough, he went out to work to help provide for the family. He had to pray his way along from those very early days, both in the things of providence and for his own soul's safety. He worked as a gardener in those early days and then the Lord led him into farming, and the Lord wonderfully provided him with his own farm in 1947, for which he always praised the dear Lord. He continued in this until he retired and sold the farm in 1979.

Our dear friend was a very loving man and a great help to so many. He was a wonderful example in Brabourne village. Every time there was a service he would either walk to the chapel or drive there. He could say with the psalmist, "I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth." He was truly a humble walker and many loved him for the truth's sake. He was married to his first wife, Cissie Nicholls, for fifty years, and she died in 1991. Then in 1993 he married his second wife, a widow, Mrs. Annie Brooks. They were favoured to have five very happy years together, a time of wonderful blessing to them both, and the Lord constrained her to be baptized at the age of 83. Then the Lord took her home in 1998.

George attended Brabourne chapel all of his life. In his early days he knew what it was to pray his way along. His sins were a great trouble to him, but the Lord favoured him with His forgiving love. The Lord greatly favoured his soul under a faithful and living ministry over the years. In 1981 the Lord wonderfully blessed him under the ministry of the late Mr. Sperling-Tyler at Stone Chapel. The text was, "For 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" (Hab. 2. 3). Mr. Sperling-Tyler baptized him on July 22nd, 1981. What finally constrained him to follow his Lord was when Mr. Seth Mercer preached from, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." This sacred season he never forgot and often spoke of it. He knew what it was to be "full of the blessing of the Lord."

To visit our dear friend in his home and in hospital and finally in the care home was a sacred pleasure. He was so humble and thankful to the dear Lord for all of His mercies shown to him in spite of all his sins. Once when we visited him he said, "I awoke this morning in Boaz' field as a real gleaner." He said, "You know what I mean." He gleaned much from the Word of God and under the ministry of the Word. He felt much of the sweet presence of the heavenly Boaz, the dear Lord Jesus.

Once when Mr. Timothy Rosier visited him in hospital, he was asleep, and so a man in the opposite bed called him over to him and said concerning George,

"He is a real Christian man. He keeps praying to the Lord that the Lord would take him home. He is a real example to us each, and he is so thankful for everything." He was a wonderful witness; it was seen that he had been with Jesus.

On another occasion when Mr. Rosier visited him, he said, "I have been meditating on the hymns 802, 927 and 289."

On October 11th, 2011 he spoke to us much of the blessings he received around the time of his baptism, and how the dear Lord helped him, also of how unworthy he felt of all the Lord's mercy and His truth. He said, "I loved dear Mr. Sperling-Tyler for the truth's sake." Then he turned to the poor writer of this and said, "I love you too," which was very humbling.

On January 7th, 2012, he said to us, "The devil, Satan, attacked me when I woke up this morning, and I had to cry to the dear Lord with the hymnwriter:

"Then cry we to heaven, with one loud accord,
That to us be given the fear of the Lord."

He said, "The Lord is my stay. I can only rest upon Him." Then he quoted hymn 739.

"No help in self I find,
And yet have sought it well;
The native treasure of my mind
Is sin, and death, and hell.

"To Christ for help I fly,
The Friend of sinners lost,
A refuge sweet, and sure, and nigh,
And there is all my trust."

Our dear friend suffered much through the last few months of his life. On February 17th he said to us, "I need much patience to wait for the Lord to take me home." Speaking of heaven, he said, "What a happy and peaceful land it is, and there I long to be." He tried to quote the verse:

"There is a land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain."

Our dear friend had a good religion. It was founded upon the Rock Christ Jesus, who had washed away all his sins by His precious blood. He could say,

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

It was our favoured lot to fulfil his wish and take his funeral service at Zion Chapel, Brabourne Lees, in the presence of a large company of those that loved him. The sweet savour of the Lord Jesus' presence was sweetly known and felt. Truly, "The memory of the just is blessed."

R.D.G.F.

PRESSING TOWARD THE MARK

Beyond this vale a land I spy,
 And sometimes cast a longing eye
 To that blest place where pilgrims meet,
 To sing with soul-enraptured strains,
 To Him who on mount Zion reigns,
 And fall before His blessed feet.

Haste, haste away, fly fast my days,
 Soon shall my sighs be turned to praise,
 And gratitude for ever flow;
 No sad reflections on the past;
 Nor on my joys a chilling blast,
 As here in this dark vale below.

But can a wretch so vile, so base,
 Still live in hope to see that place,
 And with the holy tribes unite?
 O yes! since Jesus bids me come,
 Sure in His house there must be room,
 Or would He thus the poor invite?

“Come unto Me, thou labouring soul,
 My blood, My grace can make thee whole;
 My name is Christ, the sinner’s Friend:
 ’Tis not the greatness of thy sin
 Can shut thee out – I’ll take thee in,
 And save thee fully to the end.”

’Tis faith that gives the soul release
 From slavish fear, and brings sweet peace,
 Such peace as sin cannot defile:
 Faith lifts the sinner’s fainting head,
 He triumphs o’er the king of dread,
 And dying, gives an heavenly smile.

Poor, doubting soul, with tempest tossed,
 Christ came to seek and save the lost,
 And such He’ll on His shoulders place;
 His dear delights, His chosen sheep,
 His watchful eye will safely keep –
 Thou too shalt shout victorious grace.

Henry Fowler

Satan may rage, the world may frown, the flesh may rebel, and providence may seem to cross the humble believer; but yet, notwithstanding all this tempest, his soul is safe, being hid with Christ in God.

Thomas Reade

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
NOVEMBER 2012

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

SHOES OF IRON AND BRASS

Sermon preached by Mr. G.D. Buss at the Meetings of the Gospel Standard Society at Ebenezer Chapel, Ossett, on September 9th, 1912

Text: “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deut. 33. 25).

God’s servant, Moses the man of God, was face to face with the most solemn and awesome step that any man or woman will be called to take. He was on the brink of eternity, that very last step from mortality into immortality, from this time state into the eternal one. And just like the sweet psalmist of Israel, David, of whom we read in 2 Samuel 23, he had a good pillow, as it were, to lie on: “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, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.” Moses was of a similar spirit. Yes, no doubt there were things that Moses wished were different as he looked back, and the very fact that he could not enter the literal Canaan was a vivid reminder that he had not been a perfect man in his pilgrim way. But blessed be God, this dear man was not facing eternity resting on his own works or on his own name or on his own reputation. No, dear Moses was still resting on the same foundation that God built him on when at the burning bush He said, “Certainly I will be with thee,” and that spiritual rod which God put in Moses’ hand was still standing him good in this chapter as he reviewed and as he saw the prospect that awaited the children of Israel when they were to cross the Jordan after his death.

Though we often speak of Moses as the law-giver – in fact he is spoken of in this very chapter as a king – but really this chapter is Moses the prophet, God the Holy Spirit putting into Moses’ mouth and heart a prophetic view of what each tribe would enjoy in the land that they were soon to enter upon. And thus he was God’s mouthpiece to encourage them to cross the Jordan with this prospect in their hand that God had given them. God gave each tribe an expectation and He gives that to all of His people. That is a beautiful word in Psalm 62: “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my *expectation* is from Him.” And each tribe had an *expectation*. You go into Jeremiah and you read these beautiful words: “I know the thoughts that I think toward you ... thoughts of peace, and

not of evil, to give you an *expected* end.” God gives His people an expectation. The final expectation is summed up in our Lord’s words to His disciples: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” That is the final expectation that awaits God’s people.

But here below they are also given things they are led to believe will come to pass. And remember that before they entered into the blessings of these things that Moses spoke of, there were many battles to be fought in Canaan. Even where Moses was standing, he could see across the Jordan where was the walled city of Jericho, and that was just one of many other cities like it which were well armed and fortified and men of war occupying them. Yet God gave an expectation that these things would happen and He would fulfil that word we read of in Obadiah, a prophecy not often read, but it is a very beautiful little prophecy. We have in it this word: “The house of Jacob *shall*” – not might – “*shall* possess their possessions.”

Now we follow this on a little further. When the children of Israel actually came into Canaan, how were they going to decide where they were going to live? Were they going to fight among themselves for the land? No; God ordained the bound of each habitation and even though you read lots were cast by Joshua, those lots fell out as God would have it. And that is still true today, dear friend. If you are one of God’s children, hastening to a never-ending eternity “with Christ, which is far better,” you will find here below, “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” And as Moses was given a prophetic view of what would take place beyond the Jordan, so the blessings he was led to speak of to each tribe suited the place that God had appointed for them. And friends, you can be very sure of this: whether it be in providence or in grace, whether it be your natural home or your spiritual home, where you work, where you labour, God who appoints the bound of it will also make provision within that bound exactly suited to that need. He makes no mistakes. You may look over the bound to another tribe and say it looks greener over the fence. Dear friends, if you are where God has put you, God will make provision for you within that bound.

We read in Hebrews chapter 13 a word which we should never forget: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Mind you, there is a right covetousness, and Paul was not speaking against that. “Covet earnestly the best gifts” – faith, repentance, hope, love. O covet *much* of those gifts. And just as there is a right contentment, there is a wrong contentment too. Paul was not having the Hebrews to be content without a work of grace in their heart.

He was not suggesting they could sit down and be content just to drift on through life. No, they had never-dying souls; they needed to be prepared for eternity, and he would warn them that they had a never-dying soul, and he says in Hebrews chapter 2, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" So God forbid we should think that word "Be content" means to sit down as it were content *without* God, *without* Christ. God forbid any one of us should be content without Him. That is a solemn contentment of spiritual death which is the surest, quickest road to eternal misery. A Christless life will end in a Christless eternity – make no mistake about it. But having said that, where God does put His people, and when they are in their right mind, they are given a gracious contentment with it.

It does seem that Asher had a very precious portion awaiting him, but the promise that we have read by way of a text this afternoon was not given for nothing. One thing was very sure: Asher was going to need the shoes spoken of. They were not ornaments to be hung up on the wall to be looked at. They were to be used. They were going to be needed. There was going to be a necessity for them.

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Now of course, if you read your Bibles well, and I hope you do, you will know that the Lord performed a remarkable miracle throughout the forty years of wandering in the wilderness journey. That is, their clothes and their shoes did not wax old. In other words, they sufficed for the long journey that they were called to be exercised in. And if God gives you spiritual shoes to wear, they will suffice for as long as God intends you to be in that path. Really, that is what Asher's spiritual shoes were. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Here were shoes for Asher to walk in.

Now I am aware that some godly scholars (and in fact if you look in some margins) you will notice it says, "*Under* thy shoes shall be iron and brass." The suggestion there is that the part of the land that Asher was called to live in was rich in minerals. Well, that may be so, and I do not doubt that was so, but even there is a spiritual lesson. It was that where Asher was going to be called, there were going to be some riches to be found, to be mined out and ored out. But I prefer to look at this word as in our version.

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." It is remarkable what the Word of God has to say about shoes. One of the things the father did for the prodigal son when he returned was to give him some new shoes. He had worn the old ones out in rebellion, and now he needed shoes of obedience, repentance. I think of the shoes of Gibeon in the Book of Joshua. The Gibeonites put old shoes on and old clothes on to deceive Joshua and the men of Israel.

They were shoes of hypocrisy, pretending to be what they really were not. That is a very solemn way to be wearing shoes in God's sight. Remember that. God looks on the heart. But then we have those other shoes in the armour of Paul in the Ephesians. "Having ... your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." I like that expression. The gospel prepares sinners to walk in God's ways. It prepares sinners to walk obediently. It gives them the grace and the strength and the faith and the hope to press on, however hard and rough the way. Asher's shoes: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Now of course in the previous verse, and this has often been referred to concerning men called to the ministry, a word which has been pleaded many times for the gospel ministry. "Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil." It seems whenever Moses thought about Asher, he thought much about his feet, where they were going to go, what they were going to need. Literally they dipped their feet in oil to make the feet supple, because often they were hard and awkward because of the terrain in which they were having to live.

So dear friends, you and I need our feet to be dipped in the oil of the gospel, and without being fanciful, where does that oil come from? Where are we to go to get that which will soften our spiritual limbs and make them ready to run in the way of God's commandments? We must go to Gethsemane, and there you see the dear Redeemer in the olive press. The weight of His people's sins pressed hard upon His holy Person, and the weight of divine justice bore down upon Him with all its unmitigated weight, demanding of Him, the Substitute, the payment for the price of the sins of those sinners for whom He was suffering. And just as in the literal olive press as the weight came down upon the olive, so the virtue of the olive was squeezed out, so, we say it most reverently, as the weight of God's holy law upon the dear Saviour as He bore in His own Person, His sinless Person, the sins of His dear people, so the virtue of His holy life and the virtue of His atoning blood was pressed out from Him that the feet of His people might be enabled to walk in gospel ways.

Friends, we need to know where the source of our religion is. If it is real, you will trace it to Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha. Gethsemane where the Saviour stood in the sinner's place as the weight of their guilt was laid upon Him. Gabbatha, where the judgment was passed. I am not talking of Pilate's judgment, but a higher court than that. And Golgotha where the payment was made, where the dear Redeemer laid down that holy life a ransom for many, that this precious oil of gospel grace might flow into the hearts of sinners born again by the Spirit, that they may walk in gospel ways.

“Make me to walk in Thy commands;
‘Tis a delightful road.”

Well, it *will* be a delightful road if you dip your feet in that precious oil that comes from that sweet source.

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Now then, what does it tell us about Asher’s path, and that one to whom that word may be applicable this afternoon? What does it tell you about that path that is before you, because that is what it is? It is a word in the future. Here are shoes given for a path to be walked out. Now God has given the shoes suitable for the way that lies ahead. In a spiritual sense, of course, it is rather like the Lord giving a precious promise. Some of us can look back to moments and places where God gave to our poor soul promises, sweet words. We did not steal them; we did not assume them; they came with divine power; they came with authority; they came with unction; they came with application; they put us in the path God would have us go. And though at the time, perhaps it was very sweet to receive those promises, rather like the one in the Word of God we read who ate the book and it was sweet in his mouth, but it was bitter in his belly, often the walking out of what the promise entails will bring a path of much trial, much tribulation, and the flesh will dislike the way though faith approves it well. But you will find, dear friends, the shoes God gives you exactly suit the path He has called you for. You do not need to covet anyone else’s shoes. God has given you the shoes for your path and they will not wear out until you are called to lay them aside. That will only be when your journey is done. “Occupy till I come.”

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” The first thing, then, it is very personal: “*Thy shoes.*” Even literally speaking, in this congregation this afternoon there are many different sizes of shoes. Well, dear friends, so it is spiritually in one sense, and very personal. Some people spend a lot of time trying to walk other people’s paths and they spend their time criticising how other people walk. But I will tell you this, dear friends, if God gives you shoes like this to walk in, there will be so much in your path to give you prayerful exercise, you will have little time to criticise others. O may God give us a right view of these things. Not that we should not contend for the truth – we must do – but I am not saying that; I am not speaking in that sense at all. But friends, I think if we considered more our own path, the way we walk, and how we are walking, we would find there is so much occupation there, the need of repentance and faith from above to press on, that will occupy most if not all of our time in walking out what God has bid us walk in.

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” And the implication with iron and brass is they may not

seem very comfortable, even literally. We are thankful to have shoes this afternoon that are comfortable. Iron and brass does not sound very comfortable, does it? But you see, he dipped his foot in oil, and the point I make this afternoon is this: the path that God has set before you might seem most uncomfortable. Your flesh might be kicking against it this afternoon. You may even be quarrelling with God about the way. But if you dip your foot in the oil, you will find you can walk it out. You cannot walk in your own strength.

You take an example from God's holy Word. The woman in 2 Kings 4, who had so unexpectedly been given a son in her old age, and then almost as unexpectedly God took away the gift He had given. Yes,

“He gives and He takes, and He makes no mistakes,
Whatever may be the amount;
Nor have we a right, however He smite,
To ask Him to give an account.”

And that woman did not ask God to give an account, but she hastened to the prophet with her trouble and her trial, and when the question was put, “Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.” How could she say it? Her son lay dead back at home, and all her hopes were shattered; her expectation seemed to be in ruins. Friends, she had dipped her foot in oil. She could say, “It is well.” Are you finding it hard to say that this afternoon? Is the thorn sharp? Is the burden heavy? Is the way awkward? Well, dear friends, may God help you to dip your foot in oil, the oil of the grace of our Lord Jesus, and you will find it will do wonders. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ... and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Think how low He went!

“How bitter that cup, no heart can conceive,
Which He drank quite up that sinners might live!
His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?”

We do though, don't we! And why do we repine? Because our feet are not dipped in that oil. But if by God's grace He enables you to dip in oil, you will find though your shoes be iron and brass, naturally uncomfortable, yet spiritually speaking you will say, “Lord, it is right,” and you would not have one thing altered.

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.” You think of the Apostle Paul – when he had that thorn in the flesh. He could not walk with it, could he? We do not know what part of his body it was in, but suppose it was

in his foot – how painful every step he took with that thorn! It must have been agony. No wonder the dear man said, Lord, remove it. But did the Lord remove it? No; He gave him shoes to walk in with it. “And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.... For when I am weak, then am I strong.” And that word “the power of Christ” is one of the definitions in God’s holy Word of grace: “the power of Christ.” And it is that power that will give you the grace to walk in the shoes that God has given you to walk in. “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

Again, look at these shoes of iron and brass. It implies, dear friends, that the way itself is going to be rough. Not slippers. If you tried to walk up one of these Lancashire or Yorkshire hills with slippers, before you were half way up they would be in ruins, not suitable. Well, here are shoes that are suitable for the roughness and the awkwardness of the way. Now if Asher understood what Moses was saying, that tribe would realise there were going to be some awkward things in the way, and crooks in the lot, and thorns in the flesh, some difficulties. Was Asher to ask for a different part of the land? No, that is where God had put him and that is where he will find his shoes suitable. Yes, though it may be you have to tread on the lion and adder we read about in Psalm 91: “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder” – you could not do that without shoes of iron and brass, could you? You can with shoes like that. So you may have a very awkward path and the most awkward part of it, friends, will be yourself. I speak for myself at least. That is our most awkward part, isn’t it? We feel so inadequate; we feel such fools, so weak, so unsuitable for the path God has put us in. Surely, Lord, there must be someone more capable, more ready, more able, than us! We seem staggered at every new turn, brought to nothing at every new trial. We are such weaklings. But, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.”

“Fear not, brethren, joyful stand
On the borders of your land;
Jesus Christ, your Father’s Son,
Bids you undismayed go on.”

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.” and they will not wear out. I think of dear Jacob, and the promise given to him at Bethel. “I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest ... for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” I suspect Jacob was a comparatively young man when that was given, probably early twenties. We just make that as a conjecture. Years later we find Jacob leaning upon his staff on his dying bed. What staff? You say, it was the stick he leaned on literally. Well, it was in one sense, but

spiritually it was different to that. It was the same staff he was given at Bethel, or shall we say, the same shoes he was walking in and they served him right to the end.

You say, But I would like another promise. Well, friends, God is sovereign. He may give you another one, but He may say, You be content with the one I have given you.

“What more can He say than to you He has said,
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”

What more can He say?

“Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismayed;
I, I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.”

That arm we heard of this morning (Isa. 33. 2). What more can He say? What more do you need?

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass.” And then I like to think of the iron and brass in another way: the mingling together of faith and prayer. The two go together. Wherever God gives faith, you will find He will give prayer as well. The two go together. In fact, they are so joined together. “The just shall live by faith,” and they live by prayer, and Asher is going to need faith, and he is going to need prayer. You are going to need to pray your way along. It is the only way forward. In that new trouble that has come and that new mountain that has risen, you say, What am I to do? It is in these shoes: faith to believe what God has said about it.

“As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” And prayer to plead it. “Thou saidst.” Take it back to the Lord. Remind Him what He said to you when He put you in the way. It may not have been this exact promise; it may have been another one. But tell the Lord. He has not forgotten it, though you often do, but He loves to be reminded by His people saying, Lord, Thou saidst. Thou saidst, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

But it may be there is one here this afternoon who has come to the end. Some of you remember the late Mr. Joseph Field of Sedgley, a godly man and a man I highly esteemed. His father was a preacher too, a preacher at Gornal, and when his son Joe was sent into the ministry, he had been preaching about six weeks, and one Saturday night he went to see his father. He said, “I have come to the end. I can’t go on, Father.” “O,” he said, “my lad, I have been there for forty years.” Well, dear friends, some of us know what that is. We keep coming to the end of everything – our strength, our wisdom, our patience, our grace – and yet

mysteriously we have gone on. How is it? "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy *days*" – note that; nothing in store. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," especially when you get to the end of everything, and God's people often get there.

I think of godly Elijah. If ever there was a man you would be surprised at coming to the end of everything, it was Elijah. If you had sat with him at Cherith and watched that man's faith! He expected the ravens to come morning and evening with bread and flesh, and they did. He expected to drink of the water from the brook, and even when it dried up, he expected the Lord to give him another direction and off he would go to Zarephath in due course, and he expected the Lord to appear for Him as He did. The barrel of meal did not waste, and the cruse of oil did not fail. If you had stood with him on Mount Carmel and seen what happened with the Lord's help as he outfaced the prophets of Baal and vindicated the cause of God there, did this man ever fear? Did he never have any temptations? Did he never have any troubles? Did he never get to the end of everything? No, not Elijah, you would say. When he gets on his knees and prays for rain, even when there is no prospect of it and wrestles on until the seventh time, surely this man is a stranger to fear altogether!

What do we read the next day? He runs away from Jezebel, hides himself under a juniper tree. He is at the end. "Let me die, Lord, and not live. I am not better than my fathers." Elijah, what has happened? Has your God failed? Where have your shoes gone, Elijah? The poor man sank spiritually into a depression, and God's servants and God's people know what that is when the Lord for a moment withdraws the power of His presence and we cannot hold ourselves up. People may talk about duty this and duty that, but you get where Elijah did and you will want something done for you, dear friend. You will; you will indeed.

My dear late friend Mr. Harry Salkeld, a member with me at Chippenham in his last years, said, "In my early days I used to hear a man who kept saying, 'Do, do, do.'" He said, "But my poor soul could not feed." He said, "I wanted something done, done, done." Well, when you get to the end of everything, dear friends, that is what you will want: something done for you – a dead lift, as the godly Puritans used to say. That will not make you a fatalist – do not misunderstand me – but you will want something done and you will need the Lord to do it.

And the Lord came and spoke to Elijah. "Arise and eat," He said. Arise from slumber and eat. He lay down to sleep again but the angel touches him again. "Arise and eat." And this time he said, "Because the journey is too great for thee." Ah, Elijah, you have got to be a little child again, come right back to first principles. When you get to the end of everything, you will find how simple your religion will have to come

again, right back to first principles. “It is too great for thee.” Did you ever expect it to be different? Did you think you would get to a place of independence, and carry on in your own strength? “Too great for thee,” Elijah. Ah then, “he ... went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights.” He went on where it seemed impossible to go on.

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” Now God did not tell Asher how many days. He has not told you either. But though He may have said to one of you here this afternoon,

“The time is now fixed, and soon it will come,
When Christ will His messenger send,
To fetch you from Meshech and carry you home;
And then all your sorrows will end,”

even though that is the case, with a few more days, you will still need this promise. You will need it till your dying breath. However long or short our journey may be from this hour forward, God does not tell us how many days, but He does say, as many as they are, “so shall thy strength be.” He does not tell us what will be in those days – prosperity or adversity, joy or sorrow, deliverance or bondage, success or failure. He does not tell us that. All He does say is whatever the day, winter or summer, cold or heat, whatever the day, “so shall thy strength be.” A wonderful word this!

And dear friends, there is something else about it as well. It is as the day comes, “so shall thy strength be.” That is what our Lord meant in the sermon on the mount: “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Now some of us are very apt to anticipate. The hymnwriter was very right:

“Creatures of fear, we drag along,
And fear where no fear is.”

Very true. And the way he ends that beautiful hymn I have often found an encouragement:

“O if to me Thy strength be given,
If Thou be on my side,
Then hell as soon shall conquer heaven
As I can be destroyed.”

But one thing you can be sure, dear friends, whatever day God has appointed for you, so shall your strength be. Wasn't it one of the martyrs who the day before he was to be martyred put his finger in a candle flame, and could not bear it? He thought, How ever am I going to manage when my whole body is being burnt the next day? But when he came to the next day, friends, he smiled through it all, because it was *his day*.

One here may be anticipating – I know not – a day, and it casts its long shadow over you. O you are fearing and trembling and wondering how it will be. Friends, it is “*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*” You can be sure when that day comes provision will be made. When Abraham and Isaac were going up Mount Moriah and Isaac asked that poignant question, “Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” what did Abraham say? Not, my God *has* provided, though in fact in the purposes of God it was already provided, but Abraham had not seen that yet. “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering,” but not half way up the mount; when you get to the top, my son. That is when God will make the provision clear – when you need it, not before. Then He will make it clear. That day you dread, the Lord can manage it. He can shut lions’ mouths. He can turn darkness into light. He can open iron bars and brazen gates. He can make a way where there seems to be no way. He can manage it. And that beautiful word our Lord spoke to His disciples: “In that hour it shall be given thee.”

“*As thy days, so shall thy strength be.*” Now what strength do you feel to need then this afternoon? First of all, do we not need strength to believe? How battered and bruised our poor faith gets! How often the Lord has to say to us, Where is your faith? Where has it gone? “How is it that ye have no faith?” We behave as if we have no faith. I speak to myself. Perhaps you are not like that, but that is how I often get. But ah, this is the strength God has to give to His dear people, strength to believe, and one touch from His holy hand, one smile from His lovely face, one word from His holy lips, it does the deed. Faith rises up and you believe again.

Again, what about repentance? Strength to repent. I wish we knew more of it. It is a very rare gift, real repentance, a broken and a contrite heart that God will not despise; the repentance that comes from a view of Gethsemane and Gabbatha and Golgotha, *our* sins being dealt with, *our* wretched state being dealt with by the dear, innocent Sufferer. That will bring repentance. O may God give us strength to repent. You say, Do we need that? You certainly do, because your sins are so powerful because you love them. That is why you need the strength to repent of them. That was what one of the old patriarchs said in the early church. It was easy to pray against those sins that were not a temptation to him, but that bosom sin, that sin that wrapped itself around his very heart and mind and his old nature, to pray against that was more than nature could do. You need grace to pray against that besetting sin, that lust, that corruption that is so part of your fallen nature. You cannot get above it, but the strength of God can raise you above it.

Then again, do not we need strength to love? O we do. Would to God we loved Him more. We need love pouring into our hearts that our

hearts might love Him in return. But He can give it. He can make the most loveless, cold, dead heart love Him in return. One touch will do it; it will.

“As thy days, so shall thy strength be.” What about patience? “Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” Some of us need that grace. Some of us are not natural waiters. Sometimes I stand on Chippenham station waiting for the London train. Some people sit there quite quietly, but I wander up and down the platform waiting for this train. It does not come any quicker, but that is me. Now dear friends, may God give us the grace of patience. “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” May God help us to be still this afternoon and know that He is God. Did not Ruth need strength to sit still in that day when matters were to be decided in Boaz’ hands? “Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall: for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.” What strength she needed and she was given it. You will be a wonder to yourself when God gives you that patience.

So we could go on. O the many other graces. What about the grace to die, the strength to die? The worldling would not understand that. Strength to die, they would say. Well, that is just yielding up your natural strength. It is losing it all. Well, so it is naturally speaking, but O for a believer, who knows what is after death, the judgment, O how they want to be well persuaded that they “have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

Many years ago there was a godly woman on a bed of affliction and she did not know what the cause was. There was pain in her poor body and she got so low it seemed almost as if she was sinking into the very valley of the shadow of death, and her poor heart sunk. What am I going to do? Where am I? And it just came to her so quietly: all I can do is cling unto Jesus. So simple, but she said the very thought of it brought quietness and confidence into her spirit. There was One to cling to, and so there is in your weakest moments, friends, whether it be a dying bed or otherwise. O Jacob, he clave, he clung to that Angel of the covenant, did he not? “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.” The man was leaning though halting on his thigh. He was wounded, he was a lame man. All he could do was cleave and cling, but he got such a blessing.

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” So just three things in conclusion. First of all, friends, this is a word of stability. It is God’s word to quieten our poor hearts that get so agitated, so turned over inside out. Really the Lord is saying, “Be still, and know that I am God.” That is what the Lord is saying to Asher.

I have got your path in My hand. I know what tomorrow will bring, and the next tomorrow as well. “Be still.”

Secondly, it is this:

“Whate’er I need in Jesus dwells,
And there it dwells for me.”

“On such as cannot help themselves” – that is who it is for. This is a word for the helpless, for the ignorant, the one of whom we read in Isaiah’s prophecy: “The wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein,” because of our text.

And the third thing is – wonderful thought this – these shoes shall carry you safe home to heaven. They will. They will last. Everything else will fail, but what God has given you and what God has spoken into your poor heart, that will outlast the storms, the winds, the waves, the fires, yea death itself. And when you are landed safe in glory and see Him who first gave you those shoes to walk the pilgrim way, you will have an eternity to praise His dear name for so separating you out from the lost, ruined race of Adam and putting you in the pilgrim way in the day of your new birth, and bringing you safely through till you were safely landed. “So He bringeth them unto their desired haven.” May God add His blessing. Amen.

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY NORTHERN MEETINGS

*Report of Meetings held at Ebenezer Chapel, Ossett,
on Saturday, September 9th, 2012. It was impossible to hold the
Meetings at Manchester this year.*

PRAYER MEETING

Mr. N.H. Roe (Pastor, Ossett) read Isaiah 33, and then spoke from verse 2: “O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for Thee: be Thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble.”

This is a prayer of the prophet in very few words, and yet what is expressed in this prayer is that which was surely the exercise and desire of his soul, both as a servant of God and as a true believer through the riches of divine grace, and that both for himself personally and also with regard to the cause and interest of his God in his day and generation. With just a brief glimpse of the background to this prayer, the very ministry of the prophet Isaiah, we notice that they were troublesome times in which he lived. There was the apostasy of the ten tribes of Israel and there were the problems within Judah itself, idolatry rife, and not

only that, but there were the judgments of God abroad in the earth, the armies of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, both in the invasion and the taking away of the ten tribes of Israel, and also the invasion of Jerusalem.

But it is not the background to this prayer I want to deal with, but this petition of the prophet himself, and I trust it is that which is the desire and exercise of our souls as we come together this morning, both around the Word of God and for prayer unto our God, and our prayer particularly as we have met here on this occasion with respect to the Societies and the Lord's blessing upon their ministry, but also with respect to the causes of truth to which we are joined in fellowship. We do seek the real welfare of the cause and interest of our God in our day and generation.

As we look around us in our day, and sure it was with the prophet himself in his day, there were those things that troubled and distressed him, and yet as we find here in this prayer of the prophet, there is much instruction and encouragement for ourselves also, that as we look around, both with regard to the causes of God amongst us, indeed the wider aspect, the nation in which we live, the society in which we dwell, there is much obviously not only to trouble, but of which surely we have just cause to mourn over, and like with the prophet here to cry unto the Lord our God. And how great is the mercy of which we are reminded here, yes, that they were troublesome times in which the prophet lived, and so with us in our day, but what is the encouragement and consolation for the living family of God as it was here for the prophet? It is that "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," that there is that way of access and acceptance with Him as He is the one and only true God, that way of access and acceptance with Him which He Himself has appointed and provided to the praise and glory of His great and holy name, and that through the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ and through faith in His name.

So with the prophet here in this prayer of this second verse, there are three distinct petitions.

The first: "O Lord, be gracious unto us."

The second: "Be Thou their arm every morning.

And the third: "Our salvation also in the time of trouble."

I would just notice that this prayer of the prophet here was not an isolated incident in the life of this man of God. It was a path that he had trod from the very beginning of the Lord's dealings with him, and in which still he continued to tread. What I mean by that, we see as expressed in his language here, when he says, "We have waited for Thee." Yes, he did know what it was to wait upon the Lord both in prayer and in supplication through the enabling grace of God given him. How we do need that continually, that grace so to wait upon the Lord in all the matters and issues that may concern us, both personally and with which the cause and interest of our God is confronted in the day in which

we live. Where are we to go? To whom are we to look? Should not a people, as the prophet says in the earlier part of this prophecy, seek unto the Lord their God? O for grace so to do! As the psalmist said, “My soul” – and may that come home to us individually and personally – “My soul,” he says, “wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him.”

We surely do prove there is no help to be found in self, and is that not realised increasingly under the teaching of the Holy Spirit?

“No help in self I find,
And yet have sought it well;
The native treasure of my mind
Is sin, and death, and hell.”

Nor is there any advantage in looking to an arm of flesh. Indeed, even in the days of Isaiah there was that very proneness to look to an arm of flesh. The Lord in an earlier chapter gives out the solemn warning to those who go down to Egypt for help, that stay upon horses and trust in chariots because they are many. With the threatened invasion of the Assyrians they were going down to seek help of Pharaoh, and forgot the Lord their God. O is that not often, we have sadly to confess, which is found with us still? O for that grace that brings us at all times and in all situations here where the prophet is, low at the footstool of divine mercy.

And what encouragement is given to us, as the prophet does here, to call upon the name of the Lord. Yes, with him it was his covenant God revealed and made known unto him in the word and promise that the Lord has spoken to His church and people now. Do not we have the glorious reality of this, the encouragement that is given unto us, in what Paul writes in his Epistle to the Hebrews? “Seeing,” he says, “that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.” Friends, what need there is for that in the day and generation in which we live, to hold fast our profession, to stand fast for those things we have received and believe as taught of God the Holy Spirit, and which as companies of the Lord’s people we profess, to hold fast the profession of our faith. For he says, “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” O what a merciful and gracious High Priest is our Lord Jesus Christ! His ear is ever open unto the cry of His people. Did He not say to His disciples, that has application still to His church and people, “If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it”?

The encouragement likewise is given us which is mentioned there in Hebrews where the apostle says, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in

time of need.” Now that was just what the prophet sought here in his prayer unto the Lord and for which he waited upon the Lord and had waited, and still he desired enabling grace and was concerned to wait upon the Lord.

Let us then look briefly at these three petitions of the prophet and see what Paul reminds us as I said to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Not coming, friends, in our own strength; not looking to anything in self or even in created things, but coming as ever a needy sinner must come and will come, and what is evident here in the language of the prophet, he well knew his spiritual poverty and his need.

See the very first petition: “O Lord, be gracious unto us.” There is no hint here of any supposed worth or merit in himself that he had to look to or plead before the Lord. No, he comes, as we ever must come and will come as taught of God the Holy Spirit, as the hymn well puts it:

“Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Black, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.”

Coming upon the ground of pleading for mercy for Jesus’ sake. Do we get beyond that? Is that a constant realisation, I trust, with us? “Have mercy upon me, O God,” is the language of the psalmist, and he adds this: “Have mercy upon me, O God; heal my soul; for I have sinned against Thee.” Is that not expressive of the greatest need of the child of God, what we find continually, our need as a sinner? And as surely taught of God the Holy Spirit, the possession of the life of faith is a constant coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, that daily realisation, our need of Him, our whole dependence upon Him for time and for eternity.

“O Lord, be gracious unto us.” May that indeed be our desire and plea as we gather here for prayer this morning. For it is in His grace, that is His free, His undeserved love and favour as made known unto us. Not as I say for any ground of worth in ourselves, but for His own great name’s sake.

He says also, “Be Thou their arm every morning.” How expressive is this: “Their arm every morning”! One puts it this way:

“That tried, almighty arm
Is raised for their defence;
Where is the power can reach them there
Or what can force them thence?”

Remember, friends, wherein is both all the help and the hope of the people of God. “The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;

neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” Remember the God that we profess to own and worship is the One and only true God who upholds all things by the Word of His power, and indeed has heaven and earth at His command and waits to answer prayer. We acknowledge that, but do we really believe it? Is that always before us as we seek to gather both publicly and even as we come before the Lord in our own personal devotions? Do we really believe that God is God and that what He has revealed of Himself in His holy Word is that which is faithful and true? O the mercy, the gracious teaching of the Holy Spirit that brings us there and keeps us there, looking wholly away from self and only unto Him in whom is all our help and all our hope!

“Be Thou their arm every morning.” Of one thing we can be sure. Upon that tried, almighty arm of our God and Saviour we can implicitly rely. He has never failed; He never will fail. Men fail, we fail, the times and circumstances change, but our Lord Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,” and,

“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.”

“Our salvation,” he says, “in the time of trouble.” Now the time of trouble is not particularly designated here, but we can take it surely as being whatever the trouble, the trial, the tribulation of the people of God, whether from within or without, whether personal, whether within the family, whether within the church of Jesus Christ, or even as the situation that confronts us outwardly. “Be Thou ... our salvation also in the time of trouble.” See how the psalmist beautifully puts it, and it is that which I just leave with you this morning. There in Psalm 46 he says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled.... There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.” What the psalmist bore witness to, as here with the prophet, so it is still concerning the church and people of God, our God is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,” and as one hymnwriter well puts it:

“He holds all nature in His hand;
 That gracious hand on which I live
 Does life, and time, and death command,
 And has immortal joys to give.”

I will leave the remarks there. May the Lord bless His own Word.

Hymns 383, 1141 and 1139 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. M.G. Bailey (Tenterden), Mr. J.R. Ince

(Pastor, Nottingham), Mr. J.A. Kingham (Luton, Bethel), Mr. J. Roe (Ossett), Mr. D.J. Christian (Luton, Bethel). Mr. Roe opened the meeting with prayer and closed with prayer and the benediction.

BUSINESS MEETING

After the singing of hymn 551, Mr. G.D. Buss (Chairman of the Gospel Standard Society) read Psalm 91, after which Mr. B.E. Izzard (Pastor, Fenstanton) asked the Lord's blessing on the meeting.

Mr. Buss then spoke as follows:

It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you here this afternoon, and we are especially thankful to our friends, the pastor and church at Ossett, for kindly making their very comfortable building available to us today, and we hope we may feel some of the unity of the Spirit continuing as we felt in the prayer meeting in the earlier part of our gathering.

There is one word which our dear friend just mentioned in prayer. It is one word which is so necessary: *intervention*. In many respects it seems to us in our day that the arm of the Lord is withholden. But the psalmist prayed and the prophet Isaiah prayed, as we were reminded this morning, and in another place too: "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord, as in the days of old." What the prophet wanted and needed was for the Lord to intervene. Until the Lord intervenes, all the efforts of men are nothing. Until the Lord intervenes, the enemy seems to have the upper hand and the powers of darkness seem to rise. But when God's arm is raised up for our defence and for the defence of His cause and of His truth, then there is no doubt at all about the outcome. When God arises like that, as we read in Psalm 68, "Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered," then we may look for answers and we may look for the Lord to appear.

But again, we were reminded of another word this morning, and it is a word we should also consider: "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." But the prophet did go on and say, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God." O what a need there is for self-examination and solemn reflection as to the reason why the arm is so withholden! It is so easy for us to put it down to divine sovereignty in the latter days which we know are with us, but surely if we look within our hearts we know the reason for the withholding of God's arm. O may God bring us once more in true repentance at the foot of the cross, pleading the return of the Holy Spirit and the return of that mighty arm that once worked so powerfully even in this part of our beloved land in the days of Gadsby and Kershaw, churches raised up and wonderfully established and which

were a great witness to the power of God in their generation. The same God still lives. May it please His holy Majesty to return in mercy to us, weak and feeble though we feel to be.

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,

As we come to another annual meeting in the north of England, we have been thinking of the line of the hymn: "Change and decay in all around I see." It was on a Friday in September 1951 that the first of these meetings was held at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester. These continued on a Friday until 1978, when the day was altered to Saturday, but what changes have taken place in those sixty-one years! We think of the godly men who took part in that first meeting, all of whom have now passed away and are safely landed. Then we think of those many chapels which have either closed or passed into other hands. We see such desolation among the churches, and this is not confined just to the north, but throughout our denomination. This year, of course, another change has occurred as the repairs at Rochdale Road have prevented us from holding our meeting there, and we are very grateful to our friends at Ossett for the use of the chapel today. May the Lord's blessing rest upon them here.

We are very conscious of all the changes that have taken place in our land during those years and we are concerned and grieved about many things. Particularly we think of the desecration of the Lord's day. How solemnly we read in the Word of God of His judgment on those who fail to observe His day! We look back to those days when the shops were shut and there was little or no professional sport on the Lord's day. Now so many events take place on the Lord's day, and we were saddened that the River Pageant to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was held on that day. We have seen the relaxation of shopping hours during the Olympics, and already politicians suggesting that the restrictions should be lifted so that the shops can trade much longer. May we be kept from following the example of the world, and truly value His day, as it is recorded in Isaiah: "Call the Sabbath a delight."

There is also the proposal to allow same-sex marriage which, despite the strong opposition in the consultation period, government ministers have said they will go ahead and ensure it becomes legal. These things were still a criminal offence when the first Northern Meeting took place.

Increasingly there are the attacks on Christianity by those who seek to promote a secular agenda.

All this would sink us in despair, but there is One who changes not and who is still upon the throne. What a mercy that is and how thankful we should be! "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Despite all our failings He is still the same and His mercies are new every morning.

We are mindful of the solemn withholding of the Holy Spirit. May we examine ourselves and cease from those things that grieve the Spirit. Our prayer is that there might yet be an outpouring individually and on the churches. We think of the psalmist who wrote, "It is time for Thee, Lord, to work."

The Committee is very grateful for the support given by the churches, both prayerful and financial. There are difficult matters that come before the Committee and we seek grace to deal with them rightly in the fear of the Lord.

We are pleased that Mr. John Broome has recovered sufficiently to enable him to resume preaching, and we would be thankful that some younger ministers have been raised up. May the Lord abundantly bless the labours of each of His servants as they proclaim His glorious gospel.

It is at this time that we announce the prices of the magazines for the coming year. The cost of postage rose sharply in March and a further increase is expected in 2013. We are grateful for the donations given in addition to the subscriptions and during the year a legacy of £2,000 was received for the Magazine Fund from the estate of the late Mr. John Watts. In view of this, the Committee decided to keep the prices of the magazines the same for a further year.

We give thanks to the Lord for upholding our Editors and enabling them to continue. May the Lord grant His blessing on their labours.

The Aid and Poor Relief Society has also received a legacy from Mr. Watts of over £9,000 and we have been notified that the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund is expected to receive a substantial legacy from a lady who passed away several years ago in the Brighton Bethesda Home.

The Committee is always pleased to assist in cases of need and we would encourage our subscribers to notify us of persons who may require assistance so that the appropriate enquiries can be made.

Above all these things we would seek the prosperity of Zion.

“There my best friends, my kindred dwell;
There God my Saviour reigns.”

May it be the blessed portion of each one to be found at last with Him in glory.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Christian for his report and for all he does on behalf of the Society, both seen and unseen.

Mr. A.J.H. Topping (Bethesda General Manager) then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Mr. Chairman, subscribers and friends,

We come once again through God’s goodness to give a report on the Bethesda Homes to our northern friends. We have been helped through another year since our last meeting in Manchester and would give thanks for the mercies which have been received. The complexities of regulation and numerous other statutory requirements are increasingly burdensome and time-consuming. We have to be compliant and we are thankful to say that the required standards are maintained. We acknowledge the Lord’s help in the problems that are encountered and seek the grace we need to depend upon wisdom from above.

We are thankful to be able to report that thus far this year our total incoming resources continue to exceed our expenditure, the reasons for this being threefold:

1. High occupancy at the Brighton Home enabling it to show a surplus and at the Harpenden Home enabling it to break even,

2. Legacy income has continued and amounts to just over £100,000 for the year to date, derived from the estates of Mr. John Watts in the sum of £19,740, Mrs. Elsie Burgess £25,000, Miss Ann Hall £5,322 and Mr. George Brooks £50,000.

3. A very large donation of £100,000 received from the estate of Miss Mary Yoshimoto who was a resident in the Harpenden Home.

We give thanks to God for His continued provision for the needs of Bethesda.

We also acknowledge with thanks the smaller donations given by chapels, subscribers and other friends which continue to make a significant contribution to Bethesda's ability to provide care for the Lord's elderly people.

It is also pleasing to be able to report that we have been able to contain our expenditure within the budgets set by the Bethesda Fund Committee at the beginning of the year, with the exception of repairs and renewals. Exceptional expenditure at the Harpenden Home and to some extent at Studley was not anticipated but has been met from our reserves. The building fabric at Harpenden needs continuing refurbishment and major items of equipment at the Homes have had to be replaced.

As mentioned, occupancy at the Brighton Home and the Harpenden Home continues to be very good. There are only two vacancies at the Brighton Home and four at Harpenden. There are five vacancies at Studley at the present time and we hope that some friends who are in need of care will be inclined to come into the Home.

Since last reporting, five residents have passed away: Mr. Harry Robinson, Miss Winifred Shelton and Miss Mercy Dadswell at the Harpenden Home, and Mrs. Margaret Crouch and Mr. Tom Hart from the Brighton Home.

Two places have been filled, and we are pleased to welcome Mr. Harry Wallis at Harpenden and Miss Sylvia Holman at Brighton.

A number of short-stay residents have been welcomed in all three Homes.

The 25th anniversary of the opening of the Studley Home was held on June 16th, and this was attended by a good number of friends and supporters. Our Bethesda Chairman was helped to speak a few words from 1 Samuel chapter 7, verse 12. He briefly recalled the Lord's great goodness in the provision of the Home and in maintaining it over the past twenty-five years. Mention was made of past residents and of how they had testified of the Lord's blessings to them and of the good hope they had through grace. The faithfulness of the Lord to His promise encouraged us to believe that He would continue to be our Helper and never leave us nor forsake us.

It was reported at the April AGM that inspections of the Homes were then shortly expected. Although many homes in the same area as our Homes have been inspected, none of the Bethesda Homes has yet had a visit from the Care Quality Commission. We seek to maintain and improve the standard of care we provide for our residents.

I commented in April on the Government's proposed reforms to pensions, and said that our staff would have the option to opt out of their automatic enrolment in an employer's pension scheme. This is no longer the case as changes to the rules mean that employees will not now be able to opt out for at least two years after enrolment. This is likely to have a significant impact on Bethesda's staffing costs, increasing them by up to £10,000 in the first year, £20,000 in the second year and £30,000 a year from then on.

Having received a legacy of £5,000 from the estate of the late Mr. John Watts to the Harpenden Flatlets, it was agreed by the Bethesda Fund Committee to apply this to pay for the renewing and upgrading of the heating system at the Harpenden Flatlets, which is in need of replacement. It is expected that the new system, being a modern boiler with individual heating circuits to each of the Flatlets, will be a much more satisfactory arrangement than the existing one. Each Flatlet resident will be able to control the heating in their own Flatlet, whereas before the temperature was controlled centrally.

Following the appeal for more subscribers at the Annual General Meeting in April, there has been an encouraging response which we would like to build on. I would once again warmly encourage friends who do not yet subscribe to give their support to Bethesda by becoming subscribers, and to this end there are a number of subscriber application forms in the chapel porch. I would mention again that if you are a subscriber to the Gospel Standard Society or to the Gospel Standard Trust, this does not automatically make you a subscriber to Bethesda as well. Bethesda is a separate charity.

Finally, once again I would like to thank most sincerely the staff, Home Support Group members and other volunteers who work so hard for Bethesda's residents. The volunteers supply much useful support to the residents in various ways.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Topping for his report, and said what a favour the Bethesda Homes have been to the denomination for many years, and he hoped they would continue for the coming generations. He particularly mentioned the Haydock Home which is remembered for the wonderful spirit within that Home, and the sense of God's presence which was there.

He also referred to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Studley Home, and reminded us that Mr. Henry Mercer had served voluntarily as Secretary of that Home for twenty-five years, which is much appreciated.

The Chairman mentioned some new books recently published by the Gospel Standard Trust – *Some Welsh Ministers*, by Mr. J.R. Broome, *Brought Unto the King*, the writings of Mrs. Rhoda Gosden (wife of Mr. J.H. Gosden, former Editor of the *Gospel Standard*), the *Expositions of Scripture*, by J.C. Philpot, and the *Nazarene's Songs*, by William Gadsby. He also said that some of the Trust's books are now available in electronic format.

Two further points made by the Chairman were:

1. The importance of our young people being aware of the terrible evil of the theory of evolution.
2. The collection was to be for the Gospel Standard Library, and he recommended the Library to the friends.

The meeting concluded with the singing of hymn 500 and prayer by the Chairman.

If the Lord will, the Annual Meetings will be held next year on Friday, April 5th.

STRENGTH TO FIGHT

Address by James Bourne, November 27th, 1840

“In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us” (Neh. 4. 20).

This denotes the Word of God, that instruction He sends us, and the spiritual obedience we ought to pay to it, and that we shall always have enemies to contend with as long as we live. We shall never be without them. But Nehemiah said, “Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.” That is, if you possess the true fear of God, it will not be a secret religion with which you shall glide out of this world, but you shall be found in the exercise of it all the day long, and in all that you have to do; for there is no day wherein you will not be attacked by this enemy: but this is the great thing which God wants us to look to; not to the strength of our enemies or to our own weakness, but *to His great power and faithfulness*. And if we look so to Him, though we may not find the deliverance we want exactly, we shall find a sensible support, so as not to be overcome. It is wonderful how near God often is to us, answering our prayers, whilst we think He is a great way off. This enemy will pursue us as Pharaoh did the Israelites, and we think there is no way of escape. “I shall never all my days get out of *this* perplexity and this trouble.” But no, it shall not be so; for the Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.

God always takes the weak side; that little, trembling, fearing cry to Him will be sure to bring in His power. Therefore, in all that you have to do, seek above all things to sit still and see the salvation of God; not to go before Him, but continually to commit your way to Him and watch His hand, and to let Him manage all. This trust He only can work in us. We are always in haste. With what great ease He can bring us out of our difficulties. It is astonishing how easily and by what imperceptible means and degrees, or how by one word, God can deliver us from impending troubles, and does, and will. God divides the sea before His people. I wish I could persuade you to look to Him and to His *promised* help, and to encouragements in Him, and not to look to your difficulties; for He will get Himself honour on these enemies. This unbelief, pride, covetousness, and whatever it be, He will break it in pieces. We wonder why they follow us so pertinaciously; but God hardens them, and our only relief is in waiting on Him, for contention will not help us here. The Lord put Himself between the Israelites and the Egyptians, as He always does, in the needful position; therefore, “be not faithless, but believing.”

It is said in Deuteronomy, “Let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, 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” (20. 3, 4). Now this promise is absolute. You dare not deny that you have the fear of God; then, if so, this is God’s presence with you. The fear of God contains such light, such power, such tenderness – all these things are tokens of God’s presence with you. Therefore, do not look at the things which are seen, but at the invisible power of God; and make up your minds that this battle will continue as long as you live, but no enemy shall stand before you, because the Lord fights for you. And “as birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem”; and you know how they fly round a thing. So is the Lord “round about His people” (Isa. 31. 5; Psa. 125. 2).

TRUE FAITH

By Jonathan Edwards (1702-1758)

This is one thing that very much distinguishes that faith which is saving from that which is only common. A true faith is a faith that works, whereas a false faith is a barren and inoperative faith. And therefore the apostle describes a saving faith as a “faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5. 6). And the Apostle James tells us, “A man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (Jas. 2. 18). But more particularly,

The *conviction of the understanding and judgment*, which is implied in saving faith, *tends to holy practice*. He that has true faith is convinced of the reality and certainty of the great things of religion, and he that is convinced of the reality of these things will be influenced by them, and they will govern his actions and behaviour. If men are told of great things, which, if true, do most intimately concern them, and do not believe what they are told, they will not be much moved by them, nor will they alter their conduct for what they hear. But if they do really believe what they are told, and regard it as certain, they will be influenced by it in their actions, and in view of it will alter their conduct, and will do very differently from what they would if they had heard nothing.

We see that this is so in all things of great concern that appear real to men. If a man hears important news that concerns himself, and we do not see that he alters at all for it in his practice, we at once conclude that

he does not give heed to it as true; for we know the nature of man is such that he will govern his actions by what he believes and is convinced of. And so if men are really convinced of the truth of the things they are told in the gospel, about an eternal world, and the everlasting salvation that Christ has purchased, it will influence their practice. They will regulate their behaviour according to such a belief, and will act in such a manner as will tend to their obtaining this eternal salvation.

If men are convinced of the certain truth of the promises of the gospel, which promise eternal riches, and honours, and pleasures, and if they really believe that those are immensely more valuable than all the riches, and honours, and pleasures of the world, they will, for these, forsake the things of the world, and if need be, sell all and follow Christ. If they are fully convinced of the truth of the promise, that Christ will indeed bestow all these things upon His people, and if all this appears real to them, it will have influence on their practice, and it will induce them to live accordingly. Their practice will be according to their convictions.

The very nature of man forbids that it should be otherwise. If a man be promised by another that if he will part with one pound he will give him a thousand, and if he is fully convinced of the truth of this promise, he will readily part with the former in the assurance of obtaining the latter. And so he that is convinced of the sufficiency of Christ to deliver him from all evil, and to bring him to the possession of all good that he needs, will be influenced in his practice by the promise which provides all this. Such a man, while he actually has such a conviction, will not be afraid to believe Christ in things wherein he otherwise would seem greatly to expose himself to calamity, for he is convinced that Christ is able to deliver him. And so he will not be afraid to forego other ways of securing earthly happiness, because he is convinced that Christ alone is sufficient to bestow all needed happiness upon him.

There are two coronation days of our Lord Jesus. One is the day when He ascended into heaven in Person, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, where the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb that sits upon the throne and lay down their crowns at His feet. Another is the day when He descends down to the earth in the power of His Spirit among His people, enabling them by faith to put the crown upon His head and to put honour upon Him by counting all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of His glory. And O what a happy day would this be, were I preaching the coronation sermon of our glorious Lord Jesus upon His coronation day! O behold His glory! Behold His crown!

Ralph Erskine

FOLLOWING CHRIST

*Letter from Samuel Rutherford to one of his Anwoth parishioners,
Thomas Corbet*

Dear Friend,

I forget you not. It will be my joy that ye follow after Christ till ye find Him. My conscience is a feast of joy to me, that I fought in singleness of heart for Christ's love to put you upon the King's highway to our Bridegroom, and our Father's house. Thrice blessed are ye, my dear brother, if ye hold the way.

I believe that ye and Christ once met; I hope ye will not sunder with Him. Follow the counsel of the man of God, Mr. William Dalglish. If ye depart from what I taught you in a hair-breadth, for fear or favour of men, or desire of ease in this, I take heaven and earth to witness that ill shall come upon you in the end. Build not your nest here. This world is a hard, ill-made bed; no rest is in it for your soul. Awake, awake, and make haste to seek that Pearl, Christ, that this world seeth not. Your night and your Master Christ will be upon you within a clap; your hand-breadth of time will not bide you. Take Christ, howbeit a storm follow Him. Howbeit this day be not yours and Christ's, the morrow will be yours and His. I would not exchange the joy of my bonds and imprisonment for Christ, with all the joy of this dirty and foul-skinned world. I have a love-bed with Christ and am filled with His love.

I desire your wife to do what I write to you. Let her remember how dear Christ will be to her when her breath turneth cold, and the eye-strings shall break. O how joyful should my soul be to know that I had brought on a marriage betwixt Christ and that people, few or many! If it be not so, I shall be wo [sorrowful] to be a witness against them. Use prayer; love not the world; be humble, and esteem little of yourself. Love your enemies and pray for them. Make conscience of speaking truth, when none knoweth but God. I never eat, but I pray for you all. Pray for me. Ye and I shall see one another up in our Father's house. I rejoice to hear that your eye is upon Christ. Follow on, hang on, and quit Him not. The Lord Jesus be with your spirit.

Your affectionate brother, in our Lord Jesus,

S.R.

Aberdeen, 1637

Though God promise forgiveness to repenting sinners, yet God promiseth not tomorrow to repent in.

George Swinnock

THE CONVERTED BURGLAR

This remarkable account, from the Gospel Standard 1904, signed "A.B., Chelsea," was almost certainly written by Alfred Brandon, for many years pastor in Chelsea.

My mind cannot feel contented or comfortable if I allow the following circumstance to be buried in oblivion, and time now must be short with me. It is about fifty years ago that I became acquainted with George Marshall, when he and his good wife came to hear at the little chapel. He related to me the Lord's mercy and goodness to him, which was of no ordinary nature, and my soul was truly knit to him.

He had long been connected with a gang of London housebreakers, and was a leading man among them. He told me with sorrow that he had been in Newgate and all the other prisons in and about London, and there was not a sin, except murder, of which he was not guilty. The last house fixed upon for burglary, before the time for mercy came, was the mansion of Sir Gabriel Wood, and he had to arrange for particulars of entrance, and one stipulation in their common plot was that if in this attempt no one noticed them in the work, the plot went on, but if any eye was fixed upon them, the plot was to be broken up. But an eye which he little thought of was fixed upon him, and the Holy Spirit fulfilled His office of mercy and brought the rebel down. He was smitten in his conscience, and distress filled his soul. He at once left his sinful employment, and the hand of the Lord lay heavily upon him. He was one of the purchased sheep of Christ, one that the Lord said He must bring. Now his heavy trials began, and he was chastened, yes, and scourged as a son.

He had no friend, no home, and knew no trade. For two years he tramped the streets of London as a vagrant, almost foodless and shoeless, forlorn and dejected. When God intends to break a sinner down, "He sealeth up the hand of every man." The work must be manifest as His work (Job 37. 7). In this deplorable state his former companions would sometimes meet him and press him to join them again. On one occasion he was especially troubled. One person met him and said, "Why, George, how is this?" He told him that he could no longer live in sin, and said that he would rather starve first. "O," said the man, "we have a good job on now, and you are just the man for it." But the Lord had made poor George firm in his sorrow. But the time of his deliverance drew nigh, both for his soul and his body.

One day as he stood in misery and pinched with hunger at a door, I think in or near Oxford Street (not by chance), the housekeeper was coming out (a grace-taught woman), and seeing him, gave him some help, and asked him if he would have some food, which he gladly accepted,

and she told him to come again, which he did. She then put this question to him: "Why are you in this state?" He told her something of his circumstances, and she felt that the Lord's hand was in it, and provided for him lodgings, food and clothes, and then entered spiritually into his trying case, and the Lord very graciously delivered his soul through her instrumentality. Thus she became preacher, mother and nurse to him, and by her influence he obtained a situation, and filled a position as collector to a medical society, which he honourably held for many years.

This good woman afterwards became his wife, which was long before I knew them. The years that I had the pleasure of knowing him, a more humble, kind, honest and tender-hearted believer I never knew. His experience, of course, was deep, and the grace of Christ in his heart produced most blessed effects in his life, and Christ was all his theme and all his glory. We walked together, and himself and his grave, sober-minded wife were very dear to me for many years.

But a parting time came, for while walking through St. James's Park one wet day, he took cold, which settled on his lungs, and when he came to see me afterwards, my heart sank within me. I saw in him an intimation of a speedy dissolution. He lived about a mile and a half from me, and when I last saw him on his deathbed, he had a sweet peace in his soul, and expressed his tender affection, but said that he had one painful regret, for the Lord had shown him on his bed believers' baptism as he had never seen it before, and he was grieved in his heart that he had not publicly professed the Lord Jesus Christ in walking in His footsteps and by keeping His commands, and thus showing his grateful appreciation of the Lord's goodness and mercy so conspicuously bestowed upon him.

BOOK REVIEWS

Expositions of Holy Scripture, by J.C. Philpot; hardback; 208 pages; price £13 plus £2.20 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the bookroom at Harpenden, or from agents.

To lovers of J.C. Philpot, anything that he wrote or preached is precious. This is the very reason these "expositions" came to be in print – for after his lamented death, those who had notes of his comments when reading the Scriptures had them published, for which the godly were extremely pleased.

As he read the chapter in public worship, Philpot commented here and there, with a loving desire to be a help to his congregation. So these are not truly *expositions* of the chapter; some things are not mentioned at all. They are gracious comments here and there. We feel this ought to be explained. Those expecting the masterly, orderly, scholarly opening up and applying of Scripture (that we are used to in J.C. Philpot) could well be disappointed. On the other hand, there are many beautiful, sacred and profitable things.

Some things we cannot understand. On Hebrews 2. 9, 10, there are six pages. Surely he read more than two verses. Did he read the whole chapter, and just pause on something that particularly attracted him?

One thing in the book we found especially beautiful – the inclusion of one of Mr. Philpot's pulpit prayers. This was truly gracious. We had never seen one of his prayers before.

The book is exceedingly well-produced, and the Publishers describe it as "a rich treasury of the gospel for hungry souls."

Ernest Kevan, by Paul Brown; paperback; 294 pages; price £8; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is an exceedingly well-written book by one who highly esteemed and admired Ernest Kevan. We enjoyed reading it, though some of the small details of college life at the Bible College where he was principal will not interest most.

We remember E.F. Kevan (1903-1965) well. He was a Strict Baptist pastor (Metropolitan Association – *Gospel Herald/Earthen Vessel*), who little by little laid aside his Strict Baptist principles as he became first principal of the newly-founded London Bible College.

A humble yet remarkable man, he was never renowned in his day as a champion of the doctrines of free and sovereign grace. He applied to be an accredited minister with the Baptist Union, and changed the good old Strict Baptist hymnbook for *The Baptist Hymnal*. His emphasis was more on evangelical religion – though much superior to much of what passes for "evangelical religion" today. But the sub-title, "Leader in Twentieth Century British Evangelicalism" (emphasised by the Publisher's note)? We never understood that Dr. Kevan was well-known then, or even today.

A Memento of John Kemp, edited by Matthew J. Hyde; paperback; 182 pages; price £6.50 plus £1 postage; obtainable from the editor, 5 Hawthorn, Appledore, Ashford, Kent, TN26 2AH.

In former years our chapels were blessed with some outstandingly godly ministers. Not least among them was John Kemp (1850-1932) who for over fifty years was pastor at Biddenden, Kent. Whenever he is mentioned it is with affection and esteem. Never was there such an occasion locally as when, on his 50th anniversary, he spoke to over a thousand hearers.

This little book contains notes, taken in longhand by his wife, of eleven of his sermons. These have never been published before. They are profitable, gracious and experimental – and because of their shortness eminently suitable for public reading.

There are also a few letters and most interesting photographs and a brief biography.

We are sure the book will be welcomed.

The Shulamite, by James E. North; small paperback; 56 pages; published by the author and obtainable from him at 10 Copinger Close, Totton, Hants., SO40 8WN. There is no specific charge but obviously there are production and postage costs.

We are pleased to bring before our readers this little book, which deals with the importance of the subject of backsliding. Really it is an exposition of the

Song of Solomon, chapter 5, and has seven short sections: Love Declared; Love Denied; Love Demonstrated; Love Departed; Love Disgraced; Love Desolate; Love Described.

Of course, there are various interpretations of the details in the Song, and we do not agree with the author in each case (e.g. who the watchmen are, and the daughters of Jerusalem), but the doctrine is very clear, and Mr. North speaks well of Christ. The work is interspersed with quotations from Gadsby's.

We found this a profitable book.

OBITUARY

Eileen Cicely Saunders, a beloved member at Zoar Chapel, Dicker for 55 years, and widow of Mr. Roy Saunders, a minister of the gospel, passed peacefully away on March 29th, 2012, aged 92.

Much of the following has been taken from her own writings. She was born of godly parents, and was brought up to attend Ebenezer Chapel, Broad Oak, Heathfield. When she was two-and-a-half years old she was severely ill; her father had to take her to Brighton Children's Hospital in the middle of the night. Her father feared that she was going to die, but the dear Lord broke in with these words, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thine husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well." He knew that she would live. She was brought up to learn the Psalms, the Scriptures and hymns, and some of these were applied to her heart. When she was about eleven, her Grandfather lay dying, and he quoted the words in Isaiah 43. 1, 2: "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and ... when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." This she never forgot; it was everything she needed for her own soul.

In 1941, Mr. and Mrs. Saunders were married by Mr. Frank Gosden at Broad Oak Chapel. Her husband was away in the second world war for six-and-a-half years; this was a very trying time for her. On one occasion being alone with her baby daughter, the German bombers started to roar across the Pevensy Marshes. Being very frightened, she opened the *Daily Light* on June 24th. It was so wonderful and lovely to her as she read it; the feeling of peace that came, she never forgot. The following words were some of what she read: "My times are in Thy hand"; "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness"; and, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

She speaks of the different trials that she went through with her children being ill and how the dear Lord wonderfully heard and answered prayer and sanctified these things to her, so she could praise His holy name.

In 1956, the burden of baptism was laid upon her, and she feared to speak of it, so she pleaded with the Lord that when Mr. Caleb Sawyer came to preach he would speak of it in the sermon. The Lord heard and answered her prayers as Mr. Sawyer entered into her exercises, so she felt that she could venture to speak to her pastor, Mr. Sperling-Tyler, and she and her husband were baptized by him

on December 9th, 1956. It was a great time of blessing to our friend and to her husband, the Lord confirming the step as she read from the *Harvested Sheaves*: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." She said it was a day never to be forgotten. They both felt one with the flock at the Dicker, and could walk with them in the things of God and love the dear Saviour above all earthly joys.

In 1982, She was rushed into Eastbourne Hospital on Boxing Day. She had to have her right kidney removed, and before the operation the assistant surgeon told her exactly what they were going to do. She said that it was such a shock; she felt to sink fathoms. She felt, "I had no religion at all. I could not find anything. It was black as midnight." The next morning she opened her Bible on these words: "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?" She said, "No, Lord, there is nothing too hard for Thee." All her fears had gone. Then she opened her hymnbook and looked at hymn 909. The text over that lovely hymn is, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." It was all so beautiful. The operation was a success, and the analysis of the tissues showed no malignancy. She said, "I praised the dear Lord and thanked Him, whom my soul loveth." After two weeks she returned home and the first thing that she did was to praise the Lord by playing the organ and singing the doxology. She loved music and played the chapel organ for a time, and taught in the Sunday School for a number of years; also she wrote several poems, both of spiritual and natural things. [One appears, following this obituary.]

Her dear husband passed away in January 2000 and she missed him greatly, since then living alone and yet not alone for the dear Lord has been with her and graciously helped her.

She speaks of her love to her present pastor and how she loved him for the truth's sake, and how his ministry had been meat and drink to her soul. His ministry had so often touched her heart, and many times she marvelled at the things that her dear pastor had mentioned, words that she had read or things that she had come into, which he knew nothing about.

She speaks of knowing and feeling to be a guilty sinner, but she believed the dear Lord had washed her guilt away. She goes on by saying, "A few years ago, whilst walking in the Botanical Gardens in Cambridge, I came to a lovely fountain. These wonderful words took hold of my heart:

'To the dear fountain of Thy blood,
Incarnate God, I fly;
Here let me wash my spotted soul
From crimes of deepest dye.'"

She said, "I shall never forget it. I love my Saviour so much. He is my All and in All, and I cannot do without Him."

She also said, "My dear pastor's ministry has been so good to my poor soul, and he once mentioned about Mary Magdalene thinking Jesus to be the gardener, and when He said to her, 'Mary,' it was so beautiful. I say this reverently, but I wished I was her."

On March 19th before she passed away in the Bethesda Home at Hove, she said, "I keep asking the dear Lord to take me home to be with Him; I am finished with everything here."

Our dear friend was blessed with a real religion. She was a real praying soul and a gracious hearer in the house of God. She loved to sing the praises of her dear Redeemer who had done great things for her. We believe she is now joining in the everlasting song, and crowning Him Lord of all. "Then in a nobler, sweeter song, I'll sing thy power to save."

Her funeral was taken by her pastor on April 30th, 2012, at Zoar Chapel, Dicker, in the presence of a large congregation, followed by interment in the chapel graveyard. She chose the following hymns from Gadsby's hymnbook for the occasion: 267, 160 and 667.

R.D.G.F.

BELOVED JESUS

Beloved Jesus, crowned with light
Above the clear blue sky,
O look on us with tenderness,
And let us feel Thee nigh.

Beloved Jesus, crowned with might
On Thy eternal throne,
Bow down Thine ear to us, O Lord,
And let Thy might be known.

Beloved Jesus, crowned by right,
Wash us in Thy pure blood;
Give us acceptance in Thy sight,
O take us through the flood.

Beloved Jesus, crowned with joy,
Do hear our humble prayer;
Answers of peace to us send down,
For Thou art ever there.

Beloved Jesus, crowned with love,
In heaven, Thy wondrous home,
O take us to that dear abode
When all our conflict's done.

Beloved Jesus, then shall we
Crown Thee our Lord of all,
And ever sing Thee songs of praise,
And see Thee as our All.

Eileen Saunders (d. 2012)

Written a few years before her death.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
DECEMBER 2012

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

THE KING'S VISIT

What wonderful occasions were these visits of the shepherds and the wise men! Even secular painters in the Middle Ages were fascinated by these visits, "The Visit of the Shepherds," "The Visit of the Kings" – as divinely led they went to Bethlehem to "worship Christ the new-born King." But the vital thing is the visit of the King of kings Himself!

"He left His radiant throne on high,
Left the bright realms of bliss,
And came to earth to bleed and die.
Was ever love like this?"

The simple meaning of "a visit" is to go somewhere *with a purpose*, and then leave. Old Zacharias clearly tells us what the purpose of the Lord's visit was: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people" (speaking in the prophetic manner as if the thing was already accomplished). The great work of redemption was the purpose of the Saviour's coming, and when it was accomplished He returned to glory. "This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.... For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Our mercy is (as we sing): "Thou visitest sinners still," and the cry of a living soul is: "I wait a visit, Lord, from Thee." Zacharias takes up the point again in his wonderful hymn of thanksgiving (popularly known as the *Benedictus*): "The Dayspring (or Sunrising) from on high hath visited us" – He who is the Light of the world. And this is what we surely need: "To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

William Gadsby beautifully describes one of these visits. He himself was visiting a poor, old, afflicted, godly woman. It was only a dark cellar where she lived, and when he entered he was appalled by the filth and the dreadful smell – even old bones lying about. (Her only carer was a lazy, dirty daughter.) Gadsby's immediate thought was, "Let me get out of here as soon as possible," but he heard a feeble voice calling, "Come in, Mr. Gadsby, come in. The Lord Jesus visits me in this room, and His visits are most sweet!" No wonder Gadsby included in his hymnbook:

"Thy shining grace can cheer
The dungeon where I dwell."

Years ago a godly old man kindly told his pastor he did not like the way he quoted the hymn: "More frequent let Thy visits be, *or* let them longer last." "But that is how it is in the hymnbook," the pastor replied. "Yes, I know," said the old man. "But I don't like this 'or.' It should be, 'More frequent let Thy visits be, AND let them longer last.'"

We are sure (in the spirit of it) the cry of every sinner saved by grace is: "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation."

"Visit, then, this soul of mine;
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
Fill me, Radiancy divine!
Scatter all my unbelief;
More and more Thyself display,
Shining to the perfect day."

May our readers be favoured with these heavenly visits, now and through the New Year.

WE ARE DEBTORS

*Sermon preached by J.S. Green at Gower Street Memorial Chapel,
London, on December 25th, 1962*

Text: "We are debtors" (Rom. 8. 12).

If the Holy Ghost should enable us graciously to consider what we have read together in that second chapter of Luke and in those precious hymns we have been singing, we should have no hesitation in coming to this blessed conclusion that, "We are debtors." If we could truly enter into that word in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor," we would inwardly feel what a sacred privilege, what a blessing, to be thus a debtor unto God.

We would, as helped, like to speak a little first how we are indebted to God the Father. This was the theme of all the apostles in their ministry, and in those blessed epistles that have been handed down to us by the Holy Spirit. O how these godly men did praise and bless God the Father for His unspeakable gift! They realised that it was the greatest blessing that could be conferred upon them, to feel in their hearts something of God's wonderful love in the gift of His dear Son. We sometimes sing,

"This precious truth His Word declares,
And all His mercies prove;
Jesus, the Gift of gifts appears,
To show that God is love!"

My dear friends, nowhere do we see the love of God the Father shine like we do in the wonderful gift of His dear Son. It is amazing when we come to consider it, that God should ever love poor sinners to such an extent as we read in this chapter. "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?"

Now we are, then, debtors; debtors to that great God; debtors to His infinite love in that, if He has given to us precious faith, savingly to apprehend His dear Son, He will with Him freely give us all things. Now these people are indeed great debtors. They will never be able to pay that great debt they owe. They will learn far more of this debt after they get safe to heaven, and then they will praise that great God for His goodness and mercy towards them in not sparing His own Son, that Son who always pleased Him, who did those things which were a pleasure unto the Father. Yet as we read in the Scriptures, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Do you feel this morning, my friends, that you are a debtor to God in this way? O have you by His wonderful grace been favoured to taste a little of His wondrous love which has softened your hard heart, and has called forth from you a return of love to God Himself?

This is one of the best blessings we can have this side of heaven. And the good hymnwriter, he did speak for himself and his friends when he penned this verse:

"O may we all, while here below,
This best of blessings prove;
Till warmer hearts in brighter worlds,
Shall shout that God is love!"

Now we are indebted to that great God for all the earthly comforts we have. Every one of us here this morning are debtors to God. The whole world are debtors to Him, but they do not realise it. But I believe, if God's wonderful love ever flows into our hearts, we shall sometimes look upon our temporal comforts and feel, I owe all these to that great God, to His love and to His mercy. And thus it will humble us much before Him. And if He sanctify our temporal things to us, we shall feel that in every way we are debtors to God.

We poor, sinful debtors are thus indebted to Him. What a wonderful thing to know it! Good Dr. Watts in that lovely hymn, says,

"To Thee we owe our wealth, and friends,
And health, and safe abode;
Thanks to Thy name for meaner things,
But they are not my God."

O what a blessed frame of mind to be in when we can count our blessings in some little measure, and feel the truth of these three words: "We are debtors." And God does not expect us to pay that debt. But O that we might be enabled rightly to show our love and our appreciation for all His goodness and mercy to us, in seeking to trust Him and to do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Secondly, these three words will apply to each one favoured to know and to love the Lord Jesus Christ. O what a great debt we owe to Him, when we are enabled to consider that He did undertake the cause, not of angels, but of sinners! He passed by the nature of angels, and when He was born of Mary, He had that real, true flesh like unto that of His people, yet without any sin. Now if the Holy Ghost should lead us a little into this mystery, the wondrous birth of the Lord Jesus, and give us a taste of His exceeding great and wonderful love, we should go home in full agreement with the apostle, saying, "We are debtors."

I owe all my salvation to the Lord Jesus Christ. I owe that hope I have for heaven to Him. If I have enjoyed any peace in my unworthy heart, that peace has come from Him; that peace has flowed to me through His most precious blood. And thus, as that sinner lays hold by faith upon Christ, enters a little into His love, and feels the true, blessed and yet solemn reason for His having come to dwell below, clothed in a body like our own, O how that sinner will praise His name, will bless Him, will glorify Him, will do as Mary did – will ponder these things in their hearts. And the more you are enabled to do as Mary did, the more you will feel the truth of this text. You will put it personally and say, O what a debtor I am to the Lord of life and glory, to the incarnate Son of God. And this is very precious teaching; this is heavenly teaching, that secretly makes that sinner feel he owes the whole of his salvation unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus we should have no blessed gospel to preach; there would be no hope for us beyond this present world apart from those truths we were reading in our chapter this morning. Everything depends upon this. And thus as God's people journey on, you hear them confess they feel to grow greater sinners, more and more unworthy of the notice of the Lord Jesus, but they do enter more fully, more deeply, more sweetly, into this truth: "We are debtors."

Thus free grace becomes a pleasing and sacred theme to all God's dear people – to have in experience the fulfilment of some gracious promise, so that a time of heavenly love really comes in one's experience, which will give them some entrance into the joy and pleasure and peace that was Simeon's. God gave him that promise that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, and he could not die before that promise was fulfilled. And what a debtor he felt he was to that promise-making, promise-keeping, promise-performing God, when he

took his Saviour as that little Babe in his arms. He had found his All. He wanted nothing more. He was completely satisfied, apart from heaven. Nothing more to pray for here on earth, and that knowledge of Christ given to him, that view of Him by faith, completely satisfied him, and he could say, "Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."

Now some professors would not be truthful were they to use our little text, and say, "We are debtors," to say that they are indebted to the Lord for all their religion. No. They have done so much themselves. They have procured so much by their own works. But that will not stand at last. Only this will stand, my dear friends, which makes you and I feel we are debtors to the Lord.

Then, thirdly, we are debtors to the Holy Ghost. I often feel, when I am in my right mind spiritually, what a debtor I am to the Holy Spirit. And if He omits to speak of what He Himself does, yet that realisation of our utter helplessness, our ignorance, will make us appreciate what He has done for us, and we shall feel as we grow in grace our need of the divine teaching of the Holy Spirit more and more.

The birth of Christ is only a narrative to those who do not possess the Holy Ghost. The sacred, saving truth of His birth which makes His people feelingly such great debtors, they who lack the Holy Spirit know nothing of. They may have a good exterior to their religion. Their so-called good works may seem to exceed the good works of God's dear people. But they do not, they will not, they cannot put the crown upon Jesus' head. But if this blessed Spirit dwells in us, if He is graciously teaching us and makes our need of the Lord Jesus to increase, and as that need is met in the Person, in the work, in the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall sweetly feel that He does become more and more precious to us. And the Lord's little ones who have not journeyed far in the spiritual pathway will feel how very wonderful it would be to have a right knowledge of Jesus, to have some little hope in a precious Jesus. To feel all this comes to us through the condescending grace and unctuous teaching of the Holy Ghost will cause us to confess, "We are debtors."

Now we only know a little of the debt we owe. One has put it very sweetly, speaking of the time when he should get safe to heaven:

"Then, Lord, shall I fully know,
Not till then, how much I owe."

Now I believe this, that through the condescending grace of the Holy Spirit, through His blessed teaching, God's people grow feelingly greater sinners. And as they feelingly grow greater sinners, they have an increased knowledge of what the Lord Jesus has saved them from. They do anticipate heaven in a sober and right way, where they will be enabled to praise God, that three-one God, for His goodness towards them.

“Free grace to every heaven-born soul
Will be their constant theme;
Long as eternal ages roll,
They’ll still adore the Lamb.”

Now if we did not know a little of our indebtedness to God, to the blessed Trinity, we should never have anything to thank God for, nothing to praise Him for. But as the Lord’s people are taught these things more deeply and more clearly, they have to confess, “We are debtors.” Said Toplady:

“A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with Thy righteousness on,
My person and offerings to bring.”

This was the religion the apostle had. He renounced everything else. He trusted wholly and solely to the love of God, the electing love of the Father, to the wonderful grace, mercy and suffering love of God the Son, and to His wonderful resurrection. And he felt indebted to God the Holy Ghost for the knowledge of these things.

The Lord help us to meditate, to ponder over these three words, and if we feel we are debtors, I am sure we shall feel this, that if we get safe to heaven,

“Amongst the rest, this note shall swell,
My Jesus has done all things well.”

Amen.

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

By Ambrose Serle (1742-1812)

Who shall unfold this mystery, or unfathom this love of my God? The Ancient of days became a Child of days, and the Lord of all would be the Servant of all that He might be a Redeemer, a Brother, a Friend of poor, unworthy mortals, of vile apostates and rebels, such as I am, and such as, without Him, I and all others for ever must have been.

He took our nature without sin, that He might bear our sin. If sin had been in that which He took for Himself, it would not have been possible that one who was equally sinful should have taken off sinfulness from others. Thus He, who was not and could not be a sinner by nature, did by imputation take the greatness of sin upon Himself. He bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and Jehovah laid upon Him the iniquities of us all, when He once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust. This dear Immanuel was a Lamb without spot, and therefore meet

to be slain for atonement; and a Scapegoat, or Strong-One, going off, laden with iniquities and so able to bear them away into everlasting forgetfulness.

He was very God and very Man in one Christ. As Christ He is Immanuel, or God with us. What His name implies, that He truly is. He is God with us, able to save and to succour, able to bless and to enliven, in all our pilgrimage from earth to heaven. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

And is this Thy promise, O Thou meek and lowly Jesus! and shall I be still slow of heart to believe it? Shall I always be hanging my head like a bulrush, and shall my eyes be still gushing out their faithless tears, when Thou hast promised not only the best of creatures [providential blessings?] in earth and heaven, but Thine own blessed Self to be with me, who art Lord of all? O my dear Redeemer, be so with me by Thy gracious power that I may be deeply sensible of Thy continual presence. Manifest Thyself to me as Thou dost not unto the world, for I am Thine, and I desire to give up myself and all I am and have to Thy blessed will for ever. Be indeed, according to Thy name, my Immanuel, my God with me and in me of a truth, that I may walk with Thee as one agreed, and draw from Thee all those supplies of grace, life and peace, without which I can neither be happy nor alive to Thy glory. O hear and answer, for mine eyes and my heart are upon Thee.

THE SAVIOUR'S HUMILITY

By William Dyer (c.1636-1696)

Our Saviour's humility descended very low.

First, He was born of a poor maid, of no account or reputation. Was there never a great lady or gentlewoman in Jerusalem for this great Prince of heaven and earth to be born of, but that He must be born of a poor, despised virgin? Yes, certainly, there were gentlewomen in store in Jerusalem, but our Lord Jesus Christ regarded not the rich more than the poor.

Secondly, He was revealed to poor shepherds, not to emperors and kings, not to rulers and great men, not to doctors and learned men, not to Caesar at Rome. I say, the angels did not go and declare these joyful tidings and good news to Caesar at Rome, but to poor shepherds in the fields (Luke 2. 8).

Thirdly, He was born in a stable (Luke 2. 12). Not in a fair house or palace, not in a parlour or chamber; no, but in a stable where horses and beasts are fed.

Fourthly, He was wrapped up in clouts [swaddling bands], and laid in a manger; they were no clouts of fine linen or silks, no clothes of silver or gold, nor precious robes, but poor and mean like to beggars' rags. Now, beloved, put all this together, and tell me what is more wonderful than this? O humility, humility, how great are thy riches that are thus commended to us! Thou pleasest men, delightest angels, and confoundest devils, and bringest the Creator to a manger. O sweet Jesus, Thou conquerest death by dying!

The next wonder in Christ's humiliation is this: He became poor. That He that was so rich became so poor; that He that was Lord of all had nothing at all; He that made heaven and earth had no habitation of His own; He that gives crowns of victory of life, of glory to others, had no crowns Himself here, but a crown of thorns. The foxes and the fowls had more than Jesus Christ. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Matt. 8. 20). The foxes had holes to lay their heads in, but Christ hath not a place to lay His head on. As He was born in another man's house, so He was buried in another man's tomb.

"Ye know," saith the apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet ... He became poor" (2 Cor. 8. 9). "Yet He became poor." Ay, poor indeed, and so poor that He had not a penny. You will say that a man is very poor that hath not a penny; truly such an one was Christ. He had not a penny to pay tribute till He got it out of a fish (Matt. 17. 27). And when He was to ride in pomp to Jerusalem, He had no coach, no chariot, no horse or beast of His own. He was fain to ride upon another man's ass (Matt. 21. 2).

O ye blessed saints, admire and wonder at this. Is not He the brightness of God, the paradise of angels, the beauty of heaven, the Redeemer of man, the destroyer of death, the King of saints! And that He should become so poor for us! O this is wonderful to angels and men.

Sinner, remember this – *none ever yet obtained an interest in Christ but unworthy creatures*. Was Paul worthy before he obtained an interest in Christ? And what worthiness was in Zacchaeus when Christ called him down from the sycamore tree, and told him that this day salvation was come to his house? Though *you* are unworthy, yet *Christ* is worthy. Though you have no merit, yet God has mercy. Though there is no salvation for you by the *law*, yet there is "*plenteous redemption*" in the gospel.

Thomas Brooks

COMFORT AND ASSURANCE
From “Hill’s Deep Things of God”
By Sir Richard Hill (1732-1808)

It is not uncommon to hear professors say, that “they have done with looking to frames and feelings, and what they depend on is the unchangeable promise of God.” This *may* be the language of sound, tried faith in the furnace, but I believe it is oftener the language of a spiritual decline, or of a loose, careless walk. Whoever wishes to live near to God, and to have communion and fellowship with Him, will put the highest value upon the sensible comforts of His Spirit.

We may set up distinctions about walking by faith and walking by sight, and there may be times and cases in which this distinction is to be attended to, but I can see no reason why the man who is strong in faith should not also be “filled with, joy and peace in believing.”

That is an unscriptural notion which would separate salvation from its effects and privileges. Do I undervalue the blood of Jesus by seeking to “abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost”? Do I the less trust in the Saviour’s righteousness, because the Spirit Itself beareth witness with my spirit that I am a child of God, enabling me to cry, Abba, Father? Do I give the less credit to the written word, because I seek to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”? To “have access with boldness and confidence” is a fruit of divine faith. To be “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” is also the consequence of believing. And if the love of God be shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, it is because I am “justified by faith, and have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I say, therefore, that there is much mischief done by telling God’s people that they are to sit down contented without assurance and without comfort. These are blessings which accompany salvation, though not salvation itself. These are the privileges of all true believers, though not the lot of all, especially at all seasons. Comfort and assurance must be sought in the use of the appointed means. They are incompatible with a careless, prayerless walk, or with the indulgence of any one known sin, however small it may be thought. Whoever would enjoy the consolations of the Spirit must be afraid to grieve that blessed Guest or to quench His holy motions. The Christian who most rejoiceth in the Lord will be he who walks most humbly and most closely with his God.

Whoever would examine his comforts to see from what source they are derived would do well to pay attention to the following method of trial, for though hypocrites seldom suspect their comforts, the sincere soul will often be questioning the truth of them, and will be anxious to know from what fountain they flow.

First: If comforts proceed from Satan transformed into an angel of light, they lead to sin and presumption; if from the Lord, they are always accompanied with a hatred of sin (especially the sin which does most easily beset the soul), and with a longing desire to obtain victory over it.

Secondly: The comforts which proceed from God are always accompanied with a spirit of prayer and of praise. A praying, thankful frame of mind is the very temper which a soul enjoying the sensible presence of its Saviour naturally (for the new nature has its actings, as well as the old) falls into. Whereas false comfort begets negligence in drawing near to God.

Thirdly: Where comforts really proceed from the Holy Ghost, they make Christ more and more precious in all His offices, and cause self to be abased and to sink into nothing, whereas false comfort always puffeth up, and makes the soul think itself something when it is nothing.

THOUGHTS CONCERNING ILLNESS

To Mr. William Tiptaft

My dear Tiptaft,

Mrs. Keal has forwarded to me this morning a letter received from you, in which you are so kind as to offer to come and help me for two Lord's days. It would very much gratify both myself and the friends if you could do so.

I am thankful to say that through rich mercy I am much better than when I last wrote, the congestion being very much removed, and what I now chiefly feel is great weakness and general debility from being brought down so low and kept on such scanty diet. None but those who have been in a similar furnace know how trying to the mind illness is, and one of its chiefest trials is perhaps least observed, or at least, less spoken of than other attendant circumstances, which is the prostration of mind which it produces.

Many people think that illness is the best time for religion, and for being prayerful and spiritually-minded, but this is a great mistake. When the illness is severe, it takes such possession of the whole mind, and at the same time so enfeebles it, that it has not power to act as in health. I have often found that when the main force of the illness is over and I am beginning to recover, that that is a good time, if the Lord is pleased to draw the soul upward to Himself, to read, pray and meditate. But when illness is severe, the soul needs divine support, patience, submission, resignation, and to lie passive in the Lord's hands, believing He doeth all things well. It is then we need special support, so that the mind may not be distracted, but rest upon the Lord's goodness and mercy, and what we hope has been felt in times past. I remember what poor Thomas

Copeland once said to me in his illness. "People," he said, "think that illness is a good time to seek God; but they will find when they are very ill that the illness itself occupies all their thoughts and feelings." At the same time there are times and seasons in illness when the weight of bodily affliction seems partially removed, and then if the Lord be pleased to work by His Spirit and grace, there is a drawing up of the soul unto Himself.

Certainly one thing trials and afflictions produce if they are in any measure sanctified; they show us the impossibility of being saved but by an act of free, distinguishing, sovereign grace; they make us cast ourselves wholly upon the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, and to rest satisfied with nothing short of its application. Sin also is seen to be exceedingly sinful, and the recollection of past sins grieves the conscience.

Nothing has tried me more than the recollection of my sins and backslidings since I made a profession. These have been much more grievous in my eyes than any sins which I committed in the days of darkness and death. But I believe it is good for us to see and feel the weight and guilt of our sins and backslidings so as to break to pieces our self-righteousness. A man does not know his own temptations so as to say, "I am not tempted with this or that propensity." I may be wrong, therefore, when I say that I am not much troubled with self-righteousness, for I see and feel in myself nothing but sin, and what is more trying still, my carnal mind is just as sinful, polluted and corrupt as ever it was in my life.

I do see the deep necessity for every child of God to walk much in godly fear. Sin and Satan are never off their watch if we are. Sin is like a spring which can only be kept from expanding to its full length by continual pressure. Take away or relax the pressure, it expands in a moment to its full length. The fear of God in the heart is the pressure upon the spring, and if that relax or let go, sin extends itself in a moment, and who can tell how far it will go? As Francis Spira said, "Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof?" It is much easier to check sin in its first movement than when it has gained strength. If the egg be not crushed, it will break out into a viper. What should we do without free grace, the atoning blood of the Lamb, and the work of the Holy Spirit to make the gospel precious to the soul?

I hope I have learnt some of these lessons in my affliction. But how soon is all forgotten? Religion is a daily, one might say an hourly, work, and only He who began can keep alive His work upon the heart.

As they have had no preaching at Oakham since December 18th, they will be much pleased to see you.

Yours very affectionately,

J.C.P.

Stamford, January 25th, 1860

LETTER BY WILLIAM HADDOW

See Review, page 383

My dear Friend,

You will be glad to know that the Lord lifted me over another mountain yesterday afternoon. I believe He stood by me and enabled me to speak a little from Revelation 7. 13, 14. My heart coveted another token that I should be amongst those who would stand before Him in white, having come out of great tribulation.

My mind is running much today on these things, and I feel the time is wasted unless I am occupied with eternal things. At times I feel I do not want to be buried in earthly concerns; yet we have to do with them. This morning while walking to the station my mind was troubled about the prospect before us. [The war had just been declared against Germany.] While I was musing over it, that word came with a little authority: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." A prayer went out of my heart: "Lord, help me to keep still and watch Thy hand." I felt a hope that the Lord spoke the word to me. Words often come into the mind, but this was different. I cannot explain just how it came, but you know what I mean, do you not? Sometimes we take hold of a word, but this word dropped in my heart and took hold of me. I hope it was a token for good.

What a mercy if God has a special care over us, body and soul! I thought this morning that, amid all the depressing news from the different centres of war, the word is still true: "The Lord sitteth upon the flood; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever." All His purposes will be fulfilled; none is exempt from them. It is better we should go mourning all our days and have our portion in the Lord, than to have no cross or trial and prove to be a castaway.

But O if we are His, what a God we have! Are we black and defiled? The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, can cleanse us from all sin and make us white. Are our hearts cold, dark and desolate? There is a river which flows from the throne of God which gives life and health and peace. And God hath said, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Are we in trouble or burdened? He says, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is enough that My favour is toward you; it is enough that I think upon you with lovingkindness; this shall sustain you. Are we in need? He says, "The gold and the silver are Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." Are our trials such as seem never to bring us any good? He says, "All things shall work together for good." Are we seekers? He says, "Your heart shall live that seek God."

My heart would love to say in full assurance of faith, "This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death." Sometimes I am glad I have got to die. There is an end, and beyond it an

expectation. At times I think it will not be long. [He died a month later, aged 37.]

“Eternity, tremendous sound!
To guilty souls a dreadful wound.
But O if Christ and heaven are mine,
How sweet the accents, how divine!”

My hope, my treasure, my desire, is far from this mad, striving world. Yet at times I wonder: can it be that a poor, sin-ruined creature as I am, can really be an heir of heaven? I do want it made clear. There is a deep fear lest I should come short. I want Christ in my heart, revealed by the Spirit, as my own personal Redeemer. I *hope*, but I want to *know*. If the Lord answers my poor breathings on your behalf, you will often sing in the secret of your heart of the preciousness of Christ.

Your affectionate pastor,

W. Haddow

September 18th, 1939

ALL POWER GIVEN TO CHRIST

(Matthew 28. 18)

By Ralph Erskine

What matter of comfort does this doctrine afford to the friends and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, seeing He hath all power in heaven and earth given unto Him! For, as they shall be kept by His power, through faith to salvation, so their enemies may fight with fury against them, but they shall never be able to prevail; for their Lord and Captain is said to ride upon a white horse, with a bow in His hand and a crown upon His head, and to go forth conquering and to conquer (Rev. 6. 2).

We read of a cup of consolation (Jer. 16. 7), and this doctrine holds it to the mouth of all the friends and followers of Christ. What comfort is here to the broken-hearted sinner, that is under the pangs of the new-birth, that the power of the Spirit rests upon Christ for healing of such? “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted” (Luke 4. 18). Yea, what comfort is here to these that complain they are hard-hearted? For He hath all power to take away the heart of stone and to give the heart of flesh. But here I especially speak of these that are in a state of friendship with this glorious and powerful Lord. Surely such may encourage themselves in the Lord their God.

Here is encouragement against the want and weakness of grace, that He having all power is able to make all grace abound (2 Cor. 9. 8), and

to make the feeble as David, and David as the angel of the Lord (Zech. 12. 8). Here is encouragement against apostacy and fear of falling away totally, in that He who hath all power hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," and is able to make us stand (Heb. 13. 5).

Here is encouragement against unbelief and doubting of the promise of God. For, having all power, we may be fully persuaded that He that hath promised is able to perform (Rom. 4. 21). To doubt of His promise is to doubt of His power; to discredit His promise is to deny that He hath all power in heaven and earth.

Here is encouragement against enemies without and within, the devil, the world and the flesh. Though thou art weak and hast no power against them, yet He having all power, you may receive the comfort that Hezekiah gives to his subjects: "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (2 Chron. 32. 7, 8). So here, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4. 4). Wicked men and devils, their will is larger than their power; their will is to do many things that they cannot do; but it is not so with Christ. His power is as large as His will, if not vastly larger in certain respects, for though He will not do all that He can, yet He can do all that He will; for all power in heaven and earth is given unto Him. You see, believer, the might of your enemies, but see also that your Redeemer is the mighty God as well as the everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace; and because He is the God of peace, He will bruise Satan under your feet, and destroy your enemies that disturb your peace.

Here is encouragement against the dangers and difficulties, the crosses and losses, reproaches and trials you may meet with in following the Lord Jesus. He, having all power, can easily make up what you seem to lose in His service. Hence Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." It is said, "He had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Therefore, whatever loss you sustain in the Lord's service, we may say to you, as the man of God said to Amaziah, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this" (2 Chron. 25. 9). Is thy cleaving to His way seemingly prejudicial to thy credit, wealth or gain? Yet fear not, for He whose name you profess hath all power in heaven and in earth.

Here is encouragement against the seeming hardness and difficulty of the duty or work the Lord may call you to, for He having all power, is there anything too hard for Him, who at the same time promises that His grace shall be sufficient for thee, and His strength perfected in thy weakness, and to work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure? Therefore, says Paul, I am able to do all things through Christ

strengthening me. How can I deny myself, take up my cross, and follow the Lord? Why, though we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, yet our sufficiency is of God.

Here is encouragement to pray without ceasing. If you prayed to one that had no power to give what you ask, you might have little courage, comfort or confidence in prayer. But He, having all power, "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3. 20). The conclusion of what we call *The Lord's Prayer* teaches us to pray in the faith of His power, for after we have prayed for these things contained there, the conclusion is, "For Thine is the kingdom and the power." Hereupon we ground our assurance to be heard, that He who hath the kingdom hath also all power in heaven and earth.

Here is encouragement against all the confusions and commotions in the church of Christ upon earth, when the floods lift up their waves; and when floods of division and defection, floods of profanity and impiety, and floods of error and heresy are like to overflow the church of Christ, yet He who hath all power in heaven and earth, as Head of His church and King of Zion, hath the command of the floods, and is mightier than the noise of many waters. Therefore, "Upon all the glory shall be a defence"; "the gates of hell shall not prevail." It is not in the power of all the devils in hell and wicked men on earth to thrust our Lord out of the earth, for He hath all power in heaven and earth; and when He exerts His power, a covenant-reformation will revive, in spite of earth and hell. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory."

Here is encouragement against powerful lusts, powerful corruptions, powerful temptations, that you may be harassed with. He that hath all power hath said, "I will subdue your iniquities," and that "sin shall not have dominion." He it is who once suffered, being tempted, that He might be able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. 2. 18), where you see His ability, as Mediator, to succour the tempted, is founded on His once suffering, being tempted, which bespeaks power joined with pity and sympathy.

Here is the encouragement against the most desperate case. When soul matters are at the lowest pass with you, and when you are brought to the utmost distress, to the utmost confusion, to the utmost perplexity, and, as it were, to the belly of hell with Jonah, yet here is a present relief: all power in heaven and in earth is given unto Him, whereby He is able to save to the uttermost. His power reaches from the lowest hell to the highest heaven.

Here is encouragement against the fears of death. He that hath all power hath said, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy

destruction”; “for I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore ... and have the keys of hell and of death.” When death begins to stare you in the face, believer, you may say, “O death, where is thy sting?” Where is thy power to hurt or harm me? All power is taken from you, and all power is given to Christ; the power of the keys is in His hand, and though death may tumble my body into the grave and crumble my flesh and bones into dust, yet you have no power over a pile of my dust, nor shall one pickle [part] of it be detained in the earth any longer than He pleases, for He that hath all power in earth as well as in heaven will command the earth and the sea to give up their dead (Rev. 20. 13). He that is declared to be the Son of God with power by His own resurrection from the dead will raise the dead with the same power by which He made the world out of nothing, and raised Himself out of the grave. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4. 16). Therefore, O death, may the believer say, Let Sadducees and atheists doubt and debate the resurrection of the body as they will, “Not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God,” nor believing that all power in heaven and earth is given unto Christ; yet as for me, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another: though my reins be consumed within me” (Job 19. 25-27).

Finally, here is encouragement, O believer, against the fears of safe landing in heaven. When your body is to be laid in the dust for a while, fear not but your soul shall be led safely to heaven, for He hath all power in heaven, as well as in earth. He hath the keys of heaven and life as well as the keys of hell and death. He hath all the keys of His Father’s house, and many a million of chambers are there. “In My Father’s house are many mansions.... I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14. 2). Immediately after Christ had spoken the words of this text to His disciples, saying, “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth,” He ascended up into heaven in their view, as they were all gazing up after Him, and so He took them to witness that He had the keys of heaven in His hand, by which He opened the gate and sat down with His Father upon His throne; and by the same key of omnipotency will He open the way to the heavenly mansion for you, believer, that where He is, there you may be also. There is no power in heaven to oppose Him, and there is no power in heaven but what is given to Him. The King of Glory hath power to set the crown of glory upon your head. He hath such power in heaven that it will cost Him no more to bring you there but to say, “Father, I will,” and it shall be done. “Father, I will that they also whom

Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17. 24).

Take home then to you all the encouragement that this great truth imports. If you live in the faith of this power that is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, you may live in the joy of the Lord as your strength, and enjoy all these encouragements that His power carries in the bosom of it.

THE LORD IS OUR GOD

By Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

How comes God to be our God?

Through Jesus Christ. Christ is a middle Person in the Trinity. He is Emmanuel, “God with us.” He brings two different parties together: makes our nature lovely to God, and God’s nature lovely to us; by His death, causes friendship, yea, union, and brings us within the verge of the covenant, and thus God becomes our God.

What is implied by God being our God?

It is comprehensive of all good things. God is our strong tower, our fountain of living water, our salvation. More particularly, being our God implies the sweetest relations.

1. The relation of a father. “I ... will be a Father unto you” (2 Cor. 6. 18). A father is full of tender care for his child. Upon whom does he settle the inheritance but his child? God being our God will be a Father to us, a “Father of mercies” (2 Cor. 1. 3); “The everlasting Father” (Isa. 9. 6). If God be our God, we have a Father in heaven that never dies.

2. It imports the relation of a husband. “Thy Maker is thine husband” (Isa. 54. 5). If God be our Husband, He esteems us precious to Him, as the apple of His eye (Zech. 2. 8). He imparts His secrets to us (Psa. 25. 14). He bestows a kingdom upon us for our dowry (Luke 12. 32).

How may we know that by covenant union, God is our God?

1. By having His grace planted in us. Kings’ children are known by their costly jewels. It is not having common gifts which shows we belong to God; many have the gifts of God without God; but it is grace that gives us a true, genuine title to God. In particular, faith is *vinculum unionis*, the grace of union, by which we may spell out our interest in God. Faith does not, as the mariner, cast its anchor downwards, but upwards. It trusts in the mercy and blood of God, and trusting in God, engages Him to be our God. Other graces make us like God; faith makes us one with Him.

2. We may know God is our God by having the earnest of His Spirit in our hearts (2 Cor. 1. 22). God often gives the purse to the wicked, but the Spirit only to such as He intends to make His heirs. Have we had the *consecration* of the Spirit? If we have not had the sealing work of the Spirit, have we had the healing work? “Ye have an unction from the Holy One” (1 John 2. 20). The Spirit, where He is, stamps the impress of His own holiness upon the heart; He embroiders and bespangles the soul, and makes it all glorious within. Have we had the *attraction* of the Spirit? “Draw me, we will run after Thee” (Song 1. 4). Has the Spirit, by His magnetic virtue, drawn our hearts to God? Can we say, “O Thou whom my soul loveth”? (Song 1. 7). Is God our paradise of delight? our chief treasure! Are our hearts so chained to God that no other object can enchant us, or draw us away from Him? Have we had the *elevation* of the Spirit? Has He raised our hearts above the world? “The Spirit lifted me up” (Ezek. 3. 14). Has the Spirit made us seek the things above where Christ is? Though our flesh is on earth, is our heart in heaven? Though we live here, trade we above? Has the Spirit thus lifted us up? By this we may know that God is our God. Where God gives His Spirit for an earnest, there He gives Himself for a portion.

3. We may know God is our God if He has given us the hearts of children. Have we obedient hearts? (Psa. 27. 8). Do we subscribe to God’s commands when His commands cross our will? A true saint is like the flower of the sun, which opens and shuts with the sun: he opens to God and shuts to sin. If we have the hearts of children, God is our Father.

4. We may know God is ours and we have an interest in Him by standing up for His interest. We shall appear in His cause and vindicate His truth, wherein His glory is so much concerned. Athanasius was the bulwark of truth; he stood up for it, when most of the world were Arians [denying the true Godhead of Christ]. In former times the nobles of Polonia, when the gospel was read, laid their hands upon their swords, signifying that they were ready to defend the faith and hazard their lives for the gospel. There is no better sign of having an interest in God than standing up for His interest.

5. We may know God is ours and we have an interest in Him by His having an interest in us. “My Beloved is mine, and I am His” (Song 2. 16). When God says to the soul, “Thou art mine,” the soul answers, “Lord, I am Thine; all I have is at Thy service; my head shall be Thine to study for Thee; my tongue shall be Thine to praise Thee.” If God be our God by way of donation, we are His by way of dedication. We live to Him, and are more His than we are our own. Thus we may come to know that God is our God.

A BAPTIZING ADDRESS

Delivered by Seymour Farmer to a gathering of 2000 people on the river banks before baptizing in the river at Malmesbury on September 8th, 1907. Mr. Farmer was pastor there from 1907 till 1932. We feel this is an outstanding address.

In the few words which the time at my disposal will admit of my saying to you this morning, it is not my intention to enter into our reasons for adhering to the original mode of Christian baptism, nor to give any explanation of the significance of the ordinance beyond a passing sentence or two.

I am not here to force my views of baptism upon the consciences of any, but every man is entitled to the privilege of giving others the benefit of his own personal experience, and speaking from personal experience, I would say that I have seen such beauty, blessedness and glory in the ordinance of believer's baptism – I have seen such profound truth illustrated thereby – that if our blessed Lord had commanded believers to be baptized every week of their lives, most gladly would I avail myself of the privilege.

I feel that the claims of my heavenly Master demand of me that I should make use of this opportunity to endeavour to bring home to the consciences of you all some plain gospel truth in a few simple and faithful words.

It is recorded of that ancient Persian monarch Xerxes that upon one occasion when reviewing his vast army he suddenly burst into a flood of tears. What mighty impulse was it which thus in a moment affected that stern monarch? What overwhelming thought was it which thus unmanned that courageous warrior? It was the one overwhelming thought that fifty years hence every man in that vast army would be dead. As I look at this large assemblage, a similar thought forces itself upon my mind, that within a given number of years every one of us here this morning will have passed the portals of death, and O solemn thought, within that given number of years every one of us, *except those sheltered beneath atoning blood*, will not only be dead, but damned!

Ah some of you will say, that is strong language. Some of you will say that is not the phraseology of present day Christianity. I care not whether it be popular phraseology or no; I am not ashamed in any company, in any place, in any church or any chapel (I would do so in yonder parish church if the bishop of the diocese would sanction my preaching there). I say I am not ashamed to use the phraseology my adorable Lord Jesus used when on this earth He Himself spake to men, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ as He Himself preached it, for that gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that

believeth. It was that mouth, in which guile was never found, which said, "He that believeth not shall be damned." It was that mouth, in which guile was never found, which said, "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." It was that same mouth which said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all ... perish."

But that same blessed mouth, which ever spake truth, also said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men," that is, unto those who do truly repent; that same blessed mouth said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." O sinner, you will never know what rest in Christ is, or what the eternal rest of heaven is, unless you have first known what it is to labour under a load of conscious guilt, and to be heavy laden therewith. That same blessed mouth also said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Now what do these emphatic statements bring prominently to view? They are not *my* statements; they are *His* statements whose I am and whom I serve. These statements make these two things conspicuously manifest – the absolute necessity of repentance, and the absolute necessity of faith in Jesus, in order to our being delivered from the wrath to come.

The three dear friends about to be baptized will be baptized upon a definite profession – the profession of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. When the Apostle Paul took his leave of the elders of the church at Ephesus and testified to them that he was pure from the blood of all among them, he having declared unto them "all the counsel of God," he summed up the testimony of his three years' ministry among them in two things: "Testifying ... repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." All the counsel of God, all living religion, is comprehended in those two things, and the saints of God are learning out what repentance is and what faith in Christ is to the very end of their mortal life.

What then is repentance? and what is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Repentance is sorrow, a bitter grief on account of sin, but it is more than that; it is a *godly* sorrow. You may be sorry for wicked things you have done and wicked things you have spoken because of the trouble and wretchedness they have brought you; there is the sorrow of remorse, the sorrow of the world which worketh death. You may be sorry for your sin for the same selfish reason that a man bitterly regrets a bargain he has entered into when he discovers that it is a bad bargain, a bargain which will involve him in serious loss. That is not *godly* sorrow. Godly sorrow is a sorrow for sin because *it is sin*, and because it is sin *against God*, and is invariably attended with intense hatred to sin itself. But repentance, whilst consisting for one thing in godly sorrow, is even something more than godly sorrow; it is rather the practical outcome of godly sorrow which consists in a separation from the practice of sin.

“Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve
By doing so no more”

“Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation,” and, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and *forsaketh* them shall have mercy.” O what a joyful thing for me to have to testify to you in the Lord’s name that every one truly confessing and forsaking his sins “shall have mercy.”

And what is faith? You will, of course, say faith is to believe. Quite true, but it is something more than merely believing, something more than giving credence to a principle; it is even more than giving credence to Christ’s own words.

If you will take the trouble to ascertain for yourselves, you will find that the Greek word translated “believe” in our English Bible is a word which includes in its meaning “to confide in,” “to commit to,” “to entrust with.” Those who believe in Jesus to the saving of the soul confide implicitly in the efficacy of His atoning blood, and confide implicitly in the perfection of His righteousness, and confide implicitly in His Person as the Son of God, and so confiding, they commit themselves and all the eternal concerns of their souls to Him. Saving faith is always associated with the blood of atonement, and it not only receives the atonement and righteousness of Jesus, but confides in His Person as the Son of God. Its language is, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Now, do any ask our reason for adhering to the original mode of Christian baptism, or do any ask, “What mean ye by this service?” or, “What lessons is its observance intended to teach?” The complete answer to all such questions is found in one word: “obedience.” The adorable Head of the Church has commanded it; it is a part of His revealed will, “made known ... for the obedience of faith” (Rom. 16. 26).

Our dear friends are here to avow their love and loyalty to Christ by rendering loving obedience to His commands, and in that obedience to walk in His own footsteps. He Himself set the example.

“The King Himself was plunged
‘Neath Jordan’s swelling flood,”

and no greater honour can be conferred upon us than to be allowed to walk in *His* footsteps.

They are here openly to identify themselves with Him in all He was when here on earth – a Man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men. They are here even willingly to accept and joyfully bear whatever shame, whatever reproach, the world chooses to cast upon them because of their obedience to Christ.

When Peter and others of the apostles were brought before the Jewish council after having been released from prison by the angel of God, for again preaching Christ in the temple, and the council devised their death, but were deterred therefrom by the advice of Gamaliel, it is said that “they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His dear name” (Acts 5. 41), and our dear friends here can say, and we can say with them in all the love of our hearts,

“If on my face for Thy dear name
Shame and reproaches be,
All hail reproach, and welcome shame,
O Lamb of Calvary.”

But as a concluding word let me say this. If any of you are disposed to cast shame or reproach upon these dear children of God, if you choose to say unkind words of them or to them, the responsibility is yours; God will assuredly require it at your hands at the day of judgment. The meek and lowly Jesus Himself said, “Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea” (Mark 9. 42). Sinner, beware!



PURITANISM IN DERBYSHIRE

AN ACCOUNT OF THE GODLY MINISTERS EJECTED FROM THE CHURCH OF
ENGLAND IN THAT COUNTY IN 1662

By John M. Brentnall

We are grateful to Mr. Brentnall for this article which first appeared in *Peace and Truth*. Though it is 350 years ago since the dreadful happenings of “Black Bartholomew,” August 24th, 1662, St. Bartholomew’s Day, yet their importance is still of great significance to us today.

We have already given some account of what took place, but this article explains in more detail the sufferings of the godly.

Introduction

As this year marks the 350th anniversary of the cruel Act of Uniformity (August 24th, 1662), which has never been rescinded, we shall note in this article how this spiteful, vengeful and foolish Act affected the county of Derbyshire. Though it proved to be the biggest disaster the Church of England ever inflicted on itself, it gave rise to an organised Nonconformity, and left an indelible mark on the Christianity

of the nation. We trust the article will prompt others to research the history of their own county during this period of persecution. Their findings may help to prepare them for possible persecution today, besides reminding them how far we have fallen from the dedication of our Puritan forefathers to God.

During the latter half of the reign of Elizabeth I, many Englishmen felt that her Acts of Uniformity (1559-1562) left the Church of England only half reformed. Diocesan bishops, clerical vestments and the keeping of certain "holy days" were just a few of the "dregs of popery" that "the odious people called Puritans" wanted removed.

Instead of reviving Puritan hopes for further reformation, the accession of the avowed Calvinist James I dashed them with a wave of persecution. During his reign, many Puritan ministers were ejected from their colleges and fled to the Netherlands out of the reach of his persecuting bishops and their agents. The Pilgrim Fathers even sailed to the British colonies in America to escape the growing police state, in pursuit of liberty of conscience.

With Charles I's coronation and marriage to a Roman Catholic in 1625, fears of a national apostasy to Rome spread. When Charles' henchman, Archbishop Laud, unleashed a series of cruel persecutions on them, the Puritans either suffered further repression or joined their compatriots abroad. But the escalation of Laud's repressive measures finally proved disastrous for both himself and his king. Both were beheaded.

This swing in the pendulum of providence brought a true revival of a more Biblical Christianity under Cromwell's benign rule. Prelacy was overthrown, liberty of worship was secured for Protestants, the Liturgy was replaced by a Reformed Directory, the Thirty-nine Articles were superseded by the Westminster Confession, ungodly and inefficient clergy were put out in favour of heaven-sent ambassadors of Christ, and licentiousness among the people was restrained by a strict code of morality. This was the high noon of Puritanism, the triumph of truth over error.

It was at this time that God called to the ministry as fine a body of men as ever adorned the Derbyshire scene. Most notable among them were John Hieron of Breadsall, Thomas Stanley of Eyam, Samuel Ogden of Mackworth, John Oldfield of Carsington, John Billingsley of Chesterfield, Luke Cranwell and Samuel Beresford of Derby, Richard Love of Brailsford, William Bagshawe of Glossop, Thomas Shelmardine of Matlock, Robert Porter of Pentrich and Samuel Wright of Heanor.

Judging by the vast changes that were made during the Commonwealth and Protectorate, we can only conclude that the Spirit of God was much in evidence among them. Only a few examples of such

changes must suffice. From a “rude, wicked, swearing, drunken people,” the inhabitants of Wirksworth were changed into God-fearing, sober men and women under the faithful ministry of Martin Topham. Similarly, the careless spinners and weavers of Glossop were under William Bagshawe transformed into serious lovers of the gospel. Much good was done, too, in Bakewell under the two Rowlandsons, father and son: Psalm-singing, family worship and strict observance of the Lord’s Day were notable fruits of revival there. The Puritan weekly lectures at Repton, Ashbourne, Darley Abbey and elsewhere became thronged with people seeking the way of salvation, and many found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, however, Charles II broke his promise to allow freedom of conscience to his subjects, and initiated a period of persecution that both brought out the best in the Puritans and subjected them to great suffering. The notorious Act of Uniformity had the effect of forcing two thousand faithful ministers from their charges, leaving them to preach in fields, barns, private homes and wherever they could get a hearing for the gospel. It was so framed that only a few Puritans felt they could remain in the Established Church without violating their conscience. Assent and consent to all the contents of the Prayer Book was required; ministers who were not episcopally ordained were expected to undergo re-ordination; and all were to acknowledge the supreme authority of the king in both church and state.

These demands were unacceptable to all who subjected their conscience to Scripture alone. The Derbyshire Puritans were among them. As the threatened day of their ejection drew nearer, these deeply conscientious men plied their consciences concerning their motives. Perhaps John Oldfield of Carsington spoke for them all when he soliloquised: “It is not, O my soul, a light matter thou art now employed in: it is not thy maintenance, family, wife and children, that are the main things considerable in this enquiry.... It is, O my soul, the glory of God, the credit and advantage of religion, the good of that poor flock committed to thy keeping by the Holy Ghost, thy ministry, thy conscience, thy salvation and the salvation of others, that must cast the scale and determine thy resolutions.”

Oldfield was not alone among the men of a tender conscience. “If Breadsall parsonage was the best bishopric in England,” said John Hieran after his ejection, “I must do again what I have done.” When John Bingham was offered any living he would choose provided that he would conform, he told the Archbishop of Canterbury that he would not violate his conscience for the best preferment in the world.

Samuel Charles confided to his diary the reason why he chose to suffer rather than sin: “For Thy sake, O Lord, I left my house. So far as

I can look into my own heart, for Thine only have I left house and land ... I am sure I went out, not knowing whither to go."

Bound by the deepest ties to examine every claim on their obedience from the powers that be, they also felt bound to admit or reject that claim as it agreed or disagreed with the higher duty they owed to God. And so, when the trial came, they left all for conscience' sake to follow Christ.

Having chosen to suffer under the Act rather than comply, they found the fires of affliction very hot. The savage misrule of Charles II and his cruel brother, James II, scattered the saints far and wide. As both kings were papists, the one secretly, the other openly, their reigns were marked by sheer perfidy and worldliness. God ceased to be All in all to the nation, and ruthless enactments against Puritan Dissent were executed with merciless cruelty, while the court sank deeper and deeper into profane sensuality.

After quitting their manses for conscience' sake, the labours of the Derbyshire Puritan ministers were richly blessed by God. "Is not the presence of God and His blessing more abundantly in our select assemblies than in the public parochial congregations?" asked Samuel Ogden rhetorically. There is much evidence to confirm Ogden's claim.

William Bagshawe found the Lord's hand with him wherever he went. From the family home at Ford Hall, he supervised many Peakland congregations, crossing the bleak moors on foot and horseback in all weathers, founding churches, praying with families, relieving the poor, burying the dead and encouraging his persecuted brethren to persevere through all hazards. His father's home became a refuge for the distressed, an academy for students and a centre for prayer, hospitality and conference. At Chapel-en-le-Frith, Charlesworth, Hucklow, Middleton-near-Youlgrave, Chelmorton, Bradwell, Edale, Tintwistle, Ashford, Kinder, Malcoff and elsewhere, as the gracious invitations of the Saviour rang loud and clear from his sanctified lips, the Spirit drew multitudes with the cords of a man, till the wondrous acts of God's love found a fresh place in their hearts.

Similarly, Thomas Stanley's ministrations were attended with power from on high, both among his former parishioners at Eyam and at Ashford, Bakewell, Longstone and Hucklow. "Choice hearers" notes a contemporary, "flocked" from several parts of the county to get good for their souls. "Grave, reverend and tender Mr. Stanley" also continued as curate to the new Rector of Eyam, being supported by voluntary gifts from his former parishioners. Despite his "demotion," he played a heroic part in the plague-stricken village of Eyam, not forsaking the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made him overseer.

The brothers Timothy and Jonathan Staniforth, ejected from Allestree and Hognaston respectively, ministered with great success in

the centre of the county. "They often preached at night," says Calamy, "for the greater secrecy, particularly about Heage, and many had cause to bless God for their labours there."

Thomas Stanley, John Oldfield and William Bagshawe often preached in the old tithe barn at Ashford-under-Water, where large numbers gathered to hear the words of eternal life.

John Billingsley of Chesterfield preached privately to Nonconformists in Mansfield, but once every fortnight he rejoined his old flock, secretly expounding the Word, catechising families and visiting the sick.

Robert Porter also settled at Mansfield, but paid frequent visits to Pentrich, travelling the dirty and dangerous roads at night. "Never did anyone go with more joy to his most pleasing recreation," he told his flock, "than I have gone to Longcroft Fields to preach to you."

John Oldfield, also risking fines, imprisonment and deportation, wandered around the county preaching, especially at Ashford, Wirksworth, Brackenfield and Alfreton, that the Word of God might have free course and be glorified.

John Hieron, too, gathered large congregations at Little Eaton, Loscoe, Marehay and Heanor, till he was called home like a sheaf of ripe corn. A clump of trees known as "Hieron's Wood" at Little Eaton still marks the spot of many of his ministrations.

Thus they were forced by the Great Persecution out of the settled comforts of parish routine into clandestine opposition to the laws of the land. Time fails us to tell of the merciless humiliation and fines they suffered for refusing to place their conscience under the whim of Satan's lackeys. Yet the wounds made by the Act of Uniformity left scars in their hearts to the end of their days. Bagshawe recorded many of them in his *De Spiritualibus Peccis*. Samuel Charles of Mickleover never referred to *Black Bartholomew* (August 24th being St. Bartholomew's Day in the Anglican calendar) except in tones of the deepest grief. He observed the day of his ejection as a fast day for the rest of his life.

For reasons undisclosed, other ejected ministers found alternative employment.

Luke Cranwell, ejected from St. Peter's, Derby, opened a medical practice in the town.

For seventeen years Daniel Shelmardine of Barrow-on-Trent rented a farm in the adjoining village of Twyford.

John Bingham of Marston-on-Dove set up a school for the sons of gentry at Bradley Hall.

Timothy Seddon of Langley became private tutor to the family of Samuel Hallows of Derby.

Samuel Beresford of St. Werburgh's, Derby, returned to his home in Shrewsbury to maintain a private academy.

Samuel Ogden became Master of Mackworth School, while the scholarly Roger Morrice of Duffield spent the rest of his days studying and collecting old manuscripts.

Conclusion

Those who ask why they chose such hardship in preference to comfortable livings should listen carefully to their answers. The great principle so tenaciously held by these men and their hearers was that of *liberty of conscience under the Word of God*. When the reformation they so ardently desired was denied them, and man-made impositions were put in its place, they felt compelled to register their dissent and avow their nonconformity, whatever the consequences. It was the same principle that made Moses choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11. 25, 26). It was the same principle that moved Peter and John to disobey the Sanhedrin with the words: "We must obey God rather than men." Their nonconformity was not divisive or schismatic, but conscientious.

It was this principle, said one of Charles Broxholm of Darley Dale, not contumacy, which "hindered his being an active Conformist" and "led him to be a passive and patient Nonconformist."

Thomas Shelmardine regarded it as the greatest honour of his life to suffer for this principle. When someone spoke to him on his death-bed at Wirksworth of having forfeited all preferment by his nonconformity, he replied, "I am going to my preferment; and next to my hope of heaven, I rejoice that I was turned out of Matlock."

When William Bagshawe came to examine himself for the last time, before crossing the river of death into his Judge's presence, he disclosed to a friend that he was "well-satisfied" as to his nonconformity, and blessed God "who had kept him from acting against his conscience in that affair."

Thomas Stanley likewise, preparing to give in his account as he lay dying at Eyam, rejoiced that his Lord had allowed him to suffer for conscience' sake.

Thoroughly convinced that God was with them when they chose to suffer rather than sin, they could not, with the example of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and the Saviour Himself before them, abandon a principle that was dearer to them than life. Neither would they have launched themselves into the arms of their covenant-keeping God unless they had been men of great faith.

By faith, Samuel Hieron left his living at Shirley, and though "he met with hard pennyworths everywhere, yet he found God pitiful and of tender compassion, and had enough to carry him to his journey's end."

By faith, John Billingsley dwelt so much on eternal realities that it was said of him: "Few had more of heaven in them than he."

By faith, John Oldfield reminded his brothers in Christ: "When God will not use thee in one way, He will in another."

Even in their darkest hour, they believed God, and it was counted unto them for righteousness.

And how they wrestled by faith in prayer! Of William Barber someone said: "His house was a house of prayer."

Of William Ainsworth one observed that all the godly in the Peak District, with their families and congregations, fared the better for his prayers!

Of John Hieron it was said that he would take no denial from God in prayer till he was assured that Popery would be utterly ruined. Such was their faith while wrestling with God.

Towards the close of the century, after Derbyshire men played their part in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and were among those who gave the Protestant William of Orange the warmest welcome to the English throne, the spiritual giants who survived the Great Ejection of 1662 and the Great Persecution were succeeded by a band of younger men who found grace to take up the weapons of their warfare. Among these were Robert Ferne and Joseph Foolow of Chesterfield, William Tong, John Ashe of Ashford, Stephen Offley and George Lowe. These men were trained either by William Bagshawe and Samuel Ogden at Ford Hall, or by the renowned Richard Frankland in his Presbyterian Academy at Rathmell and later Attercliff in Yorkshire. Dr. Clegg took the Puritan movement, by now somewhat diluted, into the eighteenth century. By the time of the Revolution Settlement, although toleration had been granted to all Protestant Nonconformists, a period of spiritual decline set in from which the county has never recovered. The Derbyshire Puritans therefore saw the dawn, high noon and decline of godliness in the seventeenth century.

Their place in national church history is noteworthy not merely for their doctrinal faithfulness and practical godliness, but also for their conscientious refusal to conform to the Church of England's rigorous imposition of conformity. While stigmatised by some as a purely negative stance, this refusal was in fact the outworking of a principle that is the surest defence of Biblical and Reformed Protestantism. "With a foresight that has been abundantly justified by subsequent history," writes Iain Murray, "they saw that there was no ultimate safety from Rome apart from the Scriptural principle that nothing must be received into the worship, government and teaching of the Church which is without Scriptural warrant." The Derbyshire Puritans exemplified this

principle to a marked degree, as the county records and other extant documents prove.

The lesson for us is clear. Should severe persecution be unleashed on us, may we prepare now to suffer with our Saviour men's scorn and rejection, along with any losses we may incur. After all, it is His rule they principally hate, and their ultimate destiny rests in His hands. Our victory has already been secured by His conquest of sin, Satan, the world, and death on the cross. Let us then rejoice. "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

BOOK REVIEWS

The Westminster Reference Bible; hardback, either black or colour; xxiv + 1659 pages; price £14.95; published by The Trinitarian Bible Society, Tyndale House, Dorset Road, London, SW19 3NN, and obtainable from T.B.S. headquarters, agents or bookshops. A black calfskin leather edition is available at £49.95.

The Word of God, speaking of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, says, "that in all things He might have the preeminence." So it is with His holy Word. The little children's hymn sings of "many good books that demand our respect." But infallibility belongs to the Bible alone.

How, then, can we review the Word of God? Only as commenting on this particular edition, published "after several years of intensive work" by The Trinitarian Bible Society – which deserves the support it receives from our congregations. We still stand unmoved in our contention for the Authorised (King James) Version alone.

Of course, The Westminster Reference Bible *is* our Authorised Version. In no way is it a study Bible (in the sense of Geneva on the one hand or Schofield on the other) with comments, explanations, etc. Its chief feature is that it has two margins, one at each side of the page, to accommodate over 200,000 references, mainly derived from John Brown of Haddington's *Self-Interpreting Bible*. These are extremely valuable, especially in meditating on any verse. For instance, Psalm 23, verse 1, there are references to the shepherd passages in the Bible, and (on the second part of the verse) references to God supplying His people's needs. These are a valuable help ("Scripture interpreting scripture by scripture itself!")

The only criticism we have met with is that this Bible is fairly big and quite heavy – but surely it is not intended for taking to the services of God's house, but for reading at home. It is well-bound and the print is clear.

Other features are: chapter heading summaries, which are quite helpful; a daily Bible reading guide; a concordance; the definition of unusual words in the margins; preliminary pages connected with the 1611 version; and especially, a table of money, weights, measures, and eight beautifully-produced coloured maps at the end.

We wish God's blessing to rest on this publication. May we ever approach with Anne Steele's prayer:

“Divine Instructor, gracious Lord,
Be Thou for ever near;
Teach me to love Thy sacred Word,
And view my Saviour there.”

The Nazarene’s Songs, by William Gadsby; hardback with lovely, coloured picture of the wild Pennine moors traversed by Gadsby; 320 pages; price £15 plus £2.20 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom or from agents.

At last! For many years it has been our desire that this excellent book should be republished. Only one or two of the original copies are still in existence.

The Nazarene’s Songs is one of our denominational heirlooms. It consists of *all* William Gadsby’s own hymns, a hundred of which do not appear in “Gadsby’s Selection.” Moreover, some of the well-known hymns have many more verses than appear in the “Selection,” for instance, “When Ruth a-gleaning went” with nineteen verses.

The book is beautifully produced.

Sermons of the Great Ejection; paperback; 276 pages; price £6.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

For years we have valued this book, first published fifty years ago to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the Great Ejection in 1662 when about 2000 ministers for conscience’ sake had to leave the Church of England. We are therefore very pleased to welcome its re-publication.

There is a long introduction by Iain Murray which clearly and simply explains what took place in 1662, the issues then, the faithfulness of so many ministers and the sufferings they endured.

The sermons are a selection of those preached as a final farewell before the ministers were compelled to leave their charges. There are sermons by Calamy, Brooks, Collins, Lye, Watson, Oldfield and Whitlock, and “The Nonconformist’s Catechism” is added, published at a later date giving scriptural reasons for nonconformity.

We would emphasise that this is not merely a historical monument; the sermons are of excellent quality, in true Puritan style.

Outstanding is Edmund Calamy’s sermon on “Trembling for the Ark of God” (1 Sam. 4. 13), which has appeared more than once in the *Gospel Standard*. Strictly speaking this was not an “Ejection Sermon”; three months afterwards, Dr. Calamy was present when the preacher failed to turn up at a service and so he was prevailed upon to take his place – for which he was arrested.

This is a book we strongly recommend.

Ebenezer Strict Baptist Chapel, Ripley, 1812-2012, sub-titled, “A Brief History written by the church and congregation on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the building of the chapel”; pamphlet with interesting illustrations; 33 pages; no charge, but obviously a donation for printing and postage will be appreciated; obtainable from Dr. Peter Wilkins, 14 Spring Vale, Swanmore, Hampshire, SO32 2PH.

We are glad that so many of our chapels are publishing short histories when they celebrate centenaries or, as in this case, the bi-centenary.

This booklet is particularly well-researched and written. Ripley is an interesting chapel.

Also included is the sermon preached on the occasion of the 200th anniversary from the text: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure."

The Authority of God, by I.A. Sadler; pamphlet; 30 pages; price £1 plus 60p postage; available from the author: 1 Payne Close, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 3FX.

Dr. Sadler's theme is The Authority of God – as Creator – of the Word of God – of Christ as Head of the church – of those ordained of God – and God's final vindication of His authority. He writes with deep conviction and gracious concern about the way God's authority is despised and denied in the world today, and even in the church of God.

The booklet is sub-titled, "Where the word of a king is, there is power."

Further Letters and Sermons of William Henry Haddow, edited by Matthew J. Hyde; hardback; well-bound; 424 pages; price £21.95 plus £3.50 postage; available from Mr. J. Crowter, Haystacks, Green Lane, Potter Heigham, Norfolk, NR29 5LP.

Not many people today remember William Haddow, who was pastor at Ebenezer Chapel, Welwyn. His death in 1939 at the early age of 37 was a deep shock to our churches and caused great sorrow. He was highly esteemed as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Haddow was a prolific letter writer, most of his letters being written to younger people in the Bedfordshire/Hertfordshire district – among them Miss Hannah Goldsmith, and Mr. and Mrs. Bert Gurney and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Barker, who have many descendants in our chapels today. Altogether 205 letters appear. These are deep, experimental letters, seeking to encourage seeking sinners. We include the last one he wrote (page 364). (It will be remembered that a previous volume of his letters has appeared.)

Also included is an account of Mr. Haddow's funeral and notes of three sermons he preached (from John 20. 14-16 and two from Philippians 3. 10, 11).

May God's blessing attend.

Following special request, a book containing fifty-two prayer meeting addresses given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, over many years (slightly edited) has been published. The title is *Saturday Evening Meditations* as it is felt that they could be profitable reading before the Lord's day week by week. They could be suitable for reading at prayer meetings. The price is £6 plus postage (U.K. £2, overseas £4).

Saturday Evening Meditations is a hardback book of 142 pages with a lovely lakeland picture on the front, and is obtainable from Mrs. Alison A. Kingham, 11 Sutherland Place, Luton, LU1 3SY.

IMMANUEL – GOD WITH US

What is this my eyes behold?
 Who its wonders can unfold?
 God the Word, mystery divine,
 Born a Babe in Bethlehem.

How the holy angels gazed,
 Lost in wonder all amazed,
 When they saw their Maker lie,
 In a manger born to die!

Silence breaks, and they exclaim,
 Glory to the great I AM;
 In their highest height they sing,
 Glory to their new-born King.

Yet they could not fully trace
 All the glories of the case;
 Here they saw a volume sealed,
 Not to them fully revealed.

Guilty sinners, lost and poor,
 Who can knock at mercy's door,
 Shall its choicest glory view,
 Feel, and love, and sing them too.

Saved sinners here may trace,
 A mysterious stoop of grace;
 God made flesh them to redeem,
 And secure their bliss in Him.

Holy Ghost, bless us with faith,
 In the glories of this birth;
 Tune our hearts to sing with joy,
 This Incarnate Mystery.

Sweetly open every breast,
 To receive Him as our Guest;
 Seal His mercy in each heart,
 And His matchless love impart.

Then we'll sing with sweet surprise,
 God with us by sacred ties;
 And His name we'll still adore,
 When with us time is no more.

From the newly-published *The Nazarene's Songs*

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

Editor: B.A. Ramsbottom

Vol. CLXXVIII 2012

*Obtainable from:
Gospel Standard Publications,
12(b) Roundwood Lane,
Harpenden, Herts. AL5 3BZ*

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OUR MAGAZINES

Our desire in our pages has ever been to seek the honour and glory of God and the spiritual profit of our readers. May there still be the sweet savour of Christ in our pages.

We are thankful to be brought through another year, and again express appreciation of all who help and for the prayers of the Lord's people.

The Editor