

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
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“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

When Israel left Egypt for Canaan, the Lord said, “I remember thee ... when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown” (Jer. 2. 2). So when the last year began, we did not know what mercies, what joys, what sorrows would be sown – “what gloomy lines were writ for me, or what bright scenes may rise.” Now, as we look back,

“Deep sorrows crossed life’s pathway,
The hedge of thorns was sharp”;

though we cannot add with Rutherford, “Now these all lie behind me.” It is not right, as some contend, that when the old year ends, its sorrows are gone for ever. Yet we are “brought safely by His hand thus far,” for which we are thankful.

The unknown way stretches before us in the new year and, “we have not passed this way heretofore.” What a word that was when first spoken to Joshua! It was a time of deep sorrow for him personally; his friend and master Moses had died. It was a time of crisis in Israel, the sore loss of a leader appointed by God. For Joshua himself there was the awful weight and responsibility of having to lead Israel into the promised land. And then immediately there was Jordan to be crossed, and “Jordan overfloweth all his banks.”

The only hope for Joshua and for Israel was the presence of God with them, beautifully symbolised by the holy ark of the covenant. This is our only resting-place now. The ark was to go before them, and they were to follow. “Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you” (Josh. 3. 11). They were to follow, in dependence, in hope.

The eyes of all Israel must be fixed on the ark. In a gospel sense it is “looking unto Jesus.” “To keep our eyes on Jesus fixed, and there our hope to stay.” If they had fixed their eyes on Jordan’s swelling, or on the Canaanites, their walled cities and their chariots of iron, then they must have sunk in dismay. But Joshua had a promise to rest on: “And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed” (Deut. 31. 8). Comparing Deuteronomy 31. 8 with Hebrews 13. 5, this promise belongs to the whole blood-bought church of God.

This point of the Lord *going before* His people is exceedingly precious. As the good Shepherd, “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them” (John 10. 4). Sometimes He puts them forth in a way of solemn soul-exercise. Sometimes He puts them forth to walk in a way they have never walked before. Sometimes He puts them forth in a pathway of deep sorrow and distress. But He does not leave them; He goes before. There is not a step a child of God has to tread but the Saviour has gone that way before.

The Lord also has said, “I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron” (Isa. 45. 2). Then there will be crooked things, ways that cannot be passed, but the Lord will make a way through where there is no way. It is good to be reminded that He who goes before is almighty.

“Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame –
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.”

Almighty to hear and answer prayer – but in His own time and way. “Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the mighty waters, and Thy footsteps are not known” (Psa. 77. 19).

With Israel, the Lord performed a miracle for them. The crossing of Jordan was a miracle. There was no way over, no way through, no bridge, no ford, no ferry; but the Lord divided the waters, and “made a way for the ransomed to pass over.”

The coming of a new year reminds us that we are each nearer the Jordan of death. “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?”

“The storm of death draws on apace,
And who can say how nigh?”

It is our mercy if we can see the Lord Jesus going before, right down into the swelling of Jordan, to take the sting from death and the

victory from the grave – as symbolised by the holy ark descending first into Jordan, the waters dividing, and Israel passing over on dry ground.

“In that dread moment, O to hide
 Beneath His sheltering blood!
 ’Twill Jordan’s icy waves divide,
 And land my soul with God.”

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It has become the custom in our editorial addresses to look round and comment on things in the world, in the nation and in the church of God. Looking back over our pages for many years, it seems that “evil men wax worse and worse.” But now almost every vestige of Christianity, even in a nominal way, seems to be under attack, and the powers of hell let loose. It seems incredible that recently a charity shop selling old books was forbidden to sell a Bible. No leadership comes from those in authority in the established church. (Some of the wisest words recently have come from a Moslem leader, calling for more morality and decency, less drinking, reducing abortion, etc.!)

But in the midst of all this looking around, there is still a voice that sounds from the empty tomb: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24. 5, 6). The world has always been an enemy of the people of God – but how clearly Daniel saw the opposite in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream! “In the days of these kings” – while the great and mighty are hatching their plans – “shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2. 44).

What does this mean? That God is almighty, that He is on the throne, that He is in control, and that all His purposes are being fulfilled.

“Thy throne eternal ages stood,
 Ere seas or stars were made;
 Thou art the ever-living God,
 Were all the nations dead.”

Kingdoms rise, kingdoms fall. The only remains of the four great monarchies now are archaeological ruins. The proudest head has been laid in the dust. But God’s kingdom stands for ever – whether we think of the kingdom of God as the church, or as the work of grace being performed in sinners’ hearts (and the two are inseparable).

Christ has said of His kingdom: “Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” His work, setting up the kingdom of His grace in sinners’ hearts, though opposed by Satan, is going on to completion. It can never be overthrown. His work in a sinner’s heart will “stand for ever.”

This is our comfort in these days of darkness and degeneracy. The cause of Christ is a victorious cause. Really the whole Book of Revelation is a commentary on this glorious fact.

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Thinking particularly about the churches that we love, we have the problem of a lack of ministers, which is a concern to so many. We hope it is not through the Lord entirely withdrawing His favour from us. J.K. Popham once said that only one thing is necessary to cause withering and death, and that is for the Lord in righteous judgment to withdraw a gracious ministry. In mercy may this not be so with us. But may there be urgent prayer for the Lord to send labourers into His harvest – and faith clings to that word “His” – “*His* harvest.”

The result of all this is that many who go forth in the Lord’s name are over-burdened. A young man, beginning to preach, may be speaking three times on the Lord’s day, and two or three times in the week, as well as following his secular calling. It was not always so. When we ourselves began to preach over fifty years ago, it was only twice on the Lord’s day, and never in the week. The danger is, as Mr. F.L. Gosden said: “If anyone constantly *gives out* more than he *takes in*, then he becomes bankrupt. So it is with the ministry.”

Only He who created the world can make a minister! And over the years the Lord has taken, fashioned and used the most unlikely men. Our mind goes to a quiet, little, humble man, the chapel caretaker, who to everyone’s amazement began to preach. One minister said he was the last in all the denomination you would ever think would be a preacher. But what a gracious minister he was! How well received, how profitable! And it was the unction, savour and dew, which only the Holy Ghost can give.

In the old *Gospel Standards*, especially the middle of the nineteenth century, we often come across someone unknown today: “the occasional preacher.” In obituaries he was often mentioned: “He occasionally spoke in the Lord’s name.” J.C. Philpot spoke warmly of such people – they had not much gift; they could not hold the people; but they were godly men with a good experience, and it was profitable to hear them three or four times a year. It would seem that for the most part they only spoke at the chapel where they were members.

John Gadsby tells of “dear Mr. Mouncey,” his father’s old deacon, speaking at times in the Lord’s name. So does John Kershaw of John Roby, that eminent man who under divine teaching was brought as a sinner to the Saviour’s feet. In more recent times, older ones remember William Dunderdale of Nateby (Garstang) and John Bailey of Blackpool, whose addresses were much loved and esteemed – though they would never call themselves “preachers.” Of course, Stanley Bowles, who died

not too long ago in the Haydock Bethesda Home, was specially gifted, though he could never be persuaded to venture from his home church.

At times those who spoke occasionally later became eminent ministers – we think especially of Mr. F.L. Gosden, who spoke for some years from the “desk” at Shovers Green.

We tremble lest we should be satisfied with some second best or some expedient; but is there a gift, promised in the Epistles, which is being neglected today?

Another difference we have noted from the days of J.C. Philpot. In recent times the normal practice seems to be for a man, believing himself called to preach, to approach his pastor, deacons and church, relate his exercises, and receive their sanction. More often in former days it was the pastor, deacons and church who were burdened about some man in their midst and approached him to enquire about his leading. Was there more prayer, discernment and gracious exercise then? (There was the remarkable and unusual case of John Forster, when the church told him he *must* preach – and when at last he consented, he proved to be a most able minister and pastor. See *G.S.* 1878, page 331.)

But how we need a spirit of hearing in our congregations! It is not just a lack of *preachers* but also *hearers*, and the days prophesied by Amos have come: “Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of *hearing* the words of the Lord” (Amos 8. 11). Where the Lord graciously grants a spirit of hearing, it will not be said, “The sheep look up, and are not fed.”

May the Lord return to His people in mercy. We do not despise the reading services. May they be blessed of God. And may it not be ministers only that are raised up but “men of Issachar,” “men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron. 12. 32).

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J.K. Popham always felt there would be better days in our churches, our chapels being full. The Puritans and godly Scots always believed in “the latter-day glory.” It would be a wonderful thing if they were not mistaken. We still have “the glorious gospel of the blessed God,” and there are some wonderful promises. For instance:

“Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: My house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem” (Zech. 1. 16).

“Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it” (Zech. 4. 7).

“And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest Himself shall establish her” (Psa. 87. 5).

We have been specially attracted by Hosea 14. 7: "They that dwell under His shadow shall return: they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon." We trust we *are* under the shadow of the Almighty; and what a glorious reviving and restoring is here promised, despite all our sin and backsliding! Spiritual prosperity; fruitfulness instead of barrenness; and crowning it all the sweet savour of Christ in the midst! And all this in answer to the poor prayers of His people: "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously."

Personally we wait for the Lord to come, as promised, "leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills" (Song 2. 8), to come right where we are, to do everything for us, to reveal Himself. There are so many mountains of sin and sorrow that intervene.

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When we first became Editor, we felt like someone with a large treasure-house who, month by month, could seek out precious gems and give them away. We still feel this is our privilege, however arduous and unrelenting; there is a wonderful treasure-house of godly writings around us. Even today, as there is so much Christian literature being published, there are still some priceless treasures being reprinted. Surely there must be some gracious effect? May God's blessing rest on our own Gospel Standard Trust Publications. We think of the wonderful labour of love of Mr. Caleb Pearce as later this year he retires from his position as Publications Manager.

Our own loyal helpers with the work of the *Gospel Standard* we sincerely thank. It would be hard to manage without them.

We are still disappointed that we receive so few obituaries. At the beginning of our Editorship we had forty in one year. Especially we think of accounts of our godly ministers who have died, and those who have been pillars in the churches. (We must confess that we have had some strange ones sent over the years, one, we believe, by a Roman Catholic! These have come from people with little or no religion but with a loving desire to honour their parents.)

We would remind our readers that book *reviews* are not necessarily book *recommendations*. In this day when so much is appearing, and which our young people are likely to read, we are willing to give our honest opinion, the good and the bad. Infallibility belongs to Scripture alone. J.K. Popham was strongly criticised for his recommendation of the Puritans (because of the free offer, infant baptism, etc.) but he contended that England had never been blessed with more godly ministers. J.C. Philpot likewise in recommending the Erskines spoke of "flies in the ointment," but such a sweet savour in the ointment.

It is still a deep concern to us that there seems to be so many who fear the Lord in our congregations, who have never known the assurance of faith, and who have never made an open profession of the Lord's name. Only the Lord can lay that topstone of sweet assurance and gospel liberty. May He shine through the darkness and "turn again our captivity as the streams in the south." Bless God that we still have the blood-sprinkled mercy seat, the throne of grace, and the wonderful promise of "grace to help in time of need."

We send greetings to our friends at home and overseas. We feel especially for our young people in these dark, degenerate days, but it is a comfort to see quite a number following on in the ways of the Lord. As we think of the little ones born into this evil world, our only hope is that the Lord will keep them as the apple of His eye, and hide them under the shadow of His wing.

We feel there is no better way in which we can approach the new year than in the spirit of good old Dr. Fawcett:

"Lord, hast Thou made me know Thy ways?
Conduct me in Thy fear;
And grant me such supplies of grace,
That I may persevere.

"Let but Thy own almighty arm
Sustain a feeble worm,
I shall escape, secure from harm
Amid the dreadful storm.

"Be Thou my all-sufficient Friend,
Till all my toils shall cease;
Guard me through life, and let my end
Be everlasting peace."

May these desires be granted.

Wishing you every blessing
With love for Jesus' sake,
The Editor
B.A. Ramsbottom

I find no words more suitable to express my desires for myself and the church of Christ than the words of the Lord's prayer are. "O be Thou, by the clear Spirit of adoption, known to be our heavenly Father. Let us reverence Thy name, and delight in Thy kingdom and Thy will, even as Thy saints do in heaven. Supply our need, both for soul and body. Forgive us our sins, perfecting in us love to one another. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For all power and glory belong unto Thee."

Bernard Gilpin

CASTING ALL YOUR CARE ON THE LORD

*Sermon preached by Jesse Delves at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham,
London, on April 6th, 1955*

Text: "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1 Pet. 5. 7).

This is one of the many timely exhortations in the Scriptures. I suppose it is hardly possible to find a condition or circumstance in our lives to which no word of timely exhortation applies. Some of these exhortations in the Scripture are to guide us in our ways; some of them are to support us in our trials, to show us to whom to look in our troubles; and others, how to deport ourselves in our lives, walk and conversation. So that it may be said that gospel exhortations cover our lives, as well as a great many more important concerns in our souls.

These are often designed to be for the comfort of the Lord's people when they are harassed by the devil, and come to such a pass at times as to wonder where the scene will end. If we look at the exhortations in the comforting aspect of them, it would seem that the Lord's people need never be in any trouble, or have any trouble about anything, but be lifted above it all and just walk in the confidence of their faith and put their trust in the Lord. *But the Lord has never designed it to be that way.* You will never find it to be that way; rather they are supporting and comforting exhortations, as they are in the gospel and in the precepts, indicating a path of trial and of difficulty; fiery trials, trials of faith, walking in deep waters, and sometimes in great uncertainty about things too, so that, were it not for the Lord condescending to speak a timely word here and there to His afflicted and tempest-tossed people, it would seem, at least in some cases, as though they might sink and never rise again. But that will never be with a vessel of mercy. It is true, he may sink very, very low; you will. Possibly you and I have done so; we have passed through some sharp and heavy things, so that we have felt as the children of Israel, "The soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." Well, that is just the very time for the Lord to come in and give that divine support which only He can give, and give you to feel it, and make it as an anchor to your soul in a storm or, as it were, a secret strength holding you and sustaining you in the face of all inward and outward opposition.

It can be a very sweet moment when, by His grace, we can, and do, cast our care upon Him. Have you ever known such a moment as that? I believe I have once or twice in my lifetime. If you have really been able to do this, then you have not had a trouble although you have been in the midst of trouble. Well, say you, that is a paradox altogether. I quite agree, but the Lord's people often live in paradoxes; they are a

paradox to themselves in many respects. Sometimes they are never so strong as when they feel their weakness. Moreover the Lord has said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." But when you can cast your care upon Him, you can walk in the fire, even if you are not able at the time to see the other end of the furnace any more than the children of Israel could see the other side of the Red Sea.

But this "casting all our care upon Him" is an act of faith. You might read the exhortation a hundred times over and feel more burdened than ever. In fact, it can, if it so work in your spirit, even seem to mock you, because sometimes it may be the more you have tried to cast your care upon Him, the heavier the burden has become. We have to prove that we cannot do these things in our own strength, and yet when we are helped by the Lord, nothing is sweeter than to be able to cast our care upon Him. O when this is the case, faith has a single eye.

In the first place, to cast our care upon Him, we must possess a knowledge of Him. You do not usually put confidence in strangers, unless at least you hear something confirming of their character and reputation, and even so, you would want to know them personally before you would feel very safe and happy to commit any matters of importance into their hands. So it is with the Lord's dear people and the Lord Himself. A knowledge of Him is necessary in order to this exercise of faith, and even where there is a knowledge of Him, He Himself must give the faith to cast our care upon Him. But this can be a very choice and a very sweet moment in a believer's experience. It is just that time when you see the Lord above everything else and above everyone else too, and getting a hold of Him by faith you feel supported in the storm – and not only so, but see the storm made a calm.

It seems as though sometimes the Lord leads His people in certain ways of providence to put them to a most severe test, and then, when He has brought them to that test, enables them to cast all their care upon Him. How wonderful His ways have been! Even in that chapter we read (Genesis 37) Joseph went to see his brethren and they conspired against him, and would have slain him but for the intervention of Reuben. Eventually they sold him to the Ishmeelites and he was carried away into Egypt. It did not seem then as though the Lord was taking much care of him.

Sometimes it may seem to you that the Lord is taking no care of you at all, especially when you have tried to pray (and perhaps with all urgency) for the Lord to appear in a particular matter, and yet have to see things grow worse and worse and become darker than ever. But we have to remember that our ways are not the Lord's ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. If they were, where should we get to? We are continually misjudging the Lord and coming to premature conclusions; but the Lord

never judges us wrongly or comes to premature conclusions in any matter.

The Lord was watching over Joseph and foretold that he would be honoured in such a way that his brethren would go down on their knees before him. Speaking after the manner of men, it would seem to have been wiser if Joseph could have kept those dreams to himself, because it only stirred up wrath against him. Yet poor, dear boy, he could not see what lay before him; he dreamed of his preferment, of his brothers bowing down to his sheaf, of the sun, moon and stars, but he did not dream about the prison, of being cast into prison and having to dwell there a long time. He did not dream about the irons; he did not dream about the forgetful butler. No!

So it is with our providences. The Lord brought His will to pass by things which appeared as dark and black as they could possibly be, so that with Joseph and his father too, all seemed to go against them. Trial after trial came, and poor Jacob rent his clothes and was so distressed that he said, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning," and later, "All these things are against me." At such a time he might have said, What care has the Lord for me? He is not watching over me; if He were, things would not have come to such a pass as this. But they do come to "a pass," which in the end proves that the Lord was watching over us all the time.

We read, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry." Yet things at times have gone so opposite and contrary, that it has seemed as though there were no God, no control over things at all – just drifting on in a sea of uncertainty. Yet, in the midst of all this and perhaps much heaviness in your spirit on account of matters, you may suddenly feel rising up in your heart the power of faith, and get a glimpse of the Lord God of Jacob, of His almighty power, grace and wisdom, and feel, in a way surprising to yourself, to cast your care upon Him.

"Casting *all* your care upon Him, for He careth for *you*." This casting of our care upon Him has a wide scope because it leaves nothing out; it takes in everything in our lives, soul and body, everything here. After all, what a wonderful mercy it is to know this God, to be favoured and privileged in times of trial and difficulty to cast our care upon Him and to prove Him to be a wonder-working God for us! And have not His people proved that at times, here and there? When you can cast your care upon Him, as I have hinted, you find a rest, a rest in your soul, and you can feel a rest in your body too. One minute, as it were, we may be "careful and troubled about many things," and the next minute, if the Lord appears, just able to be still and prove that "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

“Casting *all* your care upon Him.” The Apostle Peter in the verse before exhorts us to humble ourselves under the Lord’s mighty hand, that He may exalt us in due time. To humble ourselves is not according to poor, proud, human nature – it is His grace alone in us that can rightly bring us to humble ourselves before Him. I do not believe we shall ever cast all our care upon Him until, first of all, we humble ourselves before Him.

But this casting of our care upon Him – *all* our care – takes in, in the first place, the care of our souls, and that is the most important of all considerations because of the tremendous issues. No matter can be on the same level of importance as the salvation of our never-dying souls; but how are we to cast this care upon Him? We can only do this as we are blessed with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and can take our poor, needy, sin-stricken souls to Him, wait upon Him, and plead His Person, blood and righteousness, which is the only means and way of deliverance from the wrath to come. But if you and I are favoured, at times, to get just a little light here, have some manifestation to our souls of the Lord Jesus Christ in His all-sufficiency in our salvation, can rightly realise that He is “Alpha and Omega” in it all, “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” – if we can get hold of that by His grace, there can be perhaps, for a few minutes, a very sweet casting of all the care of our soul upon Him, renouncing all beside, placing no merit on anything of our own or on any works of our own, however commendable they may be of themselves, realising we are poor nothings, and that if we were dealt with as our sins deserve, we should be banished for ever.

This casting our care upon Him as concerning our souls is putting our whole trust in His finished work; it is to be brought to the place which Toplady speaks of in that wonderful hymn:

“Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

This is casting our care upon Him!

I know what it is to cast my care upon Him, and that without speaking “cunningly devised fables.” I believe the Lord brought me to a place once where I felt I could just leave this world, resting my soul on His blessed atonement. He gave me such a view of that and my interest in it, that I felt as though I could pass from time into eternity resting my soul upon it. That is what I mean by casting the care of our souls upon Him.

Some people in their religion think such a lot of what they may be doing and build their hope upon some accomplishment of their own, but a poor sinner, stricken and wounded by the law in his conscience, brought to know that he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all, is

brought away from all such refuges of lies to the cross of Calvary and is stripped of all fancied righteousnesses, and feeling them to be nothing but filthy rags, falls at the Redeemer's feet and trusts alone in the merits of His wounds and blood, and will glory in nothing but the cross of Christ. This, I believe, is casting the care of our souls upon Him. We need His grace to commit them to Him. Then indeed they are very sweet moments when faith gets a view of Him. He is seen then to be sufficient, absolutely, and in the confidence of faith in the heart, you can throw your burden on Him, the burden of your sin and guilt, by confessing your sins in faith and hope in the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord help us then to cast the care of our souls upon Him.

But is there not also the care of our poor bodies? These mortal bodies of ours occupy much of our thoughts at times, different weaknesses and afflictions, and much of our conversation turns upon this and that ailment of our poor bodies. After all, we must all realise that they are mortal bodies – that our bodies are destined to die. What then? How can we cast our care upon Him concerning these things? Well, I believe the body is part of the purchased possession; that when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross He redeemed us, soul and body, and that one day with us death will be swallowed up in victory, and these bodies will be raised again, spiritual bodies, and this mortal will put on immortality. We are in a mortal state here but O, you can cast your care upon Him, even in regard to your body, when you can feel a sweet hope in your soul – nothing will help you to commit your body to Him better than this. If He should be pleased to come and bless us in our souls, give us a sweet hope of eternal life, let a little of His wonderful love flow into our poor hearts, we can commit our poor bodies to Him and feel resigned to His holy will.

We are not to be careless about our bodies; they are the Lord's handiwork and when affliction comes upon us, it behoves us to seek relief and recovery subject to the Lord's divine will. But although all this we do, and place much reliance upon this or that remedy for this or that complaint or disease, after all the sweetest moment is when you feel that you, soul and body, are the Lord's property, and that some day both will be with Him to dwell with Him for ever. Sometimes I have felt that was a wonderful statement in Philippians where the apostle says, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

If you are laid upon a bed of affliction, you have deep and great concern for your body, whether or not it may please the Lord to raise you up. Naturally speaking, almost all our concerns rest on this point: shall I get better or not? and if left to ourselves we may perhaps think little of the Lord in it. But if the Lord should come and bless your soul in

affliction, you can lie upon your bed, even with a suffering body, and feel it sweet to be there if the Lord is there too. O when He comes into the thing, when His sweet presence is felt, then you can, just at that time, lie passive in His hands and know no will but His.

This is casting all the care of your body upon Him. Why, you can say, Lord, this poor body is Thy property; it belongs to Thee. Give me grace to live as long as Thou art disposed for me to live upon this earth. Make me to know my end; do not leave me to rebel against Thy sovereignty in this – if some should live longer than I, or I should live longer than they. Grant me submission and a gracious preparation. And if He is pleased to answer your poor pleadings, you can commit your soul and body into His blessed hands.

I do not think you will think me to be speaking lightly or carelessly respecting our poor bodies. It is right for us to take this care of them that we are exhorted to do in this way, but when afflictions come upon us and we are filled with apprehension as to their possible issue, nothing can be sweeter than to feel a sweet and sacred sense of the Lord's kindness and mercy in our souls. Then we can commit our bodies rightly into His hand and say, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done. This, I believe, is casting our care upon Him.

Some of the Lord's people have much concern and care about their families. It is quite right that they should, too. What godly, exercised parent having children could be otherwise? because realising they are his children and have immortal, never-dying souls, his prayer, above all beside, must be that they may prove to be vessels of mercy, of the Lord's own family. What a wonderful thing it is when the Lord in His mercy answers prayer in this particular, as in some cases He does. But even with regard to this, this exhortation "casting all your care upon Him" may be very timely. I know I cannot say much about this, but perhaps parents have had just some rare occasions when they have felt they could lay their own dear children at the Lord's feet, commit them to Him, and watch and pray and hope that they may see answers to their humble pleadings that the Lord may be pleased to bless their family. This would be casting all their care upon Him.

Then there are also cares of the business or vocation in life that sometimes press very heavily upon the Lord's people. It does not seem that the Lord's people can walk as lightly in things as worldlings do, because they have to do with the Lord in them and are often tried about them, have exercises about them which the worldling has not. There may be a number of things, more or less involved, in your vocation in life. Some things may seem so very necessary and you pray about them and yet meet with disappointment, at least for a season, and you feel the Lord is dealing hardly with you. This may or may not be the case, but it is often so, and where that is the case there is a trial of faith, and you may

look at a verse like this and say, That is what I have been trying to do; I have prayed about this and asked the Lord to go before me and now all seems confusion and I meet with disappointment. You say, The Lord has no care for me; I cannot be one of His or He would have regarded me and given me success, gone before me and caused His goodness to pass before me in the way.

Yes, but when thus melted down there may be another reason, and I believe there is. The point is to be enabled to cast your care upon Him when things go so against you, when the Lord deals hardly with you. Imagine poor Joseph lying in prison with his feet in irons, as we read, and someone coming along lightly and saying, Well, Joseph, cast your care upon Him. How resentful he would be! We may sometimes say things very easily to others in trial if we are not in the same trial, yet, at the same time, the Lord's people who have passed through trial and know what it means may sometimes, as helped, speak a very timely, helpful, fitting word to others in tribulation, which has sometimes been of much help and blessing as the Lord has been pleased to use it.

"Casting all your care upon Him." Many things come into this which I cannot enter upon now, in the positions and circumstances in which we are placed in the church of God. Ministers have the care of the ministry, and they know what the burden is to some extent. What wrestling there is before the Lord about it, and how at times they go down into the depths and feel they cannot preach again. (Perhaps some may not feel as much as I do like this at times.) Well, what then? When we are come to the end of everything, as helped and enabled it can be very, very seasonable and timely to cast our care upon Him. Why? Because we are casting our care and our own unworthiness upon Him who has all fulness. You cannot cast your care on anyone better. If you were in the depths of poverty, to what purpose would it be going to someone else in the same straits and casting your care upon him? But when the poor minister who feels to be in the depths of poverty in his soul is enabled to cast his care upon the Lord, he casts his care upon Him who has all fulness to supply his need. Moreover this has been promised in some particular things. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

There is the care of the church too, and of those who bear the burden and are made helpful and useful in their sphere, and exercised members who may sometimes feel the need of this exhortation, as we all do, and when enabled to follow it, it is good and strengthening to faith and honouring to our God.

"Casting all your care upon Him." Why? Here the apostle seems to give a reason and answer to this: why cast all our care upon Him? Because "He careth for you"! That is the reason. You would not cast your care upon a person who had no care for you, but if you had a friend

who had great concern for your welfare, a friend in whom you could confide, who had your interest at heart, you might feel disposed to put some confidence in him, to commit your matters to him, which might be right and proper in a business way, or a private capacity. But when a poor sinner is brought to know the Lord Jesus Christ in some humble measure and is given to see that in Him all fulness dwells, he can, here and there, as helped, cast his care upon Him because he feels and believes that the Lord cares for him.

“For He careth for you.” This might take in a number of things. To a point we can go back to the eternal council and decrees of our covenant God and see, as we may hope, where and how He cared for us before the world was, in His purposes of love and mercy toward us in placing us among His people there in the covenant of grace and giving us an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Has not God cared for us in providing for us in the gospel, in the gift of His beloved Son, who in the fulness of time took our nature upon Him, and offered Himself without spot to God? Did He not care for us there? And has He not cared for us in the provision of all needful things for our souls? For the church is said to be blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” He cares for His people. O how many times this has been seen in the Lord’s providences over His people! How many times!

I was reading the other day about a dear man at Mayfield, greatly tried in providence. Everything went against him on his farm; rain came and it kept raining, and the more he tried to pray the more it rained, so he came to be near despair. One day on the way to chapel he looked at the fields and saw all going to ruin and he felt desperate, but when he got to chapel he felt enabled to pray for the Lord to appear. The Lord did appear and rolled away the clouds and the sun shone and continued to shine, and after all he had a better harvest than for years and he had difficulty in finding sacks to put the corn in.

So I believe the Lord’s people have many times in their life had to prove the Lord cares for them. We have, in our business life, seen some remarkable things. After all, it is not when things go smoothly for us that we realise the Lord is caring for us – we may wax fat and forget the Lord in that way – but when brought into trials and difficulties, we go down into the depths and are overcome with fear and apprehension, have to struggle and try to pray to the Lord in our distress. That is where we prove the Lord cares for us, when He appears and turns our captivity as the streams in the south.

May the Lord give us grace to cast our care upon Him and not to be unduly moved by what may seem to be disappointing things, knowing that the Lord sees the end from the beginning and is “too wise to err, too good to be unkind.” Furthermore, although sometimes He may seem to

pass us by and take no notice of us in our matters, yet the truth remains: “He careth for you.” “He careth for *you*” – for *you*.

May the Lord give us to feel it in a right way and to cast our care upon Him.

Extract from Dr. Hawker

Yes, blessed Jesus, I would cast all upon Thee; sins, sorrows, trials, temptations. Thou art the Almighty Burden-bearer of Thy people; for the Lord Jehovah hath laid on Thee the iniquity of us all. And as Thou bearest all our sins, so Thou bearest all our sorrows. And dost Thou not bear all the persons of Thy redeemed? Dost Thou not bear all our troubles, all our exercises, all our temptations, trials, difficulties? The government is upon Thy shoulder; the care of the churches is all with Thee. And shall I not cast all my care upon Thee? Shall I be careful for many things, while Jesus saith, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee”? O for grace to sit loose to all things, and to leave all things with Thee. Lord, do Thou bear me up when I am falling, support me when weak, uphold me against all mine enemies, carry me safe through a life of grace here – and finally, bring me home to Thy glory, to behold Thee, and dwell with Thee for ever.

THE FIERY, CLOUDY PILLAR

*By W. Augustus Clarke, 1778, author of hymn no. 62
in Gadsby's Selection*

When the Almighty God, in His wise and unerring providence, appointed Moses to lead the tribes of Israel (which He had brought out of the house of bondage) for the space of forty years, through a dry, barren and dreadful wilderness, Himself undertook to be their wonderful and glorious Guide, giving them a most significant and lively representation of His divine presence in the cloud that went before them. Not as if the incomprehensible Jehovah could be enclosed in a cloud, for He fills both heaven and earth, yea, all space and duration, with immensity and omnipresence; but here the Lord condescended to the childish capacity of His people by letting forth one single ray of His invisible glory, for His church's direction in a pathless wilderness in their pilgrimage to the goodly Canaan.

The pillar of cloud and fire was entirely supernatural, and was one of the standing miracles that the Eternal Jehovah indulged His people with all the time of their journey, which was forty years.* The Person manifesting Himself in this cloudy pillar bears the adorable name, Jehovah: “And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night” (Exod. 13. 21). He is also called the Angel of

* This is the glory of the Old Testament, that it had many wonderful and glorious appearances of the great and covenant God in a sweet and familiar way to His people [original footnote].

God: "And the Angel of God ... went before the camp of Israel" (Exod. 14. 19). Likewise, such a glorious Angel that was both of God's nature and name: "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in Him" (Exod. 23. 20, 21). He is also called the Angel of God's presence: "And the Angel of His presence saved them" (Isa. 63. 9); which Angel Paul calls Christ, whom the Israelites tempted in the wilderness by their murmuring, rebellions and ingratitude: "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted" (1 Cor. 10. 9).

Now the Lord Jesus, in a most wonderful and glorious manner, is typified by this cloud (Isa. 4. 6). It was a figure or symbol of Jehovah's presence with His people, for the Lord was many times pleased to manifest His divine presence by clouds. Jehovah appeared in a cloud to His servant Moses: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud" (Exod. 19. 9). So in Leviticus 16. 2: "For I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat." His bow also, being set in the cloud, was a precious and delightful sign of His covenant favour.

When this pillar of the cloud moved before the Israelites, they travelled forwards by day; and when the pillar of fire moved by night, the tribes moved onward by night. It was a faithful and constant guide through the terrible wilderness, in which I view it as a striking and lively symbol of Jehovah-Jesus being the constant Guide of His spouse and bride through all her providential changes, vicissitudes and various frames of soul till He brings her to the heavenly Canaan, which flows with milk and honey.

This cloud was likewise a figure of the great Redeemer, because it is called the Lord's going before them (Exod. 13. 21); which points out Christ, the Saviour, as the glorious Leader of His beloved children, taking them by the arms and teaching them to go. Hence as this pillar of the cloud led Israel through unknown ways safe to the promised Canaan, which was the glory of all lands, so Jehovah-Jesus is the infallible Guide to the soul through all the unknown paths of providence and grace, to eternal happiness and glory.

This cloudy pillar moved freely without any human aid, because the Lord dwelt in the cloud; so the Eternal Jehovah moves freely in His love, in all the dispensations of His providence and operations of His wondrous and glorious grace for the salvation of His chosen flock. Yea, it may be justly averred that Jehovah in all His divine Persons has been moving in His love towards His people from all eternity.

"He spread a cloud for a covering" (Psa. 105. 39). This cloud was of such a wonderful form as to cover the whole camp of Israel,* which

* It is supposed that this cloud covered twelve miles in compass [original footnote].

I view to be a most glorious emblem of the everlasting, unchanging and covering cloud of His boundless love to His redeemed people. Every poor, sickly and feeble Israelite was safe under this wondrous cloud. So is every weak, feeble, afflicted, tried and mourning babe belonging to the Lord Jesus as safe and secure under the covering cloud of His invariable love as if they were already in the eternal state of rest.

The cloud covered Israel from the wrath of Pharaoh and his formidable army, whose hearts burned with Satanical fire against Moses and the favoured tribes. So the Lord Jesus covers and defends His elect, when whole shafts of fiery darts come from the bows of infernal spirits against their souls, and shelters them from the heat of violent persecution and the furious rage and angry surges of the sea of indwelling sin.

The cloud covering the Israelitish camp must be very sweet and refreshing in their present situation in the wilderness; in which respect I view it as a delightful figure of the refreshing and covering shade of a Saviour's blood, invaluable righteousness and atonement, which covers all the church militant while passing through this waste howling land.

O the sweetness and greatness of the dear Redeemer's boundless love to His spouse and bride! O my soul, mayest thou be helped to admire and adore with flaming affection the matchless grace and amazing wonders of divine love, even that vast love of Jehovah's heart which He laid out and let out in the highest degree in and upon His dear children, who are His peculiar people, whom He calls His glory: "Israel, My glory!"

The pillar of the cloud and fire was the medium of Jehovah's presence with His people; so is the God-Man, Christ Jesus, the grand and only medium of all grace and glory to all the redeemed jewels of His love. This cloud also waited on all the indigencies and necessities of the Israelites in all their journeyings to the goodly Canaan. It rested in order that they might rest, and moved according to their travelling, which I view as a sweet, expressive emblem of the tender compassions of our precious Christ, who not only waits on our necessities, but bears with all our infirmities, needs and weaknesses, and graciously supplies all the wants of His people out of His infinite fulness.

O my soul, what canst thou desire more than there is in a precious Christ? O that thou mayest prostrate thyself before Him! It may be that thy wants are numberless and the depths of thy vileness inexpressible, and that thy complaint is that thou canst not pray, that thou canst only sigh and mourn. Well, Jesus knows the language of sighs and groans, and therefore He will help and bless thee, and give thee to know that thou art blessed, and that thou shalt be blessed.

Guide me, O my precious Jesus,
Through this pathless wilderness;
Help me in each trying hour
With Thine all-sufficient grace.

FRIENDSHIP

Our hymnwriter Anne Steele (1717-1778) also wrote a few pieces of prose. This is taken from the recently-published book, The Life and Times of Anne Steele.

Friendship has been oft my favourite theme and afforded many a pleasing thought; but hitherto my experience of this blessing answers not my ideas. Perhaps they are raised too high, or, it may be, this is too near akin to all other earthly pleasures which fly our wishes or disappoint our expectations.

Let me then raise my thoughts from earth and consider this amiable subject in its divine perfection. Let me meditate on the friendship of the blessed Jesus, who says, "Henceforth I call you not servants ... but ... friends." Wondrous condescension! Delightful assurance! Infinitely more engaging than the dearest ties on earth! An interest in His friendship how desirable, how extensive the blessing! It contains everything we need for time and eternity.

The dearest friend on earth, though his heart be ours and his will ever ready, may want the power to assist us. In necessities, dangers and distresses, we can have no more than his tenderest concern, his sincerest good wishes. We disclose our griefs with unavailing confidence, while friendship mourns but cannot help us. But Jesus is infinitely powerful; all power in heaven and in earth is His. He is able as well as willing to save to the uttermost; to Him we may lay open all our hearts and pour out our souls without reserve; to Him lament our frailties, for He alone can correct them; to Him reveal our wants, He can supply them all; to Him we may tell our sorrows; He can and will remove or give us strength to bear them; to Him we may recount our comforts and our joys, for He is the spring from whence they flow; He only can continue and increase them.

Our friends may be so far distant in our greatest extremities that we may be deprived even of the benefit of their kind condolence and compassionate sympathy, because they cannot be acquainted with our distress, but Jesus is ever near, ever ready to assist His beloved friends. He hears every groan and pities every sorrow; He is touched with a feeling of their infirmities, and His divine compassion and sympathising tenderness are far beyond all that mortal friendship ever knew. Are they exposed to want, affliction and distress? He shares in all their sufferings, and to express how intimately His affection is united to them, He even speaks of those sufferings as His own – I was sick, I was in prison, etc. – and kind offices done to the least of those whom He graciously condescends to call His brethren, He rewards as done to Himself; and if He hide His blissful face, yet still they dwell upon His heart, and in His

own best time He will relieve them. His sovereign hand can turn afflictions into blessings, and grief shall terminate in joy.

“His own soft hand shall wipe the tear
From every weeping eye.”

In straits and difficulties, if we apply to earthly friends for counsel and receive the best advice they are capable of giving, they are weak, short-sighted creatures like ourselves, and by following their directions, we may be led into irretrievable errors and misfortunes, but Jesus the heavenly Friend is infinite in wisdom. He guides His favourites by His counsels, the unerring dictates of His sacred Word, makes their way plain before them by the constant care of His providence, and conducts them, through all the difficulties and embarrassments of life, to eternal safety and happiness.

Human nature is frail, and the warmest, sincerest friendship may cool and change to indifference; and though friendship is ever ready to put the most favourable construction on the behaviour, to place every action in its fairest light, and to pity and forgive the faults it cannot mend, yet as it cannot know the heart, and judges only by words and actions, these are liable to misunderstandings and false representations, which may interrupt its course, and perhaps entirely dissolve those ties, which seemed too firm for time and chance [change?] to loosen.

But if the love of Jesus is unchangeable, He that made the heart knows all its inmost recesses, and can never be misinformed, can never mistake. If there is a principle of sincere love to Him, though buried amid a thousand imperfections, that love Himself inspired He approves, and will reward. The soul once His is His for ever; not all the powers of earth or hell, not things present nor things to come, shall be able to separate from His everlasting love.

In mortal friendships, the satisfaction a generous mind enjoys in obliging, and the sentiments of a grateful heart in being obliged, are exceedingly agreeable; but this heavenly Friend engages our warmest, our everlasting gratitude, and even gratitude is swallowed up in wonder, when we meditate on the immeasurable extent of His divine beneficence, in what He has done, is still doing, and will do for the objects of His love. Of enemies and traitors He has made friends and favourites. For guilty, lost, undone creatures, deserving nothing but never-ending misery and eternal death, He has brought pardon, life and immortal happiness; and this with His own most precious blood. It would be a surprising effect of friendship for a man to lay down his life for his friend, but Jesus freely gave His life for such as were His inveterate enemies. Stupendous love! Astonishing goodness!

At death, earthly friendships are dissolved; with the friend our comforts die, and the satisfaction we enjoyed in their society leaves only

the remembrance of the pleasures we have lost. But Jesus lives for ever, lives to make intercession above for His friends, to communicate constant supplies of grace to them below, to guide them through all the scenes of mortal life, to guard them from every danger, to strengthen them in encountering their last enemy, crown them with victory, and bring them safe to His glorious presence, to live with Him for ever and ever.

Happy, happy souls who have an interest in this all-sufficient, this everlasting Friend! O may I never rest satisfied till I can say with a humble yet well-grounded confidence, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend!" Blessed Jesus! teach me to know Thee and to love Thee more; let me hear the voice of Thy sacred Spirit whispering to my heart that Thou art mine; assure me of my interest in Thy almighty, Thy unchangeable love; then shall I be blest indeed.

THE THINGS OF GOD FIRST

From The Christian Man's Calling, by George Swinnock (1627-1673).

George Swinnock, ejected from Great Kimble, Buckinghamshire, is one of the lesser-known Puritans, but his writing is very simple and very profitable. The Editor of The Christian Man's Calling felt there is no better work on practical religion, "the gospel applied to everyday affairs." Though Swinnock's references to natural history are fanciful, this does not affect the vital truths he is illustrating.

Themistocles, seeing two cocks fight when he was going to a battle, pointed his soldiers to them, and said, "Do you see yonder combatants, how valiantly they deal their blows, with what fury they fight! and yet they fight not for their country, nor for their gods, nor for the honour of their ancestors, nor for glory, nor liberty, nor children! What courage then, my brave countrymen, should this put into our hearts, on whose resolution all these depend, and by whose valour they subsist!" So I say to thee, reader, dost thou see yonder worldling, how he rideth, runneth, toileth, moileth [to drudge], sweateth, wasteth his strength, wrongeth his body, makes a very pack-horse of it, and will scarce allow it time to eat or sleep? Dost thou see yonder superstitious person, how zealous he is for the inventions of men, laying his estate, limbs, liberty and life at the feet of his own idol? How like one upon a fiery steed full of mettle, he rides post out of God's way and from God's Word! Nay, dost thou see yonder sinner, what time he spends, what miseries he endures, what wealth he wastes, how hard he labours to gratify his lust? And yet these work not for the blood of Christ, nor for the love of the Father, nor for

the graces of the Spirit, nor for freedom from the curse of the law, the slavery of Satan, the torments of hell, nor for their souls, nor for their God, nor for fulness of joy and the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore. What zeal and fervency should this put into our hearts, dear friends, and what diligence and industry into our hands, when we work and trade for all these! And if we make them our business, our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Exercise thyself to godliness, not to superstition. As the ivy in time eats up the very heart of the oak it groweth about, so doth formality and superstition the very heart and life of religion. Let God's laws, not thy own or others' lusts, be the rule whereby thou governest thy heart and life.

Superstition, saith an eminent divine [Gurnall, *Christian in Complete Armour*] is to true holiness what the concubine is to the true wife – who is sure to draw the husband's love from her. This brat the devil hath long put out to nurse to the Romish church, which hath taken a great deal of pains to bring it up for him; and no wonder, when she is so well paid for its maintenance, it having brought her in so much worldly treasure and riches.

What some observe of horse-hairs [see note at the beginning], that though lifeless, yet lying nine days under water they turn to snakes, may pertinently be applied to superstitious ceremonies which, though at first dead, or held at most but indifferent, yet in continuance of time have quickened and done much mischief. There is a simplicity in the Word and worship of God which I would entreat thee to look after. "I fear, lest ... your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11. 3), not as simplicity is opposed to wisdom, but as simplicity is opposed to mixtures; compositions do but diminish and abate the virtue of simples. The more natural and simple the wine is, the more pure it is; mixtures do but adulterate it. The more simple the worship of God is – I speak of gospel simplicity and order – the more pure it is. Human inventions and mixtures may abase it, they cannot adorn it. God's altar under the law must be of earth; "If thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it" (Exod. 20. 24, 25). Men are apt to think that by lifting up tools on God's altar they polish it, but God Himself saith they pollute it.

When the church was in her infancy, she was dressed in the swaddling clothes of ceremonies; but since she is grown up, God hath provided her other attire. To the Jews, the Sun of righteousness was behind, and therefore the shadow of those ceremonies was before. They were in force and power; but to us Gentiles the Sun of righteousness is before, and therefore the shadow of ceremonies is behind. When Christ came, those shadows seemed to say, as the angel to Jacob, "Let me go, for the day breaketh" (Gen. 32. 26); at the death of Christ the veil of the

temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, to acquaint us that the Jewish ceremonies must then vanish (Matt. 27. 51).

Reader, I would not be mistaken; I do not advise thee against that order and decency which is commanded in the worship of God, nor against active obedience to authority in things that are circumstantial, or not directly nor consequentially forbidden in Scripture, but I would counsel thee to beware lest, like the dog in the fable, whilst thou art snapping at any shadow, thou dost not lose the substance; and withal I must tell thee that as when the shadows grow long it is a sign the sun is declining, so when those shadows, those even indifferent things increase, usually the substance, the light of holiness, decreaseth.

When corn runs out into straw and chaff, those that feed on it may well be thin and lean; but when it runs into ear and kernel, thou mayest expect such as eat of it to be fat and well-favoured. When religion runs into formalities and ceremonies, her followers can never be thriving spiritually – they may starve, for all the gaudy flowers wherewith the several dishes on her table are decked and set forth. It is the power of godliness alone which, like wholesome and substantial food, will distribute nourishment and strength to the inner man. I expect nourishment from bread, not from straw or stones, because God hath annexed His blessing to the former, not to the latter. I look for spiritual strength from divine institutions, not from human inventions, because God's promise is made to word-worship, not to will-worship. One would think the sparks of that fire wherewith Aaron's sons were consumed should fly in the faces of men, and make them afraid to offer up to the Lord what He commanded them not (Lev. 10. 1, 2).

Exercise thyself to this worshipping the true God according to His revealed will. Do not dally and trifle at it, be not cold and careless about it. Take heed of the worldling's political principles: "Fair and softly goeth far. Too much of one thing is good for nothing. It is good to be religious, but not too conscientious. A little moderation would not do amiss." These men would serve thee as ignorant mountebanks do their patients, that whilst they go about to cool the liver, lest it should set the blood in a flame, kill the stomach, and thereby necessarily destroy the body. They pretend some fear that thou mayest work too hard, even to thy hurt, when thou canst never do enough, much less too much, for thy God and thine everlasting good. I must needs tell thee that there is an impossibility of dividing thy service betwixt thy sins and thy Saviour, and of parting thy heart and work between the world and the word: "No man can serve two masters" (Matt. 6. 24). If like a meteor thou hangest between heaven and earth, haltest between Christ and the flesh, as a hunting dog between two hares, running sometime after this, sometime after that, thou wilt be sure at last to lose both.

Those creatures under the law, which did both move in the waters and hover up and down in the air, were unclean in God's account (Lev. 11. 10). There is a story of a bastard eagle, which hath one foot close like a goose, with which she swims in the waters and dives for fish, and another foot open and armed with talons, with which she soareth in the air and seizeth her prey; but she, participating of both natures, is weak in either, and at last becomes a prey to every ordinary vulture. The ambidexter in religion, who is both for the flesh and the spirit, for riches and righteousness, is all his time a servant of sin, and will at last become a prey to Satan.

Wherefore I must entreat thee, reader, to make godliness thy sole design and delight, thy main occupation and recreation. If thou find not the golden veins upon the surface, or just under the skin of the earth, do not throw off thy trade, nor cast away thy tools, but delve and dig lower; thou shalt certainly at length come to the rich treasure. The virtuous man in Greek is denominated from a word that signifieth industrious and diligent. Labour is the way to get and increase virtue, and the more virtuous thou art, the more laborious thou wilt be; frequent use must keep thy spiritual arms from rust.

It is a more worthy thing to abound in work than to abound in wealth. Melanchthon spake nobly, Let others take riches; give me labour. They who have been busy about much meaner studies have yet pursued them with incredible pleasure and extraordinary pains. Endymion spent whole nights on rocks and mountains in contemplating the motions of the stars. It is said of Chrysippus that he was so intent on his book that he had starved his body, had not his maid put meat into his mouth. Cicero professed he would part with all he was worth that he might but live and die among his books. Did they reckon human knowledge, that curious piece of vanity, at so high a rate that they would trample on their possessions, take any pains to procure it, to promote it? What a price shouldst thou set upon godliness, upon divine knowledge, which is the very seed of eternal life (John 17. 3)! Shouldst not thou undervalue thy estate and strength for it? Shouldst not thou spend all thy time, employ all thy talents, and improve all thy opportunities for the furthering of it?

O that holy Paul might be thy pattern: "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24. 16). Here is Paul's precious cabinet, and his care to preserve it; his cabinet was his conscience void of offence, a treasure of inestimable value; in this cabinet were all the jewels of divine graces. His faith and love, his hope and humility, his patience and heavenly-mindedness, were glistening in it gloriously, like so many costly and sparkling diamonds. But observe Paul's care of this cabinet: "I exercise

myself, to have always a conscience void of offence." Paul knew many subtle thieves were abroad, and therefore he must make it his business to keep his pearls, or otherwise they would be stolen from him. He knew if he were robbed he were ruined; nay, if but a flaw were made in the jewel of his conscience, it would be of exceeding ill consequence to him; therefore he did exercise himself to keep a conscience void of offence.

Again, exercise thyself to godliness; make it thy business in the whole course of thy life, nay, in every passage of thy conversation. As the blood runs through the whole body and every vein of the body, so godliness must run through our whole conversation and every particular action of it. Godliness must be like the sun (though its situation be in heaven, and that the main place of its residence) that enlightens and warms the whole body of the air, and all the earth by its influence; let godliness shine on all thy natural, civil and spiritual works; "nothing must be hid from the heat thereof." Reader, observe the command, "Be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1. 15).

The Greek word and the Latin word for conversation come of a verb that signifieth to turn; to note, that which way soever a Christian turneth himself he must be holy. He must be holy in his closet, alone, holy among company, holy at home, holy abroad, holy in his shop, holy among his sheep, holy in the church, holy in his chamber, holy at his table, holy in his travels, holy in prosperity, holy in adversity, holy in every relation and in every condition, "in all manner of conversation." As oil is laid over all colours to make them durable, so godliness must be laid on every part and practice of our conversation, and thereby they will be permanent to our comfort, and run parallel with the line of eternity. We lay gold, because excellent, on all sorts of metals; godliness, which is more precious than fine gold, must be laid on our naturals, morals, intellectuals; all of them must have their virtue and value from it. The truth is, they all, like ciphers, stand for nothing unless this figure be joined with them and put before them.

Believers are commanded to be "holy men" (Exod. 22. 31). In the original it is *men of holiness*; and "ye shall be men of holiness unto Me" – that is, all over holy. As Christ is called "a Man of sorrows" (Isa. 53. 3), because His whole Man, body and soul, was steeped in tears, and His whole time, from the womb to the tomb, was spent in sorrows and sufferings, full of tribulations; and as Antichrist is called a "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2. 3) because he is, as Beza observes well, mere sin, nothing but sin, so the children of God should be men of holiness, mere holiness, made up of holiness, nothing but holiness. Every part of them should be holy, and every deed done by them should be holy. Holiness in their hearts should, as the lungs in the body, be in continual motion; and

holiness in their life must run through all their works, as the woof through the whole web.

The Jews had their daily, weekly, monthly, yearly addresses unto God, to teach us that we must be always trading heavenward, that there must be an unwearied commerce, an uninterrupted intercourse, betwixt God and our souls. Saints' lives are therefore compared to a walk, and called a "walking with God," or a "walking before God." They must still walk as in company with Him, and tread every step as under His eye (Gen. 5. 22 and 17. 1). The planets, because of their wandering nature, are sometimes nearer to, sometimes farther from the earth, yet always within the zodiac, the highway of the sun. So the Christian, though he be sometimes stooping to the earth in his particular calling, sometimes mounting up to heaven in the immediate worship of God, yet he must always be in the path of godliness – the highway of the Sun of righteousness. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long," saith Solomon (Prov. 23. 17). Whether a Christian be eating or drinking, or buying or selling, or ploughing or sowing, or riding or walking, whatever he be doing, or wherever he be going, he must be always in the fear of the Lord. Godliness must be his guide, his measure, and his end; as the salt, it must be sprinkled on every dish to make it savoury. Thy life, O Christian, must be so led that it may be a continued serving of God.

The precept is full (though if a true Christian, thou wilt esteem it a privilege), that whatsoever thou dost, thou art to "do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10. 31). God must be the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end," of all thy actions. Thy duty is to "pass the time of thy sojourning here in fear" (1 Pet. 1. 17). Every moment must be devoted to God; and as all seasons, so all actions, must be sacred. There is a prophecy that in Jerusalem, "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS TO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Judah and Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 14. 20, 21). Mark, the same inscription is to be upon the bells of horses, and on every pot which was on the high priest's mitre, HOLINESS TO THE LORD, to teach us that everything, though but of common use, should be sanctified to God's service – that every ordinary enterprise, saith Calvin, should be a sacrifice.

When men can live and plod on in their profession, and not be able to say when they last experienced any living sense of the love of God or of the privileges they have in the blood of Christ, I do not know how they can keep themselves from being ensnared.

John Owen

“OLD CALEB”

He was born exactly 150 years ago – on January 19th, 1858. As a boy he knew John Kershaw well. Mr. Kershaw used to visit his home, and loved to talk to the boys, showing them the gold watch he received on his 50th anniversary. As an aged man, “old Caleb” loved to tell his children and grandchildren about former days, but especially what the Lord has done for him over the years.

He would speak about how, as a young husband with three small children, he feared that his wife was dying. Being poor, he was out early one morning, working as a lamplighter, when the words powerfully arrested him: “And Jacob was left alone.” He feared to tell his wife, but on arriving home she greeted him: “Caleb, I’m going to leave you. While you were out the Lord spoke clearly to me: ‘The Master is come, and calleth for thee.’” “Yes,” he said, “the Lord has told me too.” She died soon afterward.

One occasion he specially loved to speak about. On one Lord’s day he went to chapel feeling as sinful, hard and indifferent as it was possible to be. But the opening hymn was 167, and as it was sung his heart was melted as never before or afterwards – especially the verses:

“Alas! the cruel spear
Went deep into His side;
And the rich flood of purple gore
Their murderous weapons dyed.

“The waves of swelling grief
Did o’er His bosom roll,
And mountains of almighty wrath,
Lay heavy on His soul.

“Down to the shades of death
He bowed His awful head;
Yet He arose to live and reign,
When death itself is dead.”

Another occasion was when setting out to chapel one beautiful summer morning and seeing a crowd of people going off to the seaside in “a waggonette.” As he put it: “The devil began to inject my soul with infidelity. ‘You going to that miserable chapel on a day like this, and these people going to the seaside to enjoy themselves. And how do you know there is a God?’” He never forgot how the Lord delivered him: “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.”

Marrying a second time, he had four more children, and knew his times of sadness. Of the seven, one died as a baby; one was killed in the Great War; and one (a most godly woman) died at the age of forty; another losing her husband in his early thirties.

At one time one of the grandsons was so ill that it was thought he could not live. So “old Caleb” and his wife stayed up all night in prayer. In the early hours of the morning they received their answer, and went round to their daughter’s, saying, “That child can’t die!”

One day some distinguished relative, “Aunt Deborah,” arrived – one of her few visits, when she had to be treated with great respect. It was prayer meeting night. But, as the grandchildren were told many years later, “I wondered whatever to say but your grandmother just quietly said, ‘Aunt Deborah, it is prayer meeting night. We cannot miss. You will be most welcome to come with us,’ to which ‘Aunt Deborah’ replied, ‘Thank you. I shall be delighted to accompany you.’”

How sad that that generation of godly people is no longer with us! They *lived* for the house of God, and the text often put on their funeral cards was: “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.”

Caleb had a sad trial mingled with blessing when his wife suddenly died. She had not been well, and was unable to go to the prayer meeting. But before her husband left, she made a request she had never made before. She said, “Will you give out hymn 477, ‘Give me the wings of faith to rise’?”; and then added, “Read Revelation chapter 21.” On his return home, she was dead in the chair with her Bible open before her.

In his old age (he lived to be over 90), he had a way of raising his hand when saying something important – one especially:

“Nor shall I know a Father’s frown,
But ever with Him reign,
And wear an everlasting crown,
For me to die is gain.”

Not long before he died, he spoke just a few words at the prayer meeting. He said, “Yesterday one of the neighbours asked me to go in and hear the king’s [Christmas Day] speech. It was good what he said, but I can’t remember one thing. But,” he continued, “over fifty years, nearly sixty years ago, I heard the King of kings speak, and I can remember clearly what *He* said.” It was on the promenade in the Isle of Man, and he was wondering what this one was doing, and what another was thinking, when the words came with power: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.” It was a word never forgotten.

“The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.” When he died his friends thought of the hymn about Moses that was often sung in the Sabbath school:

“When at length his hair grew hoary,
Honoured, useful, blessing, blest,
God received him up to glory,
Changed his labour into rest.”

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

A letter by Samuel Rutherford to the Viscountess of Kenmure

Madam,

All dutiful obedience in the Lord remembered. I have heard of your ladyship's infirmity and sickness with grief; yet I trust you have learned to say, "It is the Lord, let Him do whatsoever seemeth good in His eyes."

It is now many years since the apostate angels made a question whether their will or the will of their Creator should be done; and since that time froward mankind hath always in that same suit of law appeared to plead with them against God, in daily repining against His will. But the Lord, being both party and judge, hath obtained a decret [a judicial sentence], and saith, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. 46. 10). It is then best for us, in the obedience of faith and in an holy submission, to give that to God which the law of His almighty and just power will have of us.

Therefore, Madam, your Lord willeth you, in all states of life, to say, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven"; and herein shall you have comfort, that He, who seeth perfectly through all your evils, and knoweth the frame and constitution of your nature, and what is most healthful for your soul, holdeth every cup of affliction to your head with His own gracious hand. Never believe that your tender-hearted Saviour, who knoweth the strength of your stomach, will mix that cup with one drachm-weight of poison. Drink then with the patience of the saints, and the God of patience bless your physic.

I have heard your ladyship complain of deadness and want of the bestirring power of the life of God. But courage! He who walked in the garden, and made a noise that made Adam hear His voice, will also at some times walk in your soul, and make you hear a more sweet word. Yet you will not always hear the noise and the din of His feet, when He walketh. You are, at such a time, like Jacob mourning at the supposed death of Joseph, when Joseph was living. The new creature, the image of the second Adam, is living in you, and yet you are mourning at the supposed death of the life of Christ in you. Ephraim is bemoaning and mourning (Jer. 31. 18), when he thinketh God is far off and heareth not; and yet God is like the bridegroom (Song 2. 9), standing only behind a thin wall and laying to His ear; for He saith Himself, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." I have good confidence, Madam, that Christ Jesus, whom your soul through forests and mountains is seeking, is within you. And yet I speak not this to lay a pillow under your head, or to dissuade you from a holy fear of the loss of your Christ, or of provoking and "stirring up the Beloved before He please," by sin.

I know, in spiritual confidence, the devil will come in, as in all other good works, and cry, "Half mine," and so endeavour to bring you under

a fearful sleep, till He whom your soul loveth be departed from the door, and have left off knocking. And, therefore, here the Spirit of God must hold your soul's feet in the golden mid-line betwixt confident resting in the arms of Christ and presumptuous and drowsy sleeping in the bed of fleshly security.

Therefore, worthy lady, so count little of yourself, because of your own wretchedness and sinful drowsiness, that you count not also little of God in the course of His unchangeable mercy. For there be many Christians most like unto young sailors, who think the shore and the whole land doth move when the ship and they themselves are moved; just so, not a few do imagine that God moveth and saileth and changeth places because their giddy souls are under sail and subject to alteration, to ebbing and flowing. But "the foundation of the Lord abideth sure." God knoweth that you are His own. Wrestle, fight, go forward, watch, fear, believe, pray; and then you have all the infallible symptoms of one of the elect of Christ within you.

You have now, Madam, a sickness before you, and also after that a death. Gather then now food for the journey. God give you eyes to see through sickness and death, and to see something beyond death. I doubt not but that, if hell were betwixt you and Christ as a river which you behoved to cross ere you could come at Him, but you would willingly put in your foot and make through to be at Him, upon hope that He would come in Himself in the deepest of the river, and lend you His hand. Now, I believe your hell is dried up, and you have only these two shallow brooks, sickness and death, to pass through; and you have also a promise that Christ shall do more than meet you, even that He shall come Himself, and go with you foot for foot, yea, and bear you in His arms. O then! O then! for the joy that is set before you, for the love of the Man (who is also "God over all, blessed for ever"), that is standing upon the shore to welcome you, run your race with patience. The Lord go with you.

Your Lord will not have you, nor any of His servants, to exchange for the worse. But to God's children the bounds and the limits of death are abridged and drawn into a more narrow compass. So that when you die, a piece of death shall only seize upon you, or the least part of you shall die, and that is the dissolution of the body; for in Christ you are delivered from the second death; and, therefore, as one born of God, commit not sin (although you cannot live and not sin), and that serpent shall but eat your earthly part. As for your soul, it is above the law of death. But it is fearful and dangerous to be a debtor and servant to sin; for the count of sin you will not be able to make good before God, except Christ both count and pay for you.

I trust also, Madam, that you will be careful to present to the Lord the present estate of this decaying kirk. For what shall be concluded in

Parliament anent [in reference to] her, the Lord knoweth. Sure I am, the decree of a most fearful parliament in heaven is at the very point of coming forth, because of the sins of the land. For we “have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (Isa. 5. 24). “Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter” (Isa. 59. 14). Lo! the prophet, as if he had seen us and our kirk, resembleth *Justice*, to be handled as an enemy holden out at the ports of our city [so is she banished!], and *Truth* to a person sickly and diseased, fallen down in a deadly swooning fit in the streets, before he can come to an house.

The priests “have caused many to stumble at the law,” and “have corrupted the covenant of Levi” (Mal. 2. 8). “But what will they do in the end?” Therefore give the Lord no rest for Zion. Stir up your husband, your brother [the Marquis of Argyle] and all with whom you are in favour and credit to stand upon the Lord’s side against Baal. I have good hope that your husband loveth the peace and prosperity of Zion. The peace of God be upon him for his intended courses anent the establishment of a powerful ministry in this land.

Thus, not willing to weary your ladyship further, I commend you now and always to the grace and mercy of that God who is able to keep you that you fall not. The Lord Jesus be with your spirit.

Your ladyship’s servant at all dutiful obedience in Christ,

S.R.

Anwoth, July 27th, 1628

BOOK REVIEWS

David: Man of Prayer and Man of War, by Walter J. Chantry; hardback; 294 pages; price £12.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Written by the present Editor of *The Banner of Truth* magazine, this study of David’s life first appeared as monthly articles. Its emphasis is the spiritual lessons to be learned from the life of David, which we found very helpful and profitable.

We would not agree with the author’s seemingly condoning David (and others) not strictly speaking the truth in times of war and extremity (see page 62).

Sermon by Mr. John S. Green, “Sleepy Souls Warned”; pamphlet; obtainable free of charge from Mr. David Kerley, Bethany, 49 Station Road, Over, Cambridge, CB24 5NJ.

This is the first sermon to be produced by the friends at Swavesey, and it is hoped that others will follow. It is an excellent sermon, “Sleepy Souls Warned,”

on Song of Solomon 5. 2, 3. The sermon seems to have been well produced and made easy to read, and would be eminently suitable for a reading service.

For those unfamiliar with Mr. Green's name, he was formerly pastor at Gower Street Memorial Chapel, London.

THE DIVINE WEAVER

Man's life is laid in a loom of time,
To a pattern he does not see
While the Weaver works and the shuttles fly
Until eternity.

Some shuttles are filled with silver thread,
And some with threads of gold;
While often but the darker hue
Is all that they may hold.

But the Weaver watches with skilful eye
Each shuttle fly to and fro,
And sees the pattern so deftly wrought
As the loom works sure and slow.

God surely planned that pattern;
Each thread – the dark and the fair –
Was chosen by His master skill
And placed in the web with care.

He only knows the beauty,
And guides the shuttles which hold
The threads so unattractive,
As well as the threads of gold.

Not till the loom is silent,
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the pattern
And explain the reason why

The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skilful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He had planned.

Author Unknown

The duties that God has for us along our ordinary path of life are not in proportion to the strength we have in ourselves, but in proportion to the help and relief that is laid up for us in Christ.

John Owen

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
FEBRUARY 2008

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

THE MOUNTAIN MADE A PLAIN

*Sermon preached by J.C. Philpot at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street,
London, on Lord's day morning, August 11th, 1844*

Text: "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it" (Zech. 4. 7).

The children of Israel were, beyond all controversy, a typical people, and therefore God's dealings with Israel after the flesh were typical of His dealings with His elect family, Israel after the Spirit. This typical character of God's dealings with them we may trace throughout the whole of the Old Testament. I need not multiply instances, for they are to be found in almost every page, but I shall confine myself this morning to that portion of their history which, with God's blessing, may throw some light upon the text.

You know that as a chastisement for their sins, the children of Israel were carried captive to Babylon, and remained there seventy years. When the seventy years, however, were expired, "the Lord," we read, "stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (He is the God,) which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1. 1-3).

In obedience to this edict, many of the children of Israel left Babylon to return to the land of their fathers, and to Jerusalem, their beloved abode. And one of the first things which they did, after "they set the altar upon his bases" (Ezra 3. 3), was to commence rebuilding the temple of the Lord, which had been laid in ruins by Nebuchadnezzar. We have an account of the laying of the foundation, which I need not enter into, in the Book of Ezra (3. 8-13) where we find that Zerubbabel, who was the temporal head, and Joshua, who was the spiritual head – the one being the prince, and the other the high priest – "set forward the work of the house of the Lord." And we gather from Zechariah 4. 9 that the hands of Zerubbabel in particular laid the foundation-stone, he being

the governor of Judah, and the lineal descendant of David, and thus a type of the Lord Jesus.

But no sooner was the foundation of the temple laid than difficulties arose as to its completion. "The adversaries of Judah," when their offer to become co-partners and co-workers was refused by Zerubbabel and Joshua, "hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose" during several reigns, and wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes, complaining that they were "building up the rebellious and the bad city once more"; and if they succeeded in setting up the walls again, there would be no more toll or tribute paid to the kings of Babylon. In consequence of these obstacles, for thirteen or fourteen years was the building of the temple much hindered, and during the latter portion of that period entirely suspended.

But at the end of this period of fourteen years, the Lord raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, in order to stir up the spirits of the people to go on with the building of the temple in spite of all the opposition made to it, as we find in Ezra 5. 1, 2: "Then the prophets Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them." And we find the Lord prospering the undertaking, and moving the heart of Darius king of Persia, so that he gave command that they should not be interrupted in the building of the temple, but should have money given them from the king's tribute towards the completion (Ezra 6. 8).

At the time, then, that this prophecy was delivered – which was just at the end of the fourteen years, but whilst all the difficulties still existed in the way of finishing the temple – the heart of the people was faint and desponding, for they saw no prospect of the temple ever being completed. It was begun, but how it was to be finished they knew not; and their hearts sank within them at seeing the walls of the temple only half-reared, and no probability of the headstone ever being put on.

Under these trying circumstances it was, that the Lord spoke these words to Zerubbabel, who had laid the foundation of the temple: "Who art thou, O great mountain?" – thus alluding to the difficulties, opposition and impediments that lay in the way of completing the temple. "Who art thou, O great mountain?" What are all these adversaries, all this opposition, all these difficulties? "Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." All the difficulties shall as much disappear as though a mountain in a moment were to sink down into a level. "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: My house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem" (Zech. 1. 16).

He who has begun the temple shall also complete it; as we read, “the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; His hands shall also finish it” (Zech. 4. 9).

And so it happened; the prophecy was literally and historically fulfilled; the mountain became a plain, and the headstone was brought forth and put upon the temple with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it,” as we read, “And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy” (Ezra 6. 15, 16).

These, then, are the historical circumstances on which I hope, with God’s blessing, this morning to build up a spiritual and experimental interpretation, and to show spiritually, if God enable me, how all the mountains (and many there are) which stand in the way of the completion of the work of grace in the soul, and the building of the inward temple where the Holy Ghost takes up His abode (for “your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost”), all disappear before the spiritual Zerubbabel, the Lord of life and glory. And how He is sure to bring forth the headstone, and put it upon the spiritual building with shoutings of “Grace, grace unto it.” As this spiritual interpretation is my object, and this the line of things I mean to pursue, I shall, with God’s blessing, take up the words as they lie before me.

I. The Lord here begins with an inquiry, “Who art thou, O great mountain?” I never saw a mountain till I was more than twenty-three years old; and I shall never forget how surprised I was, as I was travelling through North Wales, when I first beheld its steep and rocky sides. My idea of a mountain was that it was a high, grassy hill, an elevated knoll, covered with beautiful trees and herbage up to the very top. But as to those lofty peaks that thrust themselves into the sky, completely barren of verdure, with their deep and rugged precipices – of such a mountain as that I had not the least conception. In carrying, then, into your mind what a mountain is, you must not think of such a hill as Primrose Hill [some local hill], or such grassy knolls as are in this level, cultivated country, but you must conceive an object that rears up its lofty peaks into the sky and presents an insuperable and impenetrable barrier, an obstacle not to be clambered over, but which must be entirely removed that a free passage may be afforded. And unless you carry into your mind this idea, that these tall peaks, deep precipices and unfathomable abysses present an insuperable obstacle, you cannot enter into the mind of the Spirit in the text, and will therefore lose much of the sweetness, beauty and force of it.

The Lord, then, addresses Himself to this mountain, and says, "Who art thou, O great mountain?" As though He had said, Let us look at thee; let us take thy dimensions; let us see thy heights; let us look at thy depths; let us view thee in all thy magnitude, and examine this insuperable obstacle that stands in the way. "Who art thou?" Be thou ever so high; be thou ever so huge; be thy precipices ever so deep; be thy peaks ever so lofty; "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel" – let Him but speak, let Him but appear – "thou shalt become a plain." It matters not how high; it matters not how deep; "before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

Now, let us look at this spiritually. Say that the Lord has begun a work of grace upon your hearts. Zerubbabel (Jesus, set forth by that name), the true Prince of Israel, through the operation of God, the Holy Ghost, has laid the foundation of a spiritual temple in your conscience. But no sooner is the foundation-stone of God's grace laid in the soul than it is with us spiritually as it was with the Jews naturally: opposition arises, and enemies start up on every hand; and the great mountain which before did not appear rears up its head. The adversaries of the church were quiet enough when she was in Babylon; but when she came forth to build up the temple at Jerusalem, then they started up. So spiritually: all the enemies, obstacles, impediments and difficulties that the quickened soul meets with were dead as stones, when there was no work going on in the conscience; but no sooner does Zerubbabel lay the foundation-stone of grace in the heart than adversaries rise up thick, lofty mountains begin to start up and, where before there was nothing but a plain, thrust up their lofty peaks into the sky.

1. For instance, there is the mountain of *God's inflexible justice*. Who knows anything of God's justice, righteousness, purity, holiness and indignation against sin whilst in a state of nature? But when the spiritual Zerubbabel lays the foundation-stone of grace in the heart, this lofty mountain for the first time begins to appear; the high and rugged peaks of God's immutable justice, and the deep abysses and precipices of eternal woe, this Sinai mountain, hitherto not perceived, rises up betwixt heaven and the soul. Now it cannot be passed over. There are many who are trying to wind their way round this mountain, but they will only fall down its precipices. Some skilful engineers are attempting to lower its peaks and bridge its ravines, but the rocks will fall upon them, and the bridges break under them, and let them down into ever-devouring flames.

The mountain of God's justice in a broken law is not to be passed over by a fallen creature like man; it ever stands up as an impenetrable barrier betwixt God and the soul till Zerubbabel appears; but "before Zerubbabel," this lofty mountain of God's inflexible justice becomes a plain. He has fulfilled it; therefore He has removed it out of the way. As

the apostle speaks, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and *took it out of the way*, nailing it to His cross" (Col. 2. 14). By fulfilling the law, He removed the impenetrable barrier of God's inflexible justice. He made no bridge over the precipices; He did not lower a little the peaks, that the sinner might by degrees clamber over them; but by fulfilling the law, He completely put it out of the way. Thus before the spiritual Zerubbabel this mountain of inflexible justice becomes a plain.

2. But there is also *an unbelieving heart*, which stands up as a great mountain betwixt salvation and the soul. We know nothing of an unbelieving heart till God the Spirit makes the conscience tender in His fear. Deceived by Satan, we mistake presumption for faith, and vain-confidence for a good hope through grace; the unbelief and infidelity of our fallen nature are completely hidden from us and we know no more about the workings of a fearful, doubting heart, and the utter impossibility of creating spiritual faith in our own souls than the dead in the graveyard.

But when the spiritual Zerubbabel sets His hand to the work and lays the foundation-stone of grace in the conscience, then for the first time this mountain begins to appear – the mountain of a doubting, unbelieving and infidel heart, which questions everything that God has revealed, and will not and cannot receive the truth as it is in Jesus. And O what struggles, difficulties, perplexities and exercises are felt in the soul through this great mountain of unbelief which rears up its huge head so unexpectedly!

When God the Spirit convinces us of unbelief, He does not *create* the mountain, for if He did, it would make God the author of sin; but He *shows* us the mountain which before was hidden from our view, and makes us feel what a barrier it is betwixt heaven and our souls. The mountain was there before, but we did not see it. When this truth is revealed by the Spirit in the conscience, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," we are brought to see that to live and die in unbelief is to live and die in our sins. As soon, then, as we get faith, we feel unbelief in our hearts. For we need living faith to believe our own unbelief, spiritual light to see its existence and divine life to feel its power. O this great mountain that stands up as an insuperable obstacle between heaven and our souls!

But the Lord says, "Who art thou, O great mountain?" Art thou so high, art thou so deep, art thou so immense, that thou canst not be removed? For if it be not removed, not a single soul can get to heaven. But some say, "We must do our best to get over this mountain; we must take God at His Word; we must believe His promises, look to Jesus and rely upon His truth." In other words we must, with a great deal of pains

and skill, lower this mountain, level it, tunnel it, cut through it, or make a road over it. But a living soul finds it no such easy thing to take God at His Word, no such simple thing to believe the Lord's promises. He finds that all this "taking God at His Word," leaves him still in the mud and mire of doubt and fear, still in the pit wherein is no water, still under the curse and sentence of a broken law. Therefore, all this taking God at His Word, looking to the promises, relying on Jesus, without the Spirit's inward work and witness, is found in our experience to be utterly unable to remove the mountain of unbelief.

Now the Lord says, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." The spiritual Zerubbabel, with one glance of His eye, with one touch of His finger, with one word of His lips, in one moment can cause faith to spring up in the soul to receive Him in all His covenant fulness. And thus the great mountain of unbelief, which seemed completely irremovable and utterly impassable, sinks down into a plain, and we can no more refuse to believe when the spiritual Zerubbabel gives us faith than we could believe before He gave it. When faith is given, of all things it is most easy to believe; the mountain before Zerubbabel sinks into a plain.

3. But there is also *the burden of sin*, that lies hard and heavy on a tender conscience. The iniquities and transgressions of his past life, the base, base backsliding of which he has been and is perpetually guilty, the slips, falls and inconsistent words and actions, and the horrible workings of a depraved nature – all these at times lie with great weight and power on the conscience of an awakened sinner and, like a mountain, press down his soul to the earth. How is this great mountain of sin and sinfulness, asks the soul, to be removed? I cannot change my own heart; I cannot take away the burden of sin; I cannot purge my guilty conscience; I cannot bring spiritual, holy and heavenly thoughts into my mind. How is this great mountain to be removed? Why, such a mountain as that left upon the soul would be a millstone to sink it into the lowest depths of hell.

But when the Lord says, "Who art thou, O great mountain?" this burden of sin, this weight of guilt that makes thy soul cry and groan – what art thou "before Zerubbabel"? Let Him but speak with power, "it shall become a plain." For Zerubbabel, the spiritual Zerubbabel, has shed atoning blood to wash away all this guilt, has brought in everlasting righteousness to justify the ungodly, and has a heart full of love which He can and does shed abroad in the soul of His beloved ones. Thus, then, this burden of guilt and shame, this great mountain, before Zerubbabel, let Him but speak, becomes a plain.

4. *A hard heart.* And O, what a burden a hard heart is to one whose conscience has been made tender in God's fear! A hard, rocky, unfeeling

heart – what a great mountain is this betwixt God and the soul! When we cannot produce one feeling of contrition, when we cannot raise up one pang of godly sorrow, when not a sigh will come out of our steely bosom, not a single tear fall from our iron eye, O at what a distance does this hard heart keep us from the Lord! What a burden, what a plague, what a source of guilt and trouble is a hard heart to all that fear His name! O this great mountain that thrusts up its lofty peak into the sky, so that heaven is not seen, nor the countenance of God beheld, nor the lovingkindness of Jesus' heart is realised, but nothing seen except this dark and impenetrable barrier between God and our souls! We cannot move it. All the preaching in the world cannot stir it, all the praying in the world cannot move it, and all the exertions of the creature cannot alter it. You might as well try to remove Snowdon from its base as try to move away the rocky barrier of a hard, unfeeling, impenetrable heart.

But, before Zerubbabel, the spiritual Zerubbabel, the mountain becomes a plain. In one moment the hard, unfeeling heart that seems shut up in chains of adamant ice, in one moment, can He make it flow down and dissolve. Did not the church feel this, when she cried, "O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that *the mountains might flow down at Thy presence*"? (Isa. 64. 1). This is the way whereby Zerubbabel removes the mountain of a hard heart. He does not remove the mountain (if I may use the expression) *bodily*, but He makes it dissolve, flow down, and melt into a plain. He softens the heart (as Job says, "God maketh my heart soft": 23. 16), and makes it tender and contrite before Him.

5. But a thousand difficulties, a thousand perplexities stand in the way of a soul that fears God. Men devoid of the grace of God, in a fleshly profession of religion, have no difficulties; the constant burden of their song is, "What a pleasant thing religion is!" "It never was designed," they quote, "to make our pleasure less." But if such professors knew anything of the difficulties, exercises, temptations and sorrows that lie in the path of every real Christian, we should not hear so much about cheerful piety, which is often but another name for delusion and hypocrisy.

Look at the rebuilding of the temple by the remnant that returned from Babylon; view the obstacles thrown in the way of its completion; see how the enemies start up at every step; how the great king sends his commands not to go on with it; how the builders are compelled for many years to desist from putting a single stone upon the walls; what despondency seized the breasts of those that loved Zion to see the place of God's abode desolate; and how indeed they found that prophecy fulfilled, that the wall should be built in troublous times! (Dan. 9. 25).

But does not this *delay of the work* set forth one of the great mountains that the children of God find in their path? The work of grace

seems often at a standstill in them. And what a trying path it is to God's people that perhaps for thirteen or fourteen years they cannot trace the hands of the spiritual Zerubbabel to have laid a single stone in their heart, or raised up one clear and striking Ebenezer! This apparently complete suspension of the work makes them often say, Surely if I were the Lord's, I should feel more than I do! I should have more going on in my soul; I should certainly experience more sorrow or more joy; more castings down or more liftings up; more darkness or more light; more-striking dealings of the Lord in providence; more manifest testimonies in grace; surely if the Lord were at work on my conscience, I should not be at this standstill for so many years.

But look at the temple. Several years elapsed without a single stone being put upon the walls. The foundation had been laid, and the walls raised to a certain height, but for a long time there was a complete suspension of work. This entire cessation from building, producing hopelessness and despondency in the minds of the people as to its completion, was chiefly the "great mountain" that the Lord declared should be removed. The hands of Zerubbabel should complete what his hands had begun. And we know that this great mountain became a plain – that King Darius issued orders that the temple should be completed, and that he who opposed the work should be hanged, and his house made a dunghill (Ezra 6. 11). Thus Zerubbabel literally and actually brought forth the headstone with the shoutings of those exulting in this manifestation of the Lord's grace and favour who had once sunk into distress and despondency.

But what a mountain is this in the way of God's people! To feel so little faith in exercise, so little love, so little joy, their affections so cold, and so little life and power in their hearts, is indeed at times to a tender conscience a great mountain. O, says such an one, that I could feel more! How many sermons do I hear, and not a single word comes with power to my heart! How many chapters I read, and not a verse is applied with sweetness to my soul! How I go on sighing and groaning, and yet seem not to advance one step forward in the heavenly road! "Who art thou, O great mountain?" the Lord still says by His prophet. "Who art thou?" What! Is this mountain too great to be removed? Are these peaks too lofty to flow down at the Lord's presence? "Who art thou? ... Before Zerubbabel" – let Him but speak, let Him but appear, let Him but smile, let Him but drop one soft word into the conscience, "before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

6. But whatever good thing we try to do, whatever spiritual thing we are engaged in, we are sure to find some mountain or other in the way. When busy in the world, when engaged in business, when occupied with the things of time and sense, there are no difficulties then. You can

use your head and hands and employ your thoughts without interruption; but no sooner does the soul become engaged in spiritual things than a thousand vain thoughts intrude, a thousand worldly things fill the mind, and it seems scarcely possible to be spiritual and heavenly-minded for a single half hour together. This apparent (for in the case of the spiritual building of the temple of mercy there is no *real*) suspension of the Lord's dealings with the soul is indeed a great mountain. O, says the poor, groaning soul, if I could but be spiritual, if I were but heavenly-minded, if I had more sweet communion with Jesus, if I could see Him agonising under my sins, if I could but have a solemn sight of the Son of God suffering and dying for me! But whenever I try to take up spiritual things, a host of vain and worldly thoughts rushes into my mind, and my gadding, roving, roaming, adulterous, idolatrous heart is running everywhere. I cannot read the Word; I cannot fix my attention; I cannot understand nor feel what the Bible says; I cannot lift up my heart to God for five minutes, nor is my soul melted by His love. O what a mountain, what a barrier, what an obstacle there is in the way betwixt God and my soul!

“Who art thou, O great mountain?” How the Lord challenges the mountain to stand forth in all its stature! How He takes a survey of it in every part; He gauges the depth, and measures the height, and looks at it in all its towering bulk, and all its huge dimensions! “Who art thou?” What! too great to be removed? too hard and rocky to flow down! “Before Zerubbabel!” One touch of His finger, one glance from His eye, one word from His lips; let it be the highest mountain, although it be a second Andes, it shall at once “become a plain.” Do not you find it sometimes to be so? Your hard thoughts of God are removed; your doubts and fears take wing and fly away; your carnality and earthliness are for a time dispersed; heavenly affections, spiritual desires, holy breathings and ardent longings come into your heart; and you feel some embracement of Jesus in the arms of faith, because “before Zerubbabel” this mountain has become a plain.

But some may ask, Why has the Lord appointed that these mountains should stand up betwixt Himself and our hearts? I will answer this question by another. Why did the Lord permit the temple to be so interrupted by the adversaries of Judah? Was it not His sovereign pleasure that the temple should be rebuilt? Did He not declare that the glory of the latter house should exceed the glory of the former? Did He not mean it to come to pass? Why did He then suffer these adversaries to rise up on every hand to stop its completion? To show them these two things, which man cannot learn in any other way:

Firstly, the utter helplessness, complete weakness and thorough impotency of the creature to everything good; and,

Secondly, the almighty power of the Lord displayed in removing every obstacle in the way of His will. People talk of "Almighty God"; "the Almighty" is in everybody's lips; but how few know that He is the Almighty! And the people of God too, though persuaded that He is almighty, and that the spiritual Zerubbabel has "all power in heaven and earth," yet when they come into the slightest difficulty, their faith staggers and gives way, and they cannot believe that He has power or will to deliver. Have you not been in temptations out of which you believed the Lord Himself could not deliver you? At least, if the words did not come from your lips, the thought passed in your heart. Have you not been in trials out of which you have been confident no good could come? And have you not been in straits and difficulties when it seemed utterly impossible for the Lord to appear? What was all this? Were you not doubting the very omnipotency of God, which is the foremost article of your creed, and secretly saying, "He is not almighty"?

Now the Lord, to show that He is almighty, causes or permits these mountains to rise up in our paths, that He may have the glory of taking them out of the way, that He may convince us that we have not the least power to remove them ourselves; and when He removes them, that He may get glory to Himself, for He is a jealous God, and will not give His glory to another.

Now I would ask those here who know the Lord, have not you ever found the highest mercy to be shown forth in the deepest misery, your clearest deliverances to come out of your sorest temptations, and the greatest power of God to appear in the greatest weakness of the creature? And why is this? In order to convince you, not as a cut and dried article of a Calvinistic creed, but to show you in your very heart of hearts, in the very depths of your conscience, what a poor, helpless creature you are in the things of God; and thus to make it plain that the hand of the Lord has done it all. If there were no mountains of difficulties, perplexities and obstacles for the soul to be harassed and exercised with, we should not want a Zerubbabel, an almighty Jesus to appear; we should not need the power of God to be put forth in our hearts. We should be satisfied with a sound Calvinistic creed, with a dead, formal profession, with a name to live, and merely seeing the truth in the letter. But having these mountains of difficulties, obstacles, perplexities and exercises, we are brought to feel our need of the almighty power of God experimentally put forth to remove them. And when the Lord does remove them, the soul can give Him all the praise and glory. Then "before Zerubbabel" every mountain "becomes a plain."

And if you are a child of God, let these two things be written on your conscience (God Himself in mercy write them there!): you will have a mountain in your way pretty well every step that you take in the divine

life. If you ever were to visit a mountainous country, you would see that it was a continued chain of eminences, so that one is only the introduction to another, that mountain rises after mountain, and peak after peak, so that the whole journey is a succession of mountains. So spiritually, there will be a succession of mountains in the path of every one that fears God. And you will also find this, that "before Zerubbabel," before the almighty power of Jesus, these mountains will become "a plain." And thus we learn to sink into the depths of self-abasement, and put the crown upon the head of Him to whom it alone rightly belongs.

II. "And He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." What is literally meant by these words? Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the temple, but it had been at a standstill for several years. The Lord therefore promises by His prophet Zechariah that the hands of Zerubbabel which had laid the foundation should also put on "the headstone," or the last stone in the roof, and that the temple should stand forth complete, towering in all its beautiful proportions and all its sublime grandeur. This is the historical meaning of the prophecy. But we have a spiritual and experimental meaning couched under it. The spiritual Zerubbabel, Jesus, the Lord of life and glory, whose hands have laid the foundation-stone of grace in the heart, will accomplish the work, and bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it."

There are two senses in which the spiritual Zerubbabel brings forth the headstone:

1. When Jesus reveals Himself with divine power to the soul, and thus completes the spiritual building, making the heart a temple for God to dwell in; for until Christ is manifested in the conscience, and His love, blood and grace are sealed with a divine witness upon the heart, the headstone is not brought forth, nor are there shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." The building is begun, but not finished; the walls are raised up, but the roof is wanted to keep out the wind and weather. The temple is not completed for the Lord of the temple to come in and dwell there till the top-stone is fitted in.

How many of God's dear children are in that state! Zerubbabel has laid the foundation in their conscience; there is a work of grace begun in their heart; there are testimonies, signs, tokens, promises, evidences; yet the headstone is not brought forth with shoutings of "Grace, grace unto it." The last stone is not yet laid on; the arch wants the key-stone; so that they cannot say, "My Lord and my God." And because the headstone is not brought forth with shoutings, they are troubled, distressed, exercised, tossed up and down with fears that they are not "the Lord's building"; for

they think that if the work were of the Lord it would have been finished long ago.

But look at the temple! Consider the long time it took to finish. Look at what an interval took place between laying the first stone and putting on the roof. What exercises the spiritual Israel must have had in those days, and how often must the souls of those who loved Zion have sunk within them when they looked at the unfinished walls! Many doubtless were the sighs, cries and groans that went up from the people of Israel that the Lord would complete the temple; and many anxious enquiries among themselves, Shall we ever see the headstone brought forth? Shall we ever behold the Lord's house completed? So spiritually. How many of God's dear people are troubled in their minds, and go on questioning, doubting and fearing perhaps for years, because they have no clear testimony in their conscience that their sins are pardoned, and are unable to cry, "Abba Father!" or say the Lord is their God!

But He that has laid the foundation of the temple will also complete it. Shall the heavenly Architect commence and not complete? Shall His enemies ever mock Him, and say, He "began to build, and was not able to finish"? (Luke 14. 29, 30). Shall not grace finish what grace began? The promise is express: "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" (Phil. 1. 6). The mountain of doubt, fear, unbelief, questionings, perplexities, shall "before Zerubbabel," in His own time and way, "become a plain"; and He will bring forth the headstone thereof with such sweet revelations of His blood and love that the soul will shout "Grace, grace unto it."

But why is the repetition? O there is a sweetness in it. Grace begins the work and grace completes it. Grace applied the law and grace reveals the gospel; grace killed and grace makes alive; grace wounded and grace heals. Grace laid the foundation and grace brings forth the top-stone. Thus grace reigns first and grace reigns last; yea, every stone in the temple is laid by the hands of almighty grace. *One* "grace" – that would not express half the feeling of the soul. "Grace, grace" must be redoubled, as though the soul were under the necessity of repeating it – "grace, grace!" For nothing but grace could ever have laid the foundation, and nothing short of grace could ever have brought forth the headstone.

2. But there is another meaning of the word. For the temple shadowed forth not merely the work of grace upon the heart, whereby the bodies of God's people become the temple of the Holy Ghost, but also the whole church of God, who are living stones in that temple, which will one day shine forth in all its beauty and glory, and of which Solomon's temple was but a feeble and imperfect type. Zerubbabel has laid the

foundation below, and in each successive soul that He takes to glory there is another living stone laid in the glorious temple above.

But the headstone is not yet brought forth. There are many of the stones yet buried in the quarry; others are being hewed out of the rock and digged from the hole of the pit; others are being chipped and hacked, to bring them into some fitting shape; and others, already squared and fashioned to occupy their destined place above, are lying for a short time amid the parings, drippings and rubbish. The headstone is not yet brought forth with shoutings.

But when the last vessel of mercy shall be safely gathered in, and the great, the glorious, the living temple shall stand forth in all its beautiful proportions and sublime grandeur; when Zerubbabel, the heavenly Architect, who laid the first and each successive stone brings forth the headstone, the key-stone of the arch, which binds in the roof and completely fastens the building, the arches of heaven will ring with shoutings; and there will be one universal burst of joy and exultation from the redeemed throng of "Grace, grace unto it." The sound of good works will not be heard there; creature righteousness will not be extolled there; there will be no discordant clink of man's axe and hammer; there will not be a semi-chorus half round the throne above singing the praises of human piety and creature exertions; but there will be one universal song of harmony, extolling sovereign, super-abounding grace. And if the Lord do not teach us the first note of the song of the Lamb here below, depend upon it, we shall never sing it hereafter.

But O what harmony will come in a full body from the heavenly choir, when there will not be one discordant note, nor one jarring sound, but all will be in sweet melody, and "grace, grace," will still be the song throughout the countless ages of eternity!

But what a deal of exercise and work upon the conscience it takes to make a man feelingly join in that note! What depths of man's depravity must be known as well as heights of redeeming mercy! What an acquaintance is needed with the workings of a fallen nature! What troubles, exercises, perplexities and temptations has the soul to wade through, and what testimonies and deliverances to experience before it is fit to join in that triumphant song!

Now, if the literal temple had been built up without any trouble whatever, if all had gone on smooth and easy, there would not have been any shouting of "grace, grace," when it was finished. But when they saw how the Lord had brought a few feeble exiles from Babylon, how He had supported them amidst, and carried them through all their troubles, and how He that laid the foundation had brought forth the headstone, all that stood by could say, "Grace, grace unto it." It was these very perplexities and trials that made them join so cheerily in the shout, and made the heart

and soul to leap with the lips when they burst forth with “Grace, grace unto it.”

And who will shout the loudest hereafter? He that has known and felt the most of the aboundings of sin to sink his soul down into grief and sorrow, and most of the superaboundings of grace over sin to make him triumph and rejoice. Who will have most reason to sing, “Grace, grace”? The lost and ruined wretch who has feared that he should go to hell a thousand times over, and yet has been delivered thence by sovereign grace, and brought to the glory and joy of heaven. No other person is fit to join in that song, and I am sure no other will join in it but he who has known painfully and experimentally the bitterness of sin, and the evil of a depraved heart, and yet has seen and felt that grace has triumphed over all, in spite of the devil, in spite of the world, and in spite of himself, and brought him to that blessed place where many times he was afraid he should never come.

RELIGION IN THE HOME

By William Gurnall (1616-1679)

“I will walk within my house” (Psa. 101. 2). Much, though not all of the power of godliness lies within doors. It is in vain to talk of holiness if we can bring no letters testimonial from our holy walking with our relations. O it is sad when they that have reason to know us best, by their daily converse with us, do speak least for our godliness! Few are so impudent as to come naked into the streets: if men have anything to cover their naughtiness they will put it on when they come abroad. But what art thou within doors? What care and conscience to discharge thy duty to thy near relations? He is a bad husband that hath money to spend among company abroad, but none to lay in provisions to keep his family at home. And can he be a good Christian that spends all his religion abroad, and leaves none for his nearest relations at home? That is, a great zealot among strangers and little or nothing of God comes from him in his family.

Yea, it were well if some that gain the reputation of Christians abroad did not fall short of others that pretend not to profession in those moral duties which they should perform to their relations. There are some who are great strangers to profession, who yet are loving and kind in their way to their wives. What kind of professors then are they who are dogged and currish to the wife of their bosom, who by their tyrannical lording it over them embitter their spirit, and make them cover the Lord’s altar with tears and weeping? There are wives to be found

that are not clamorous, peevish and froward to their husbands, who yet are far from a true work of grace in their hearts; do they then walk as becomes holiness who trouble the whole house with their violent passions? There are servants who from the authority of a natural conscience are kept from railing and reviling language when reproved by their masters, and shall not grace keep pace with nature?

Holy David knew very well how near this part of a saint's duty lies to the very heart of godliness, and therefore, when he makes his solemn vow to walk holily before God, he instanceth this as one stage wherein he might eminently discover the graciousness of his spirit: "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart."

WHAT IS THE NEW BIRTH?

By the American divine, William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

From first to last, salvation is all of grace. Paul says: "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit. 3. 3-6). So it is clearly by the grace and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit is sent down to renew our natures and to accomplish in us the new birth. *Pardon* saves a sinner from the curse of the law and the lake of fire; *acceptance* through Christ gives him a title to heaven; but in *regeneration* the dominion of sin begins to be destroyed and the soul begins to be fitted for the Master's use.

The new birth is a great mystery, yet it is much insisted on in Scripture. "The washing of regeneration" is as necessary as washing in the blood of Christ. "The renewing of the Holy Ghost" is as essential as the "justification of life." Within the space of four verses, our Lord thrice declares how necessary it is to salvation. Hear Him: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God... Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3. 3, 5, 7). The fallow ground must be broken up or the good seed will not take root in our hearts. The wild olive must undergo the operation of engrafting with the good olive, or it will remain worthless. All the Scriptures teach as much. Christ regarded

it as by no means marvellous that a vile sinner must undergo a great spiritual change before he could be fit for the service of God.

Perhaps there is not a more drivelling error than that which teaches that baptism with water is the regeneration that Jesus Christ and His apostles insist upon. When men can confound the “washing of regeneration” with the washing with water, they are fully prepared to follow, in fact they are *already* following, in the footsteps of those who confounded “that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh” with that circumcision, which is “of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2. 29). Perhaps, too, no error is more mischievous than this. It is monstrous that such error and folly should be taught in lands where God’s Word is in general use.

To baptism, some add an outward reformation and insist that this should be admitted as sufficient. Supposing this to be the meaning of Christ and His apostles, it is impossible to defend them from the charge of using very mysterious language to convey so simple an idea. But such a belief is never entertained by those who have a becoming respect for God’s Word. It will therefore claim no more attention at this time.

Sound divines have very remarkably agreed in telling us what regeneration is. Dr. Witherspoon says, “A new birth implies a universal change. It must be of the whole man, not in some particular, but in all without exception.” And he shows at length that it is not partial, external, imperfect, but that it is universal, inward, essential, complete and supernatural.

Charnock says, “Regeneration is a mighty and powerful change wrought in the soul by the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit, wherein a vital principle, a new habit, the law of God, and a divine nature are put into and framed in the heart, enabling it to act holily and pleasingly to God, and to grow up therein to eternal glory.”

Thomas Scott [the commentator, John Newton’s friend] quotes with approbation another definition, but does not give his author. He says, “Regeneration may be defined [as] a change wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit in the understanding, will and affections of a sinner, which is the commencement of a new kind of life, and which gives another direction to his judgment, desires, pursuits and conduct.”

Although this change is called by various names, yet the doctrine of Scripture respecting it is uniform. Sometimes it is called a holy calling, a creation, a new creation, a translation, a circumcision of the heart, a resurrection. But whatever be the name, the thing signified is everywhere spoken of in very solemn terms and as a rich fruit of God’s grace. Thus says Paul, “It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me” (Gal. 1. 15, 16). Again: God “hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not

according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1. 9). Again, Peter says that "the God of all grace ... hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus" (1 Pet. 5. 10).

Nor have the purest churches ever doubted the necessity of this change. They also remarkably agree concerning its nature. The Westminster Assembly teaches that God "is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace."

The Latter Confession of Helvetia says, "In regeneration the understanding is illuminated by the Holy Ghost, that it may understand both the mysteries and will of God. And the will itself is not only changed by the Spirit, but is also endued with faculties that, of its own accord, it may will and do good," and quotes in proof Romans 8. 4; Jeremiah 31. 33; Ezekiel 36. 27; John 8. 36; Philippians 1. 6, 29; and 2. 13.

The Synod of Dort says, "This regenerating grace of God worketh not upon men as if they were stocks and stones, nor doth it abolish the will and properties of their will, or violently constrain it, but doth spiritually revive it, heal it, rectify it, and powerfully yet gently bend it: so that where formerly the rebellion of the flesh and stubbornness did domineer without control, now a willing and sincere obedience to the Spirit begins to reign; in which change the true and spiritual rescue and freedom of our will doth consist."

The truth is that if we give up regeneration, the last hope that a sinner may ever again be either holy or happy is gone *forever*. The Church of Ireland holds that "All God's elect are in their time inseparably united unto Christ, by the effectual and vital influence of the Holy Ghost, derived from Him, as from the Head, unto every true member of His mystical body. And being thus made one with Christ they are truly regenerated, and made partakers of Him and all His benefits." Indeed, nothing could more distress one, who rightly considered his lost estate, than to have the hope that springs from the doctrine of regeneration destroyed or seriously shaken.... Every man, who has ever had his eyes opened to see his own wretchedness and vileness, will agree with the saying of Usher: "It is not a little reforming will save the man, no, nor all the morality of the world, nor all the common graces of God's

Spirit, nor the outward change of the life: they will not do, unless we are quickened and have a new life wrought in us.”

In his old age, when he could no longer see to read, John Newton heard someone repeat this text, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15. 10). He remained silent a short time and then, as if speaking to himself, he said, “I am not what I ought to be. Ah, how imperfect and deficient! I am not what I wish to be. I abhor that which is evil, and I would cleave to that which is good. I am not what I hope to be. Soon, soon I shall put off mortality and with mortality all sin and imperfection. Though I am not what I ought to be, what I wish to be, and what I hope to be, yet I can truly say, *I am not what I once was*, a slave to sin and Satan. I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge, ‘By the grace of God, I am what I am.’”

Our second birth brings us into a state of grace. It is one of the richest of God’s covenanted mercies. When one is born anew, a fatal blow is given to Satan’s kingdom in the heart; for “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3. 6). *This is a work of amazing energy!* It was for good cause that the Synod of Dort taught, “God, in regenerating a man, doth employ that omnipotent strength, whereby He may powerfully and infallibly bow and bend his will unto faith and conversion.” Paul uses all the strong words he is master of to teach us that we are renewed by power, by amazing energy. He prayed that his Ephesians might know “what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead” (Eph. 1. 19, 20). We know of no greater power than that which accomplished the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet the same power converts the soul....

Dr. Nevins says, “Some think and represent it as easy to save a soul – to bend a will – to change a heart. Easy? It is God’s greatest work.... God, in saving a soul, putteth forth a mightier energy than in making many worlds.” In his *Views in Theology*, Dr. Beecher admits, “The power of God in regeneration is represented as among the greatest displays of His omnipotence ever made, or to be made in the history of the universe. When the fair creation rose fresh in beauty from the hand of God, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy; but sweeter songs will celebrate and louder shouts will attend the consummation of redemption [regeneration?] by the power of God’s Spirit.”

Job was a happier man on the dunghill than Adam was in paradise. His holiness indeed was perfect, his happiness was great; but neither of them permanent and indefeasible, as our happiness by the Mediator is.

John Flavel

WHAT IS FAITH?

By James Buchanan (1804-1870), one of the godly divines connected with The Free Church of Scotland in its beginnings

A real, thorough conversion consists mainly and essentially in repentance and faith, two gifts of the Spirit that are often used together or even separately to denote the whole of this great change: repentance indicating what the sinner turns *from*, faith, what he turns *unto*. Conversion is the turning point at which he turns out of the broad way that leads to destruction and into the strait, the narrow way that leads unto life. He then flees from the wrath to come and flees to Christ as his refuge. He forsakes the service of sin and follows Christ as his Master. He shuns perdition and seeks salvation in Christ as his Saviour.

Now repentance describes his conversion with reference chiefly to what he turns *from*, and faith describes his conversion with reference chiefly to what he turns *to*. Each implies the other, there being no true repentance where there is no faith, and no true faith where there is no repentance. Both are wrought in the soul at the time of its conversion by the power of the Holy Ghost applying the truth as it is in Jesus. From this radical change of heart, there flows an outward change of life, reformation of life proceeding from a renewed mind. First, the tree is made good; and the fruit becomes good also (Matt. 12. 33). The fountain is purified, and the stream that flows from it is also pure.

The production of true faith is often spoken of in Scripture as amounting to the whole work of regeneration: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" (1 John 5. 1). And again, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1. 12, 13). Here, every one who really believes is said to be born of God; and as every true believer is a converted man, it follows that the production of saving faith is equivalent to the work of regeneration.

But then it must be a real, scriptural faith, such as is required in the gospel: not the faith which the Apostle James declares to be dead, but that living faith that is described in Scripture as a well-grounded belief resting on the sure testimony of God. It must be a positive belief, not a mere negation or absence of disbelief, nor a doubtful and wavering opinion, but a thorough conviction of mind. It must be an intelligent belief, such as is inconsistent with blind ignorance and implies a perception of the meaning of God's truth, a full and comprehensive belief, embracing all that is essential to be known in regard to the method of salvation.

This belief implies scriptural apprehensions of God in His true character, of Christ in His Person as Immanuel, in the fulness of His offices as Mediator, His great design and His finished work, and of ourselves as guilty, depraved and exposed to a sentence of righteous condemnation. This belief, thus founded on God's testimony and implying spiritual apprehensions of His truth, is a vital, active and operative principle, bending the will to a compliance with God's call, awakening suitable emotions of reverence, fear, complacency, delight, love and joy, renewing, transforming, purifying the soul, and effecting a complete change on all our practical habits.

The production of this real, living and sanctifying faith is the great work of the Spirit in conversion, a work which implies or produces a universal change on all the faculties of our nature, so that as soon as this faith is implanted in his soul, the sinner becomes a new man, the truth of God received by faith renewing his understanding, his conscience, his will, his desires, his affections: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5. 17).

Every believer then, in the gospel sense of that term, is born again. In other words, no-one is a believer who is not regenerated. The production of saving faith is that wherein regeneration properly consists. But then it must be such a faith as the gospel requires and describes. That faith, although it may have its seat in the understanding, implies a change in our whole moral nature, and especially a renewal of the will. The understanding is, in the order of nature, the leading and governing faculty of the soul, and it is by means of truth cordially believed that the great change is accomplished.

But the truth is either not duly understood or not really believed, where it works no change on the heart and habits of the sinner. He may read, speak and speculate about it; he may even embrace some fragments of it and hold them tenaciously; but the substantial truth of Christ's gospel cannot be really understood and believed by any man who remains unconverted. It is true that many an unregenerate man may suppose that he believes: he may never have questioned the general truth of God's Word; he may even have ranged himself on the side of the gospel; and by a public profession or in private conversation, he may have often defended and maintained it. Nay, he may have had many thoughts passing through his mind, many convictions awakened in his conscience that show that he is not altogether ignorant or unimpressed. Yet I apprehend that nothing can be plainer from the Word of God than that these transient impressions may often be experienced by an unconverted man, and that the man who is not regenerated and transformed by his faith has no true faith at all.

PRECIOUS FAITH

By Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

What is justifying faith?

I shall show:

I. *What it is not.* It is not a bare acknowledgment that Christ is a Saviour. There must be an acknowledgment, but that is not sufficient to justify. The devils acknowledged Christ's Godhead: "Jesus Thou Son of God" (Matt. 8. 29). There may be an assent to divine truth, and yet no work of grace on the heart. Many assent in their judgments that sin is an evil thing, but they go on in sin, whose corruptions are stronger than their convictions; and that Christ is excellent; they cheapen the pearl, but do not buy.

II. *What justifying faith is.* True, justifying faith consists in three things:

1. *Self-renunciation.* Faith is going out of one's self, being taken off from our own merits, and seeing we have no righteousness of our own. "Not having mine own righteousness" (Phil. 3. 9). Self-righteousness is a broken reed, which the soul dares not lean on. Repentance and faith are both humbling graces. By repentance a man abhors himself; by faith he goes out of himself. As Israel, in their wilderness march, behind them saw Pharaoh and his chariots pursuing, before them the Red Sea ready to devour, so the sinner behind sees God's justice pursuing him for sin, before, hell ready to devour him. And in this forlorn condition, he sees nothing in himself to help, but he must perish unless he can find help in another.

2. *Reliance.* The soul casts itself upon Jesus Christ; faith rests on Christ's Person. Faith believes the promise, but that which faith rests upon in the promise is the Person of Christ. Therefore the spouse is said to lean upon her Beloved (Song 8. 5). Faith is described to be believing on the name of the Son of God (1 John 3. 23), viz., on His Person. The promise is but the cabinet; Christ is the jewel in it which faith embraces. The promise is but the dish; Christ is the food in it which faith feeds on.

Faith rests on Christ's Person, as He was crucified. It glories in the cross of Christ (Gal. 6. 14). To consider Christ crowned with all manner of excellencies stirs up admiration and wonder; but Christ looked upon as bleeding and dying is the proper Object of our faith; it is called therefore "faith in His blood" (Rom. 3. 25).

3. *Appropriation*, or applying Christ to ourselves. A medicine, though it be ever so sovereign, if not applied, will do no good. Though the plaster be made of Christ's own blood, it will not heal unless applied by faith; the blood of God without faith in God will not save. This

applying of Christ is called receiving Him (John 1. 12). The hand receiving gold, enriches; so the hand of faith, receiving Christ's golden merits with salvation, enriches us.

Wherein lies the preciousness of faith?

I. In its being the chief gospel-grace, the head of the graces. As gold among the metals, so is faith among the graces. Clement of Alexandria calls the other graces the daughters of faith. In heaven, love will be the chief grace, but while we are here, love must give place to faith. Love takes possession of glory, but faith gives a title to it. Love is the crowning grace in heaven, but faith is the conquering grace upon earth. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 John 5. 4).

II. In its having influence upon all the graces, and setting them to work; not a grace stirs till faith sets it to work. As the clothier sets the poor to work, sets their wheel going, so faith sets hope to work. The heir must believe his title to an estate in reversion before he can hope for it; faith believes its title to glory, and then hope waits for it. If faith did not feed the lamp of hope with oil, it would soon die. Faith sets love to work. "Faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5. 6). Believing the mercy and merit of Christ causes a flame of love to ascend. Faith sets patience to work. "Be ... followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6. 12). Faith believes the glorious rewards given to suffering. This makes the soul patient in suffering. Thus faith is the master-wheel; it sets all the other graces running.

III. In its being the grace which God honours to justify and save. Thus indeed it is "precious faith," as the apostle calls it (2 Pet. 1. 1). The other graces help to sanctify, but it is faith that justifies. "Being justified by faith" (Rom. 5. 1). Repentance or love do not justify, but faith does.

Come, reader, speak thy heart, if thou be one that heartily lovest Jesus Christ, and hast gone many days, possibly years, mourning and lamenting because of the inevidence and cloudiness of thine interest in Him; who hast sought Him sorrowing, in this ordinance and in that, in one duty and another; if at last Christ should take off that mask, that cruel covering (as one calls it) from His face, and be known of thee in breaking of bread. Suppose He should, by His Spirit, whisper thus in thine ear as thou sittest at His table: "Dost thou indeed so prize, esteem and value Me? Will nothing but Christ and His love content and satisfy thee? Then, as sweet, lovely and desirable as I am, know that I am thine; take thine own Christ into the arms of thy faith this day." Would not this create in thy soul a joy transcendent to all the joys and pleasures in this world? What thinkest thou of it?

John Flavel

THE NEED OF GRACE

Part of a letter from J.K. Popham to J.H. Gosden, May 1918

In your present life you need much grace, but not more than a *full* Christ can give, not more than a *willing* Christ will give, not more than an *ever-present* Christ does give; present, if not always perceived: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." He will be with you in a double sense: for your own salvation, sanctification, enlargement in knowledge, in experience of justification, of His own most mysterious, wonderful, glorious Person, and of His Word; then for the great and solemn work to which He has ordained and called you. You will find in this work the truth of Luther's words: "Temptation, meditation and prayer make a minister." O it is heavy! Yet it is blessed beyond all words. You may often be in bondage, but will prove that "the Word of God is not bound." You will grow in a trying sense of insufficiency, but that will be to make room for a sweet experience that your sufficiency is of God. You may sometimes think you were almost a lunatic to have ever entertained a single thought of being a minister of the gospel; then you will have a discovery of the glory of God in choosing the foolish, the weak, the base things, "yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are" (1 Cor. 1. 27, 28).

May you be made more anxious to preach the gospel than to preach sermons. May a single eye be given you, that your whole body may be full of light (Matt. 6. 22). There is no occupation so honourable as that of the ministry. There is no height so giddy, so precipitous, as the pulpit. "Study to shew thyself *approved unto God*, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2. 15). This is an arduous matter, very difficult. Aim at testimonies from God in your own soul. If you live on anything short you will die. Preach Christ; warn every man, that you may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. So to preach, you will have to show the state of men *out* of Christ, and contend for a *revelation* of Christ; and this will arouse the enmity of mere professors. But in all your godly labour you will have profit – profit in these things: the smile of God in your conscience, souls for your hire, seals to your ministry. O rich man!

For faith, this gift of God, this saving gift, what is it but God's power given to us to eye Christ, to lay hold on Christ, to keep our hold on Christ through all sorts of storms, hurricanes, temptations, deaths, so as never to waver in that especial point of asking, believing, hoping, expecting all in Christ's name, for Christ's sake; He seen instead of us; He interceding always for us; He more and more; ourselves less and less; even till He is all, and we are nothing?

Bernard Gilpin

THY WILL BE DONE

By Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

I shall show what is the import of this petition with reference to the will of God's providence. It imports,

Firstly, A confession,

I. Of a natural aptness in all men to quarrel, repine and murmur against the methods and disposals of providence (Num. 14. 2). No king's management is so freely canvassed and censured by the subjects as the King of heaven's management in this world is by the hearts of men. An all-wise providence guides the world in every particular, but where is the man that has not some quarrel or other with it?

1. Kind providences towards others are grudged (Matt. 20. 15). Though God is the sovereign Lord of all, and all things are His own, and He is debtor to none, men are prone to quarrel the disposal of His benefits, as if they would teach Him on whom to bestow His favours.

2. Afflictive providences towards one's self are quarrelled. The foolish heart speaks as one of the foolish women (Job 2. 10). Though the most we meet with in the world is short of our deservings, yet how does the heart rise against the smallest evils laid upon us! When the yoke of affliction is wreathed about one's neck, the unsubdued heart rages under it like a wild bull in a net.

II. Of a natural backwardness to fall in with the designs of providence of one sort or other. God teaches by kind providences, and afflictive ones too. But such is the perverseness of human nature that it scorns to be led by the one (Rom. 2. 4) or to be driven with the other (Jer. 5. 3). Whether God write men's duty in white or black lines of providence, the heart is disposed not to fall in with it (Matt. 11. 16, 17).

Secondly, A profession,

I. Of the saints' sorrow for this disposition of heart crossing the will of God. It is a burden to them, and the renewed nature hereby enters a dissent against this quarrelling of the corrupt nature against the will of God (Jer. 31. 18). They condemn themselves for not submitting cheerfully to, and falling in readily with the divine will in all things. It is one of the greatest struggles which a child of God has, to get his will conformed to the will of God.

II. Of the faith of the power of grace to subdue the will to this conformity. So they hereby put their stony, refractory heart into the heart-changing hand to melt it down and make it pliable (Jer. 31. 18 forecited). And it is the comfort of all the saints that there is a remedy of sufficient grace in Jesus Christ for the removing of the natural perverseness of their wills.

Thirdly, A desire of grace for a thorough compliance with the will of God's providence. Which extends to,

I. A submission to the will of God in afflicting providences. This is our duty, whatever be our trial. "I was dumb," says David, "I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it" (Psa. 39. 9). But it was a difficult duty, because of that corrupt self-love which cries for ease, and so much prevails in all men, because of that blindness of men's minds, whereby they take that which is really for their good to be for evil to them, and because we are all so much wedded to our own will. Therefore the saints desire the removal of these impediments by God's grace, and the subduing of our hearts to a submission.

II. A thankful acceptance of merciful and kind providences (Luke 1. 38). This is our duty also, but it is the natural bias of our hearts to sacrifice to our own net, and to forget and overlook God's goodness in these; to sit down to the covered table of kind providence, not looking up with due acknowledgments to Him who has provided it. So it is the saints' desire to have grace to enable them to receive thankfully.

III. A compliance with the design of providences of all sorts. We must act according to the will of providence (Acts 13. 36), and we have need of grace for it. When God by His providence puts work into our hands and gives us abilities and occasions to serve Him, we are obliged to employ all for His service, else we answer not the design. Mercies and rods have a call. And everyone is by providence put into some particular station, with some talents, less or more, for the duties of that station. He does the will of God's providence that employs his interest, gifts and abilities in his calling, moving in his own sphere prudently, constantly and vigorously, as those in heaven do.

Fourthly, A consent to the will of God, a yielding of the heart that it may be done. Our Lord gives us a copy of this resignation to the will of God in His bitter sufferings. "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done" (Matt. 26. 42). And the church in Paul's case wrote after this copy, saying, "The will of the Lord be done" (Acts 21. 14). And whatever befalls the church, ourselves or others by the will of providence, there ought to be a humble resignation to the will of God in it all.



Poor Christian, be not dejected because thou seest thyself outstripped and excelled by so many in other parts of knowledge. If thou know Jesus Christ, thou knowest enough to comfort and save thy soul. Many learned philosophers are now in hell, and many illiterate Christians in heaven.

John Flavel

LOOKING TO CHRIST IN ALL

By George Swinnock (1627-1673)

Perform religious duties with faith as well as fear; fear will keep the heart awful, and faith will make it cheerful in the service of God: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10. 22). In ordinances man draweth nigh to God, but if he would do it with acceptance he must do it with affiance, with faith: "By faith Abel offered ... a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" (Heb. 11. 4).

Faith doth instrumentally justify both our persons and performances, because it looks up to, and lays hold on Christ, who justifieth both meritoriously. God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Now there are many sins in our best services; we must therefore carry all our sacrifices (as the Israelites did, Exod. 28. 38) to our High Priest, who will take away the iniquity of our holy things and procure their acceptance with the Lord: "He shall ... purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord" (Mal. 3. 3, 4). It is a prophecy of Christ. He shall purge away the dross from our duties, and then they shall be pleasing to God.

It was a sacred law among the Molossians that whosoever came to the king with his son in his arms should be pardoned, whatsoever offence he were guilty of. The Athenian general, therefore, when banished his country, fled to Admetus, king of the Molossians, his deadly enemy, and prostrated himself before him with his son in his arms, and found favour. God and man are enemies; there is no appearing before this dreadful King without His Son in our arms, and with Him there is no fear of a repulse: "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Eph. 3. 12). As God and man are angry, Christ is *medium reconciliationis* – He makes them friends; as God and man are reconciled, Christ is *medium communionis* – He is the means of their fruition of each other.

Therefore, reader, whatever thou dost, whether thou prayest, or hearest, or singest, or readest, "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3. 17). Consider, thy admission into God's presence is by Christ: no man cometh to the Father but by the Son (John 14. 6); "Through Him we ... have access ... unto the Father" (Eph. 2. 18). It is His blood which hath purchased thee this gracious privilege. He alone hath turned the seat of justice into a throne of grace. When thou approachest God, He would be a fire to consume thee, not a Father to embrace thee, were it not for His Son.

Consider also, thy assistance in duties [religious exercises] is from Christ: "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15. 5). O how dull and

dead is thy heart in the most solemn duty unless this Lord of life quicken it. Though thou hast a real principle of spiritual life, yet unless Christ draw thee, give thee quickening and inciting grace, thou canst not run after Him in a duty.

Further, thine acceptance in the ordinances of God is through Christ. O how unsavoury would thy best duties be, were it not for the odours of His most sweet sacrifice! The golden censer and the incense under the law typified that all our performances must be perfumed and presented by Christ before they can be accepted with God. The smoke of the incense must ascend with the saints' prayers before they can be pleasing. The incense (which signified the merits of Christ) is the pillar of smoke in which the believer's performances mount up to heaven (Rev. 8. 3, 4). No wonder that David begged so hard, "Let my prayer be set before Thee as incense."

The priests, when they went into the tabernacle to sacrifice, were commanded to put off their own, and to put on the holy garments provided for them (Exod. 28. 43), intimating that none must approach God in the rags of their own, but in the robes of Christ's righteousness. The ark, which was a special type of Christ (without of shittim-wood, speaking His humanity, within of wrought gold, typifying His deity), did signify thus much to us; it covered the two tables, so Christ the law; there God gave His precious answers and was propitious to His people. So God accepteth the persons and prayers of men in Christ (Eph. 1. 6). If the patriarchs were welcome to Pharaoh, it was for Joseph's sake; and if the people of God are welcome at any time to Him, it is for Jesus' sake.

Faith in Christ is the eye which ravisheth the heart of God: "Thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes" (Song 4. 9). Of all the virgin graces none find such favour in His sight. This, this is the Esther on whose head He sets the crown. When she appears before Him, though it be contrary to the law of works, He constantly holds out the golden sceptre of grace. He is so delighted with her beauty, so ravished with her comeliness, that He granteth her request, be it to the half or whole of His kingdom.

Therefore, reader, when thou goest to God, be sure to take Christ along with thee, as ever thou wouldst speed. Let thy prayers and petitions be in His name, with an eye to His promise: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do" (John 14. 13). Let thy praises and thanksgivings be in His name, according to His precept, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5. 20). To be short, as a holy priest offer up all thy spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

A NURSING FATHER

Some memories of Robert Moxon of Bury (1840-1906) by Fred Windridge. Mr. Moxon left a fragrant memory with all who knew him.

In or about March 1895, I made application for membership of the church at Gower Street. When trying to relate to the deacons something of the Lord's dealings with me, I was conscious of two things: firstly, that my account was very dry and insipid; secondly, that I was not being favourably received – it was like talking to a stone wall. After they had heard my account, the deacons told me that they themselves believed the work of grace was begun in my heart, but they were also quite sure the church would not receive me. “The time may come,” said Mr. Link, “when you will be able to say, ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’” I went out of that vestry like a man in a dream; I was stunned and dazed; it was a terrible blow. Rejected by the church of God! I had nearly seven years to think it over.

Whatever did it mean? It occurred to me that the deacons did not really believe in me, that they saw the root of the matter was not in me. My pride was wounded – that was certain. I had many solemn and bitter reflections on the matter. Sometimes I cried out inwardly that it was very cruel and unjust; sometimes I thought the deacons must have heard a little concerning my wretched backsliding.

My present judgment of the matter is that the Lord saw that I was in need of the rod, and that He was now determined to lay it on. It was as though He said to me: “The church of God at Gower Street will never know how basely you have wandered from Me; I will use them to chastise you.”

In those days I used to sit up in the gallery in a prominent position. Many eyes were upon me, and it frequently came into my thoughts: “They know you have been rejected; they believe you are a hypocrite.” This was bitter indeed. But somehow or other, I could not go away, though I felt but little profit in attending.

I was only partially conscious of my wretched case, yet felt a vague uneasiness of impending trouble. And a day of trouble was indeed drawing near.

Though the experience of being put back was painful, it was profitable to me. From this time my thoughts began to revolve more about my own shortcomings and inconsistencies than upon those of others. I would bless God for turning me back and causing me to examine myself – my actions and my spirit.

I was once speaking to Mr. Moxon about my “rejection” at Gower Street. Feeling very sore about it, my anger soon began to show itself. Mr. Moxon remained silent for a little while. Then, rising and walking to the window as though casually observing something outside, he said,

"I was once treated very badly by a man in Lancashire. I became angry and was determined to have my revenge. While I was meditating upon some plan of vengeance, these words dropped into my heart and stopped me: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'" And then he repeated, very gently and lovingly, "*Forgive them; forgive them.*"

I was just at that moment far removed from a spirit of forgiveness, but the memory of Mr. Moxon's words and tender demeanour abode with me for a long time, and I would bless God that He did at last give me the spirit of forgiveness.

On one occasion Mr. Moxon told me a little of his path as a backslider. He had become entangled with some worldly people, tempted to believe that considerable advantage would in this way accrue to him. He went on thus for some time when he one day inwardly heard a voice, powerful though quiet: "Robert, you will have to retrace your steps." Pondering awhile, he perceived the snare, and grace was given to escape it.

Ah, dear Robert Moxon! He was indeed a nursing father to me. He saw that I was in a snare, and the Lord blessed his instructions, admonitions and warnings to me. He had a most sweet and alluring way of conveying counsel, bringing himself down to the capacity and the experience of the person he was addressing. He was a skilful "fisher of men" (Matt. 4. 19). His memory is dear to me.

Now that I am writing of him, I scarcely know how to leave off. I called to see him one Saturday night at his lodgings in London. I was very low at the time. As I rose to take my leave of him, he asked how things were going on within. I murmured something about feeling very much cast down. He immediately said: "I can remember when you were in a different state," and he then quoted, with feeling and sympathy in every accent: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Psa. 42. 11).

I betrayed no outward emotion, but as I withdrew my heart was ready to burst with the feeling that I had at least one real friend in the world.

Just about the time when I was so troubled as to being put back at Gower Street, Mr. Moxon preached from Rom. 14. 7, 8: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." I remember that he referred to the first verse and to the fourth: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand." This was a most blessed

season to my soul – balm to my wounded spirit. “I wept to the praise of the mercy I’d found”....

My dear friend bore with me, continued to sympathise and to give counsel until he passed away on May 23rd, 1906.

I believe I may say with truth that no ministry was ever so much blessed to my soul as that of Robert Moxon. I feel I must here mention some of the discourses that were specially blessed to me. “Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me” (Matt. 15. 25); the case of the mad Gadarene (Mark 5); “By the rivers of Babylon,” etc. (Psa. 137. 1-6); “How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?” (Jer. 12. 5); “And the men,” etc. (2 Chron. 28. 15).

I may have seemed to digress, but the spiritually-minded reader will see that God used the friendship and the ministry of Mr. Moxon to keep me from giving up altogether.

In the summer of 1896 I spent a few days at Bury, and Mr. Moxon very kindly entertained me at his house.

From *His Great Goodness*.



Alas, this is the undoing mistake of thousands who are called Christians. They know somewhat of the history of Christ; they have some notions of a Christ in their heads, but this is the precipice upon which they ruin themselves: they think to be saved by a Christ without [outside] them. They hang upon the outside of the ark, they live upon bare notions: the Son of God took our nature upon Him, died for sins, rose again, and is gone up into heaven, and sits at God’s right hand; and therefore conclude they shall be saved. O but what a fallacy do they put upon their own souls (James 1. 22)!

Christ is the hope of salvation, it is true, but it is not simply Christ in our nature, not simply Christ on the cross, not Christ in the grave, no, not alone Christ on the throne, but, saith the apostle, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1. 27). It were an easy thing to be saved if a Christ without [outside] us were all; and I know no reason why reprobate men and devils might not get to heaven on such terms.

Christ must be in us by His Spirit, and we must be in Christ by faith, or else our persons and our hope are both reprobate (2 Cor. 13. 5). Appear before God’s tribunal in the great day without this union, and plead what you will, your answer will be, “I never knew you: depart from Me” (Matt. 7. 21-23; Luke 13. 26, 27).

Believe this, O all you carnal, Christless Christians, and tremble, and swim no longer down the stream of security, lest it empty you forth into the lake of perdition. But work out your salvation with fear and trembling, and give all diligence to make this conjunction with Christ sure to your own souls, that when He shall appear you may also appear with Him in glory (Phil. 2. 12; Col. 3. 4).

Remember, all your true and solid comfort and rejoicing in life, in death, and at the day of judgment, is all bound up in your union with Jesus Christ; Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Thomas Case

BOOK REVIEWS

Raising Children God's Way, by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones; paperback; 85 quite large pages; price £5.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a helpful book, though there is nothing dramatic and no easy way or trite methods recommended in bringing up children. The emphasis is on scriptural teaching.

The five chapters are firmly based on the Word of God: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6. 1-4). The book is written against the background of a national breakdown in family life and discipline of any form.

In the chapter on obedience to parents, Dr. Lloyd-Jones helpfully deals with the case of unbelieving parents, and also touches on a little mentioned point: some professed believers are very active in church concerns but sadly neglect their own parents who are growing old!

Dr. Lloyd-Jones strongly warns against Christian parents pressing children to make an open profession of faith – presuming on what is God's work alone.

There are many profitable thoughts, the whole emphasis being that Christian *practice* must be based on Christian *doctrine*. But parents who are looking for some quick, single remedy will not find it here!

The Loveliness of Christ: Extracts from the Letters of Samuel Rutherford; soft leather back; 108 small pages; price £10.00; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a little gem. First published in 1909 it consists of short extracts from Rutherford's letters, selected by Ellen Lister and originally strongly recommended by Handley Moule, the well-known evangelical Bishop of Durham. Bishop Moule described it as a "small casket stored with many jewels."

Rutherford's letters are renowned for their emphasis on the loveliness of Christ, but another emphasis, which comes out clearly in the extracts, is sanctified affliction. We give a few examples:

"If the Lord call you to suffering, be not dismayed; there shall be a new allowance of the King for you when you come to it."

"There is not sweeter fellowship with Christ than to bring our wounds and sores to Him."

"There is meat in hunger for Christ."

"Grace withereth without adversity."

"Ye will not get leave to steal quietly to heaven, in Christ's company, without a conflict and a cross."

"There are many heads lying in Christ's bosom, but there is room for yours among the rest."

“Your rock doth not ebb and flow, but your sea.”

“O, what a fair One, what an only One, what an excellent, lovely, ravishing One is Jesus.”

Three letters are included at the end and a glossary of old Scottish words.

The foreword is written by Sinclair Ferguson who says the extracts in the book “sparkle like diamonds on a dark cloth in a jeweller’s shop.” Mr. Ferguson specially welcomes the new publication as he had deeply appreciated an old copy in days past. The publishers’ desire is that of Rutherford himself: “Every day we may see some new thing in Christ. His love hath neither brim nor bottom.”

The reason for the price is that this is a beautifully-produced little book with a soft leather cover. It is specially intended for a gift or a present.

TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR TOMORROW

Matthew 6. 34

What will be my lot tomorrow?

Oft my trembling heart has said,

When anticipating sorrow,

I’ve been overwhelmed with dread;

Then in moments, thus distressing,

When I’ve sought the Lord by prayer,

He has said, my faith addressing,

“Leave the morrow to *My* care.”

“’Tis enough that I uphold thee –

’Tis enough that I’m thy Guide;

In My Word of truth I’ve told thee,

‘I will to the end provide.’

What though dangers round thee hover?

What though fears thy bosom fill?

Soon thou shalt with joy discover,

I am *all*-sufficient still.”

O Thou condescending Saviour,

Let me hear Thy gentle voice;

Let me still enjoy Thy favour,

In Thy pardoning love rejoice.

Then though all around be dreary –

Though all earthly comforts flee,

While I know that Thou art near me,

I will still rejoice in Thee.

Gospel Magazine, 1857

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MARCH 2008

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

CALVARY

*Sermon preached by Ernest Roe
at Ebenezer Chapel, Luton, on March 29th, 1966*

Text: “And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left” (Luke 23. 33).

The great mystery of the hidden wisdom of God is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It was this theme that the great Apostle of the Gentiles was brought to a holy determination or decision to preach, namely nothing else but Christ and Him crucified.

The subject embraces everything that can be uttered, and more, by man. It will be the study and the praise of a blessed eternity to the beneficiaries of that atoning blood. Think of it. If you get there, as I trust you may, and I too by the grace of God, we shall not be talking about one another; we shall not be finding fault with one another; we shall be occupied with one Person, one work, one love, “the Lamb in the midst of the throne.” Then, why should we not, God helping, be more than ever resolved, every time you brethren in the ministry and I go into the pulpit, to take nothing else but that subject? If people are tired of it, we are sorry, but the living will be fed, and we have the promise that His dead elect shall be called thereby.

Now first at Calvary, this sacred place, we have the sovereignty of Jehovah in its greatest glory demonstrated. Sovereignty means God has the right to do just as He will. Now there are many theories and many philosophies about what is termed the atonement of Jesus Christ, but put all philosophies and theories on one side that do not touch the foundation point, namely, what is the existent occasion for the place called Calvary, or, in simpler terms, why did Christ die? Why was He crucified at Calvary? Many will tell you: to display perfect humanity, the love of a human being even to those who were cruel to Him. Ah! He did all that and much more, but let me ask you to contemplate this – a truth largely covered over and hardly ever touched upon in the religious press as it goes today, namely – sin, sin.

Why did God permit sin, the existent occasion for Calvary, to enter the world? I cannot tell you – no man can. There have been many

theories suggested; they are but theories. Facts are what we want. There can be no fact given other than, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Sin came into the world by the disobedience of one man, and he being a federal, legal representative of the whole race, the whole race have sinned and are under the sentence of death and condemnation through their sin, and nothing can alter it; nothing can alleviate that condition.

But God (O the riches of His love, the riches of His grace!), God, out of pure sovereignty, was pleased to arrange that One should come who could deal with that problem of sin, who would eliminate it as to its legal consequences upon His chosen people, and He has done it. He has not half done it. He has not done a part and left you and me to do the rest. He has finished it. How so? Why, by the place called Calvary where they crucified Him. There sin, that hideous monstrosity, sin, was imputed to Him. "The Lord hath 'caused to meet' on Him," said the prophet Isaiah, having regard to the Jew and Gentile church, "the iniquity of us all," literally, actually, legally laid upon His dear Son – no *ifs* and *buts* – a fact – taken off or from the account of His people and laid upon His holy Son. This explains Calvary, and nothing else can explain it. All the philosophies of modern wisdom so-called, religious or otherwise, could not – it is impossible they should – solve this great enigma; if Christ did not at Calvary deal with sin, then the whole human race is going to hell, as sure as there is a God upon His throne. Strong language – not too strong; if you and I know our sinnership we will cordially agree to that.

Do you remember, can you ever lose sight of the period when God charged *your* sin on your conscience, when He made you say, "The sorrows of hell gat hold upon me"? And why was that? Because He charged, in some measure (for the measurement differs in different cases), He charged you with your sins and you could not get away from that charge. You tried to drown it. You tried to remove it by something or other, but no, it stuck, it deepened. Now could all the schemes that men devise ease *your* conscience but atoning blood? No, nothing but that. Why? Because I am a sinner and I want that which explains to me how sin, *my* sin can be dealt with properly, actually removed, blotted out by God. Calvary, the atonement, is the only answer. How sovereign was God to have this!

Have you ever visited this place, friend? I do not mean geographically; I mean spiritually. Can you in any degree say God the Spirit has made Calvary real to you, *real* to you? You may not be able to say, as some may perhaps say, that you have the full assurance, without doubt or fear at all that He did bear your sins there, but somehow (you cannot explain how) your heart has a love to it, a drawing to it. It

attracts you. You feel sure of one thing, that if ever your case is dealt with rightly, it must be dealt with rightly there. That alone can solve your great problem. Do you bless God for that, friend? It is nice to have the full assurance, but it is not the full assurance that will save me, though I would love it, and everyone would who seeks God; it is what He did there that will do it and that alone.

To have the soul attracted to it and sometimes to get, even though it may be a distant glimpse of that holy, happy place, as it now is, Calvary, O it is a blessed religion, and a religion without it is not worth having – no good to anyone, neither in life nor death.

It was Newton who said:

“In evil long I took delight,
Unawed by shame or fear,
Till a new Object struck my sight,
And stopped my wild career.

“I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood.

“Sure never till my latest breath
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke.

Have you ever been there, friend? It is a solemn, profitable spot for you and me to be brought to visit. Then you will want the last verse:

“A second look He gave, which said,
‘I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid;
I die that thou may’st live.”

You will love Calvary. You will not want a slipshod, higgledy-piggledy ministry if you know anything of that blessed experience, Calvary, in your soul.

Now at this sacred place, justification was wrought out and accomplished. And what is justification? Well, two things are embodied in that term. One is, we are *made* righteous. Just what we want; just what we want. Our filthy rags of righteousness, which we may have worshipped, clung to, our religion, profession, good deeds (as we imagine), O when the Holy Ghost shines into your heart, man, you will say, Away with it all; it is a bundle for the ragman to take and burn. Ah, what a blessing when God declares that all your filthy rags have been removed and you have been made righteous! Righteous – whatever does it mean? Well:

“So near, so very near to God,
Nearer you cannot be,
For, in the Person of His Son
You are as near as He.”

That takes some believing, but it is rich gospel. It is a fact, and the weakest saint, the deepest, most hungry, most thirsty seeker after Christ is made that through the righteousness of Jesus Christ,

Then the second thing in regard to justification follows. Because you are made righteous through Calvary, God, as a Judge, proclaims you righteous. If you will follow me for a moment (and I am anxious that you younger ones should particularly follow me because this is a very prime article of a standing or falling church, as Luther termed it), God, as a righteous Judge, in passing His verdict must not only do justice, but justice must be *seen* to be done.

Well, at Calvary, God judged His dear Son. How could He do that? Only on the ground that the Son of God legally became your Representative and the law beheld you in Him and He standing for you, with the result, “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow ... smite the Shepherd,” and He was smitten, and He was righteous in smiting Him, not because He had done anything personally wrong but because He had, out of pure love to the sinner, voluntarily taken the sinner’s place, and God was bound, having that in regard, to deal with Him as He would deal with the sinner, and He did. *He did*. “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

And who are they that are justified thus at Calvary? Now you listen. Some of you might say, O it is they who pray, who repent, who believe, who live a good life. Well, they do, but that is not the reason they are justified or made righteous before God. Listen to this, will you? It is the Word of God: He “justifieth the ungodly.” O it is lovely! Ah, take that word home, fellow believer, old or young: “ungodly.” That is you; that is me – ungodly in thought now. You would not like your thoughts exposed as they have been perhaps today, nor what they have been while you have been in chapel. I would not – thoughts ungodly. God save us from our wicked thoughts. Words ungodly, deeds ungodly, ungodly from the moment we are born to the moment we die, and, as you live to get older (and I am sure my aged friends will agree with me), we get more ungodly in our apprehension and feeling until, looking back, we cannot say we have spent a good life, profitably, usefully. We cannot say it. All that we can see is sin, iniquity, transgression in all that we have done, and that is not exaggerating; God knows it is not. He, justify a person like that? Well, that is what He says.

In the fourth chapter of Romans you have it by inspiration of the Holy Ghost: He “justifieth the ungodly,” and He justifies him without

works, religious or otherwise. Without works – your bad works, your imaginary good works do not enter the question. Justified without works. What? God take a man who is ungodly in his apprehension and confession, to whom ungodliness is a grief and a burden, and a growing one, who has no religion, no prayer, no faith, no love, no humility, not anything spiritual? That is how he often feels. God knows he does. God take that man and justify him freely? That is just it, and this was wrought out at the place called Calvary.

Justice is seen to be done too, because the apostle throws down the gauntlet and he says, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” Let him come along if he can; who shall do it? “It is *God* that justifieth.... It is *Christ* that died.” That is the ground of it, the only ground, and that is not all. “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.” “He was delivered for our offences, and He was raised again for our justification.” The two go together.

Blessed be God for Calvary. Here, friend, look; if you are made to seek justification before God, do not look at your experience, good or bad, though you will want a right one, that you will, but do not look at it as the basis of your justification before God. Look at Calvary; that did it. I am telling you what is true. You know it is true, but you are like me; you will say, I wish I could always do that. Yes, “The life that I now live in the flesh,” said Paul – I do not live in the pharisaical religion I once was in but – “I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

At Calvary, one more thought, our old man was crucified with Him there. Our “old man.” That is a Biblical expression to denote the corrupt nature that belongs to us each and, as one Scotsman used to say when he was asked how he was, “I am an old man carrying an old man.” How true! And the old man seems to get a bigger burden the older you get. You can see him in so many different lights and hues where you never did see him when you were younger, not that we are despising what we may see when we are younger – there has to be a beginning, bless God, yet the beginning grows.

“The old man, which is corrupt” – people do not like that word today. It is true: corrupt. It is a bundle of corruption. There is nothing in it of holiness. It cannot be made holy, and God does not attempt to make it holy. He calls it “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” but it was crucified with Christ. Sixth Romans: “*Knowing* this” – ah, that is what we want to know – “*Knowing* this, that our old man *is* crucified with Him.” It is *dead* at Calvary, put to death there, legally, to all eternity; it will never breathe, never move, never trouble the child of God again, never.

Now, if you and I could only be taught that beautiful word from the sixth of Romans, "*Knowing this,*" *knowing* it in our hearts, believing it in our hearts, that this which troubles me so much, that is my drawback, hindrance; when I pray it is there; when I read it is there; when we preach it is there; when you listen to the gospel it is there. Yes, but it is crucified; its penal issue has been settled once for all. Paul, he was a very great and strong man in faith; Paul breaks out, "Do you know," he says, "*I was crucified with Christ.*" Very bold language, Paul, but very, very true, for when the Lamb of God at this place called Calvary was crucified, His children were crucified in Him. You were there, fellow believer; all believers, all who get to heaven were there, in union with Him on the tree. Marvellous truth; lovely truth. Heaven is wrapped up in that truth, "*I was crucified with Christ.*"

And how can God, having dealt with your sin in Christ at Calvary ever throw you away at the last? Never. You may fear it; you may dread it. You may sometimes be under the temptation that He will, but it cannot be.

"Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then again at mine."

Never.

At the place called Calvary the doorway to heaven was opened up, and nobody can shut it. No, the devil would if he could – that he would. Unbelief shuts it up in our experiences. Unbelief is a devil, a demon, an adversary to us. Well, have we sympathy with that good man, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief"? That is a beautiful word. He said it with tears, and you will say it with tears, in your heart, if not down your cheeks – that you will. "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." You believe that you will get to heaven. O but unbelief says at once, No you will not; it was never for you, a person like you. You know what you have done. Outwardly you are fair; you are deceiving people; you are deceiving yourself; you, be such a fool as to think you will get through that door into heaven? Never. And something seems to say, "Amen," to those suggestions and you do not seem far, at times, from despair, but Christ opened the door into heaven here and it shall never be shut, never.

May I say one word more and that is this: that at Calvary, when Christ was crucified, two malefactors were crucified with Him, one on the right hand, one on the left. Here the sovereignty of King Jesus appears just before He closes His eyes in death. One of them said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Now, why did not the other one say the same prayer? Ah, there is a lot in that, more than meets the ear at first! Why did he not? The plain, sober fact is that the other one had not an interest in the atoning work of Jesus Christ.

You *cannot* get away from that. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Solemn it is to talk about it, but it is true, and it *should* be spoken. The other one had no interest in the atoning work of Christ, and why not? Ah! "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight," is the alone answer. If you are the thief who is crying, "Lord, remember me," you have an interest; the cry proves the interest in what He did for you at Calvary.

And remember this too, I reckon that the dying thief was the greatest illustration of the greatest faith in Christ that the whole Bible has. That is saying a lot, but I think it is about right. "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Kingdom? Kingdom? He looks as if He has a kingdom, doesn't He? Look at Him; He is mocked, spat upon, the whole political power is against Him, the whole religious world is against Him, His disciples have forsaken Him and fled, God has forsaken Him too. Hear that awful cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Yet here is a man, who up to this moment has lived in sin, that can see He has a kingdom. You cannot find a better case, a stronger case of faith in the whole Bible than that. Every appearance was against him. Lord, remember me; Thou hast a kingdom, for Thou art a King, and Thou art coming into Thy kingdom. When Thou comest thither, Remember me. What a prayer! Ah, it was a prayer, and it was blessedly answered too! "To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," and it was so.

Now friends, as I close this part of the service, here, if anywhere, you have a clear demonstration of the fact that there are some people who are saved; there are some who are lost. The point, the point of all points is, to which class do I belong? As dear old John Warburton said on his dying bed, when reference was made to this dying thief: "He was my brother – my brother was that malefactor who cried, Remember me." You do not feel it a disgrace, do you, a shame, no ignominy about it, to look upon that dying thief as your brother? O man, it is your honour. It is your honour to be able to say with him from your heart, Remember me, Lord; remember me. I am nothing but sin; I can do nothing to remedy my case; Thou canst. Think upon me, Lord, when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And it was so, and all because of what Christ did for him at Calvary.

And the whole ransomed host will be in that kingdom of glory for the selfsame reason only. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift." Amen.

He that represents Himself in the sacrament as wounded for you, shows at the same time to the Father in heaven the real body that was wounded.

John Flavel

COMFORT WHEN CHRIST SHALL COME

*From Mount Pisgah by Thomas Case (1598-1682)
on 1 Thessalonians 4*

The next word of comfort is, God will bring His sleeping saints with Him, that is, with His Son Jesus Christ the Lord. For so it follows, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout"; and when He cometh, He will bring them with Him that sleep in Him. The propriety of the work is ascribed to Jesus Christ, God-Man, the Mediator between God and man. He shall bring them with Him when He descendeth from heaven.

1. When the Lord shall descend, He will bring the spirits of just men made perfect with Him from heaven. The souls of all His glorified saints, whose bodies to this moment have slept in the grave, shall follow Christ out of the gates of the New Jerusalem to attend that glorious solemnity. So it is prophesied, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints" (Jude 14). When Christ cometh to judge the world, there shall not be a saint left in heaven, saith Chrysostom. Heaven shall, as it were, be left empty, to attend the King of glory going forth out of His royal palace to finish the work of the great and last judgment of the world. He shall come attended with all His saints; they shall fill up His train.

2. As Christ will bring their souls with Him from heaven, so He will bring their bodies from the grave. Christ at His coming to judgment will first go to the graves of the saints, and cry to them aloud in some such language as once He did to their souls in the days of their unregeneracy, when dead in sins and trespasses, in the gospel call, "Awake thou that sleepest, and stand up from the dead, and I will give thee life." Or, as in the days of His flesh He did to Lazarus when he had lain four days rotting in the grave (a lively emblem and type of the general resurrection): "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11. 43); and they that are dead shall come forth. It was the tenor of His own prediction while yet in the world, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

When that hour has come, Christ by His mighty power shall command the bodies of His saints to come forth, shall unite dust to dust, every dust in its own proper place, and form it into the same body it was when it was dissolved and laid down in the grave, and thus made up into a beautiful structure, more beautiful than ever it was in its first creation. Christ will put each soul into its own body again, and unite them together into the same sweet, conjugal society and fellowship they possessed before their separation. This friendly, espoused pair shall now be

solemnly married together before God, and men, and angels, never to suffer divorce any more, and they shall become one entire person, as they were in the days of their first contract.

O Christians, think with yourselves what a joyful meeting that will be when two such ancient friends that have been parted so long shall meet, and embrace, and kiss one another, never to suffer any more divorce, or fear of divorce, to eternity! How will the soul bless God, when it shall receive its own body again, its true yoke-fellow and fellow-labourer which laboured with it much in the Lord, and which was wont to be its oratory and temple, wherein the soul performed all its holy devotions, in season and out of season?

And how will the body rejoice to see the soul again, to whom it was espoused, which was the guide of its youth, that, in its capacity, which Christ is to the soul, its King, Priest and Prophet, and by virtue of whose conjunction with it, the very body, as poor and mean as it was in its original extraction, was preferred and admitted into fellowship and communion with the Son of God. And upon that account, not forgotten all the while it slept in the land of forgetfulness and thought not of itself. I say, solace yourselves with the anticipation of that triumph and exultation that will fill this blessed, new-married couple, especially when they shall receive one another so much more excellent than themselves at their last parting, that the body shall seem to be transformed into a soul, and the soul transformed into an angel of light! Rejoice, O Christian soul, to think how these two morning stars will sing for joy, in this their new and for ever blessed conjunction.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

*From Mount Pisgah by Thomas Case (1598-1682)
on 1 Corinthians 15*

The apostle supposeth the query, “Some man will say, How are the dead raised? and with what body do they come?” (1 Cor. 15. 35). A query neither frivolous nor impertinent, and therefore himself (by the Spirit) thinks it worth the solving.

He gives us to understand that the saints shall rise with the very same bodies they lay down with in the graves. It is expressed under the metaphor of seed: God giveth it a body, and to every seed his own body; his own body, not specifically only, but numerically its own proper body, no ways alienated or transformed into another. And holy Job, even in the depths of distress, believed and preached the very same doctrine long before. “Though after my skin, worms destroy this body” – that is, after worms have digged through my skin to consume my flesh – “yet in my

flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another” (Job 19. 26, 27).

To this if it be objected, that in the thirty-seventh verse of 1 Corinthians 15 under the metaphor of seed, he tells the incredulous fool that cannot believe this article of faith, the resurrection, “Thou sowest not that body which shall be.” Not that body which shall be. It seems then the body shall be another thing from that which is now sown.

Yea, and indeed so it shall be, in respect of *quality*, though not of *kind*. There is diversity in one and the self-same body. As it is in the metaphorical, so it shall be with the natural. The grain is sown mean and bare, but it springeth up after another manner, beautiful and green, yet the same grain. The body likewise is the same, when it riseth as it was sown, for substance, parts, members and organs, but not the same for beauty and excellent properties.

The infant shall rise a man of perfect age, the lame shall rise sound, the blind shall rise seeing, the deaf shall hear, the dumb shall be able to speak, the resurrection shall take away all defects and excesses of nature, the deformities of the saints shall not be raised together with their bodies. Yea, deformities shall be turned into comelinesses and beauties, and yet all these alterations do no more change or destroy the individuality of person than youth doth make the person numerically different from what it was in infancy, or old age from what it was in youth, or as it was in the persons of all sorts which Christ healed in the day of His flesh. They were the same individuals after cure as they were before; cure makes not another individual man of a cripple nor health of the sick. So shall it be in the resurrection, the bodies of the saints (for of them only I speak, not at all of the wicked) shall be the same for substance and matter, but wonderfully changed for form and supernatural endowments and qualities, which brings me to the particular description of the resurrection in respect of admirable and transcendent properties, of which our apostle hath instanced four.

First, “It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.” It is sown in corruption. Behold, the body is corruptible while it liveth, a nursery of such seeds and principles as will inevitably destroy itself; an hospital of all manner of diseases; but when it is dead, it is corruption itself; the fondest relation who laid it in the bosom cannot now endure it in the sight. “Give me a burying place,” said Abraham of his beloved Sarah, “that I may bury my dead out of my sight” (Gen. 23. 4). It is now the picture of all ghastly loathsomeness.

But O how unlike itself shall it be in the resurrection! “It is raised in incorruption”; when Christ hath fetched the body out of the grave, and set it upon its feet again, there shall not be the least savour of mortality upon it, as there was no smell of the fire upon the raiment of the three

children when they came out of the fiery furnace (Dan. 3. 21). All the principles of corruption and mortality shall be put off, and left, together with the graveclothes, in the sepulchre. It shall be an angelified body, flesh immortalised; subject to no more corruption than the soul itself. There shall be no more death nor fear of death, nor possibility of death for ever.

“It is sown in dishonour.” As soon as the soul is enlarged from its imprisonment, the body is presently stripped naked of all its robes and honourable attire, and wrapped up in a poor shroud of no other use than to hide deformity; and as a mean, contemptible thing, it is buried underground. But, be the burial never so ignoble, the resurrection of it shall be glorious (Psa. 79. 2). “It is raised in glory.” We may truly say, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these children of the resurrection; there shall be a glory put upon the body which shall outshine the sun in its brightest refulgency.

The soul, which is the candle of the Lord, is here for a time put into a dark lantern of the body; but then the glorified soul being returned into its ancient habitation, and become a vessel replenished with immortal and unmixed light, will transmit such beams of glory into the refined body that it shall shine like an angel of light. The body of the poorest Lazarus that ever lay on the dunghill shall be clothed with such rays of beauty as will transcend the most absolute beauty that ever mortal eye beheld.

The soul shall possess an external irradiation. As Jesus Christ is the brightness of the Father’s glory, so shall the saints at His coming (in their proportion) be the brightness of Christ’s glory. The beams of that glory which shall shine forth from the glorified Person of their Redeemer shall reflect such a glittering splendour upon the saints in the resurrection that they shall be glorious even to admiration. They shall be admired by the very angels, by one another, and even by themselves also, they shall wonder to behold this strange change wrought upon themselves.

“It is sown in weakness,” weakness indeed! What more impotent than man while yet alive, vanity itself (Psa. 39. 5). Yea, hear that text out, and you will say he is vanity indeed, for first it is every man, kings as well as beggars, every man, take where ye will. And as it is every man, so it is every vanity, or altogether vanity. Every man is the centre of every vanity; he is not only mixed vanity, partly something and partly nothing, some solidity and some froth, but vanity throughout, vanity and nothing else! And then again it is every man in his best estate, or, according to the Hebrew, standing. Ye need not stay till he is down, when he is languishing, suppose, in his sick bed; but take him standing in his most erect posture, when he is most himself in his bravery. Or, as it is Isaiah 40. 6, take him in his goodliness, gallantry, in his freshest colours and excellences; and yet then, even then, he is vanity. Every man

is vanity; and that you may not doubt of it, the Holy Ghost hath set a double seal to it, one in the front, Verily, and another at the end of the text, Selah: "Verily, every man in his best estate is altogether vanity, Selah"; such a piece of vanity that he is not able at his best to free himself of, or fence himself against the injuries of the most contemptible creature that ever God made.

Thus weak he is in his strength, what is he in his weakness? So feeble he is when he stands, how feeble when he is fallen, in sickness, in his old decrepit age, his second infancy, in death.

But now behold this feeble thing shall be "raised in power"; the body even of the weakest infant shall be invested with an angelical power; a monument whereof, the formidable host of Sennacherib king of Assyria hath erected for all posterity; wherein one angel went out and smote one hundred four score and five thousand (2 Kings 19. 35), who overnight, like so many Goliaths, defied the armies of the living God; but in the morning lay upon the ground so many blasted, lifeless corpses, and all by the ministry of one angel. Such vessels of strength and activity shall the bodies of the saints be in the resurrection; they shall be clothed with mighty power. Gideon, Samson, Jephthah, David, and all his famous worthies are but as babes in the children of the resurrection. He that is weak among them shall be as David, and he that is as David shall be as the angel of God. Again,

"It is sown a natural body," such a body as is animated, sustained by the soul, yet in so low a way that it is subject to corruption, and is no sooner deserted by the soul, but it resolves into dust or natural; such a body as stands in need of natural helps, of meat, drink, rest, sleep, to shore up the feeble tabernacle of dust for a while, and all will not do, but down it will come – roof, and walls, and props and all. Or again, natural, that is, such as hath natural motions, operations and affections, such as are proper only to the fallen nature of man: feeble, slow, limited, and temporary.

But now behold, in opposition to all these acceptations, "It is raised a spiritual body," not in regard of the substance of it, as if it were turned into a spirit, but because animated and acted by the soul now in its glorified capacity, made perfect with all heavenly qualifications, and so spiritualised in all its faculties and operations that it is called no more by the name of a soul, but of a spirit (Heb. 12. 23). To the conduct and motions whereof, the body now shall yield absolute and immutable obedience and conformity. Here the soul depends, as it were, upon the body; because, though the body be acted by the soul, yet the soul acts according to the temperament of the body and the disposition of the organs.

But in the resurrection, it shall not be so. The body then shall depend wholly upon the soul, and be actuated properly and undisturbedly

by the soul. Here the soul seems to be flesh itself, because actuated by the flesh, and is oft subservient to the flesh; but then the very body shall seem to be a spirit, because actuated by the spirit, and shall be universally and uniformly serviceable to the spirit. The soul shall immediately be actuated by God, and the body shall immediately be actuated by the soul; thus it shall be a spiritual body.

“It is raised a spiritual body,” because it shall subsist as a spirit; it shall stand in no need of those gross material aliments of meat, and drink, and sleep, by which it is now underpropped; but it shall be sustained merely by virtue of its union with the soul, as the soul by virtue of its union with Jesus Christ. This is to be a spiritual body, when the body shall subsist as a spirit, or as an angel doth subsist.

Likewise the operations of the body shall then be all spiritual operations. It shall then be abased no more to any of the servile drudgeries of this present state; it shall work no more, toil no more, sin no more. The offices of the body shall be as far above its present functions as the work of a king transcends the employment of a swineherd. They shall for ever be freed from all those uses which do imply a state of infirmity, and shall be taken up wholly in heavenly and angelical services, as to stand before the throne of God and of the Lamb, and to praise Him for ever and ever.

And lastly, the body shall then be spiritual, because it shall be endued with spiritual affections. It shall not be liable to weariness, sickness, pain or external injuries, any more than a spirit is. In the resurrection, the bodies of the saints shall not cease to be flesh and blood, but they shall be divested of all the defects and infirmities of flesh and blood (1 Cor. 15. 50, 51). This is the mystery of it: “We shall be changed.” The fire of the last judgment, that only purgatory of the saints that we dull Protestants know, shall not consume the bodies of the saints, but their corruption only. It shall not destroy the substances, but refine their qualities, as the goldsmith maketh a new vessel of old plate, not by altering the metal, but by changing the form and fashion. The furnace of the resurrection shall purge out all the slime, and dross, and filth, and imperfection out of the bodies of the saints, and refine them into a body that shall exceed the celestial bodies of the sun, moon and stars in splendour and purity.

Behold, these are now the beatifical properties wherewith the very bodies of the saints shall be arrayed and beautified in the resurrection – a change which we are not in a capacity to understand till we shall possess it. And all these admirable properties the blessed apostle hath cast up into one word, a word of a most incomprehensible signification, the vast comprehensive estimate of all the rest: “Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3. 21).

O who can tell how glorious the glorified body of Christ is! Behold, if such was the brightness of Moses' face at the giving of the law, that the Israelites were not able to bear it: "They were afraid," saith the text, "to come nigh him" (Exod. 34. 30); if Stephen's countenance did shine as the face of an angel when he stood holding up his hand at the bar of his unrighteous judges, in the posture of a malefactor (Acts 6. 15), what think we is the lustre and brightness which shines forth from the glorified body of the Lord Jesus, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see (1 Tim. 6. 15, 16)? Behold in His transfiguration, His face did shine as the sun and His raiment was white as the light (Matt. 17. 2). What glorious beams of light and glory do Moses and Elias and Peter now see sparkling from His glorified Person exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, that is, on the highest throne of the highest Majesty in the court of heaven (Heb. 1. 3)? Surely the glorified body of Christ doth as far surpass the sun in brightness, as the sun surpasseth a clod of earth; and yet to this exemplar of glory must the bodies of the saints be conformed in the resurrection!

Surely, glorious things are spoken of the resurrection; so great, so glorious that, had not the Spirit of God spoken them before, it had been daring presumption to have reported or believed it.

THE WITHHOLDING OF THE SPIRIT

By Joseph Irons, 1831

There needs no effort to prove the fact; for the most superficial glance at the state of the churches must painfully convince us that the Holy Spirit is grieved and withholds His influence. Why else is the conversion of a sinner so rare an occurrence? Why is genuine spirituality at so low an ebb? Why is legal bondage so general, yea almost universal? Why are religious novelties swallowed with eagerness? Why is church order subverted by a republican spirit? Why, I ask, are the houses of prayer become theatres of amusement, forums of controversy, or school rooms of heathen morality, rather than temples of spiritual worshippers holding fellowship with God? Intellectual preaching is now preferred to spiritual; mathematical experience substituted for divine teaching. A polite, flesh-pleasing Christianity, which cannot offend the world, seems to be the popular religion of the day. It is no wonder that the influence of the Holy Spirit is withheld, and that His Almighty power is not felt, causing converts to "fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows." Jesus is not glorified.

The Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth, and will not give His testimony to error; hence the greater part of the pulpit orations of the present day are powerless, amusing harangues, which neither profit souls, alarm Satan, nor glorify God.... But let ministers of God insist upon honouring and exalting the Person of Christ, as “of God made unto us (the church), wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”; let them insist on His being the Covenant Head – yea, “the Covenant of the people”; let them glorify Him as the express image of the Father in His essential Deity – the Daysman and Surety of His church, made accountable for the honour of the holy law, divine perfections, and the eternal salvation of His whole church; let them thus glorify Christ, and the Holy Spirit will give testimony to the Word of His grace. But while His honours are sacrificed at the shrine of human reason, and the Spirit’s prerogative prostrated at the feet of proud freewill, His holy sanction cannot be expected [and] will not be bestowed.

Brethren, fellow watchmen, let us lift up our voices to glorify our divine Master; and if for this we must be dubbed hyper-Calvinists or antinomians, be it so. We will not be ashamed of our badge, nor turn one step aside to avoid the opprobrium, while the Holy Ghost continues to own our message to the conversion of sinners and the edifying of the body of Christ; but rather rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer reproach for Him who bore the cross and despised the shame for us, and wear as titles, yea, receive as honours, all the ugly names with which we may be loaded by formal professors, glorying only in the cross of Christ, as the centre of our hopes and the theme of our tongues.

Jesus must be glorified, for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and all the communications of grace which the Holy Spirit makes to ransomed souls are from His inexhaustible fulness. And while the ambassadors of Christ proclaim His work and exalt His name, the Spirit of truth applies the Word, convincing, comforting, sanctifying and establishing the election of grace. The Holy Ghost is given because Jesus is glorified by the Word preached.

Having thus acquitted my conscience with regard to the pulpit, I must now be alike honest with regard to the pews. Jesus is not glorified by the great bulk of gospel hearers by a simple, exclusive dependence on His Person and work for salvation, apart from all that pertains to the creature. Few indeed renounce righteous self as well as sinful self, to make Jesus all in all; few indeed pay more attention to His atonement and intercession than to their own frames and feelings; few indeed renounce all confidence in the flesh, to appropriate His merits and rejoice in His finished work. Hence the Holy Ghost is not given to impart comfort, to effect liberty, or to create assurance. But man, being left to intellectual

attainments, human wisdom and fluctuating emotions, becomes the victim of distress, the captive of legal bonds, and the dupe of unbelief; and a poor, meagre, pygmy race of Christians has sprung up, in whom infidels find little to contend with, devils little to oppose, the world little to offend, and Christ little indeed to glorify His name.

Nay, is not the creature glorified instead of Christ in self-complacency as to some attainment, or when vile corruptions seem quiet awhile, when some liberty is enjoyed in prayer, when some sermon is heard with pleasure, or when some flattering encomium [exaggerated praise] is given by man? O that Christians in these last days, were like Abraham: "strong in faith, giving glory to God"!

There is yet one more point to which I must invite your attention before I close: I mean the exemplary conduct by which the redeemed family glorify Christ.

Tenaciously as I contend for the doctrines of grace, and warmly as I insist upon the necessity of experience, I deny the use of the one, and dispute the existence of the other, where I see not the fruits of the Spirit; for the Lord hath said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." He doth not direct us to "gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles," but declares that "every good tree bringeth forth good fruit." Paul was directed by the Holy Ghost to say, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation ... teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." His injunction to the church at Corinth is, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And for himself, he thus determines: "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death." The Thessalonians were congratulated that their receiving the gospel in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance had made them ensamples to all that believed. Peter informs us that "so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." And John declares that "whosoever is born of God sinneth not."

What then must we say of multitudes who profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him, who talk like disciples of the Son of God, but walk as enemies of the cross of Christ? We can say nothing too severe of them. They are counterfeit coin, base metal, wolves in sheep's clothing, the tools of infidelity, the agents of Satan in the camp of the Lord. I ask not a question about the creed they profess. They may subscribe to all the doctrines of grace or be the advocates of universal redemption and freewill, but if under the dominion of base lusts, or carried along the tide of fashionable amusements, their profession is but a mask to hide their deformity, a disguise of their loyalty to the prince of darkness, and an aggravation of their enmity to the King of kings, by which they are heaping up wrath against the day of wrath.

O I am appalled at the state of the great bulk of professors in these last days! I look for truth, but I find profane and old wives' fables; I look for simplicity, but I find it supplanted by duplicity; I look for godly sincerity, but I find carnal policy; I look for heartfelt experience, but am annoyed with empty notions. In a word, I look for the godliness which is profitable in all things, and find little else but unprofitable speculations in religious things. And while national crime is fast filling up its measure, which calls for divine visitation, the professing church seems determined to win the race of rebellion against the Lord, as if desirous that judgment should begin at the house of God.

Yet even now, "there is a remnant according to the election of grace," whose faith stands in the power of God, whose bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, whose souls are governed by reigning grace, and whose lives are practical expositions of their sound creed. These are not carried away with every wind of doctrine, nor can they swallow every nostrum [a quack remedy] of theological quackery which ignorance or knavery may prepare. Being kept by the power of God, they feed upon the old store, they drink the old wine, they walk in the good old way, in the footsteps of the flock, and by their happiness and usefulness demonstrate the correctness of the apostle's statement: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." Alas that their number is so small, and consequently that Christ is not glorified in the churches to any extent, by the unreserved devotedness of those who profess His name.

How suitable is that exhortation of the apostle to the Romans: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world." For, saith John, "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, 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."

Did Christ meet death with such a heavy heart? Let the hearts of Christians be the lighter for this, when they come to die. The bitterness of death was all squeezed into Christ's cup. He was made to drink up the very dregs of it, that so our death might be the sweeter to us. There is nothing now left in death that is frightful or troublesome, beside the pain of dissolution, that natural evil of it. I remember it is storied of one of the martyrs, that being observed to be exceeding jocund and merry when he came to the stake, one asked him what was the reason his heart was so light, when death (and that in such a terrible form too) was before him? O, said he, my heart is so light at my death because Christ's was so heavy at His death.

John Flavel

A STRONG HOLD IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE

The substance of the last sermon preached by Dr. John Fawcett of Hebden Bridge (1740-1817). Dr. Fawcett was one of the old Particular Baptist ministers and is much loved for his gracious hymns. When Dr. Gill died, Dr. Fawcett was invited to succeed him. He accepted – but then yielded to the sorrowful pleas of his congregation to remain.

Text: “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (Nah. 1. 7).

The name of the penman of this prophecy signifies *consolation*, and though many parts of it chiefly relate to the overthrow of the Assyrian empire and the destruction of Nineveh, its capital, yet these events, however calamitous in themselves, were encouraging to the Jews, because assurances were at the same time given them of their deliverance from the yoke of the Assyrians, their powerful and inveterate enemies.

It is very probable that Nahum was contemporary with King Hezekiah, and that he delivered this prophecy after the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria. Josephus relates that he foretold the destruction of Nineveh more than 115 years before it took place.

In the beginning of the chapter, the prophet sets forth the majesty of a jealous and sin-avenging God, dwells upon the displays of His power, which is irresistible, in that He hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storms, where, to an eye of sense, all is confusion. He describes the methods of His providence, which to our view are awfully grand and unaccountable; and then, as in the words of the text, he exhibits the milder aspect which He wears, and the gentle, condescending attention which He shows to His people. “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.” The same almighty power which is exerted in the destruction of the wicked is employed for the protection and defence of those who trust in Him. This is the doctrine contained in the text, which naturally divides itself into three parts:

- I. The Lord is good.
- II. A strong hold in the day of trouble.
- III. He knoweth them that trust in Him.

I. The Lord is good.

Goodness is inseparable from the conceptions we have of God. Sometimes it intends, or is intimately connected with, His glory. Thus when Moses desired to see the glory of the Lord, the Almighty tells him, “I will make all My goodness pass before thee.” God is sovereignly and infinitely good. His goodness comprehends all His relative perfections

— all the acts of His grace and mercy. These are the expressions of His goodness, and they are distinguished by different names according to the objects towards whom the goodness is exercised. When it supplies the indigent, it is *bounty*; when it relieves the miserable, it is *mercy*; when it bestows blessings on the unworthy, it is *grace*; and as the term in this acceptation is often applied to spiritual blessings, it is that grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. When goodness imparts blessings according to what is promised, it may be denominated *truth* or *faithfulness*.

Whatever comfort the glorious attributes of Deity afford to us, we are indebted for it to His goodness. When His *wisdom* contrives that which is for our advantage, it is His goodness; when His *power* is employed in our protection, it is His goodness. In short, His goodness renders all His other attributes subservient to our advantage. We admire and adore the Almighty for His other perfections, but His goodness allures and draws our hearts to Him. For this we love Him. As the apostle says, “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” By this we are encouraged to make our addresses to Him, and to ask help at His hand. His goodness emboldens us to come to Him for all that we need (Heb. 4. 16).

The divine Being who is the Object of our adoration and whom we, as Christians, delight to worship, is a good and gracious God; He is *essentially* good. In this sense there is none good but one, that is, God. There is none good in comparison with Him.

We might enlarge on His goodness as it is shown in *providence*, and then a large field would open to our view. In this sense “the Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.” Ten thousand times ten thousand instances of His goodness are daily seen in His dealings with His creatures. But let it be observed that His goodness is most gloriously manifested through Christ. Goodwill towards men was proclaimed at the Saviour’s birth (Luke 2. 14). O what astonishing goodness it was in the Father to give His only-begotten Son to sorrows, agonies and death for us. This was no other than His goodness, under the appellation of love; “God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.”

Herein the love or goodness of God was commended (Rom. 5. 8). It was infinite and unbounded goodness imparted through Christ alone, as the Mediator between an offended God and offending sinners. Does not this goodness shine most conspicuously in pardoning all our crimes? “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions.” Is it not displayed in raising us from a death in sin to a life of righteousness, in accepting us as righteous through the obedience of Christ, in answering our poor, imperfect prayers; in directing and guiding us with His counsel,

supplying our temporal and spiritual wants, and in keeping us by His power, through faith, unto eternal salvation?

1. We might here remark, in the first place, that this goodness is *greatly diversified*; its blessings are of various kinds. It is described as sparing, pitying, supporting, relieving, restoring and consoling goodness. We may say of the blessings of God's goodness that they *cannot be reckoned up in order*. The language of the psalmist (Psa. 139) is applicable to them: "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand." Eternity itself will be too short to utter all Thy praise.

2. This goodness is, in its nature, *satisfying* to the soul. It is so abundant in measure that it replenishes and satisfies him who has an interest in it. Divine goodness gives the invitation to us, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." "Eat, O friends! drink abundantly, O beloved!" It is adequate to fill the most enlarged desires of the longing soul; he who is parched with thirst, and fainting with hunger, when enabled to have recourse to these supplies, with joy draws water out of the wells of salvation, drinks of those refreshing streams which make glad the city of our God, and eats of that bread which cometh down from heaven; and thus it is that the divine Being even makes our cup to run over with His goodness. The Lord's people have often found this to be the case in attending to the ordinances of divine appointment, and have been filled with holy confidence in this goodness. Hence we find them using the following exulting language: "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple."

3. It is *great* goodness, and in this respect it is like Himself – correspondent with the dignity of His character. It is great beyond all expression, beyond all comparison, beyond all comprehension (Psa. 31. 19): "Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee!" The Apostle Paul seems unable to find out words sufficiently strong to set forth its greatness: "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us." It is goodness which passeth knowledge. It bestows the greatest and best of blessings on the greatest of sinners.

4. It is *free, undeserved*, goodness; hence the Almighty declares, "I will love them FREELY."

5. It is goodness which *exactly answers our needs*. It removes all our sins and all our miseries, supplies all our necessities, lightens our burdens, and makes the path of duty our delight; so super-eminentlly excellent is it, that it is life, nay, better than life. Hence the psalmist uses this enraptured language: "Oh taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." God grant that the experience of those

who now hear my voice may correspond with these animated views of divine goodness!

6. It is *continued* goodness (Psa. 52. 1). The goodness of God endureth continually: in health, in sickness, in life, and in death itself, it is still the same; His mercy endureth for ever:

“Good when He gives, supremely good,
Nor less when He denies;
E’en crosses from His sovereign hand
Are blessings in disguise.”

This goodness heals our backslidings and saves us with an everlasting salvation. It is laid up here for them that fear God, and shall be enjoyed through eternity itself:

“O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which by creation first brought forth
Light out of darkness.”

II. “The Lord is ... a strong hold in the day of trouble.” It is evident from this clause of the text that, though God’s people are partakers of His goodness as before described, and interested in His favour, yet they have often here *a day*, or rather days, of *trouble*. For instance:

1. There is sometimes a day *of public*, national trouble, which they, in some respects, share with their fellow-creatures. When the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, laying all waste before them, when wars, pestilence, famine, earthquakes and other desolating calamities prevail – then indeed is a *day of trouble*. But in these circumstances, “the Lord is ... a strong hold.” He says, “Come, My people, enter into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (Isa. 26. 20). In that day of trouble when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone, angels were commissioned to lead Lot to a place of safety. God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.

2. There is a day *of family* trouble, when those near and dear to us afflict us by their ungodly ways, as was the case with Jacob, Eli and David; or when they are visited with heavy afflictions, their years cut off in the midst; when we see them in the agonies of death, and are ready to exclaim, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” Or when the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke – this is a *day of trouble* indeed; but, “the Lord is ... a strong hold” in such a time of domestic trouble. This the psalmist David found by happy experience: “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" (2 Sam. 23. 5).

3. There is likewise a day of *soul trouble*, when we are under conviction of our sins, oppressed with the weight of them, as a burden too heavy for us to bear; when our hearts are sore pained within us; when we are feeble and sore broken. Is there any relief in such a case? O yes. "The Lord is ... a strong hold." The conscious sinner is directed to fly for refuge to the hope set before him. In Jesus Christ there is protection, relief and deliverance. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."

Are any of you, my fellow-sinners, experimentally acquainted with this day of trouble? Let me direct you to a sure, a substantial place of refuge. "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope." Hear the invitation of Him who in prophetic language is styled "a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth"; "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions." "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." O that you may have faith to believe the divine Word. Through every age it stands recorded in this Word, for the encouragement of those who are exercised with soul trouble: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

4. A time of *severe temptation* is a day of trouble. This the apostle feelingly describes when he complains of a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. There are seasons when the enemy comes in as a flood, but in these overwhelming circumstances, the Lord is still a strong hold to His people: "The spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." That Jesus, in whom is all our salvation, was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, for this very end, that He might know how to succour them that are tempted.

5. The time of *inward darkness and desertion* is a time of trouble – when we walk in darkness, and have comparatively no light; when our souls are full of trouble, so that we are ready to say, "While I suffer Thy terrors I am distracted." Such a day of trouble has often been known; but in this time of need, "the Lord is ... a strong hold." Destitute of relief and comfort elsewhere, the soul, in the exercise of trembling hope, exclaims, "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him." "When I sit in the darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

O what encouragement have we both from the promise of God and the experience of the godly, in every age, to fly to Him as our strong

hold. "They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his trouble." "Why [then] art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." The prophet Jonah was once in a very low state of mind, but he fled to this strong hold: "I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple."

6. The season of *inward conflicts* with the power of sin is a day of trouble. Of this the psalmist David often complains: "Iniquities prevail against me"; "my loins are filled with a loathsome disease." The Apostle Paul was so oppressed with a sense of it that he bursts forth as in an agony: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he found the Lord to be a strong hold in the day of trouble, for he immediately subjoins: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." He will subdue our iniquities; He will bruise Satan under our feet. Lift up your heads; the time of deliverance, the time of redemption, draws nigh.

7. The period of *persecution* is a day of trouble. Such days there have been in past ages, both under the former and present dispensation, as is evident from Hebrews 11: "They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Our blessed Saviour endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself; He was treated with insult, exposed to cruel mockings, scourges, and at length nailed to the accursed tree; and "the servant is not greater than his lord, neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him." He plainly told His disciples that they must be exposed to persecution for His sake. "The time cometh when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." This was soon after verified in their experience, and in how many instances have the faithful witnesses to the truth been exposed not only to bonds and imprisonment, but have been brought to the gibbet or the stake, and sealed their testimony with their blood.

But "the Lord is ... a strong hold in the day of trouble." "Blessed are ye," says the compassionate Saviour, "when men shall revile you." "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad" in that day. Saints amidst the heaviest sufferings have experienced extraordinary support; never known so much inward comfort, so much peace and joy, as when persecuted by men; never so happy as when in prison, in chains or brought to a stake. "We glory in tribulations also"; for when tribulation abounds, consolation much more abounds. Thus it was with primitive Christians. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame and reproach for the sake of Christ.

8. A season of *sickness*, and *approaching death*, may justly be denominated a day of trouble. This is a day which we must all know, and it surely approaches to every one of us. But O how dreadful to have no shelter then! He that has lived without God, without Christ, without hope in the world, will be in a situation more deplorable than language can express in that day of trouble and consternation. What will you, O thoughtless sinner, do in the day of visitation? where will you flee? where will you leave your glory?

But the Lord to His people is a strong hold, even in this extremity of nature. An Old Testament saint could say, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Need we then to wonder at the holy composure and confidence with which a Christian is enabled to contemplate the same scenes, in the believing views of that Jesus who is the resurrection and the life, and who, having abolished death, hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.

"Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life be past;
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last."

The triumphant language of an apostle expressive of his own sentiments, and those of his fellow-Christians, is the best comment and illustration of this part of our text: "The Lord is ... a strong hold in the day of trouble." He says, with holy confidence, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

9. Finally, the *day of judgment* will be a day of trouble, such a day as was never yet known. The Lord Jesus Himself will descend from heaven in flaming fire. "The heavens ... shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." "Every eye shall see Him ... and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." The great day of wrath will then be come, and who shall be able to stand? Who but he who has been enabled to flee to the Lord as his strong hold? Mountains, rocks and hills will then afford no shelter. But they who love and wait for the appearance of Christ will be screened, protected, owned, acquitted. They will have the smile of approbation from the great Judge: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

Such are the days of trouble which God's people know and such is the protection which they shall experience.

But we must not forget to notice in a more particular manner the figurative, metaphorical language of the text, which is very striking: a strong hold is a *place of defence and safety in danger*. Here they who fly for protection are furnished with armour; here they have stores of provisions; they have every advantage against an assailing enemy; here they encourage and comfort one another; for, till the strong hold be demolished, none can hurt those who are within; they are safe as long as that stands. Now all these particulars may be applied here. The Lord is the rock and refuge of His people. Salvation is appointed to them for walls and bulwarks; their place of defence is the munition of rocks; they have a fulness of provision; "bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure"; here they are furnished with armour of proof, the whole armour of God: the helmet of hope, the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and above all, the shield of faith, whereby they may quench the fiery darts of the enemy. Here they have great advantage against the enemy. The saints are safe so long as this refuge stands. He that would overcome *them* must first break down the strong hold. While that stands they are safe, being kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.

III. The Lord knoweth them that trust in Him.

The former idea of God's being our strong tower implies a betaking ourselves to Him, and an important observation here presents itself, namely, that a strong tower is nothing to us unless we fly to it for safety. It affords protection to none but those who are in it. This is highly necessary to be attended to. Hence the apostle speaks of flying for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. So of old the manslayer was not safe from the avenger of blood till he got within the city of refuge. He who is safe through our Lord Jesus Christ must be *personally interested* in Him. This clause of the text therefore is very important. "He knoweth them that trust in Him." Two things are here observable.

1. Their *trust* is in the Lord, a term very often used in the holy Scriptures. This trust is so intimately connected with faith in the divine Word, that it seems inseparable from it. Hence the Apostle Paul says, "In whom ye also trusted ... after that ye believed." Trust in the Lord denotes a clear discovery of the insufficiency of every other defence; they who trust in Him no longer go about to establish their own righteousness. It has cost them much to be brought off from every legal ground of hope, but they now willingly suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that they may win Christ, and be found in Him. This trust in Christ arises from a spiritual and scriptural knowledge of Him.

2. He *knows* them that trust in Him. He knows them so as to distinguish them from all others, and so as to *approve* of them. "The

Lord knoweth them that are His.” “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.” He takes care of them in all times of danger, trouble and distress; He knows them in adversity, as well as prosperity, in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment. “They shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.” Thus we see the truth of what is here asserted confirmed by every part of Scripture. The Lord “*knoweth* them that *trust* in Him.” Let us close with a word or two by way of use.

Firstly, how deplorable is their case who have not the Lord for their refuge! They are exposed to the greatest danger, from sin, from the curse of God and His law, and from their being exposed to His eternal displeasure, without any refuge to fly to. O sinners! that you did but know your danger. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”

Secondly, let us learn to betake ourselves to the “strong hold”; security is only to be found there. This refuge should be particularly fled to in the time of trouble. We are encouraged to trust in the Lord at all times; and happy, thrice happy, they who are enabled to devote their youth, and the vigour of their days, to the service of God; He will not forsake them when old and grey headed, in public trouble, domestic calamities, soul troubles, and all the disquietudes they may feel from outward temptation, and the power of indwelling sin; in the day of personal affliction, and in the hour of death, He will not leave them destitute; He will be a wall of fire about them, and the glory in the midst of them.

Thirdly, how safe then are they who are in the strong hold referred to in the text: “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.” “Who shall separate [them] from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, “be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

Persons complain of the hardness of their hearts while they continue unblest with a sense of God’s love. Let them know that this sense of hardness should urge them to cry for mercy, not to wait till they find a heart of flesh first; they may wait for ever and wait in vain.

Bernard Gilpin

W. WOLSTENHOLME

For years the last name to appear in our list of ministers was: "W. Wolstenholme, 75 Rockcliffe Street, Blackburn, Lancs."

Years have passed away, and it was fifty years ago this month last year, March 23rd, 1957, that William Wolstenholme died at the age of 70. Mr. Philip Gudgeon of Attleborough used to say what a pity it was that his life was never written as it would have been a most remarkable, interesting, profitable one to read.

It would appear that he had no Christian upbringing. He told us that as quite a young boy he was thrust out into the world by his father, who gave him half a crown (12½p), and told him to do as best he could.

The Lord taught him the truth without any human means. He felt his need as a sinner, but wherever he turned in the Bible, he kept coming across words like "election," "the elect," especially in the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

Wondering if there were any people anywhere who believed what he did, he was told there was a young man named Foster nearby, who was considering becoming a Church of England minister. Finding this Fred Foster, he asked him if there were any such people. The reply was, "Yes, the Particular Baptists," but he was warned not to have anything to do with them!

Mr. Wolstenholme's reply was that he was going – so he and his girl friend, accompanied by Mr. Foster and his girl friend, all went together to the old Islington Particular Baptist chapel in Blackburn. The preacher was the pastor, Mr. J.H. Snow, and the text: "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory."

Mr. Wolstenholme could not understand how the minister knew all about him, and who could have told him, as he described all his feelings and exercises. (Of course, Mr. Snow did not know anything about him.) When they all came out, the question was asked, "What do you think?" to which Mr. Wolstenholme replied, "This people shall be my people, and their God my God."

Both Mr. Wolstenholme and Mr. Foster were baptized in the year 1910, and later both of them went out to preach about the same time in 1924, Mr. Wolstenholme being encouraged and invited by Mr. Walter Croft, who at that time was pastor at Sale. The words, powerfully felt, which constrained him to venture forth to preach, were:

"Is there a lamb within Thy fold,
I would disdain to feed?
Is there a foe, before whose face
I'd fear Thy cause to plead?"

During the first Great War (1914-1918) Mr. Wolstenholme was a sergeant-major, and was decorated at least once for conspicuous bravery. We believe on one of the occasions he knew so much of the peace of God in his heart that it did not matter to him whether he died or lived. He retained much of the "sergeant-major" about him and could be thought of as hard, yet he had a tender heart.

Mr. Wolstenholme was a great stickler for church order. He remembered that when he joined the church at Blackburn there were eighty church members, so it was important that everything was done "decently and in order."

As a preacher Mr. Wolstenholme preached mainly in Lancashire, where he was highly regarded. Mr. Foster, of course, became an exceedingly gifted and well-known minister, holding pastorates at Patricroft and Nottingham. The word which best describes Mr. Wolstenholme is "solid." Perhaps he did not possess special ministerial gifts but the godly said there was a "strengthening of the things that remain." Quite a number, some well-known, were baptized by him.

One young man, a Methodist, coming among the Strict Baptists for the first time, said he found many of the preachers interesting, instructive and even eloquent but it was Mr. Wolstenholme who made most impression of all – the feeling that he knew the things he was speaking about, and that they were real, vital, eternal things, not sentiment or emotion. Mr. Wolstenholme later baptized him.

A man of wisdom, Mr. Wolstenholme knew when to act. There was a chapel, where he was a trustee, where the membership almost died out, though there was still quite a good congregation. Quietly, without being asked, he stepped in, took control, and saw the church re-formed and increased – when he quietly moved out again.

"They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

Written from memory

If you will not do as Judas did, nor come to such an end as he did, take heed you live not unprofitably under the means of grace. Judas had the best means of grace that ever man enjoyed. He heard Christ Himself preach; he joined often with Him in prayer; but he was never the better for it all. It was but as the watering of a dead stick, which will never make it grow, but rot it the sooner. Never was there a rotten branch so richly watered as he was. O it is a sad sign and a sad sin too, when men and women live under the gospel from year to year and are never the better. I warn you to beware of these evils, all ye that profess religion. Let these footsteps by which Judas went down to his own place terrify you from following him in them.

John Flavel

BOOK REVIEWS

The Works of Andrew Fuller; very large hardback; 1012 pages; price £27; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We must confess we were rather surprised that Banner of Truth should publish the works of the renowned Baptist minister, Andrew Fuller (1754-1815). As is well known, the publication of Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* in 1785 split the old Particular Baptist denomination in two. There were many like Gadsby, Warburton, Kershaw and Philpot who rejected Fuller's teaching (and interestingly, with this section a wonderful time of spiritual prosperity followed).

Reading Fuller carefully (now and years ago), we have found it difficult to assess exactly what he did believe. He appears to have made the atonement to be for sinners generally, but the limitation being by (a) God's choice, and (b) the Holy Spirit's work. The Baptist historian A.C. Underwood believed that this led to the old Baptist denomination accepting general redemption, and the Particular Baptists merging with the General Baptists in 1891. (Andrew Fuller also advocated what came to be known as the "free offer," though he himself would not have used that term.)

Yet when the General Baptist leader, Dan Taylor, felt Fuller had come over to their position, Andrew Fuller was upset and said he would rather go to the ends of the earth than become a General Baptist! Again, when some suggested he was a Baxterian, he said that reading Richard Baxter's works made him physically ill. All of which points to the confusion in Andrew Fuller's views.

We are, therefore, amazed at the claims of the publishers that he was "the greatest theologian" of his time; "the most able theological writer" that ever belonged to the Particular Baptists; and "the greatest theologian of the late eighteenth-century Baptist community." The kindest thing seems to be to say that he was a very sincere man, but his views were confused and often not right. To add to the confusion, it has been said that Fuller himself never preached Fullerism!

It is wrong to suggest, as some have done, that it was only the Gospel Standard Strict Baptists who rejected Fullerism. Most of the present day Grace Baptist churches in Suffolk were formed as a protest, issuing in the formation of the Suffolk and Norfolk Union. William Rushton of Liverpool who wrote against Fuller was an "Association Baptist." John Stevens, whose *Helps for the Disciples of Immanuel*, was a refutation of Fullerism, was quite antagonistic to Gadsby and the *Gospel Standard*. Abraham Booth, perhaps the leading, best known Baptist minister of his day, author of *The Reign of Grace*, also entered into controversy with Andrew Fuller.

The Works of Andrew Fuller is a mammoth work, 1012 very large pages. Of course, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* is only part of the volume, though Fuller's most renowned work. It is only fair to say that also included are the works where he wrote strongly against the errors of Deism, Socinianism, Universal Salvation – insisting on the vital importance of the Trinity and the essential Deity of the Son of God. Like Gadsby, he strongly opposed Sandemanianism.

There are various sermons and sketches, some on believers' baptism (Andrew Fuller was a strong *Strict* Baptist), pieces on the Book of Genesis and the Book of Revelation, and a life of Samuel Pearce. At the beginning is a

biography of Andrew Fuller himself (93 pages). He was pastor of the Particular Baptist church at Kettering, Northamptonshire.

Perhaps it should be mentioned that most of the print in this large volume is small.

Eternity Realised: A Guide to the Thoughtful, by Robert Philip; paperback; 196 pages; price \$16 (special \$12); published by Reformation Heritage Books, 2965 Leonard St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525, U.S.A., and obtainable from some Christian bookshops.

Robert Philip (1791-1858) was born in Huntly, Aberdeenshire. He became a minister for Newbington Chapel, Liverpool, in 1815, serving there for ten years.

In 1826 he took the pastorate at the Maberly Chapel in London, where he ministered until 1855. He wrote a number of experiential manuals and biographical tributes, which circulated extensively in Britain and the U.S.A.

This book's purpose is to place before the reader what is claimed the duty to meditate on eternity and to practise being heavenly minded. The subject is certainly not unimportant in a believer's life. I found the last chapter, "Christ, the glory of eternity," the most profitable.

The problem with books like this: the subject is dealt with on the surmise of the believer's duty and ability and not the vital need of the Holy Spirit to guide into all truth. The realisation of spiritual and eternal realities is alone through the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the application of the Word both to convict and make known the preciousness of the Saviour (Song 1. 1-4).

N.H. Roe, Ossett

Lectures on Revivals of Religion, by W.B. Sprague; 418 pages; hardback; price £16.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and available from Christian bookshops.

William Sprague (1795-1876) was an eminent Presbyterian minister from New England, who had extensive personal experience of revivals in America. In 1831 he delivered a series of lectures on revivals (in his own words) "to vindicate and advance the cause of *genuine* revivals of religion ... and to distinguish between a genuine revival and spurious excitement." These lectures were then published the following year, supplemented by letters from twenty leading American ministers from different denominations about the history of revivals and the manner in which these had been conducted by men of "wisdom, experience, and standing in the church."

The reprinted edition also includes biographical notes about each of these ministers, which help today's reader to understand the context of these excellent letters. The publishers have done a great service by reprinting this book.

The recurring theme throughout the lectures and appended letters is the need to set forth the whole counsel of God in the gospel ministry, with earnest and direct delivery, but without deviating into any novel methods to whip up excitement or generate results by man's wisdom. The minister, the church and individuals under conviction of sin are counselled to place their whole dependency upon God the Holy Spirit for blessings of salvation in Jesus Christ.

There is an insistence that the genuine work of the Spirit must be accompanied by the fruits of the Spirit, a life of prayer and a walk by faith in the precepts of the Bible. The book also warns about how revivals have been marred by those who have succumbed to the temptations of Satan, who is ever seeking to work upon the sinful frailty of the minister or his hearers. These warnings are most timely.

Whilst the author insists upon the pre-eminent agency of God in revivals, we would differ over some of the expressions about man's agency and about "duty-faith" teaching. However despite this, the book is of great value and presents much sound and vital instruction. There is much that makes uncomfortable reading for us today, which should give rise to prayerful meditation, confession and repentance over our lukewarm condition. When considering the languishing state of many churches today, the reader of this book is left in no doubt that we have backslidden from former days when the Lord abundantly blessed the churches.

It would be a mercy if this book is used of the Holy Spirit to stir up many to earnest prayer and a practical walk in the ways of God, beseeching that the Lord might be pleased to return in power to the churches. "Them that honour Me I will honour" (1 Sam. 2. 30). "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock" (Ezek. 36. 37).

I.A.Sadler, Chippenham

Altogether Lovely, by George Rose; paperback; 42 pages; price £3 including postage; published by The Huntingtonian Press, and obtainable from 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 4EB.

It is over forty years since Mr. Rose died, but he is remembered with deep affection by many.

This little book consists of two sermons on the beautiful text: "His mouth is most sweet: yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem" (Song of Solomon 5. 16). A short account of Mr. Rose's life and ministry appears at the beginning.

One of three booklets recently issued by The Huntingtonian Press, like the others it is very attractively produced.

The Experience of John Starkey; paperback; 25 pages; price £1.60 including postage, published by The Huntingtonian Press.

Lovers of James Bourne will welcome this gracious account of one of his hearers at Maney Chapel, Sutton Coldfield, and nearby Aldridge.

John Starkey was a poor shepherd with a large family, suffering from poor health. He died in 1851. This account of the Lord's gracious dealings is for the most part in his own words. It was probably first published by James Bourne, but it appeared in the 1860 *Gospel Standard*. J.C. Philpot commented, "What a sweet and simple account of the dealings of God with a vessel of mercy!"

Two letters by James Bourne appear and one by John Starkey himself.

So many of the Huntingtonians had a good religion and the possession of vital godliness. As with most of their accounts, there is little or nothing about John Starkey's background, life, family, occupation, etc.

The Sovereign Operations of the Spirit of God, by Joseph Irons; paperback; 50 pages; price £3.40 including postage; published by The Huntingtonian Press.

Joseph Irons (1785-1852), minister at Grove Chapel, Camberwell, was an outstanding preacher in his day. His ministry was abundantly blessed, and his sermons were regularly published in pamphlet form. There was no uncertain sound in his preaching: covenant love, covenant blood, covenant salvation. Also he showed no mercy to the errors that abounded in his day, considering them an insult to the Saviour he so dearly loved. To many of our readers he is best known

today by his beautiful hymn (the last in Gadsby's): "What sacred fountain yonder springs?"

Joseph Irons was preaching when Edward Irving (1792-1834) had become very popular in London – but later excommunicated by the Church of Scotland for his errors. In many ways Irving was a forerunner of the excesses of the modern Charismatic Movement. It is clear that in these sermons Joseph Irons is referring to Edward Irving and his errors – so in some ways these sermons are up to date. They deal with the work of the Holy Spirit, the texts being: "The day of Pentecost" (Acts 2. 1); "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16. 14); and, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7. 39).

But apart from the errors in the professing church, then and now, this is a lovely little compendium of divinity on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit. And there is nothing dry or arid, but rather the dew from heaven.

Preaching like that of Joseph Irons is seldom heard today; but at one time it was the glory of both church and chapel in our country. It would be a wonderful mercy if the Lord were to favour the churches once again with a ministry like this.

Huntingtonian Press are to be complimented on publishing three such little books as these.

TRUSTING IN JESUS

From Bogatzky's "Golden Treasury"

"I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2. 20).

In spiritual things we are too often living upon self. We seek in frames, forms, creatures and natural things that inward peace and stability of mind which are only to be found in the Redeemer. Outward duties are well in their place, but they have no divine life in themselves, or to give. They are to be performed, but not trusted in; to be used with grace, but cannot buy grace. They are as the scaffold of the building, a means for carrying on the work, but not the end of the great design. In the power of Christ they are blessings; without it they have no power.

The whole trust must be in Jesus. He is the way, the truth and the life; without Him, prayers, praises, rites and ordinances are carcases without a soul. Every performance of outward worship is so, unless the Saviour fills it with His divine Spirit. Then it is we experience a communion of heart, a reviving of the soul after the adorable Jesus, and a delightful view behind the veil of outward ordinances (such as no carnal eye can behold), manifesting the Lord in His goodness, beauty, grandeur, blessedness and glory.

"Nature has all its glories lost,
When brought before Thy throne;
No flesh shall in Thy presence boast,
But in the Lord alone."

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
APRIL 2008

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

GOD'S MYSTERIOUS PROVIDENCE

*Sermon preached by John E. Hazelton at Streatley Hall, London, on
August 1st, 1909, following the death of his only son.*

Text: "Should it be according to thy mind?" (Job 34. 33).

The whole verse reads: "Should it be according to thy mind? He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest"; but we will seek to confine our attention to the first clause. These are the words of Elihu to Job: "Should it be according to thy mind?"

When we read the Book of Job, the pathetic, central figure pretty well absorbs our attention. Our hearts thrill as we gaze upon him. The book opens and we see that man of God sitting in the midst of the calm and cloudless day of prosperity; a rich man, an influential man, a God-fearing man, a man evidently singularly happy in his domestic relations. And at eventide that same day a desolate dwelling! A rich man made poor! A father, absolutely childless! A God-fearing man on whom the enemy seems to have wrought pretty well all his will.

Then, succeeding that first chapter, we have alternations in the experience of Job of darkness and light – darkness that might be felt; light that came from God out of heaven. We see the fearful conflict between the unbelief of his heart and the faith of God's elect of which he, by grace, was made a partaker. We see Job brought at last to acknowledge that God had a perfect right to do with him and his as it pleased Him. The fierce winds of adversity blow, and Job is like a tree shaken by those winds; a complete tornado of trial presses upon him, but like all sanctified trial, that very hurricane causes him to wrap his roots closer around the Rock of eternal ages, and from the heart of that dear man springs one of the most wonderful utterances in the whole of the Word of God: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

So we have in Job a wonderful object-lesson of the blessed truth that "the just shall live by faith." How are we kept amidst life's trials? By the mighty power of God. Through what instrumentality? Through the instrumentality of faith. "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." Then our faith is the instrument by which we are kept. Yes, but above and beyond all that is the Keeper of our faith, the Lord

Jesus Christ, who prays for all His people in life's bitterest sorrows that their faith fail not.

Here is one of the questions that was asked by one of Job's friends; not by one of the three, but by the youngest of all, Elihu. The questions of the Book of Job are not the least instructive part of this wonderful portion of God's Word. Questions asked by God, questions asked by Satan, questions asked by Job, and questions asked by his four friends. Out of the old world, and from the centuries behind us, come those questions. How each question pierces today to the very heart of things, and how many replies voice the yearnings and experiences of God's dear people as they face sorrow, change, pain and death!

Here is one question put by the Lord, "Wilt thou condemn Me, that thou mayest be righteous?" (Job 40. 8), and Job could not answer that. Here is Satan's question, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" (Job 1. 9), and Satan received his answer. Here is Job's question, "How shall a man be just with God?" Each question is asked and answered by words full of peace and rest.

But to come to our text. It is a question asked by Elihu, the youngest of those five men. Elihu is a proper name, signifying, "God is Jehovah." In him we see a man of God inspired by the Holy Spirit as a divinely-commissioned messenger between God and Job. God sent Elihu with divine messages to His servant Job, and I take it, whilst not regarding Elihu exactly as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, he certainly shadows forth the Lord Jesus in many things that he says to Job.

What had Job been asserting? Certain things which Elihu was commissioned to meet. He was sent in love and mercy to reason with poor Job. Job had been complaining that God did not answer his prayers. Have you ever complained like that? I have again and again. Elihu took that up (read it when you get leisure); he reminded Job that God speaks in many ways, answers His people in many ways, and appears to them in ways that they do not expect. Job undoubtedly charges God with injustice, with inflicting wrong upon him; and see how beautifully Elihu vindicates the power, wisdom, love and grace of God. Job complains that God's providences are unsearchable. When I say Job, we read our names there, do we not? He complains that God's providences are unsearchable, he chafes under them; so Elihu replies and answers Job. Then God speaks at last. He speaks to Job out of a whirlwind. What is the end of it all? Job says, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42. 5).

Let us now look at this question, "Should it be according to thy mind?" First of all a fact is implied; secondly, the true reply to this question is a negative one; thirdly, there is the response which we are enabled to make to it when God raises up faith in act and exercise in our hearts.

I. First of all, there is *the fact implied*: "Should it be according to thy mind?" The fact is that things are *not* according to our mind. What things? Pretty well all things in relation to God's providence. Now I would put it in this way. No child of God here has all he wishes. Many of us, most of us, all of us have a great deal in our lives and in our lots that are crooks; they are very crooked things. "Should it be according to thy mind?" Can you make straight what God has made crooked, and what He in His lovingkindness and tender mercy has brought into your life, and brought into mine? Here are the things. We deprecate them. We put them away as it were with our hands. We object to them. We strive against them. Between you and these things there is continual collision, and where there is collision there is heat and wasting and pain. Should these things be according to your mind? Job wanted everything according to his mind, and so do you and I.

That bitter pang, that tearing up of your hopes by the roots, that unsuspected heritage of penury – are these things according to your mind? The anguished sick bed upon which you see those near and dear to you, or that you may occupy yourself; that crushing bereavement; that particular thing in your business or elsewhere. Are these things according to your mind? Should they be? That is what God says here by the Holy Ghost: "Should they be according to your mind?" See how this question comes right home to us even today. More than three thousand years ago this question was asked, and the heart is the same as ever with regard to the things by which God's people are surrounded. "Should they be according to our mind?" I should like them to be, and so would you, but God the Holy Ghost says here, "Should they be?"

What is the result of these things that are not according to our mind? We toil; O how we toil! The disciples, before the Lord spoke the word of peace, were "toiling in rowing," rowing against the wind and waves; "toiling in rowing," and so we toil against these things. We fret and fume. God casts these things down and we attempt to rebuild them. If I may speak for others, I am continually, in my folly and unbelief, attempting to rebuild what God has cast down. That building is not according to God's mind, and therefore He has brought it down. I know it was in accordance with your mind, and you were fitting it together according to your own goodwill and pleasure. Vain regrets we indulge in for that which is lost. Almost – quite, is it? – almost there is a sense of injury in our hearts that things are not according to our mind, that they do not take the shape that we want them to take; that they refuse to answer to the moulding which our hands would bring about in relation to the affairs of our lives.

We are just baffled, and when we feel baffled we get awfully rebellious, just like Job who said (I leave it to your consciences whether

you have indulged the secret thought; Job had it out in words), “Thou art become cruel to me.” That is what he said to God! What a merciful God we have! He did not deal with Job accordingly. “Thou art become cruel to me,” because these things are not according to my mind.

Let us turn for a moment in the direction in which God inspired Elihu to direct Job’s attention. Job’s faith, although it died down, never died out. To Peter our Lord said, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” It did fail, but the word in the original is “die not out.” “I have prayed for thee that thy faith die not out.” So Job’s faith died not out.

What are these things that are not according to our mind? They are according to the mind of our covenant-keeping God; they are according to the mind of Him who never inflicted one wrong on any of His dear children; they are according to the mind of Him who sees the end from the beginning; they are according to the mind of Him who is the Executor of His Father’s will, and whose heart is set not only upon the salvation, but the guidance of each of His dear people. They are according to the mind of Him who sitteth upon the throne. He causes all things that are not according to our mind to work together for the good of all of us that love God and are the called according to His purpose. They are according to the mind of Him of whom it was affirmed when on earth, “He doeth all things (beautifully) well” (Mark 7. 37). They are according to the mind of Him whose nature and whose name is *Love*.

O what a word this is for our faith! “What I do,” said the Lord elsewhere, “what I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” Should it then be according to thy mind in this little span of life of ours – seventy or eighty or ninety years, but for most of us less than seventy? Eternity is coming, and in this little bit of eternity (for we are in eternity now; time is part of eternity) should it be according to our mind when we are loved with a love that streams from a past eternity, with a love that reaches to an eternity yet to come? “He maketh the clouds His chariot,” and every cloudy chariot moves upon the axle of everlasting love.

What is a cloud? How do you feel when you enter a cloud? It is a mist, it is a dimness, it is a fog. You do not know which way to go in a fog. The road with which you are most familiar becomes one in which you quickly lose your way. In a fog things appear far beyond their ordinary dimensions. You take a pathway which you believe to be the road, and soon you are enveloped in a mystery. What are all these clouds? The chariot of a covenant-keeping God. “He maketh the clouds His chariot.” Where is God’s throne, His throne of grace, power and mercy? In the middle of all those clouds. “Clouds and darkness are round about His throne,” but God is moving on His undisturbed affairs. What are the two charioteers that draw the chariot of our covenant-

keeping God in Christ? "Mercy and truth shall go before His face." Our divine Saviour, the Lamb who died for us at Calvary, the "Lamb in the midst of the throne," is moving on among His people in His cloudy chariots. Mercy – O the mercy of our God in Christ! mercy and truth, mercy and faithfulness, faithfulness to His God, the faithfulness of the covenant, faithfulness to you and to me – mercy and truth draw on these cloudy chariots of our God and surround His throne. Here, then, is the fact implied, that things are not according to our mind.

Once more in relation to the cloudiness of the dispensations of our God. Where does the Lord say He will appear? "I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat." You see everything here connected with the cloudy dispensations of our God and His appearing to His people is associated in type with the covenant. The mercy-seat covered the ark of the covenant, representing the "covenant ordered in all things and sure," and in this covenant are these things which are not according to our mind. "I will appear *in the cloud* upon the mercy-seat" – in the density, in the gloom. The Lord Jehovah in the midst of the cloud.

"But, Lord, every door is shut; every hope is cut off; things will never be the same to me again as they were!" There follows a mist and a weeping rain, and life is never the same again; you know that in your troubles, don't you? Life is never the same again. "Lord, I come to Thee for help, for blessing, for mercy, for a revelation afresh to my poor soul of Thy covenant love to me in Christ Jesus my Lord. Where can I turn with the shut doors?" "I am cut down like a tree," says Job. "I *will* appear" – there is no contingency here – "I *will appear in the cloud* upon the mercy-seat." O, our blessing is, dear friends, that our God in Christ rules from the mercy-seat. Our God in Christ rules on the basis of His covenant love everything concerning you and me. These things that are not, and cannot be, and ought not to be, according to our minds, are all being ruled by Him who sitteth upon the throne, and when we reach the other side – and perhaps it will not be long with some of us – when we reach the other side, shall we not be able to say, "Just and true are all Thy ways, Thou King of saints"?

II. Secondly, *the proper reply* to make to this questions is one emphatically in the *negative*. "Should it be according to thy mind?" No! That is the reply of grace. Yes! That is the reply of sense and reason.

Why is that negative reply a right one? First of all, because our knowledge is so limited. We are permitted to see a good deal more than Job saw. Job was living just a day or an hour at a time, but here in the Book of Job God has lifted the veil, and we see the whole thing from the beginning to the end. We see God's purposes, the workings of God's love, the tender patience of God. It is all mapped out before us here, but Job had not this book. We, through this revelation, see a great deal more

than Job saw until the end, and we see in Job an object lesson to devils, angels and men.

Here we see that which illustrates the love, the faithfulness and the patience of Job's Redeemer. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." My Redeemer, not only in the sense of ransoming Job with His precious blood, but my Vindicator, my glorious Kinsman, my Friend! I know that He liveth. We see so little, dear friends, compared with what God sees, and because we see so little, so very little, things ought *not* to be, and cannot be, according to our mind. Dr. Livingstone wrote in his diary in Central Africa, "We see but small segments (cuttings, parts) of the mighty cycles (or circles) of Providence, and we imagine they are failures. If we could see the larger arc (the larger portion of the circle) we should often rejoice where now we weep." That is true. God sees the whole; He guides the spokes of all that wondrous wheel of providence, but we, with our limited knowledge, are able only just to see the present moment, and not able to see two or three minutes ahead.

Once more in relation to this. Our knowledge being so limited, should we not seek for more grace that we may be restrained from premature judgment? Present things, present troubles, which are not according to our mind, are vitally united to future things. God works as a whole – past, present and future are one glorious chain. Then how can you judge of present things until the future things come? Should these present things be according to our mind? Are we to judge of the web before the pattern is fully formed? If we had our will we should say, "Lord, put in the fair colours in our lives now." If the web of our lives were left to us we should seek to do this, and we should weave a web of sackcloth, with no use or beauty discernible. One thread! There is no beauty there! One note of music, it is but one! One wheel! More wheels than one are needed. All the threads are needed for the pattern. With all the notes there is the harmony. All the wheels moving – there are the great transactions of our God in providence. All parts will be adjusted presently, not according to thy mind now, but according to His mind.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain.
God is His own Interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

Brother, sister, can we not say this, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us" (1 John 4. 16)? What a mercy if we are brought to say that! "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." If that is true, "Should things be according to our mind?" "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us" before all worlds in the "covenant ordered in all things and sure." He has loved us

with an everlasting love. Bless God if He has brought us to be grounded upon covenant truth; there is no gospel without. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us," in the Person of His dear Son before all worlds. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us," in sending His eternal Son to take into union with Himself our nature, and in that nature to atone for our sins; to speak the words of the everlasting gospel to us; in that nature to enter into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief." "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us" – we cannot, we dare not, we would not deny it – in sending His Holy Spirit into our hearts, quickening us from the death of trespasses and of sins; warming these hearts that by nature are cold and dead as the stones; revealing to the eyes of our faith the beauty and preciousness of His own dear Son; causing our hearts to be warmed from time to time with the Saviour's name, and making that name as ointment that is poured forth. He has caused our hearts, notwithstanding all our wicked rebelliousness, to say,

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast."

How great, how wonderful is the love of the Spirit in coming into a heart like yours and like mine!

"We have known and believed the love that God hath to us," whereby we cry Abba Father, whereby He has distinguished us from many around. And yet when God steps into our lives, when He touches us in the tenderest place of all, we begin to doubt the love that God hath to us. O what a mass of contradiction we are! O for grace to cry,

"I do not ask my cross to understand,
My way to see,
Better in darkness just to feel Thy hand;
And follow Thee."

Our judgment too is so imperfect. We not only do not see far, but we do not see correctly. Not only so, but when we do see we mistake the nature of what we see. What do you shrink from? Inconvenience, trouble, pain. What do you want? Life to be all harvest, and the pathway to be ever smooth. What is the way trodden by the footsteps of the flock? Across the sands we journey; among the rocks we move. Now and then there is a green and a flowery place, and then it is according to our mind. We do not want to move. Like the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration we cry, "Lord, let us make three tabernacles." But that was not the Lord's way or will. The cloud beckons on, the rough pathway has again to be trodden. "Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted."

Take two illustrations. Look at Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees. Do you think that Abraham would have chosen to leave the old homestead in Ur of the Chaldees, and the pasture lands that belonged to his family for ages? "Go forth," said the Lord to Abraham, and the word was with power, and "he went out not knowing whither he went." What do we read Abraham bought in the shape of land? God said, "All the land is to belong to your descendants." But Abraham bought some land! We only read that he bought one piece, and that was for a grave. A pilgrim and a stranger was he. "Should it be according to thy mind?" It was not according to Abraham's mind by nature, but God gave him grace and he went forward leaning upon his Beloved.

Look at Joseph. Will you go as a slave to the Ishmaelites? Will you be torn from your father? Jacob, will you part with Joseph? Never, never! Joseph would have shrunk from the slavery, the sorrow and the shame that awaited him in Egypt, but he was sold to the Ishmaelites. Jacob had to give him up; Joseph was torn from the embrace of a beloved father. What was it all for? Temporally, at least, for the salvation of his father and brethren. See how our God works with a never-failing skill, and brings out of His mind those deep and glorious designs which are so manifest in dear Joseph's life – peace, joy, salvation, glory. See the great and the wonderful issue of it all.

III. Lastly, there is *the prayerful response* which we are enabled to make as the Holy Spirit enables. O how dependent we are upon the Spirit, are we not, dear friends? "O you should believe, you should do this, that and the other!" How awfully *empty* all that talk is! We want the Holy Spirit to call into exercise the faith He gives, to fan the spark which He breathes into the soul. What is the will of God concerning us? We are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. What does that mean? To be made like unto Christ. I am not like Him now, but the beginnings of the work are sure, and presently when we meet the Lord in the air, we shall be made absolutely – body, soul and spirit – like unto Him.

One feature is this. Our Lord said, "Not My will, but Thine be done," and so we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of our Lord. To be spiritually minded is life and peace, and so the Lord brings us through our bereavements, sorrows and trials to wait upon God, and those who wait *never* wait in vain. We can testify to that. By the Holy Spirit He brings out of every carnal thought and sweetly humbles us. O that the Spirit of the living God may reveal unto us Jesus, our dying Saviour, our ever-living Redeemer! Jesus in the omnipotence of His love, Jesus in the omniscience of His wisdom, Jesus the fountain of faith, hope and love. I will go out unto Him, for He has said, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee."

“Should it be according to thy mind?” No, Lord, no. Give me grace to give up searching Thy providence with my candle, and just let me – and I speak for you – just let me, like a tired child, rest on Thy heart of love, and looking up to Thee say,

“Blest is my lot whate’er befall,
What can disturb it? who appal?
While as my Strength, my Rock, my *All*,
Saviour, I cling to Thee.”

“I know the thoughts,” says He, according to whose mind are all our affairs – “I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord: thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

THE VALUE OF AFFLICTION

From A Lifting Up for the Downcast by William Bridge (1600-1670)

Consider what comes with the afflictions of the saints. There comes much supporting grace, much light, much of God’s presence, fellowship and communion with Christ in all His sufferings.

Much supporting grace: “Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” God never lays a rod upon His children’s back, but He first puts a staff into their hand to bear it; and the staff is as big as the rod. It matters not what your afflictions be, great or small, it is all one, you shall be upheld; and upholding mercy is sometimes better than a mercy that you are afflicted for the want of.

But the Lord not only upholds His people under sufferings, but He gives them much light therewith. The school of the cross is the school of light. Affliction is our free-school, where God teaches His children, and teaches them how to write, that is how to view both their sins and their graces. Their sins: so long as leaves are on the trees and bushes, you cannot see the birds’ nests; but in the winter when all the leaves are off, then you see them plainly. And so long as men are in prosperity, and have their leaves on, they do not see what nests of sins and lusts are in their hearts and lives; but when all their leaves are off, in the day of their afflictions, then they see them and say, I did not think I had such nests of sins and lusts in my soul and life. “He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous” (Job 36. 7). “And if they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then He shews them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded” (verse 8, 9).

Yea, affliction not only reveals their sins unto them, but it is God’s plaster; thereby He heals the same: “Before I was afflicted I went astray,” says David (Psa. 119. 67). And Job 36. 10: “He openeth also their ear

to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity.” Yea, these afflictions and sufferings of the saints not only reveal and heal their sins, but also put them upon the exercise of grace: “In their affliction,” says God, “they will seek Me early” (Hos. 5. 15). Yea, they not only draw out their graces but reveal their graces too, which possibly they never took notice of before.

I have read of some foolish youths, that sitting on the water side, upon the bank, and mingling their legs together in the water, they did not know their own legs; but one standing by, and smiting them on the knees with a staff, every one then knew his own legs and pulled them up. And so it is many times with God’s people; there is such a likeness between hypocrites’ common graces, and the graces of God’s children, that the saints do not know their own graces. O, says one, it is no more than a hypocrite may have; but then God smites them with some affliction, and so they feel, and see, and know their own graces. And good reason for it; for when God comes, He reveals all.

And when is God more present with His people than when they are most afflicted? God is always at the back of affliction. There heaven opened to Stephen. Afflictions are the rusty lock oftentimes which opens the door into the presence chamber. When was Christ with the three children but in the very fiery furnace? And you have a standing promise for it, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee,” says the Lord (Isa. 43. 2). And says the apostle, “For the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you” (1 Pet. 4. 14).

Yea, and as they have most of God when they are most afflicted, so in time of their sufferings they have most communion and fellowship with Jesus Christ in His sufferings. Therefore says the Apostle Peter (chapter 4, ver. 13), “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” The word *partaker* is the same that is used in John: “Truly our fellowship is with the Father,” and the same that is used in the letter to the Corinthians concerning the Lord’s supper, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” You will all grant that you have communion with Christ at the Lord’s supper; and the same word being used here shows that you have communion with Christ in His sufferings also, especially when you suffer for Him. And the greater your sufferings are, the more fellowship and communion you have with Christ in His sufferings.

Now then, if all this be true, that a Christian has experience of supporting and upholding grace, much light, his sin revealed and healed, his grace exercised and manifested, and God’s presence enjoyed, and if, too, he is made partaker of the sufferings of Christ in and by his afflictions, what reason has he to be discouraged, although he be much afflicted? But so it is that a Christian has never more experience of

God's upholding, sustaining grace, his sin is never more revealed and healed, his grace is never more exercised and manifested, and God is never more present with him, than when he is most afflicted: and he is never more partaker of Christ's sufferings than in and by his own sufferings. Surely therefore, he has no reason for his discouragements, whatever his afflictions be.

Then consider the fruit, benefit, end and issue of your afflictions, and what they bring forth. They bring forth "the peaceable fruits of righteousness," and they triumph over Satan. Poor Job may now say: Satan, you said I did not serve God for nought; but now the contrary appears. Yea, they work out "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And if you look into Philippians 2, where we are commanded "to work out our salvation with fear and trembling," you will find it is the same word that is used here concerning afflictions: that they work out an exceeding, eternal weight of glory.

Now if all my afflictions bring to me the quiet fruit of righteousness, make me to triumph over Satan, and work out an exceeding weight of glory, have I any reason to be discouraged, although I be much afflicted? Thus it is with all the saints and people of God. Though their sufferings may seem to be grievous for the present, yet they bring forth the quiet fruits of righteousness. Thereby the saints triumph over Satan, and these sufferings work out an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Surely, therefore, a godly, gracious man has no reason to be discouraged, whatever his affliction be.

Why do ye tremble at the thoughts of death, O ye saints of God? And why do you indeed, what the Jews supposed Mary did, go so often to the sepulchre to weep there? (John 11. 31). Behold, your beloved Lazarus is not dead, but sleepeth; yea, that which is of an infinitely higher consideration, he sleeps in Jesus. Did he live in Christ? Behold he died in Christ also. Did he die in Christ? Behold he sleeps in Christ. Christ is nearly related to the saints' dust. Their ashes are not laid up in the grave so much as in Christ; yea, though they should pass through ever so many changes and revolutions, and should be scattered at length into all quarters and corners of the world, He that calls the stars by their own names knows every dust of their precious bodies, keeps them in His hand, and is as really united to them as to His own human nature in heaven.

This may be as Jonathan's honey upon the top of the rod; taste of it, O ye mourners of hope, and your eyes will be enlightened. Look not on your precious relations, so much as they lie rotting in the grave, or resolved into dust, as upon their dust as it is laid up in a sacred urn, in the hand and bosom, as it were, of Jesus Christ, for which He Himself will be responsible, and bring it forth safely and entirely in the morning of the resurrection. For so it followeth, "Them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

Thomas Case

THE VALUE AND PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

By George Swinnock

The infinite and glorious God, though He be so high that He “humbleth Himself to behold things in heaven,” and so holy that “the heavens are unclean in His sight,” is yet so gracious that He condescendeth to and converseth with poor, sinful dust and ashes. Amongst all those ways which He hath appointed the children of men to walk with Him in, prayer is one of the fairest and pleasantest. In this duty, the children of God whisper Him in the ear, open their minds and unbosom themselves to Him, as His intimate friends and favourites. He hath been pleased to command it, not only out of His dominion over them and for His own glory – “He that offereth praise glorifieth Me” – but also out of His compassion to them, and for their good, that by prayers (as men far distant do by letters) there might be a constant and uninterrupted intercourse and correspondence betwixt heaven and earth.

Men, by discoursing together, come to be acquainted at first, and continue their acquaintance by sending to and hearing from one another. Prayer, which is the speech of man with his Maker, is a special means whereby he comes to be acquainted with God, as also to increase and continue this acquaintance. Prayer indeed bringeth heaven down to man, and prayer carrieth man up to heaven. It is the chief duty, wherein all the graces meet. They shine brightly like so many glorious stars in this firmament.

Of all graces, faith obtaineth the crown. “Above all, take the shield of faith.” Other jewels are of great value, but this is the fairest sparkling diamond. Among all duties, prayer seems to challenge the garland of honour: “Concerning the work of My hands command ye Me.” This is the favourite in the heavenly court, to whom the King of kings can deny nothing. This duty is of such weight, that it is frequently put for God’s whole worship: “Seek the Lord, seek His strength: seek His face evermore” (Psa. 105. 4). God’s temple, which was the beauty of holiness, the habitation of the Most High, was baptized by God Himself with this name: “Mine house shall be called an house of prayer” (Isa. 56. 7). God’s people, which are higher than the kings of the earth, are known to be nobly born by this practice. “This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek thy face, O Jacob” (Psa. 24. 6). Nay, God Himself is pleased to wear prayer’s livery, and to be distinguished by the royal robes of His relation to this duty. “O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come” (Psa. 65. 2). Pearls of a very high price are never set but in gold, the choicest metal. The worship and people of God are more worth than all this world; but O how much is God worth! Yet all these glister gloriously in the ring of prayer.

There is no duty in my observation which hath so many precepts for it or promises to it as prayer, and sure I am, there is no duty which giveth more honour to God, or receiveth more honour from God, than prayer.

Prayer hath a twofold pre-eminence above all other duties whatsoever, in regard of the universality of its influence and opportunity for its performance. The universality of its influence. As every sacrifice was to be seasoned with salt, so every undertaking and every affliction of the creature must be sanctified with prayer. Nay, as it sheweth the excellency of gold, that it is laid upon silver itself, so it speaketh the excellency of prayer, that not only natural and civil, but even religious and spiritual actions, are overlaid with prayer. We pray not only before we eat or drink our bodily nourishment, but also before we feed on the bread of the Word and the bread in the sacrament; prayer is requisite to make every providence and every ordinance blessed to us. Prayer is needful to make our particular callings successful; prayer is the guard to secure the fort-royal of the heart; prayer is the porter to keep the door of the lips; prayer is the strong hilt which defendeth the hands; prayer perfumes every relation; prayer helps us to profit by every condition; prayer is the chemist [alchemist?] that turns all into gold; prayer is the master-workman; if that be out of the way, the whole trade stands still, or goeth backward. What the key is to the watch, that prayer is to religion; it winds it up and sets it a-going.

It is before other duties in regard of opportunity for its performance. A Christian cannot always hear, or always read, or always communicate, but he may pray continually. No place, no company can deprive him of this privilege. If he be on the top of a house with Peter, he may pray; if he be in the bottom of the ocean with Jonah, he may pray; if he be walking in the field with Isaac, he may pray when no eye seeth him; if he be waiting at table with Nehemiah, he may pray when no ear heareth him; if he be in the mountains with our Saviour, he may pray; if he be in the prison with Paul, he may pray; wherever he is, prayer will help him to find God out. Every saint is God's temple; and he that carrieth His temple about Him, saith Austin [Augustine of Hippo], may go to prayer when he pleaseth. Indeed to a Christian, every house is a house of prayer, every closet a chamber of presence and every place he comes to an altar whereon he may offer the sacrifice of prayer.

Prayer is a humble lifting up the heart or pouring out the soul to God in the name of Christ; it is a crying, "Abba, Father!" As Scripture is God's letter wherein He openeth His mind to man, so prayer is man's letter wherein he openeth his mind to God. It is fitly resembled to Jacob's ladder, the bottom of which was on earth but the top reached to heaven. A thought can fly speedily to the uttermost parts of the earth, so can prayer in a moment to the highest heavens.

One of the fathers compareth it to a chain, one end of which is tied to man's tongue, the other end to God's ear. Another, *Ascensus mentis ad Deum*, a lifting up the mind to God. Paul calls it making known our requests to God (Phil. 4. 6). Austin calls it *Dei sacrificium, diaboli flagellum, et Christiani subsidium*: a sweet savour to God, a terror to the devil, and a shelter to a Christian. Bernard calls it, *Vinculum invincibilis*: the conqueror of Him who is invincible. Luther saith, It is omnipotent.

Archimedes made such an engine that, saith he, could I but find where to fasten it, I would not doubt but to remove the whole earth with it. Such an engine is prayer. By prayer fire hath been quenched, waters divided, the mouths of lions stopped, iron gates opened, the bottles of heaven opened and stopped, the course of nature overturned, diseases removed, health restored, sin subdued, grace bestowed, kingdoms supported, church enemies scattered, the blind restored, the dead enlivened, devils dispossessed, and the blessed God Himself conquered. The Jews have a proverb, *Sine stationibus non staret mundus*, alluding to their standing posture in prayer; the world would not stand without prayer.

When a great fire in Constantinople had fastened on a great part of the city, took hold of the church, flamed in at several of the windows, the bishop ran into the church, fell down on his knees, and would not rise from prayer till the fire was vanquished. And as prayer hath hindered fire, so it hath brought down water. The legions of Christians under Aurelius in a time of drought entreated rain of God, and prevailed, for which they were called the Lightning Legion.

Prayer is the midwife to bring all those mercies into the world to the believer which are conceived in the womb of the promises. It is the Christian's messenger which he sends to heaven for the supply of his necessities and, like Jonathan's bow, it never returneth empty. Oftentimes, as the echo doubleth the voice, so doth the answer the prayer; when the soul, like Gehazi, asketh but one talent, God, like Naaman, forceth two upon it. "The Lord ... is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. 10. 12). Prayer is the Thames, in which all sorts of commodities are brought up for the relief of the citizens of Zion. Some say of cornucopia [horn of plenty], that it hath all things necessary for food in it. Prayer hath in it all things pertaining to this life and a better.

It is said of the Pope, he can never want money while he can hold a pen; his writing of pardons and indulgences filleth his coffers. It is more true of the Christian, he need never want if he will but pray. Prayer is a key to God's own coffers, wherein there are infinite and all sorts of comforts. I have no friend, said a good woman, but I have a prayer; and so long as I have a praying heart, God will find a pitying heart and a helping hand. It is but, Ask, and receive; seek, and find; knock, and it

shall be opened (Matt. 7. 7, 8). The child presenteth his petition to his father, and at the foot of it there is *fiat* ["let it be so"] quickly written.

Prayer is like the Spaniards' Plate-fleet, which returns home worth thousands and millions. A courtier will sometimes get more by a petition to his prince in a morning than some tradesmen do all their lives. A regenerate person being in favour at court gaineth more by a morning prayer than a wicked man, though he works hard, gets while he liveth. "I never said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me in vain." Some asked but the cure of their bodies, when God healed their bodies and souls too; He hath forced many an unexpected favour upon an upright, fervent prayer. Prayer is not only a storehouse of mercies, but a fort-royal to defend the soul against miseries; as some write of the herb *panaces*, it is good for all diseases. When Satan entered the field against Paul, the apostle held up this shield of prayer to defend himself against his fiery darts. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice" (2 Cor. 12. 8). Prayer hath stormed and surprised more cities, conquered and routed more armies, than old men's heads, or young men's hands, than all the policy and power on earth.

Prayer is like the ring which Queen Elizabeth gave to the Earl of Essex, bidding him, if he were in any distress, send that ring to her, and she would help him. God commandeth His people, if they be in any perplexity, to send this ring to Him: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Psa. 50. 15).

O what a privilege dost thou enjoy, reader, in having freedom of access to the throne of grace! The Persian kings took state upon them, and enacted that none should come uncalled, upon pain of death; but the gates of heaven, as the *Ædiles* at Rome, are always open; thou hast liberty, night and day, of presenting thy petitions in the name of Christ to the King of the whole earth, and needest not fear (so thy prayers be according to Scripture directions) so much as a chiding for thy presumption. If it be esteemed such a favour to have an earthly prince's ear, what a favour art thou invested with that hast the ear of the "blessed and only Potentate"!

Elisha offered his courteous host a great kindness when he asked her, "Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king?" (2 Kings 4. 13). Some purchase that liberty, as the chief captain his Roman freedom, with a great sum, but thou mayest speak to the King of kings thyself, and be welcome, and needest not be at the charge of having either saints or angels thy mediators, or any of those heavenly courtiers, to bring thee into the King's presence. The Son of God Himself will do it for thee *gratis*. "In whom we have boldness" (Eph. 3. 12); liberty of speech, freedom to speak all thy mind, to lay open thy very inwards to God.

If thou art in doubts about thy spiritual estate and about thy title to the inheritance of the saints in light, thou mayest by prayer go to Him

who is “marvellous in counsel,” and have His advice for nothing. If any disease appear in thy soul which thou fearest may endanger its life, at least hinder its peace and health, thou mayest by prayer knock up the true Physician at midnight and prevail with Him to hasten to thy help and cure. If thou art surrounded with many and bloody enemies, that thou knowest not what to do, nor where to go, thou mayest by prayer send post to heaven, and thou needest not fear but Christ will meet the messenger half-way, and come in timely to thy rescue. If thou art bound with the bond of iniquity and, like Peter, watched narrowly night and day; nay, though thou art encompassed round with the black guard of hell, lest thou shouldest make an escape, yet prayer without ceasing would knock off thy chains, break open the prison doors, and, in spite of all the legions of devils that kept thee, set thee at liberty. If thou art like the psalmist, overwhelmed with sorrow, this sighing into God’s ears by prayer will ease thy heart.

When the glass of thy soul is so full of those strong spirits, fear and grief, that it threateneth to burst, thou mayest give it vent by prayer to God, and there will be no danger. Whilst thou art in this valley of tears, thou art encompassed with enemies, hast many and urgent necessities, doubts and dangers; but prayer, like Moses, will go before thee, engage Him on thy side that will overcome them all, and guide thee all the way through the wilderness of this world to the very borders of Canaan, and never leave thee till thou comest to enter into the place of praise.

But reader, the more richly this vessel of prayer is laden, the more careful and skilful must the pilot be that steers it, lest it suffer shipwreck. Queens that have great heirs in their wombs must be tenderly used, lest they miscarry. If prayer be so bountiful a friend, as thou hast heard, thou oughtest to be the more fearful of abusing it. Princes who allow favourites their ears, yet expect that they should know their distance, and ask in such a manner as they appoint, and such things for the matter as will be consistent with their honour to give, or else, instead of a grant, they may meet with a repulse and a sharp reproof. Haman, though he were so intimate with the king that he had his hand and seal at pleasure, found by woeful experience what it was to abuse the king’s favour, by desiring the satisfaction of his own lust in that which was exceedingly to the king’s loss.

The incense under the ceremonial law was a type of prayer. “Let my prayer come before Thee like incense”; but if it had not been made exactly, both for matter and manner, according to God’s own prescription, who Himself gave special direction about it (Exod. 30. 34-36), as sweet as the spices were, it had been loathsome and unsavoury to him; the burning of incense had been but as the blessing of an idol (Isa. 66. 3).

THE UNION BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE

From Mount Pisgah by Thomas Case (1598-1682)

Union with Christ is an indissoluble union. This union between Christ and the believer is not capable of any separation. They are so one, that all the violence of the world or all the powers of darkness can never be able to make them two again.

Hence the apostle's triumphant challenge, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8. 35). If the question did not imply a strong negation, the apostle himself doth give us a negation in words at length: "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (verses 38, 39).

A long catalogue, consisting of a large induction of various particulars, but in all these it is observable, he only instanceth in the creature, nor any other creature – he leaveth out God, and why? Because God Himself is the Author of this union: "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1. 30).

Here is the foundation, then, upon which the apostle erecteth this triumph: God, who only can dissolve this union, will not; the creature, which only would dissolve this union, cannot; so it stands on a surer foundation than heaven and earth. Our life is hid with Christ in God. The believer is in Christ, as Christ is in God, hence the inseparableness of this union. There is no more possibility of pulling the believer out of the bosom of Christ than there is of removing Christ out of the bosom of His Father (John 10. 28, 29).

This is the transcendent excellency of this union above all others; it is eternal. Indeed it had a beginning, but it shall never have an end. All other unions may suffer a dissolution; a whirlwind may throw the house from off its foundation, as we see in the case of Job's children (Job 1. 18, 19). A bill of divorce may dissolve the union betwixt man and wife (Matt. 5. 31, 32). An axe may dissolve the union between the head and members. Death dissolves the union between the soul and body. But nothing can dissolve the union between Christ and the believers. Nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The saints sleep in Jesus; the union ceaseth not, no not in the grave. Observe the progress of it, it began in their regeneration; then they received their first implantation into Christ (Rom. 6. 3-5); hence the apostle makes regeneration and being in Christ synonymous (verses 3, 4). Next, they are said to live in Christ and Christ in them (Gal. 2. 20). Then to show there is no in and out in this union, as some fondly dream, we

read of their abiding in Christ, not only by way of precept as John 15. 4, 5, but by way of promise also, as 1 John 2. 27. "Ye shall abide in Him"; which certainly doth express assurance and establishment for ever (Rom. 4. 16). Therefore they are said in the next place, to die in Christ: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord"; so 1 Thess. 4. 16 makes mention of the dead in Christ; so that what dissolves all other unions dissolves not this.

Yea, see one strain higher yet; not only in death, but even after death this union holds. The saints are said to sleep in Jesus; that part of the saints which is capable of sleep is not capable of separation from Christ; while their more noble part is united to Christ in heaven amongst the spirits of just men made perfect (Heb. 12. 23), Christ is united to their more ignoble part in the grave, their very dust; they sleep in Jesus.

Thus I have opened unto you the blessed and admirable union which is between Christ and His saints, and its most excellent and transcendent properties.

Opened, did I say? Alas it is impossible! This union is a mystery, a great mystery (Eph. 5. 32); next to that union between the three glorious Persons in the Trinity, and that other, like unto it, between the two natures in Christ, profound and ineffable! The heart of man is not able to conceive it, nor the tongue of an angel to express it; the natural man knows it not at all, no more of it than a brute knows what the union is between the soul and body in man; it is above his principle (1 Cor. 2. 14). The spiritual man understandeth it very imperfectly; all we know is rather that so it *is* than *what* it is. The full and perfect knowledge of it is reserved for the future state. So our Lord hath told us: "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you" (John 14. 20). Then, and not till then; we shall never perfectly understand this union until we come fully to enjoy it.

Inward worship is sometimes set forth by loving God (Jas. 2. 5); sometimes by trusting Him (Psa. 16. 1); sometimes by delighting in Him (Psa. 37. 4); sometimes by sorrow for offending Him (Psa. 51. 3), because this worship of God (as one piece of gold containeth many pieces of silver) comprehendeth all of them. All the graces are but so many links of this golden chain. As all the members of the natural body are knit together and walk always in company, so all the parts of the new man are joined together, and never go but as the Israelites out of Egypt, with their whole train. If there be one wheel missing in a watch, the end of the whole is spoiled. If one grace should be wanting in a saint, he would be unsainted. There is a concatenation [linking together] of graces, as well as of moral virtues. Those that worship God give Him their hottest love, their highest joy, their deepest sorrow, their strongest faith, and their greatest fear; as Abraham gave Isaac, he gives God all.

George Swinnock

THE URIM AND THUMMIM

By Dr. John Gill (1697-1771)

“Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one” (Deut. 33. 8)

1. Are the true Urim and Thummim with Christ? Are all lights and perfections in Him? Let us then go to Him for both. Under all our darkness let us go to Him for light; the treasures of light, as well as the words of eternal life, are with Him, therefore, whither shall we go but unto Him? Let us then follow Him, who is the light of the world, and we shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Likewise, under a sense of all our imperfections, let us seek perfection in Christ, in whom is the perfection of all grace, righteousness and holiness. It is a vain thing to imagine or expect it in ourselves. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1. 8). There is perfection in Christ, but none in us; and if we are in any sense perfect, it is as we are in Him.

2. Are all the elect engraven on Christ’s heart? You then may learn from hence how near and dear they are to Him, what an affection He has for them, and what love He bears to them. They have not only a place in His arms, but a place in His heart; they are a people near unto the Lord indeed; and as they can never be plucked out of His hands, so they can never be removed from the affections of His heart, for “who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom. 8. 35).

3. Is Christ, as a Counsellor and Advocate, represented by the priests asking counsel of God by Urim and Thummim for the people? Let us then make use of Him as such; He knows how to manage our affairs, and has interest enough to obtain what we desire; and what is more, will do all faithfully and freely, and take it kindly at our hands that we make use of Him.

4. And lastly, is the true Urim and Thummim alone with Christ? You learn hence the superiority of Christ’s priesthood to that of Aaron’s. The Levitical law was but a “shadow of good things to come,” which good things are brought to us by Christ, who is the substance of those shadows. And we may also learn the glory of the gospel dispensation, in which the day is broken and the shadows are fled and gone. “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3. 18).

See also Exod. 28. 30; Lev. 8. 8. There have been various opinions on what the Urim and Thummim really were. Dr. Gill believed they were “no other than the twelve stones in the breastplate [of the high priest] on which were engraven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.”

A WELCOME FOR FEARFUL SINNERS

From Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ by John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Those that are coming to Jesus Christ are often heartily afraid that Jesus Christ will not receive them.

I told you that this observation is implied in the text, and I gather it from the largeness and openness of the promise, "I will in no wise cast out." For had there not been a proneness in us to fear "casting out," Christ would not have needed, as it were, to waylay our fear, as He does by this great and strange expression: "In no wise"; "And him that cometh to Me I will *in no wise* cast out." There would not have been needed, as I might say, such a promise to be invented by the wisdom of heaven and worded in such a way, as if on purpose to dash in pieces at one blow all the objections of coming sinners, if they were not prone to admit of such objections, to the discouraging of their own souls. For this word, "in no wise," cuts the throat of all objections; and it was dropped by the Lord Jesus with that very purpose and to help the faith that is mixed with unbelief. And it is, as it were, the sum of all promises; neither can any objection be made upon the unworthiness that you find in yourself, that this promise will not answer.

"But I am a great sinner," you say. "I will in no wise cast out," says Christ.

"But I am an old sinner," you say. "I will in no wise cast out," says Christ.

"But I am a hard-hearted sinner," you say. "I will in no wise cast out," says Christ.

"But I am a backsliding sinner," you say. "I will in no wise cast out," says Christ.

"But I have served Satan all my days," you say. "I will in no wise cast out," says Christ.

"But I have sinned against light," you say. "I will in no wise cast out," says Christ.

"But I have sinned against mercy," you say. "I will in no wise cast out," says Christ.

"But I have no good thing to bring with me," you say. "I will in no wise cast out," says Christ.

Thus I might go on to the end of things, and show you that still this promise was provided to answer all objections, and does answer them. But I say, what need is there of it, if they that are coming to Jesus Christ are not sometimes, yes often, heartily afraid that Jesus Christ *will* cast them out?



GOD'S TIMING PERFECT

*Prayer meeting address given at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
on January 22nd, 1973*

Reading: 2 Kings 8. 1-6

The account of this godly Shunammite woman and the raising of her son to life in chapter 4 is very well known. Few people seem to be acquainted with this later history of this godly woman, but at the beginning of this chapter we find her in trouble once again. Her troubles were not ended when she received her son raised to life again.

We find this godly woman in trouble. A famine is about to sweep across the land. Notice the expression – “the Lord hath called for a famine.” Death and affliction, war, famine, pestilence are all at the Lord’s call. He speaks, and then they come. The Lord called for a famine, and it would be a mercy if we had grace to see these mysterious dispensations, these trials, as being called for by the Lord. But she had one thing on her side: that was, Elisha had warned her. The warning was that she had to go and flee where she could to find a spot where there was no famine, and in this you see the mystery of divine sovereignty.

In the life of Elijah a famine came upon the land and the woman at Zarephath and Elijah were miraculously sustained by the barrel of meal and the cruse of oil which never failed. But it was not so here; the Lord did not provide in this way in this case, and here we see the mystery of God’s sovereignty. God has promised to supply all your needs, great and small, grace and providence, but He has never promised the way in which He will do it. If need be He will provide by a miracle. He did it with the woman and Elijah; He did not for the Shunammite in the life of Elisha. She had to flee, and the only place she could find was the land of the Philistines. There was no journey to see the prophet on mount Carmel, no new moons and Sabbaths there, and she had to spend seven long, weary years in the land of the Philistines.

To a child of God exile from the house of God and the commonwealth of Israel is a great trial, and you can imagine with what holy zeal she returned at the end of the seven years, her troubles and afflictions all brought to an end – but were they? She with her family returned eagerly to Shunem, to that home, that estate, only to find it had gone, it was occupied by someone else, the land had been seized, been given away wrongfully during her absence, and as she goes with her request that it be returned to her, she is just met with mockery and disdain; this godly woman is forgotten in Shunem. O child of God, you think you are at the end of your trouble and with holy delight you may return, only to find that there is a greater trouble.

But immediately it is put into her heart what she has to do. It seems rather a daring plan: she is going to go to the king himself, directly, personally, and request an interview with him. Now that has been put into her heart. There does not seem much likelihood of success; this ungodly king who reigned at this time gave little hope that she would succeed, but it is put into her heart what she had to do.

You know there was one time when Elisha said, “Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king?” and she disdained it, but none of us know what need one day we may come into. But this somewhat daring plan is put into her heart. She is going to venture, she and her son, to the king’s palace, to the king’s court, and put the case directly to him. It seems such an unlikely thing, such an impossible thing that he will listen to her. She will in all probability be turned out; it is a dangerous plan.

Now, beloved friends, look at the mystery of divine providence:

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

Look at the mystery of divine providence. There was this godly woman and her son at the king’s palace, and who should be found there at the king’s palace but Gehazi who was once Elisha’s servant, but now a leper. It seems a great mystery why ever he should be there, but he was there, and not only so, it was laid upon the king’s heart to ask Gehazi to tell him all about Elisha and the wonderful miracles that Elisha had performed. We know not why the king requested this – whether it was curiosity or what – but one thing is clear, as this godly woman, completely ignorant of these things, is approaching the king’s palace and about to enter, there is the king asking Gehazi to relate to him the wonderful miracles that Elisha the man of God had performed.

Now look at the mystery of it, the unfolding of divine providence, everything ordered, the minutest circumstance. Just as Gehazi is relating the account of the godly Shunammite woman and the wonderful way in which her son was given to her and how the son died, the very woman begins to enter, and at the very moment that Gehazi is telling the king how she received her son back to life, this godly woman begins to cry to the king for his help; at that very moment she cries to the king that he might restore to her her lost inheritance.

You can imagine Gehazi’s wonder and amazement as he looks up from his story about this godly woman and the miracle which was performed and her son restored to life, as he looks up and with amazement he sees the very woman and the very son standing there before him. You can sense the amazement in his cry: “My Lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.” So

it seems little wonder that the king immediately acts, and this impossible thing takes place. She gets all that she desires and a certain officer is appointed to return with her to Shunem and give her all her inheritance, and not only so but all that was hers and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

It seems rather strange to me, this is the fourth consecutive occasion I have spoken of the Lord's gracious ability to restore something that is lost, and that is not intentionally, but it has come in each of the subjects. Last Thursday, the joy of salvation restored; yesterday morning the Shunammite's son restored; last evening the axe head restored; here, the lost inheritance restored. Why this should be I know not. It may be someone here has had something taken from them, you have lost something, either spiritually or providentially and you are longing for it to be restored, and there is the reminder that the Lord is able to do it.

But there is just one point spiritually I want to take up here for a moment: that is the restoring of the lost inheritance. This dear woman had an inheritance, a very blessed inheritance, and it was lost, but you see she got it back, it was restored; and the point I just want to leave with you is this. The people of God had an inheritance in Adam, an inheritance in Eden, and that inheritance we lost in Adam; when Adam fell we lost that inheritance and we lost it for ever. But you see there is the restoring of the inheritance, and our mercy is this – the Lord gives more to His people in Christ than ever they lost in Adam. So Dr. Watts very truly sings:

“In Him the tribes of Adam boast
More blessings than their father lost.”

Child of God, you lost your inheritance in Adam; you have a better inheritance restored in Christ. A child of God has greater blessings in Christ than he ever had in Adam. And there is something else: that inheritance you have in Christ you never can lose. O, says our hymnwriter:

“He raised me from the depths of sin,
The gates of gaping hell;
And fixed my standing more secure
Than 'twas before I fell.”

Adam had a blessed inheritance in Eden but it was insecure, and when Satan tempted him, he fell and he lost his inheritance. And, beloved friends, we are no stronger than Adam! O but what a mercy that the restored inheritance in Christ can never be lost.

Christ's blood, as it is food to faith, so it is poison to our lusts.

John Flavel

INTERNET ABUSE – A WARNING

We have been shocked by what we have heard and read and gladly include this article, “contributed by a concerned parent.”

We live in an age where there have been great advances in technology, especially during the last ten to fifteen years. Although there are many ways in which we may benefit from these developments, there are also many dangers and pitfalls that come with them. The Internet, which has developed in its present form since 1990, has been very useful in making searching for information much easier, and allowing messages and documents to be sent across the world within minutes via electronic mail (email). This magazine, for example, is prepared at home and sent to the printers directly using email.

One particular danger, however, we wish to call our readers’ attention to is the development in the last four years or so of the “social networking” website, started by *MySpace*; but there are now many others, of which the most popular are probably *Facebook* and *Bebo*.

The purpose of such websites is to allow users to store personal profiles online, which may include personal information, photographs, diaries, videos, music, etc, which can be shared with other “friends” who can send their own comments on anything which is recorded. No doubt there are honourable ways of using such websites, and if restricted to those whom we could trust, they could be used to make communication with friends and relatives easier. Sadly, far more often than not, such websites are not used honourably.

- People often put personal information on such websites which is sought after by criminals, who will pose as “friends” to gain access to it.
- Many use such sites to make careless statements and criticisms of others, which invite inflammatory replies and further evil comments. “Speak not evil one of another, brethren” (James 4. 11) is not a motto in use in the world as it should be by those that fear God.
- Others can gain access to information which is put on the website – and once it is there your data cannot be removed permanently; there will always be an electronically-held record somewhere. Employers sometimes look on these sites to check on a prospective employee’s background and behaviour when with their “friends,” and any ill-timed comment could endanger their prospect of employment, and come back to haunt them at a later date.
- Because of the dangers of users’ profiles being used by predators, children especially are often told to use spurious identities, to hide any personal information as to where they live or who they really are – and thus the “friends” they contact online become faceless people, whom they never really know and are afraid to trust, and this invites further “evil communications which corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15. 33) on the

hope that their real identity will not be revealed. Anything which is not open and upright must be shunned by all who fear God – anything which requires duplicity or guile has the devil's mark on it.

There are many cases recorded of teenagers scarred for life or murdered by those who have posed as friends on social networking websites and drawn them into terrible danger. Many spend hours wasting their time exchanging messages with unknown "friends," which even in a natural sense could be far more profitably employed in helping others and studying.

Two scriptures come to mind. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5. 15, 16). "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5. 22). We are particularly concerned to know that some who use the Facebook website are using the name of "Gospel Standard Strict Baptist" on their profiles.

May the Lord put His tender fear in the hearts of our young friends and keep them from this evil.

This article also appears in the Friendly Companion.

NOT CAST OUT

Part of a letter from Henry Fowler to T. T——r.

It is my business to tell you what the Lord's mind and will is in His Word concerning sinners who tremble at His Word, who feel the grievous load of their sin, who neither can love God nor serve Him as they would. Jesus Christ says to such helpless sinners, "Come unto Me," and He says also, "I will in no wise cast him out."

No indeed, T., He will not cast thee out, nor will He suffer thee to cast thyself out. You have sometimes thought that the Lord had cast you out for ever, and that He would be favourable to you no more; but the good and gracious Lord has been better to you than your fears; and by His grace and power He has proved to you that He is stronger than sin and Satan. You have been made to rejoice from your sorrow even when you had no expectation of receiving such a mercy.

I am certain if the Lord had no love nor regard for a sinner, He never would come to him with lovingkindness and tender mercy. However nicely Satan may imitate the work of God (and he certainly is very clever in imitating many things), he cannot produce in the heart of a sinner love to Jesus Christ, His people and His ways. And by this "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

THE BIGOTED PHARISEE

*By David Smith of Siddal, Halifax, one of our best-known ministers
in the days of Kershaw and Philpot*

James Greenwood

If you think the following circumstance worthy of a place in your magazine, you may insert it. It may be a little encouragement to some poor, distressed soul to have a hope in God's mercy and grace even at the eleventh hour. It is a witness for the honour and glory of God's free, sovereign and electing grace to a poor, blind and self-righteous pharisee, in the seventy-fifth year of his pilgrimage on earth, to a man who was a determined enemy to the people who love a salvation all of grace, but was at last brought to confess his rebellion and opposition, and ask forgiveness, both of those he persecuted and of God, who alone can forgive sin, through Jesus Christ. This circumstance speaks for God, and for the truth of God, which declares that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him (Jesus), seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

In our little church at Siddle Hall, near Halifax, we have a female member, Mary B., who lives at Kingcross, a village of some six hundred or seven hundred inhabitants, about two miles from the chapel. She is a gracious woman of some experience in divine things, and one that loves a preached gospel in its fulness and freeness. In fact, she likes a certain sound, the sound of the gospel trumpet, such as will cheer the heart of a poor, hungry soul that is seeking after a precious Christ as the only way of escape from death and hell.

This woman is married, and although she has a large family, and is not without many troubles consequent upon the same, yet she had taken an old father into her house, doing all she could to make him comfortable, and giving him the best morsel the house could afford. Yet, after every kindness shown him, he proved her greatest enemy in divine things, often trying to prevent her going to the house of God and the means of grace at Siddle Hall, and saying, "Why don't you go to the chapel at Kingcross, or the church? Why do you go such a distance to hear such people as those at Siddle Hall, such a narrow-minded set as they are, who believe such stuff as election, who tell you that only a certain number are to be saved, and that everybody has not an equal chance? I hate such people as those, who do not preach a salvation for everybody." And he often said that if he were the master of the house, he would not allow her to leave home on Sunday to go to such a place. This gracious woman had to endure this sort of treatment for several years; but though she bore it with resignation, she was sometimes really afraid to enter the house on her return from service on Sunday evenings,

especially if the day had been wet, for the old man would say, "You are served right, if you are wet through; you should stay at home. But I suppose it is all ordained; it was to be so."

During the last year or two, this woman has occasionally invited some of our supplies to her house to preach on weekday evenings when opportunity has presented itself. On one occasion our friend R.P., when he was staying a few days with us, went to preach there, but the old man took up his hat and left the house until the preaching was over. "He would not hear such people talk," he said. On another occasion, I was invited to go and preach there, and did so. On this occasion, the old man got up into a chamber of the house where no one could either see or hear him, and no-one knew that he was there at the time, except the old sinner and God Himself.

However, after the service was over and the people all gone, the old man came downstairs and made no small storm in the house. I had for my text, "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"; and the Lord enabled me to show that it was not the whole of the human race that was there meant, but the whole of the church of God that He had redeemed by His precious blood; the whole of the elect world, not the world lying in the hands of the wicked one; the sheep to whom eternal life is given and whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life, and put there by an act of the Father's love.

The old man said he never heard such stuff in all his life, and blamed his daughter for asking such a man to come there. I called after service to see another of our members who lived near to the house, and my wife accompanied me. Just as we were about to go home, my wife discovered that she had left her reticule [lady's handbag] at the place where I had been preaching, and so called for it. The storm was just then going on apace about this preaching, and she was very glad to get her reticule and be off.

About two months after this, I had occasion to call at this neighbour's house in the village, when the old man's daughter came in and said her father was not well. Being anxious about his welfare, and seeing his opposition to the truth of God, she scarcely dared to ask him to allow me to call and see him. However, she did so, unknown to me, and then came and told me what took place. She said to the old man, "Father, you are not well, and I should like someone to come and read a chapter to you, and pray with you. David Smith has just now called at Jesse Buckley's; may I ask him to come up and read to you, and have some conversation with you about better things? I am sure he will do you no harm, but try to do you good." "Nay," said the old man, "I can do very well without him; at the worst, I do not want any man to come

here who does not preach a salvation for all the world, and that all may be saved if they will." So he would not consent at that time.

In a few days I had to go that way again, and called to see the man. He was sitting in his armchair, and he looked as if he would have devoured me. I sat down, however, at the opposite side of the table, and asked him how he was. He said, "Middling," in rather a surly way, as if he wanted me to say no more to him; but I ventured to say, "You are looking ill, James; I think rather worse than you did the last time I saw you. It appears to me that your time will be short on this side the grave. How do matters stand for another world between you and God? On what are you resting your eternal all? Is it on Christ alone, or is it on something you have done for God by way of merit toward obtaining salvation? For," said I, "nothing will do for a dying man but the finished work of God the Son, made over to him through the operation of the Holy Spirit of God, who alone can take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us." I said, "Do you know anything of the quickening operation of this blessed Spirit?"

Here I saw a tear or two drop down his wrinkled face, but he tried to hide it from me as much as possible. He did not like to give in, did not like to confess, nor to appear soft in the matter; but I saw he was smitten, and would one day be healed. I read a portion of the Word of the Lord and expounded it to him, and prayed with him; and I felt a union to him, and I believe he now felt one to me. When we got up from our knees he said, "Call again soon." I called on several occasions to see him, talk to him, read to him, and pray with and for him.

The last few weeks of his life he was confined to his bed, and poured out his prayer to God like the poor publican: "God be merciful to me, to *me*, a poor sinner." It was not now, "Be merciful to all the world," but, "to *me*." He was now taught that he needed mercy, and that without it he must perish, whatever became of all the world. He asked his daughter if it were possible for God to save such a vile sinner? "Will He have mercy on me? Is there any hope for *one* so wretched?" His daughter's answer was, "Yes, God is able to save you, and I believe He will; for His ears are not heavy that He cannot hear. He will attend unto your cry, for He never said unto the seeking seed of Jacob, Seek ye My face in vain." So the poor man's hope was encouraged.

Several of our friends called to see him, and to read to him, and pray with him, and very glad he was of their company, especially our old friend and deacon, J.H. Indeed, he would have none to see him and speak to him but God-fearing people who could speak of things touching the kingdom. He had found out that all free will and human power were of no use to him as to his salvation, nor could they be to anyone else.

One of his old companions, with whom he had often conversed about religion matters, and who had often called to see him during the

last few years of his life, called once during his illness and asked him how he felt then. His answer was, "I feel now to be a poor, helpless man, and that I cannot do anything for myself, either in whole or in part. I now need Christ to do all for me." He told his daughter, after this man had gone away, not to allow any such persons to come into his chamber, for he did not need their company nor did he wish to hear any of their conversation, for he said it did not do him any good, and that he could not perform the round of duties they set for him to do, no, not if heaven depended upon it. He said, "I want people to see me and speak to and pray with me who know something about the things they speak of, and who understand them."

Not long afterwards he was enabled to thank God for a hope in His mercy. He called his daughter to his bedside a few days before he died and said, "Tell R.P. and D.S. I hope they will forgive me for opposing them in their preaching here. I now see that they were right and I was wrong, and I am sorry for what I have done." He now wanted no Arminian to come either to speak or pray with him. On one occasion one called to see him and pray with him, and this man told him he only had to believe and all would be right. He said, "How may I do it? I cannot believe that God will have mercy on so base a sinner." He wanted free grace instead of free will.

The last time I saw him was about three days before he died, which was on October 17th, 1862, and on this occasion my soul was drawn out in an especial manner for him. When I left him, he thanked me for my visit.

He died with these words on his lips: "God be merciful to me."

In this man was displayed the sovereignty of God in disposing of His creatures as He will, and saving His children by His grace, without any merit on their part.

"O Lord, I would not dare condemn
The vilest wretch I see,
But hope he may be loved of God
From all eternity."

I hope this short account may in some feeble measure be made a blessing to some of the Lord's dear people, and that they may take encouragement from it not to despair of their friends and acquaintance even in the last hour; for here sometimes the Lord displays His power. I hope it may encourage others of the Lord's people to go and visit the poor in their sickness, when they are requested to do so. The man on one occasion sent for me when he was almost in despair, and the Lord made it a real blessing to us both. We are commanded to sow our seed in the morning, and not to withhold our hand in the evening, not knowing whether this or that may prosper. "Salvation is of the Lord."

BOOK REVIEWS

The Work of His Fingers; A Bible Alphabet; A Bible Alphabet Activity Book, by Alison Brown; large paperbacks; 32 pages, 32 pages, and 63 pages; prices £3.50, £3.50 and £2.00 respectively; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

It is gratifying to find books for younger children that are scriptural, biblical, and have suitable pictures.

The Work of His Fingers consists of rhyming verses on the fact of creation, with large coloured pictures. The kind of questions children will ask are incidentally answered.

A Bible Alphabet introduces little children to well-known Bible stories, again with large coloured pictures. For instance: a – ark; b – basket; c – coat, and again: g – Goliath; j – Josiah. Obviously only a little is mentioned, but there is a list of suitable Bible passages, and the opportunity for parents to enlarge and explain. The one thing that needs special explanation is under ‘s’ where we read: “We are the sheep.”

There is an activity book available with pictures to colour and odd words to fill in. This has tear-off pages.

Suitable for gifts in Sabbath schools.

The Life and Times of George Whitefield, by Robert Philip; 588 pages; paperback; price £10; Published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a reprint of the *Life and Times of George Whitefield*, published in 1837, by the author Robert Philip (1791-1858) who was a Congregational Minister at Maberly Chapel, Kingsland. A short life of the author, taken from the Congregational Year Book 1859, is also included after the introduction. Most of the material has been gathered from the journals, letters and sermons of George Whitefield, and the facts are presented as far as possible in Whitefield’s own words.

The book is divided into thirty-three chapters and the range of subjects in this *Life and Times* covers his itinerant ministry in both this country and the United States of America (or the American Colonies as they were then). His preaching tours in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Bermuda are described, as also is his visit to Lisbon. Beside this, the reader is introduced to his main contemporaries, including Howell Harris, Lady Huntingdon, William Romaine and Cornelius Winter.

The author gives his own assessment of Whitefield’s relationship with the main dissenters; there is a chapter on the breach between Whitefield and John Wesley and another on his relationship with the bishops and the nobility. Whitefield’s sermons and manner of preaching are also described, with a general assessment of his character. Philip finishes his volume by saying, “I have now finished my portraiture of Whitefield. It is, I am aware, not fine; but it is faithful, as far as I know.”

This is not a critical biography but the author points out not only Whitefield’s gifts as a preacher but draws attention to what he considers his mistakes also. To those wishing to widen their knowledge of this gifted preacher, we recommend this book with a quotation from the introduction by Iain Murray:

“Philip’s *Life and Times of Whitefield* was one of the first biographies I read as a young Christian and I never return to it without being stirred afresh by its enduring message.”

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

The Path of True Godliness, by Willem Teellinck; 303 pages; paperback; price £14.95; published by Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A., and obtainable from some Christian bookshops.

The publishers state, “Willem Teellinck (1579-1629) was a pastor and prolific writer who helped move the Reformed [Dutch] Church beyond matters of doctrine and policy to reformation in life and practice.” “He fleshes out James’ emphasis, saying to us on every page, ‘Show me your faith by your works’ (cf. Jas. 2. 18).”

Because he believed the great Reformation doctrine of justification by faith was being used to justify licentious living, Teellinck moved from pre-eminent focus on the righteousness of Christ wrought for us, to concentrate on godliness wrought in us. But in doing this he slides beyond the teaching of James that our works of faith are but to evidence the reality of our glorying in the merits of Christ alone. Almost inevitably, godliness becomes exalted and our “sincere” though imperfect works do to some degree obtain God’s favour in life, death and at the judgment.

So we believe this was a wrong move on his part. Doctrine *is* life. Forgiveness of sin and Christian living are inextricably bound together. The heart of the gospel is in the words of John: “My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins.” The Holy Spirit’s way to have believers depart from sin is to preach to them that their heavenly Father has made every needed provision in His Son Jesus Christ to forgive all their sins, including present and future sins.

It might be argued that the constantly-repeated term “practise true godliness” always has the doctrine of Christ’s merits alone for salvation assumed within it. After all, Teellinck states this doctrine on page 77. But we need “Christ alone” plainly and constantly preached. We need the Holy Spirit to lead us sinners day by day to feed alone on the atoning blood and merits of the Saviour, the Lord our righteousness. For no objective whatsoever do we want to move from Him. Here alone God is glorified; here our souls live; here the love of Christ constrains us. As Paul says, “But 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.”

N.H. Roe, Ossett

Is it not madness for a man willingly to allow the ship he is sailing in to split itself on a rock, to the irrecoverable loss of his merchandise, just because he supposes he shall, in his own person, safely reach the shore on a plank?

Is it any less madness for a man to hazard the shipwreck of all his comfort, peace, joy, the glory of God, and the honour of the gospel he is entrusted with, merely on the supposition that his soul shall yet escape?

John Owen

THE BRUISED REED

*"A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax
shall He not quench" (Isa. 42. 3).*

Poor, bruised sinner, sink not in despair,
Though tossed about with every puff of air;
Wounded within, and bruised in every part,
And daily vexed with an unsteady heart.

Though scorned by man, and by thyself abhorred,
Unable to walk worthy of thy Lord;
Thy faith too weak on Jesus to depend,
Nor canst thou dare to call Jehovah Friend.

Thy love's like smoking flax, almost extinct,
Nor art thou able stedfastly to think
On Jesus' sovereign mercy, grace and love,
Nor for a moment set thy heart above.

Though law, and hell, and sin oft make thee reel,
And every gleam of comfort from thee steal;
Though faith, and hope, and love, and every grace,
Are hid from view, and darkness veils thy face –

Yet listen to the voice of Christ thy God,
Nor doubt but He will make His promise good;
In mercy great to broken hearts He speaks,
"My gracious arm a bruised reed ne'er breaks.

"However weak or worthless ye may be,
No smoking flax shall be put out by Me;
'Tis Mine to save, and save alone by grace,
Nor will I e'er reject a mourner's case.

"The work begun, I surely will perform,
And save completely from each threatened storm;
My grace shall set thy bruised heart at rest,
And raise a flame of love within thy breast.

"Thou shalt by faith on Me alone rely,
And I will all thy guilty fears destroy;
Thy great salvation I will ever be,
And thou shalt ever stand complete in Me.

"Look from thyself to My atoning blood,
Behold Me as thy Advocate with God;
Here trembling soul I give Myself to thee,
And thou in endless bliss shalt reign with Me.

"What canst thou need, or what canst thou have more?
I am thy All, believe Me and adore;
Through floods and flames I will thy soul defend,
Heal all thy wounds, and love thee to the end."

William Gadsby (1773-1844)
From *The Nazarene's Songs*

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MAY 2008

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

JOHN IN PRISON

*Sermon preached by F.L. Gosden
at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham, London, on August 24th, 1955*

Text: “Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again 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. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me” (Matt. 11. 4-6)

Every power outside of God in Christ and the gospel is against Christ and His church – every power, and if through grace we are Christ’s, we shall know it. A dead professor knows nothing about it; they go down with the stream as the dead fish, but as sure as we are born again we shall prove the truth of Hart’s words: “From that moment the conflict begins” – not ends – begins.

The Word of God gives examples of this invariably. Take the case, for instance, of James and Peter. Herod killed James and put Peter into prison, intending also to kill Peter, but prayer was made for Peter by the church of God, and God delivered Peter miraculously from prison. He could have delivered James; He could have delivered John the Baptist. Divine sovereignty is absolute, but when we look at it in the circumstances in which it operates and the things which divine sovereignty orders, there appears often a paradox. God is carrying on His undisturbed affairs and directing all things with one blessed end: His glory in the salvation of the church.

We are living in perilous times. To my mind it is well within the bounds of possibility that persecution will again be permitted and judgment will begin at the house of God, as Peter says (1 Pet. 4. 17). If you look at that chapter and the whole of the first Epistle of Peter, you will find that it speaks of the sufferings of Christ and His people with Him, and shows that when the judgments of God are in the earth, the Lord’s people will be the first to feel it. We do not half know the solemn state and condition of the nation and the nations. It is only through the restraining power of God that there is not a revolution; the insubordination of men is very perilous and very solemn. In the conferences among the nations, so far as I can see, the name of God has

been completely ignored; God is not in all their thoughts. It seems to me that we are brought to a crisis. There is only one point of hope and rest: "Thou, O Lord, remainest"; for ever and ever "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

John the Baptist, of whom the Lord later in the chapter gives such a testimony, was put into prison by the influence of a wretched woman. There are many things if we look at them on the surface that will give us to conclude that the devil reigns. John the Baptist never came out of prison alive. Not only so, it would seem that the Lord left him for a time in darkness and soul desertion. I would not presume to claim that I have been in the depths that John was, but I have known, and that lately, that nearness to despair which two things uniting together will bring you in your soul's experience, and you will know it if ever they combine together. They are soul-destitution and soul-desertion, and you will be very near the pit. When I was there the Lord mercifully made use of two lines of a hymn which, although it did not deliver, kept me "waiting stand," and they were this:

"Look from the borders of the pit
To My recovering grace."

What a sight it is!

Well, these things concerning John are written not for John's sake alone. Indeed John is in heaven; the Lord cut his days of tribulation short; he had finished his work. It was but a short time previously that John declared, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and now he was in prison and it was a severe test to his faith. Doubts and fears seemed to fill him with confusion. The Lord's people will be brought there in their experience. This is not written for nothing, neither is that blessed encouragement in Zechariah written for nothing: "Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope," but you may depend upon it, if we are in the footsteps of the flock we shall be brought into such places and conditions as are recorded throughout the Word of God. We shall! Can you look into your experience and find that the Word of God is a counterpart of your experience?

So John sent to the Lord Jesus. His faith rose to send a message from his prison. Have you ever done that? Have you ever been in a prison? There are many kinds of prisons. When the Lord leaves you for a time, then life and light will have left you. You will be left in your weakness; you will be in darkness, and you will prove that your carnal nature, a body of death, is a prison which you must carry to your grave. And you will prove that when the Lord hides His face and the blessed Spirit withholds His communications, you will be left with this – what you really are. The Lord sometimes leaves His people there to have

another look, as He did in Isaiah 51: "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged."

You will be in a prison. You cannot unlock it – what a mercy! Would you have it different? Would you have that religion that you can manipulate, that faith that you can get yourself, to pray when you like, believe when you like, hear when you like, preach when you like? Some of you may be in a prison of affliction and shut up. I know now a person at Heathfield, hardly middle-aged, and there is a creeping paralysis in that youngish woman so that I expect every time she comes to chapel will be the last. What a mercy to bow before sovereignty, not in fatalism, but to send a message from whatever prison you are in to the Lord Jesus!

The world is a prison. Some of you may feel it, where you have to work; death is all around you and you feel to be in prison in every sense. But what a mercy to have a living soul, to be possessed of that life that nothing can kill and therefore that faith which "lives and labours under load," and therefore a living hope that anchors in the Rock of Ages.

John sent a message to the Lord Jesus. O the messages that come from urgent prison cases! I am sure you will be brought into them, and then when you are, O "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." Daniel was in the lions' den before you. The Lord will be gracious in these places and enable you to be faithful unto death.

I knew a godly man, now in heaven, who went into an asylum and they took his Bible away from him. However, a Bible was got to him and he opened it for the first time on Psalm 57. 4: "My soul is among lions." There is something very blessed to see a child of God in trouble (you might say that is not a very kind thing to say), and to see the life of God and faith struggling toward Him. I visited a dear woman in an asylum. She had been put into a padded room. She is a jewel, and they allowed me to sit with her alone. She wanted me to help her get out. I said to her, "Do you feel you are in a prison in here?" She said, "Yes." I said, "But you are Christ's prisoner; you are, a 'prisoner of hope,' and when the time comes the Lord will bring you out. Do not try to get out." I had my hymnbook in my pocket and I said, "You used to sing some of these hymns." She took the hymnbook from me like a hungry man taking a crust of bread and opened on 950:

"What object's this which meets my eyes
Without Jerusalem's gate;
Which fills my mind with such surprise
As wonder to create?"

She sang that hymn, fell down on her knees and poured out her heart before God. Do you ever do that?

O the deep places the Lord's people are brought into; they send messages to heaven. But not only so, the Lord sends messages back. O that is what does you good. "Jesus answered, and said unto them, Go and shew John again" – show him *again*. When you have been locked up in desertion and bondage, when you are brought to the ends of the earth, what a sweet surprise it is when the Lord sovereignly speaks to your heart, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God"! That is the foundation of it; there is the ground of your hope; there is the power, the incentive to look from the ends of the earth: "I am God," infinite, omnipotent, omnipotent in wisdom.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John *again* those things." If the Lord was to show some of you again what you once saw, now hidden, what a resurrection you would have! That is just what I need. He said to His disciples just before He left them, "Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." O when the blessed Spirit in His infallible teaching teaches you to profit in the midst of afflictions and sorrows and soul exercises and desertion, what teaching it is! It is the way the Lord is sanctifying and preparing you for heaven. "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest." Can you agree with God in that? Multitudes do not who hear such a word as that; they will conclude we are fools and "you can keep your religion." For my part, blessed is the man whom the Lord teacheth to profit, to come out of affliction with something more than you went in with.

"Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see." He will know whether I am He or whether he should look for another. Poor John, as though he would say to the Lord, Lord, have I made a mistake after all? Have I introduced the wrong Person? I declared to the people, "Behold the Lamb of God"; art Thou He? In your prison you may say upon your bed in the night, Lord, was the work I hope Thou didst begin in my heart Thy work or am I to look for something different? When the blessed Spirit brings to your remembrance all things whatsoever have been spoken to you, it will confirm your faith, confirm your soul.

But we need this discipline, this exercise. The Lord does not deal so with the world at large; He tells us why in Amos: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth"; only you in a way of love; I know only you in a way of divine grace. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." What about it? "Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities," and then in the next verse (Amos 3. 3) He tells us another reason: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Sanctified affliction and sanctified exercise bring you into an agreement with the Lord, and you walk with Him as the three Hebrew children

walked in the fire. Their enemies thought they had despatched them, so hot was the fire that those who threw them in were burned. Then it was seen that there were four men, a fourth like unto the Son of Man. What a blessed affliction! O my friends, it is better to go to heaven through deep waters and a fiery furnace, through the lions' den, than to go dancing to hell.

"Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see," and you may depend upon it that the Lord sent with that message divine authority. When the Lord speaks, His speaking is full of Himself. "Thou hast the words of eternal life." You remember upon another occasion when He had been speaking to the multitude, He turned and said unto His disciples privately – *privately*. He gave them a private audience. Has He ever given you a private audience? He turned away from the multitude and spoke to His disciples privately things that did not belong to the world, and what He said was this: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear." In a congregation there may be people who by the Spirit hear so that it penetrates further than the outward ear and, the light of the living enlightening the eyes of their understanding, they hear the things the gospel declares.

"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." John, I am just the same One, the same Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and for ever, John, and nothing can alter it. I believe that message communicated to John the substance, the comfort of Christ's immutability and of His divine sovereignty, of His everlasting love, of His enduring mercy and of His supporting grace, and gave him a sight of His glory. I remember what a comfort this was made in 1942 with respect to a fine young man who was lost in the Air Force. I visited the stricken parents and I mentioned this case of John, how the Lord permitted him to remain in prison and took him thence to heaven. That young man left a testimony behind him, but O how it did shake those dear parents. My heart ached for them, and my prayer for them was this, and I could feel that nothing could reach their case but this: "Uphold me according unto Thy Word, and let my soul live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope." It seemed as though it would sweep everything away but what a mercy to have an anchorage in a storm. What a mercy to go from your prison to the Lord and to receive from Him some sweet assurance of His immutable love, so that you can join with Paul, being brought to some persuasion because of your experience, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things

present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8. 38, 39)!

O the reality of religion! But where can you find it, that religion that will live in secret in your heart, a religion that would live if you came down into some unknown country where there was no gospel and no other child of God? Have you got a religion between your soul and God that would live there? You would be in a prison then with respect to this world, but it is beautiful to see prisoners straining their eyes through the grating to get a glimpse of the King in His beauty and hear His voice. I have traced this, not only in my little experience, but lately with cases I have come into contact with. I buried a person last week that walked a path of poverty and sickness for many years but the Lord gave her this when she was baptized:

"Thou shalt see My glory soon,
When the work of grace is done,"

and she reminded me of it at the end.

"The blind receive their sight." The Pharisees said, "Are we blind also?" They were offended. Are you offended at what the Scriptures say about you and your nature? It is one of the first works of the Spirit. When Paul was called to preach the gospel, it was to open their eyes, to turn their darkness to light; their terrible darkness, the darkness of death, to the light of the living. The Lord Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world." He was the Light of lights, a living Light; everything that comes from Him was living. The whole gospel was a living gospel, every stream is a living stream, everything that we are occupied in, you and your dear pastor, everything that concerns this church is living and everlasting. All we speak about is eternal, and therefore when His dear people come to die, they enter into everything they have been hearing about and everything they have been singing about and everything that has been preached about; it all has to do with heaven. The Lord conveyed this truth to John. "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk." You will be brought to know what it is to be blind and lame.

"The lepers are cleansed," and these bodily diseases which the Lord healed are typical, although they were actual diseases. Do you think you are really warranted to go to the Lord with all the diseases you see? Do you beg Him to do for your soul what He did for their bodies? Things are so important and so vital you feel you do not want to trifle with them and just fit these things in; you see something about a leper and fit it in, but you are warranted to. I will give you a scripture which will warrant you; if you feel you have these diseases in your soul you are warranted to take these diseases to the Lord Jesus. The warrant is this: there was a man with the palsy and they brought him before the Lord, and the Lord

did not do what they thought He would do. They thought He would work a miracle and the man would get up. He did not do anything of the kind. He said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The Pharisees were always on the catch and they murmured at Him, but Jesus made this observation which will give you a warrant, all you that are diseased, you lepers that are pressing through the crowd in your vile condition, will give you a warrant to lay your case before Him as it is in the Word of God: "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" As though the Lord would say, it is the same to Me, body or soul. He turned it round the other way. "He saith to the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house" (Mark 2. 10, 11). It is a marvellous Scripture if you look at it. There was a palsied man and the Lord said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." He confirmed that blessed truth by reversing the whole matter: "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?"

"Urge thy claim through all unfitness;
Sue it out, spurning doubt;
The Holy Ghost's thy witness."

Whatever disease you have got.

"The dead are raised up." I am glad it comes as low as that, right down to death. They are raised up. Have you ever had the sentence of death in yourself? What a mercy! Because death must be absolute; there is not such a thing as half dead. I know it is an expression, but it is absurd to talk about being half dead. If you are half dead you are alive. But O to have the sentence of death in ourselves, right through, as dead as a corpse, "that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." You will need Him to raise you from the dead many times in your experience. You will pray, "Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead?" I need wonders wrought in me again and again. He saves to the uttermost; He is able to do it.

O send to Him, whatever prison you are in, whatever difficulty, however low you are. "Take refuge in Jesus, though hell should pursue." Be thankful if hell does not pursue. Ought I to say that? The powers of hell will pursue a child of God but if you are fleeing to the Refuge and hell is behind you, you will never go to hell. There is more in the city of refuge to save you than there is in hell to swallow you up, sinner. It is only poor people that prove it – not necessarily poor in this life, though most of them are, but there are millions of poor people in this world that are ignorant of Christ and the gospel. It is spiritual poverty.

I am persuaded of this, that if our Queen was called by grace (it is not impossible; O that it might please God), but if she was called by

everlasting grace, it would not be proper in her, in her high position, to show weakness before the world, but she would come in secret before God in a state of destitution of soul. She would say, Let my earthly honours go; they can never do me any good. I am poor without Thee, Lord. A rich man will say it. Our real state is poor, miserable, blind, wretched, naked, whatever we think of ourselves, that is true. I do not know what people would say going down the street, strutting about as though they created the earth, if we touched them on the arm and said, Do you know you are poor and wretched and blind and naked? How suitable such a sinner is to the gospel, to look out of wretchedness and poverty and see eternal joy! The contrast is so blessed, and the infinite and eternal difference between the two.

"The poor have the gospel preached to them." The blessed Spirit preaches it. Those are the people, "Blessed are the poor in spirit"; theirs is the kingdom of God. Look at it, not the kingdom of England. If you could be put into Buckingham Palace tonight, you might be dead tomorrow. But there is the kingdom of heaven. If you see it in your prison, it will help you to wait as did Job, all the days of your appointed time. Paul wraps it up in one parcel, writing to the Corinthians, "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." Paul had that gospel preached. Everything in the gospel belongs to them. The Lord Jesus is theirs; He is their Substitute; the merits of His Person, the virtue of His work are theirs. When this gospel comes to you, whoever you are, you will rejoice in the Lord. *You will!*

"Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." You would not be offended in Him when He sends a message or comes and visits you. Job says, "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit"; "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Esther gave directions to Mordecai and those at Shushan to pray and she said, I and my maidens will pray; with united prayer she could say, "So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish." She was not offended. Are you offended? Are you ashamed of Him, ashamed of Jesus?

Have you received Him in the particulars that we have tried to set out? Well, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord you will have to walk in Him in the same way as you received Him. Did you receive Him as a poor, destitute sinner, as a mighty Saviour? You will have to walk in Him like that; you will never be better in yourself; you will always need Him. His fulness is always the same. "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me." O may His love so fill your heart that it may constrain you to honour Him, to walk in His ways, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. Amen.

THE EVIL OF FATALISM

Grey Hazlerigg once wrote, "A truth out of place and out of season may work in Satan's hands like a lie." So Satan has often perverted the truth of predestination and God's sovereignty to lull sinners into idle slothfulness.

Fatalism is evil. God is not in it. There is no purpose, no point, no religion, no end, no wisdom, no love, no God! In a word – it is atheism. It is blind fate that rules.

Fatalism omits one vital point – that the *means* are ordained as well as the *end*. Let us explain. God has predestinated His people to heaven; but He has also predestinated them to repentance and faith in Jesus. God has predestinated His people to heaven, but He has also predestinated that they shall persevere in the truth to the end. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

One of the clearest illustrations of this is the account of Paul's shipwreck in Acts 27. Paul clearly affirmed that of all the 276 souls aboard the ship, not one would perish. God had told him so. "There shall be no loss of any man's life among you" (verse 22). But when some of the crew were trying to escape, Paul cried, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved" (verse 31). In other words the *means* is just as much predestinated as the *end*.*

One of the best illustrations we have ever heard of this was when in boyhood days we were listening to an old Yorkshire preacher. He said, "You all know that I come from Halifax. In Halifax there is a very steep hill" (and he named it). "Now," he said, "if I were sitting in a bus at the top of the hill and before it started I knew that it would crash at the bottom: if I believed in predestination I should jump off! If I were a fatalist I should stay on!" We feel there is a depth of divinity in this quaint explanation.

Predestination is not the *only* truth taught in the Bible. It is taught, very clearly, but there are many more things beside.

We do not know who or what is predestinated and who or what is not. The gospel is to be preached to all, and those whom God has predestinated He will infallibly call out. And though God has infallibly ordained all that will take place, we do not know *what* He has ordained. *Really, no one is a logical fatalist!* If he were he would never get up, never go to dinner, never do anything.

* One of the greatest champions for the truth of predestination was Augustus Toplady – but he was terrified of riding on a horse. His enemies taunted him with this. How did it fit in with his belief in divine sovereignty? Toplady's reply was: "I have often wondered if my terror of riding on a horse is the God-ordained means of preserving my life." And this was not mere casuistry!

God has said, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure" – in that order. Those whom God elects He calls. We cannot ascend to heaven to see whose names are in the Book of Life. But we know that those who are called by God's grace, and blessed with faith and repentance, are called *because* their names are in the Book of Life. Similarly, "All that the Father giveth Me" – in eternity – "shall come to Me" – in time.

We turn from fatalism as a God-dishonouring thing. But, sadly, at times it is as a dark shadow over those who believe in God's eternal predestination, and always has been.

"Why pray?" says Satan. "If all is infallibly ordained, what is the use of prayer?" Who does not know this temptation of the evil one? What is our answer? That He who ordained all things is the One who bids us pray. No one knew the truths of God's eternal decrees like the Lord Jesus, but it was He who said, "Ask, and ye shall receive," and who gave such gracious encouragement to pray. As it fits in with the doctrine: God has graciously ordained that many of His purposes shall be fulfilled in answer to His people's prayers.

In Ezekiel 36 God tells what He has infallibly decreed, but then adds: "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

Again, how Satan tempts godly parents that it is no use praying for their children, because if they are not among the elect they cannot be saved. But this is the logic of the devil! It is our God-given privilege to pray for our children and grandchildren, and in praying for them, above all to seek the blessing of the Lord which makes eternally rich.

May the Lord deliver His church from the dark cloud of God-dishonouring fatalism but also make the truth of predestination precious to our souls.

We subjoin J.H. Gosden's useful comments in answer to a complaint about a minister stating he was not concerned about dwindling congregations because "those who are to be saved will be saved."

Fatalism is the proper designation of such a sentiment. Not to be concerned about the low state of Zion manifests – especially in a minister – either a condition of spiritual death, or at least most grievous torpor. The blessedness of those who mourn and are "sorrowful for the solemn assembly" cannot apply to such. Moreover, seeing that the glory of God is definitely connected with the prosperity of the church and the fruitfulness of individual believers, where is the love of God in a heart unaffected by the sight of the desolation which overspreads the churches today? Even the Son of God wept over Jerusalem, notwithstanding He thanked His Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, because He had hid the

things of the kingdom from the wise and prudent and had revealed them unto babes (Matt. 11. 25; Luke 19. 41, 42).

Not concerned? It was vastly different with Jeremiah when his eye affected his heart and he wept day and night without any intermission; Daniel also who mourned and supplicated the Lord for His name's sake to shine upon the sanctuary which was desolate (Lam. 3; Dan. 9).

One perfectly and painfully realises the absolute impotence of mere human power to further or retard God's work. His purpose must ever be unfrustratable; blessed be His holy name! Yet He condescends to use means in the development and execution of His eternal purpose of grace and mercy toward His elect. Often very feeble means the Lord Himself selects, in order that it may be seen that the excellency of the power is of God and not of man.

Paul was no fatalist, but he fully believed in and taught the doctrine of election even when as a labourer together with God he strove for the furtherance of the gospel and travailed in birth for the Galatians until Christ was formed in them. He did not complacently say in self-indulgence: God will have His own; but, knowing that to be blessedly true, he laboured more abundantly than all others in preaching the gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ. Knowing that their work would not be vain in the Lord, he entreated the Corinthians to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding therein (1 Cor. 15. 58). He was not unconcerned, but sought by any means to provoke to emulation some Israelites, and might thus save some of them (Rom. 11. 14). It is greatly to be feared that there are not a few preachers who are not "labourers together with God," and whose motive in emphasising divine sovereignty is rather to indulge sloth than to exalt that solemn attribute of the eternal God.

Dependence upon the Lord's gracious promises rather energises than stifles faith and prayer. Fatalism – that cold, loveless principle – enervates while it lulls into indifferent security by the misuse of divine truth. When the psalmist said, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain," he did not discourage diligence or inculcate sloth, but sought to correct self-dependence and to stimulate watchful prayer and faith in the Lord's promised help. Gideon's appeal to the Lord manifested not indifference but anxiety of faith concerning the promised deliverance of Israel, in effecting which he was shown that he was an honoured instrument employed of the Lord, and lest Israel vaunt themselves against the Lord, saying their own hand saved them, the army was reduced from thirty-two thousand to three hundred (Judg. 6. 13). Micah was not indifferent when, filled with woe because of the desolations in Zion, he waited upon and for the Lord in penitence and vigour of faith under all his anxiety (chapter 7). David deprecating his

own sin and loss, pleading for the Holy Spirit, was not unconcerned for Jerusalem: "Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem" (Psa. 51. 18).

Zechariah did not discharge the people from their work when he prophesied that the building was "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." He and Haggai, with Zerubbabel, Jeshua and the people together, wrought the more earnestly, in spite of opposition, because (as Haggai assured them) the Spirit would remain with them according to God's covenant. And we read that the work prospered through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. Yet it did not prosper by merely assenting to God's prophets, but through believing obedience to the direction: "Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you." This represented not carnal activity, but spiritual obedience.

The Lord Jesus Christ (who surely knew that God would save His own!) inculcated not indifference but watchful diligence when, in view of the declension of the church in Sardis, He warned the "angel" to strengthen the things which remained that were ready to die, for his works were not perfect before God. Rather, that faithful Witness directed the church to the *cause of declension*, and to the *means of recovery*. Who would have the temerity to suggest that Christ infringed the doctrine of divine election, and denied that God would save His own people, because He threatened to remove the candlestick from Ephesus if she did not repent?

It has been said that some preachers have tartly told their hearers that if they were not elected they cannot be saved; implying thereby that they need not trouble, and inferring a fault in God. *Damnable error can be taught by an improper presentation of what is most true.* Disproportion can very seriously falsify truth, even as a half-truth can be a gross lie. How urgent, how imperative, then, is that infallible instruction, light and unction of the Holy Spirit for a right discharge of the solemn work of the ministry! Paul's exclamation will be that of each man whom the Lord ordains to this serious office: "Who is sufficient for these things?" And woe be to him who obtrudes himself into that office without divine ordination! The Lord in great mercy forgive us and deliver us from our ministerial sins! May He give us grace, also, in our anxiety concerning the depletion of the churches and the lack of signs following the ministry, sincerely and deliberately to search and pray to be shown the procuring causes of the Holy Spirit's withholding, and to turn from everything which provokes that gracious Teacher to withdraw from the ministry and from the churches.

Christ's perfect teaching gives a true perspective of divine sovereignty, attractive to every truly exercised soul: "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in

no wise cast out” (John 6). “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11. 28). And this perspective will be the background of all right ministerial labour – a labour which begins not in the pulpit but in the closet. Although none can come but such as are drawn of the Father, none need thereby be discouraged from coming to Christ; nor on that ground should any minister hesitate to invite a convicted, penitent sinner to come to Christ (even though he is troubled because his convictions and repentance are deficient). We solemnly realise that the most earnest appeals a minister may make will have no effect without the Holy Spirit’s power; but in our view the absence of those appeals betrays not faith in the covenant promise, “They shall all know Me,” but a practical fatalism which, however, may not always be detected.

SUBMISSION TO GOD’S WILL

By John Hill (1711-1746)

The sovereignty of God is a ground of this submission. God has an absolute power and right of dominion over all His creatures, to dispose and determine of them as seemeth Him good; He has a right to do what He will with His own. This quieted Aaron, when fire from heaven consumed his two sons. “Aaron held his peace” (Lev. 10. 3). And Eli, when that tingling sentence was denounced against him and his household, he said, “It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good (1 Sam. 3. 18). This gave David ease when he was driven from God’s sanctuary, and his throne usurped by his ungodly son. “Behold, here I am, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him” (2 Sam. 15. 26).

In these instances the affliction was not only borne, but accepted, as the word is: “If then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember My covenant with Jacob” (Lev. 26. 41, 42). That is, willingly borne, contentedly enjoyed; so Ainsworth renders it. O it is a sweet frame, when our trials are *accepted* ones, when God’s chastening hand is esteemed a kindness, when physic, as well as food, excites our thankfulness.

I do not say God’s sovereignty alone, in our clearest views of it, will of itself bring our souls to this; yet this I say, that sovereignty works submission. How dare I repine that God takes away part of my substance, when He has a right to all? My children, my friends, my frames, were all but lent me. God gives us nothing to have and to hold but His Christ (and we cannot always see our hold of Him). Why should I object? why murmur? why gainsay? Doth He give any account of His matters? Is it befitting Him, that has absolute dominion over all His

creatures, to be arraigned at man's bar? Or is it in my breast, by all my devices, reasonings and demurs, to change the purposes of His heart?

Lord, I will puzzle myself no longer with *hows*, and *whys*, and *yets*. Thou hast done it; I rest there. It seemed good in Thy sight: that is reason sufficient. Thus God has left it, and I dare not bring in my "yet, Lord, I would fain have it otherwise."

My friends, you bring in a bill of complaints against God and His providence: this grieves you; the other is not right with you; a third thing you find hard to submit to. Pray, where is there anyone has a trial like Aaron, Eli, David? and yet the remedy was near, and it is a tried one: "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." This never fails, when it is well applied; if it be really taken, it will do you good.

But it is not enough to look at the cup, and then turn away your head from it, or take it as children do physic, with their eyes shut. No, no, the more you weigh matters over, the better always. The more purely faith eyes God's sovereignty in all, the stronger are the actings of it: "It is the Lord," and Eli has nothing more to say. Let God choose my portion; best I am sure then it will be, and pleasantest in the end; for even when He acts as a sovereign, He forgets not His relation as a Father. In His hands we are safe. Faith acts herein with the greatest reason, for it is the highest reason to leave all with Him, who worketh, ordereth, overruleth all that befalls us, for His own glory and our spiritual good. This, therefore, is one reason or ground of this submission.

THE NEED FOR PASTORS

By J.K. Popham, 1909

Who will deny that the *removal of pastors* from many of our churches is an expression of the Lord's displeasure, and looks like a judgment upon them? Surely this want in any church should not be regarded as a mere incident in its life: rather it is a serious breach made by Him who has the precious gift in His own hand, and to whom it would be as nothing to raise up one and send him to it. Who can read the Scriptures with respect to the gifts of the triumphant, ascended Saviour, and not see among them the great gift that was bestowed on His churches in giving them pastors (Eph. 4. 11)? The end He has in that gift is declared in the following five verses.

It may therefore be said that according to Scripture the pastor is an integral part of a complete church, and fills an important place with regard to its spiritual life and wellbeing. If this is so, how solemn the reflection on such true churches as continue pastorless, or without such pastors as are promised in Jeremiah 3. 15!

By request

MOUNT ZION

Prayer Meeting Address given by Jesse Delves on May 17th, 1952

Reading: Psalm 48

The Mount Zion of which we read in the Scriptures was a type of the church of God, and what is recorded of it here is so intended. Truly it can be said of Mount Zion, even of the mountain where the king's palace was built, that it was "beautiful for situation," and in those days it was evidently the joy of the whole earth. That is but as a shadow compared to the spiritual privileges of the true church of God, which can be so interpreted in this Psalm.

There are just three points that may be considered in relation to Zion, the church of the living God.

She is said to be "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." The beauty of the church of Christ does indeed consist in her situation; it consists in her union with the Lord Jesus Christ, her standing in Him and the privileges that she enjoys through Him. But here particularly it may be said that the beauty of the spiritual church consists in the clothing with which she is adorned and covered. It is said that the King's daughter is all glorious within; moreover in the Canticles she is said to be, in the eyes of her Beloved, without spot and all fair. This can only be by virtue of her union with her Beloved and the covering of His righteousness that hides her every blemish and every fault. It is said to be a clothing of fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints.

Another point in relation to the church here consists in the foundation upon which she is built and the strength of her walls and towers and bulwarks. She is founded upon the Rock of Ages, and can never be overturned, for the Foundation is the Lord Jesus Himself, the Rock and Corner Stone, and her strength consists in the covenant decrees of a promise-performing God concerning her.

Another point consists in her safety in that the Lord God of heaven and earth is the church's God. It must be affirmed that every inhabitant of Zion is a favoured and blessed person.

"Blessed inhabitants of Zion,
Washed in the Redeemer's blood!"

May this be your privilege, and mine, to be a part of this spiritual building, and to have this God as "our God for ever and ever." We shall then be no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God and built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner Stone. May the Lord grant us that testimony in our own souls. Amen.

THE 1611 KING JAMES AUTHORISED VERSION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AND THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION

In these solemn days when the ancient landmarks are being removed on every hand, it is incumbent upon all those who ask for the old paths to be exceedingly diligent lest by default or neglect we remove the foundations upon which our most holy faith is built. One of these foundations is the Word of God.

Our first article of faith declares; "We believe in the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and receive them as a gracious revelation of the mind and will of God." See Deuteronomy 4. 2; Psalm 19.7; Proverbs 30. 5, 6; 2 Peter 1. 19-21; Revelation 22. 18, 19 and John 5. 39.

The use of the term "a gracious revelation" is not to imply that inspiration is to be found outside of Scripture, but that God has also revealed Himself in His creative and providential works, which leave man without excuse, but nonetheless are insufficient to show the way of salvation. See Romans 2. 14; Romans 1. 19; Psalm 19. 1; Romans 1. 32 and Romans 2. 1.

Further, whilst it is absolutely essential that the truth of God in Holy Scripture be applied to the heart for salvation, it is also essential that we have the confidence that the Scriptures we use are indeed the inspired Word of God and are not corrupted or infected with errors which detract from the glory of each Person of the Trinity, or mislead the soul in the vital matter of salvation.

In soberly considering these issues in recent months, the Gospel Standard Committee has unanimously decided to commend to the churches on our list the following statement. In so doing they recognise the independent nature of the churches on the Gospel Standard list, but unanimously feel that the standard set in the following statement should be that which all of the churches on our list should be united under. The Committee is especially concerned that our younger friends should be well grounded in the reasons why the churches on our list should adhere to the 1611 King James Authorised Version in our churches.

The Committee reaffirms its firm belief that the Authorised Version of the Holy Scriptures is the most accurate of all the English translations of the Holy Scriptures currently available, and is the version that alone should be used in private, in family and in public worship (among young and old), for *inter alia* [among other things] the following reasons:

1. The blessing of God has most clearly, most richly and most wonderfully, rested upon the use of this version of the Word of God among peoples of all ages, from every class of society, at the lowest and

highest of levels of educational achievement, throughout the whole of the English-speaking world, for nearly four hundred years.

2. The translators of the Authorised Version (and the translators of the earlier versions on which the 1611 translators worked) were men, almost all of whom were endowed by God with very considerable spiritual discernment and all had great linguistic abilities, and who consequently had a high view of God, the Holy Scriptures, and the unquestionable authority of the Word of God. These men were especially convinced of the infallibility of the Word of God. The men who have undertaken the translations of more recent years have not been so distinguished, and many of them have not been so committed to the same principles which undergirded the Authorised Version.

3. Almost all of the translations of the Bible in the English language since 1611 have been based on unreliable forms of the underlying texts (especially of the New Testament), the use of which effectively denies the all-important doctrine of the providential preservation of the inspired Word of God.

4. Most of the modern translations have used erroneous translation principles, undermining confidence in the essential doctrine of the divine, verbal inspiration of the infallible and inerrant Holy Scriptures.

5. The proliferation of new versions of the Holy Scriptures in recent years has sown considerable confusion in the church of God, in which there ought to be only one accepted standard translation of the Word of God in each language.

6. The New International Version is an example of a particularly inaccurate and dangerous version and the New King James Version should also be rejected, as although it bears the name "King James," and appears to conform to the correct texts (notwithstanding many misleading footnotes, and marginal references, which encourage the questioning of the authority of many parts of the New Testament), and is a more literal translation when compared to other modern translations, it nevertheless contains many unnecessary or unwarranted changes and subtle errors, and has abandoned the distinctive "Thee" and "Thou" when distinguishing between singular and plural pronouns, and thus detracts from the usage of these forms in prayer when referring to Almighty God, and as such demeans the worship of which the divine and blessed Author of Holy Scripture is worthy.

The Gospel Standard Committee

What will not a carnal heart attempt, if the devil suit a temptation to the predominant lust, and God withhold restraining grace?

John Flavel

A FOE RECEIVED A FAVOURITE

By J. Elliott

My wife, Mary Elliott, died on August 23rd, 1861, at Hadiscoe, Norfolk, aged 54.

Her mother was a strict churchwoman in sentiment and practice, and Mary imbibed much of her mother's principles and, in ignorance and pride, despised others that differed from her; but the Baptists she hated above all others.

At the age of about sixteen, she obtained a situation in London, where four or five other servants were kept. Her master and mistress were church people, and requested their servants to attend the church. This was very agreeable to Mary's feelings, and the kindness she received from her master and mistress was very great. It pleased God to call one of her fellow-servants by His grace to a knowledge of His salvation and faith in Christ, and she was afterwards baptized. Then began persecution by the other servants, and Mary at times, with the other servants, would persecute the girl for righteousness' sake; but the girl would often talk about matters of religion, and contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Mary was an advocate for christening children and baptismal regeneration, so called; but one day her opinions got a wonderful blow, for just as a party of godfathers and godmothers, so called, came out of church, they said one to another, "What gin-shop shall we go to?" Those disgusting words set her mind and thoughts in motion. She said within herself, "Is this the way they make Christians?" and after a little thought, and by the help of the Bible and the blessed Spirit, she saw that baptismal regeneration, and godfathers and godmothers, were all a delusion and an injurious error, which she afterwards called popery.

Her zeal for the Church of England gave way, and her hatred to Dissenters began to abate. She saw that they were right, and she began to fear that she was very wrong. Sometimes she had a desire to go to chapel with her fellow-servant, but her proud heart would not permit her, as she often confessed afterwards. But one day she listened at the chapel door, and heard the preacher talking about Peter the fisherman and casting the gospel net. A thunderstorm about this time helped to arouse her thoughts about her sins and a future state. She heard a sermon at church. The text was, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." These things combining together helped to soften her heretofore hard heart. Her sins began to be a burden to her mind, especially the sin of going to the fortune tellers, as she had gone. She saw they were all a set of delusive persons. They got her money, and she got a guilty conscience and a burdened mind. I have often heard her

confess these things with sorrow, and she would persuade all to keep from fortune telling. The sin of card playing was also a great grief to her mind.

About the time her mind was thus exercised, death removed one of the upper branches of the family with whom she lived, and after five years' servitude [working as a servant], Mary returned to Norfolk about the year 1828 or 1829, expecting to go back again when things were settled; but five years had made a great alteration at home. Her mother began to be afflicted in her eyes, and soon after this she lost her eyesight, so Mary gave up her situation in Middlesex, and stayed in Norfolk to keep house, and look after her blind mother – no small undertaking, for her mother was blind for about twelve years before she died. But Mary saw it was her duty to take care of her, and the good Lord rewarded her for her kindness to her mother. In keeping His commandments there is great reward (Psa. 19. 11).

The change in Mary's situation was now very great, being removed from the carpets and flagstones of London to a small dairy of cows; but she was one who could turn her hand to almost anything, and but few could surpass her in dairy work. Shortly after Mary returned to Norfolk, she heard that a Mr. W., from B. was to go to preach in a cottage in the adjoining parish. She soon found the cottage, stepped in, and took a seat. Can it be true that she whose proud heart would not at one time go into Gower Street Chapel, London, will now go into a humble cottage to hear a once-despised Baptist? The preacher took his text: "I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread." This just suited her case, for she felt her poverty, and the provision of Zion was blessed to her soul. She found pardon for her guilty soul, and bread for her poor and starving soul, and Christ was to her the Bread of life.

I saw her soon afterwards, and her face shone with joy. She was something like the Samaritan woman: "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did." At the appointed time the preacher came again, and Mary was there to hear, and her soul was all alive. It was soon evident that she was a changed woman, for instead of a game at cards in the evening, a chapter was read. The devil's books, as she called the cards, were burnt, and the Bible placed on the table, and very frequently would she be reading portions of it at meal times, so that she soon became acquainted with its promises, precepts and doctrines, and could meet her opponents upon the ground of truth. She soon arose and was baptized, and cast in her lot amongst the people whom she once despised. "What hath God wrought!"

"Wonders of grace to God belong;
Repeat His mercies in your song."

Like Ruth, she said, "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

She now met with opposition from her mother. The old lady had some very popish notions, such as that children can never go to heaven unless they have been christened, that if they die before, they must be buried like dogs, and that the spirits or souls of the dead never go to rest till the bell (the passing bell) has tolled for them; but Mary would say, "There are no such things in the Bible, mother." At which the old lady would say, "You meetingers think you are all right, and all others wrong." But Mary would reply, "There is no such thing in the Bible as godfathers and godmothers; and besides, actions speak louder than words. If the children were regenerated at their christening, they would grow up to be good men and good women. It is all a delusion, mother"; and she would often try to show her the error by the light of truth. Sometimes the Wesleyans would say to her, "We wonder how you can go seven miles for a loaf, when you can have one close by the door." But it must be unleavened bread for Mary, or it would not suit her taste and appetite.

Her zeal for the means of grace was almost always very warm. Not a little would keep her from the house of God. She could say with the psalmist, "I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth," and she must have travelled upwards of eight thousand or nine thousand miles to hear the gospel, and to attend the ordinances of the Lord's house. The distance there and back was over fourteen miles, and only twenty-two Lord's days in a year, for nearly thirty years, would make the amount above stated.

After about five years' acquaintance, we were married. It was a day of much prayer with us, and in goodness and mercy the Lord answered our prayers, for our love and union were not small. It was my happiness to have a good wife, a helpmeet for me.

After she was settled in life, she would often talk about the London folks with whom she had lived, but most about the once-persecuted servant, but now beloved sister, saying she wished she knew what became of her. After more than twenty years we received a letter, saying the once-persecuted girl was still alive and married to a Mr. S., and lived near L., in Essex. So one fine morning we took the train to L., and soon found her house. As soon as the two women recognised each other, almost with the first breath my wife said, "Dear S., I am come to ask your forgiveness for the ill-treatment and persecution that you received from me when we lived together at Mr. M.'s." They instantly embraced each other, and tears of joy ran down their cheeks. The scene was truly good. Mrs. S. answered, "I forgive you, dear Mary; and I rejoice that the Lord has called you by His grace." They afterwards talked together of the

goodness and mercy of God toward them; and when they parted, it was with a kiss of love. They bade each other farewell, never to meet again until they meet in their Father's house above.

My dear wife was the subject of many doubts and fears, but the gospel bore her spirits up. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." That word she lived upon for weeks. That was just before she began to be so nervous and feeble in body and mind, and it was an indication that something was coming. Her faculties all failed her, and medical attendance and advice seemed of but little use. She went to two or three different places for a change, but still got weaker. One of her feet began to drag upon the ground; she lost part of the strength of one of her hands; her speech began to alter, and she would complain very much of pains in her back. She was often cast down in her mind, but one morning she broke out:

"Begone, unbelief, my Saviour is near,
And for my relief will surely appear."

I often looked at her, and thought it could not be the same person that once took delight in providing for and waiting upon the afflicted and weak, but now wanted someone to provide, and take care of her. She was a woman of a persevering spirit, very just in her dealings, good to all, especially to the household of faith. She loved the pure gospel; were the minister small in his talents, or ever so large, it was all the same to her, for she had lived and learned to look above the preacher to the God of the means. She lived so as to leave a gap behind her, for she had stretched out her hand to the poor, yea, she reached forth her hands to the needy; but now, how changed was the scene! Sometimes a little better, then she would flag again. She would go to chapel as long as she could and her strength allowed her, but it began to be evident to most that her end was drawing near.

On August 18th I went in the morning to the chapel. When I came home in the afternoon, my daughter said, "Mother has been very much better to day than I have seen her for a long time." She sat up longer, and talked very cheerfully throughout the day. About eight o'clock, she asked me to read and pray, so that she might go to bed. I helped her upstairs, not thinking it was to be the last time. Early next morning she was taken with sickness. I instantly waited upon her, and called the nurse to her. We found she had lost her speech. I had to go seven miles for the doctor. He was soon at her bedside to administer relief, if possible. She could not speak, except faintly, "Yes," and "No." The doctor said, "You had better send for her relations and friends who would like to see her, for she is in dying circumstances." At one time she appeared to be praying. Sometimes she would look at us and drop a tear, but at other times she took but little notice of anyone.

Without any apparent pain, she gradually sank under her affliction into the hands of Him who redeemed her, and had watched her by His providence, and taught her by His grace. Without a struggle or a groan she breathed her last, about six o'clock on Friday evening.

BOOK REVIEWS

Leslie W. Falkner: Preaching the Kingdom of God, compiled by Malcolm Lee; hardback; 317 pages; price £9.25 plus £2.75 postage; obtainable from the compiler, 3 The Holt, Honiton, Devon, EX14 1JS.

We knew Mr. Falkner (1904-1985), and a few times preached in his pulpit at Blackheath, where he held two pastorates (1935-1950 and 1965-1976) apart from two other brief pastorates. We only heard him preach once, in our teenage years at Salem, Accrington, when his text was, "Kept by the power of God."

L.W. Falkner in his day was counted an outstanding preacher, and held large congregations at Blackheath. But his ministry clearly was used by God. We remember two of our ministers speaking of being specially affected by his preaching in their younger days – James Hill of Watford and Luton, and the late Joseph Rutt of Westoning.

Altogether there are thirty sermons included. These cover a variety of subjects; they are very weighty and profitable. We are glad this book has been published and are sure these sermons will be welcomed. The price is very reasonable.

One point strikes us. What a change has taken place! A minister preaching such weighty (some might even call them heavy) sermons, and of considerable length, so popular sixty or seventy years ago! Would it be so today?

There is a short account of Mr. Falkner's life. We wish it were longer.

Desires of Clive J. Jefferys; paperback; 62 pages; price £3.50 plus £1.00 postage; obtainable from Mrs. Elisabeth J. Lee (at the previous address).

This is a lovely little book, consisting of poems written by Mr. Jefferys, and short extracts from his diaries.

A most godly man, Clive Jefferys (1914-1987) a Wiltshire farmer, is lovingly remembered by many, especially in his native county. He was a church member at Little Zoar, Studley.

Lots of little books of poems are published – many, sadly, only rhyming verses even where the sentiments are good. But these poems, covering a variety of spiritual subjects, are poems of good quality (apart from the sentiments).

Among the subjects are: The Old Bible; If God Holds My Hand; To Youth; The Swellings of Jordan; Keep Us When We Leave Thy House; He Began To Be In Want (the first six).

After each poem is a short diary extract. For instance:

"Blessed be the name of the Lord, He made those things [worldly things] distasteful to me. Oh that I could praise Him more for His thoughts and preserving mercy to me, the vilest of sinners! Truly I can sing, 'Preserved in Jesus when my feet made haste to hell.'"

"Dear Jesus, prepare me to stand before Thy face. Oh shelter me beneath Thy precious blood. Let me, dear Lord, never be deceived."

"Oh to have a heart more taken up with Jesus Christ. To have His felt presence within, although I feel to be such an unworthy sinner."

We believe this book will be well received. Our prayerful thoughts are with the widow of Mr. Jefferys, in old age and affliction in the Harpenden Bethesda Home.

Twenty Golden Candlesticks Revisited, by Andrew D. Jones; paperback with many pictures; 120 pages; no price given; available from the author, 45 Innos Road, Trowbridge, Wilts., BA14 9AJ.

Subtitled "A History of Baptist Nonconformity in Western Wiltshire, 1890-2005," this is a book of historical rather than spiritual interest.

In 1890 William Doel published *Twenty Golden Candlesticks*, the history of churches in the area of Southwick. The present book follows up with what has happened to them since. For our readers there will be special interest in the churches at Zion, Trowbridge (John Warburton's chapel), Hilperton, Providence, Southwick, with a final chapter on The Halve, Trowbridge (which was not in existence when the original book was written).

Reading the Bible and Praying in Public, by Stuart Olyott; paperback; 24 pages; price £1.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This booklet gives helpful thoughts on *public* prayer as differing from *private* prayer. Also emphasis is laid that, in the public reading of the Bible, we are reading the sacred, infallible Word of God.

We feel that some of the thoughts on the second point are of great importance. How easy it is for us to become familiar! and even to think of the reading as "just a preliminary"! Increasingly we desire that the public reading of God's Word might, under the Holy Spirit's influence, be made a means of grace, and of true spiritual profit to the hearers.

Sickness, Suffering and Scripture, by David Leyshor; paperback; 86 pages; price £5.00; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This book consists of thirteen Bible passages, carefully chosen, and loving, scriptural thoughts on the problem of suffering. It would have been a nice book for a present – if only the scriptures had been in our Authorised Version. Why change from our loved and God-honoured version?

A Defence of Calvinism, by C.H. Spurgeon; paperback; 32 pages; price £1.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

For the most part this is an outstanding exposition and defence of the doctrines of grace – but a few sentences here and there seem out of keeping, almost contradictory.

Lectures to My Students, by C.H. Spurgeon; hardback; 912 pages; price £19.00 (£16, Free Presbyterian Bookroom); published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Whatever opinion is held of Mr. Spurgeon's preaching, there is no doubt that his lectures have been a help to many of our young ministers. If there is one thing he emphasises, it is their utter helplessness and complete dependence on God.

Some may be offended by a few of his more humorous illustrations – but he openly stated that he spoke in this way in all seriousness to warn them against debasing themselves in any way in the pulpit and dishonouring the Lord. Needless to say, we do not agree with every statement in the book.

Mr. L.S.B. Hyde used to say that he wished every one of our new ministers would read this book right at the beginning. It would save them from a thousand pitfalls later. At least one minister has confessed that he wished he had read it when he began his pastorate. What troubles it would have saved him from!

At the end is added Spurgeon's *Commenting and Commentaries* in which the content and value of hundreds of books is addressed. For instance, "For good, sound measure, sober sense in commenting, who can excel Gill?"; "Calvin is a tree whose leaf shall not wither"; "He is the prince of divines" (Owen). But also; "Charged with Socinianism"; "So feeble that we wonder how it got through the press"; "We cannot accept the forced and fanciful interpretations here given" (a leading Brethren writer); "Deficient in gospel clearness."

Important Note

We wish to emphasise that month by month these are "Book Reviews" not "Book Recommendations." Because a book is reviewed in the pages of the *Gospel Standard*, it does not mean that we are recommending it.

As new books appear, the Publishers send them to various Christian magazines requesting a review. Gospel Standard Trust Publications does so with its new books. We feel willing to give our opinion: a wholehearted recommendation; a condemnation; more often the good points and bad points mentioned. Infallibility belongs to God alone.

J.C. Philpot's excellent reviews were entirely different. He himself selected books (some new; some old) with the purpose of writing an essay, giving his own views on the subject matter of the book. This is why his reviews are so valuable many years later.

We hope and trust our Book Reviews are helpful, especially to our young people who come across these books (or hear of them) and are glad to know what is our honest opinion of them.

Sadly, many present-day books use different versions of Scripture. We wish to make it abundantly clear that we keep entirely to the Authorised Version in our churches.

You will find that these three divine Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, who are very God, are not jealous of each other. You may magnify Christ as much as you can, and make Christ All in all, but you will never make the Father jealous by so doing; for, "The Father loveth the Son" (John 5. 20). So also when we are sensible of the condescending kindness of the Holy Spirit, we may magnify Him as God over all, and by so doing we shall not in the least invade the glory either of the Father or of the Son.

Burrell

SAFETY IN CHRIST

*"Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him,
O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. 14. 31).*

O could I always trust,
How happy should I be,
Believing God the same
When I can't feel or see;
And though I'm so perplexed with doubt,
Who knows what God may bring about?

Though clouds o'er cast my sky,
And I can't see the sun,
Jehovah will complete
The work He has begun;
His presence only makes it day,
But in the dark I lose my way.

And will He always wait,
And come again no more?
Until my Jesus come,
I'll wait at mercy's door;
His promises are on my side,
It was for sinners Jesus died.

Then if I fail at last,
I then shall be the first;
I know I am a wretch,
Suppose the very worst;
My sins are great, I own my case,
But greater is Thy matchless grace.

If Christ can't save, I'm lost;
But as He can, 'tis well,
And as He died to save,
I cannot go to hell.
No, Jesus never lost a sheep,
Whom God Himself engaged to keep.

Then who can ever pluck
His chosen from His hands?
The weakest soul in faith
Upon a rock he stands;
Upheld by God's almighty power,
They'll conquer in the trying hour.

Then why these slavish fears,
This agitated mind?
As though thy God could change,
Thy Jesus be unkind;
Though earth should shake from pole to pole,
Thy God has well secured thy soul.

Then I would fear no more,
But leave my all with Him,
Who took the curse away,
And blotted out my sin;
This God is mine, I will adore,
My portion now and evermore.

A few more storms below,
A few more doubts and fears,
A few more cloudy days,
A few more groans and tears;
When all will be for ever well,
And I beyond the reach of hell.

Daniel Herbert (1751-1833)

OBITUARY

Cyril John Pocock, (always known as John), faithful deacon of the church at South Moreton for fifty-five years, passed away on November 24th, 2007, aged 89 years.

The following details are taken from his own writings:

“I was born at Gainfield Farm, Buckland, on March 14th, 1918. My father, Mr. Jacob Pocock, was a minister of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. My mother, Mrs. Sarah Pocock, was a very gracious woman and most loving mother to eight children, of whom I was the youngest.

“When I was four years old, I was wonderfully preserved from drowning when, after falling into the brook, I was rescued by my sister Doris. When I was five or six, my brother and I were struck down with scarlet fever and were taken to hospital. Sadly he passed away, but I was again spared, sad to say only to grow up a rebel to my parents and to fall into temptation and sin. As the years passed, I went further into sin, once attending the cinema, but this I did knowing in some measure I was doing wrong, and spent such a dreadful night following with terrifying dreams. I have never entered such a place since.

“After leaving school I became friendly with ungodly young men and went into many sinful ways, including watching boxing matches and staying out late at night, much to the grief of my poor mother who tried to restrain me, but to no avail. I also, whilst in company with these young men, as they found young ladies to go out with, wished to do the same. Eventually they introduced me to one, whom I started going out with. Although I was determined to go my own way in this and many other things, I still attended chapel regularly, until after a time I began to make excuses of having to attend to the farm animals. I sometimes did not go to chapel in the afternoon, but sad to say this was more to spend time with the young lady to whom I became very attached.

“My young lady did sometimes attend chapel with me, and it was on one of these occasions when I believe the Lord sent the arrow of conviction into my heart under the preaching at Grove Chapel of Mr. William Hope. He pointed out

the solemnity of death and the outcome of death – spending a never-ending eternity either in heaven or in hell. He asked his hearers the solemn question: ‘Where will you spend eternity?’ Immediately I was trembling with fear where I should spend eternity. I remember saying to my young lady afterwards, ‘O where shall I spend eternity?’ But I can now see, on looking back, it did not affect her at all. How sovereign are the ways and works of God!

‘Why me, why me, O blessed God,
Why such a wretch as me?
Who must for ever lie in hell,
Were not salvation free.’

“I was brought up to say my prayers, and I do believe we may be enabled to pray to God as the God of providence before we are brought to pray to Him as the God of grace. There were times when I believe I had asked Him to help me in things pertaining to my work. But now I was made to cry for mercy for my never-dying soul. I remember going on my knees, trying to pray for faith to believe His Word, and I do remember being prompted, I believe by the Holy Spirit, to pray the prayer of the publican: ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’ I was made to feel how black my past life was, and I just could not go on as I had been going. One scripture was laid on my heart, ‘Let no filthy communication proceed out of your mouth.’ This put a stop to my filthy swearing and blasphemy which I had done quite a few years, having learned it among workmen and bad company.

“I now began to attend chapel more, and regularly both week evenings and Lord’s days. As well as the Grove services, I cycled over to Uffington on Lord’s day evenings. I did not feel to get what I so much needed – the felt pardon of my sins. I remember well on one occasion going to Grove Chapel, and when I arrived, I felt I could not go in. I felt such a leprous lump of sin, if I went in I should pollute that sacred place of worship. However, after a while I had to venture in. I remember one time hearing Mr. Hayler preaching, and he said, ‘Have you been made to know your vileness well?’ I felt I could say, ‘Yes.’”

His writings show that, as all the Lord’s people prove to the end of their days, there was more vileness yet to know.

“When I went to Uffington on Lord’s day evenings, my dear Aunty Katie Pepler from Goosey used to ask me back to supper. She was made to me a real mother in Israel. I remember being able to tell her my heart-feelings, and she used to encourage me to keep praying. I felt able to tell her more than ever I did my parents at that time. I could now look upon the dear people of God, whom I had despised and disliked in times past, and see how blessed their state was and how they evidenced the grace of God in their life and conversation, and I longed to know I was a child of God.

“Another scripture was much laid on my mind at this time: ‘Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.’ This caused me great concern, I being engaged to the young lady previously mentioned, and to whom I was still naturally attached. Many prayers did I try to put up to the Lord that He would call her by His grace, but He seemed to turn a deaf ear, which caused me much grief. This, and my real anxiety to know my sins forgiven, was truly a heavy burden. I sought the Lord’s will concerning our engagement and prayed for about six months that if we must part, the Lord would say to me, ‘Come out from

among them, and be ye separate.’ Instead of speaking these words to me, I believe He worked them out in my life, as our affections to each other gradually became less and less, until in the end we parted in a most amicable way. This of course was a great relief to me and to my parents.

“Once being much cast down in not getting what I wanted (the felt pardon of my sins) I felt I must give up. I went to Grove week evening service; Mr. Oxlade was preaching. His text was, ‘Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.’ This was a real encouragement to me to try to press on.”

Being employed in farming, he was exempt from military service in the Second World War. However, he joined the local Home Guard, and writes of how he saw the Lord’s hand conspicuously helping him on several occasions:

“Soon after joining the Home Guard, they started having training sessions on Lord’s day mornings, which previously they had not. I felt I did not wish to take part, so arranged a meeting with the Sergeant-Major to discuss it with him. I tried to commit this to the Lord in prayer, and when the time came for our meeting, before I could say a word, he said, ‘I know what you have come for, and there is no need for you to attend on Sunday mornings.’ I felt this was a remarkable answer to prayer, and a proof that the hearts of all men are in God’s hand.

“However, soon the national situation became very serious and after a while I was made Lance-Corporal and in charge of night duty once a week. We were gradually better armed, and I was put in charge of preparing and training men in the use of hand grenades. These grenades had to be cleaned and charged. In this I was mercifully preserved, as at first I used the wrong tool because I was not properly instructed myself. I was subsequently told of this, and realised that I might have blown myself and others to pieces through using the wrong tool. Also, when instructing my men how to throw grenades from a bunker, if one of them did not explode, I had to go out and blow it up. This happened on two occasions, when I had to pray, ‘Lord, help me,’ as I went out. I was mercifully helped and preserved.

“On another occasion while on night-duty, when I came off duty, my usual bunk was occupied by another man, so I took to a different one. Later on in the night, two men came in from duty, and in unloading their rifles, one accidentally fired his rifle and shot the man in the leg in the bunk where I would normally have been. Again I was mercifully preserved from harm. ‘Not a single shaft can hit, till the God of love sees fit.’”

After another friendship that did not grow to a lasting bond, he became friendly with Mary Wigley from South Moreton. He writes of this:

“I met my present wife after a week evening service at Grove, but before I felt it could be any real relationship, I must have a word of direction from the Lord. I felt an earnest spirit of prayer over this, and I believe the Lord answered me through a sermon in the *Gospel Standard* by Mr. Walters. The text was, ‘And the Lord, He it is that doth go before thee; He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.’ I would humbly say to His honour and glory now, not one thing hath failed of all that is in that word, though I feel so ashamed of my own many sins, failings and shortcomings. Dear Mr. C.H. Frost married us on March 18th, 1948. After this we attended South Moreton together, where my wife had attended all her life.

"Soul exercises continued, and while at work one day I believe the Lord appeared unto me as my only hope of salvation, and for a few moments my faith saw Him as my Saviour and as He was such, He was to me my All in all in every way in providence and in grace. Now I felt a desire to follow Him in the ordinance of baptism. Sad to say, the devil tempted me that it was not real, and I could not say anything to anyone."

However, some time after, hearing of Mr. D. Stevens going forward to give his testimony to the church, his exercise concerning baptism was renewed.

"O how I felt to need divine direction before I could venture forward. One morning those words dropped into my soul: 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments.' I asked the Lord that if it was His will for me to go forward, would He keep those words on my mind the whole day even when I was at work. He did, so I felt I must venture tremblingly, and I was received."

Miss Kathleen Lay also ventured to give her testimony and was received at the same church meeting, which was chaired by Mr. William Hope, the minister that the Lord had used in the beginning of the work of grace in Father's case.

"We were baptized at Abingdon by dear Mr C.H. Frost." Mr. William Hope preached from John 21. 17 and Mr. Frost baptized, giving Father the words, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Father's mother-in-law, Mrs Annie Wigley, had carried the responsibility of the cause at South Moreton since 1915. In 1952, the year after his baptism, she retired from the position of correspondent, and Mr. D. Stevens and father were appointed deacons, Father as correspondent.

Though he had a good hope that the Lord had pardoned his sins, it was not for many years he had the assurance of it. He writes of one particular week-evening service when "Mr. Clement Wood was preaching at South Moreton and was led especially to trace out the sufferings of the dear Lord Jesus on the cross at Calvary. I felt to hear the Holy Spirit say to my soul, 'All this was done for you.' O how this filled me with real joy and a deep sense of my unworthiness and a broken heart. Many times have I looked back to this unspeakable blessing, and still have to when so tried and tempted in my soul."

It is not possible here to record all the things which Father passed through over the many years of married life, and in his exercises as deacon at South Moreton. He was blessed with a good measure of spiritual discernment. Though a very kind, tender and gentle man, he was made by the grace of God firm regarding the truth. The Lord blessed his labours as deacon. The engagement of ministers, public prayer, choice of hymns and reading sermons were great exercises to him. He was blessed with that particular gracious way of reading which discerning hearers greatly appreciate in listening to a read sermon, and over the years, several have spoken of receiving the Lord's blessing as they listened.

In the early 1970s he was given an exercise regarding enlargement of the chapel at South Moreton. He felt to be given the words in Isaiah 54. 2: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." He watched and waited for two years till the anniversary services on Good Friday in 1976. On this occasion, as in previous years, the congregations overflowed the chapel. When Mr. S.A. Garnham said to him, "John, you will have to lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes," he felt this was a confirmation of his exercises and

ventured to bring the matter before the church, and in the Lord's providence a way was made for the capacity of the chapel to be doubled.

In November 1994 he wrote: "I now come to 1st November, 1994.... Before reading the precious Word of God this morning, I did try to tell the Lord how I felt to need His help to read His Word, and that He would make it a living word to my soul. I felt led to pray the prayer of the psalmist, 'Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee: and let Thy judgments help me.' The reading was in Psalm 119 from verse 130. I came to the words, 'Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name.' This took my mind back to a blessed hearing time under Mr. J. Pack at Uffington on the Lord's day evening that his dear father died. When reading on in that Psalm, I came to verse 175 and found my poor prayer and desire I had set before the Lord. I felt so softened, and reading Mr. Philpot's portion for today so set forth the desires of my soul, and I then felt a soft heart in prayer.... As I sat down to breakfast and felt to ask the Lord for a thankful heart for all His mercies to me so unworthy, how my soul went out in praise to Him! I had to sing aloud, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.' My dear wife coming in said to me, 'Who have you been speaking to?' I said, 'The Lord Jesus,' and told her how I had felt to have had a sweet time, and how it came about. Now I see once again how the Lord fulfilled my petition, 'Let my soul live and it shall praise Thee'"

Soon after this, Father suffered a great loss in the death of his dear wife. He himself was not well, suffering from heart disease. In August 1995, three months after his wife's death, he underwent major heart surgery. Regarding this, he felt the Lord assured him of His presence through it by applying the words of Joshua 1. 5, and by the words of Isaiah 38. 5 that a good many years would yet be added to his life. He was wonderfully restored and strengthened following the operation.

In October 1996 he wrote: "The first Lord's day I went to chapel feeling so destitute of any feeling and in darkness (and had felt so for two or three weeks), no life in my soul. Our dear Pastor took for his text, 'And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no,' and he was very helped to speak of the way and so brought back to my mind things which I had passed through, and it was a blessed time. As we partook of the ordinance of the Lord's supper, I felt such unworthiness as I never felt before and when Pastor was seeking the Lord's blessing on the cup, those precious words were spoken to me again: 'All this was done for you.' O the peace I felt flow into my soul! what a transformation to my feelings! As I drove home to dinner, I sang the first two verses of hymn 420."

In 1999 he wrote: "In February, feeling much cast down at my soul's poverty and far-off condition from the Lord, He spoke a most wonderful promise to me from Isaiah 41. 10: 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.' I was amazed that He should speak such a word to me, such a sinfully-unworthy wretch. O I hope a little grain of faith has been given me to believe it (at least at times) and I have had to plead those precious words many, many times, and still do, and I am sure I shall need it to the end of my days.

"I think it was the first Lord's day December 1998 when I arrived at chapel in the morning, I spoke some vain words to a worldly person before going into the Lord's house, and immediately felt condemned for doing so as a professing Christian going to worship God. I felt such condemnation and guilt all day. In the evening I went with Pastor to Reading and he said he was to conduct the ordinance of the Lord's supper. I was invited to sit down with them. O I felt I could not, so guilty was I. However I ventured and I trust I shall never forget that occasion. Pastor announced the hymn 441, and the line, 'He wept, He bled, He died for you,' was spoken to me. O how I felt so freed from my guilt and condemnation! It remains with me. I try to remind the dear Lord of it many times."

In January 2000: "I felt such a darkness come over me and I felt shut up; it was so solemn, so distressing; it was very hard to continue. I do not remember having had quite the same experience before. It continued till the afternoon when I tried to beg of the Lord that He would appear to me, and speak a word to me, and immediately those sweet words were spoken to me so quietly: 'I love thee well, My child.' O to me, yes to me. I tried to bless and praise the dear Lord for such a blessed word to me, the vilest of sinners. I cannot praise Him as I would.... May it remain with me until I see His dear face and praise Him as I ought."

The last entry in his writings is for October 14th, 2000. "This morning as I woke at 4.40 a.m. I was so favoured to have my mind led to Calvary and helped a little to consider Him in a tiny way, in His great sufferings. It was the answer to my many poor prayers. Those words were brought to my mind: 'How light compared with Thine, are all the pains I feel!' May I be given grace always to feel it so, for it is so true."

He had to walk through seven years of increasing, grievous affliction after this. Through increasing difficulty walking, then when in a wheelchair he insisted on coming to the house of God, even giving out the hymns when in his wheelchair. When it became impossible for him to go to the house of God, this was his greatest grief. It could truly be said of him: "I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth." The last two years of his life he was bedridden, eventually being unable to move even his hands.

This account concludes with the diary entries of his son and Pastor.

July and August 2004: Father in Didcot hospital. Favoured with the Lord's blessing on several occasions in reading and prayer together out in the hospital garden. In particular I remember reading Romans 5 and we both felt blessed and lifted above all things around us for a few moments. He mentioned these times many months later.

September 5th, 2005: Visited Father in hospital. Read John 17 with him. He said the word was good to him. I felt some help in prayer though the ward was noisy. He said he was the worst sinner, but that he had a hope. Mentioned when the question, "Where will you spend eternity?" came with power to him in his youth. He said what a great question it still is.

November 5th, 2005: When I read Exodus 12 with him, Father said, "You have read one of 'my' promises." He seemed a little unclear in his mind about what he was referring to. He asked me to read again the last six verses of the portion I had read. When I read the words, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you," he put his hand up. He expressed hope in that precious blood alone.

November 17th, 2005: Father said the verse of the hymn is often with him:

“In union with the Lamb,
From condemnation free,
The saints from everlasting were;
And shall for ever be.”

He said it with savour and feeling, and evidently with a sweet hope that he is among those in union with the Lamb.

January 2006: Father told me that the Lord had told him, “In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. 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.”

March 30th, 2006: Father spoke of the dreadful sins of his life that he could not tell any of. He said he often thinks of the woman who begged, “Lord, help me.” He said with some feeling, “And He is the *same* today.”

May 23rd, 2006: Felt it especially laid on my mind last night to read John 11 to Father this morning. When I did so, he was evidently broken and blessed in the reading and in prayer.

June 16th, 2006: Felt directed to read Psalm 22 with Father. He was very broken in reading and afterward when he spoke of the Lord’s sufferings. He spoke of his thoughts having been upon the Lord Jesus in His deep sufferings.

July 14th, 2006: He indicated to his daughter that he wanted to tell her something. He quoted the lines of the hymn, “My breaches of the law are His, and His obedience mine.” She replied, “What a great thing that is!” and he said, “It is *everything*.”

January 2007: The Lord made him willing to leave his bungalow to live with his family. He felt he could move on the Lord’s promise: “The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” The way was remarkably made clear.

Though unable to speak much this year, his mind was still kept clear. His chief delights were times of reading and prayer, and listening to sermons. In early November he called us into his room and told us that the Lord had again assured him of His love, with the words, “I love thee well, My child.” On November 14th, he said to his daughter, “I may not see you again, for the Lord has said to me, ‘To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.’ He was not sure the Lord meant that day, but was sure that it would be soon. Two days later he began to show symptoms of chest infection.

November 20th: Father weaker this morning, but seems peaceful. I asked him if he felt inward support. He nodded. “Is it well?” – he nodded. I reminded him of the Lord’s words to him some years back: “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.” His face lit up with a smile.

On November 24th, the day of his death, he again was able to indicate to us that he felt upheld, feeling the everlasting arms beneath. At night his breathing became more laboured, and he quietly passed away at 10.15 p.m.

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

The family

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JUNE 2008

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

AN URGENT CRY FOR THE LORD TO COME DOWN

*Sermon preached at Clifton Chapel, on Friday evening,
April 4th, 2008, on the occasion of the Gospel Standard Society
Annual Meetings.*

Text: “Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” (Isa. 64. 1).

There seems something exceedingly urgent about this cry: “Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down!” It reminds us of Job, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!” It reminds us of Jabez, “Oh that Thou wouldst bless me indeed!” And as we sometimes sing, “Mine’s an urgent, pressing case.” It was so here with God’s ancient people. They were in great need; they were in distress. They wanted the Lord to come; it was urgent. “Oh that Thou *wouldst* rend the heavens, that Thou *wouldst* come down!”

You know, beloved friends, to me the great word in this verse seems to be this – *Thou*. Nothing short of Almighty God Himself. His divine intervention needed. “The work exceeds all nature’s power.” Thou Lord, “Oh that *Thou* wouldst rend the heavens, that *Thou* wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” It would be a wonderful thing if the Lord were to bless us with that spirit of urgency here in this assembled gathering today.

“Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down!” Now it is quite clear in the Word of God that there are quite a few of these remarkable “comings down” of the Lord. I take it to be some special appearing. The language is quite striking, isn’t it? “Rend the heavens.” It must be from above, it must be God Himself; divine almighty power is needed. In the Word of God we have a few of these occasions that the Holy Scripture specially speaks of as the Lord *coming down*.

We think of Mount Sinai and the giving of the law, and how the Lord came down in great power and glory. So much so that Moses the man of God said, “I exceedingly fear and quake.” It was a glorious coming down, it was a terrible coming down. It was a coming down when Almighty God revealed Himself in all His majesty and glory.

Then there was another coming down in a way of much love and compassion and condescension and mercy. That lovely coming down

that Almighty God spoke about to Moses at the burning bush. You remember how Moses had been forty years in the backside of the desert, and suddenly, unexpectedly one day the Lord appeared in that bush which burnt but “the bush was not consumed.” And the Lord spoke to His servant out of the burning bush and He revealed Himself by that incommunicable name – “I am that I am.”

Well, you see, this is the coming down, and this is what I like. This is what at the present time we want to know in the churches, and in our families, and in our own hearts. What I mean is this. This is Almighty God speaking of one of these glorious comings down: “I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows” – now this is it – “and I am come down to deliver them.” You see that is the living God, the God who sees, the God who hears, the God who knows, the God who comes down, the God who delivers. It is a beautiful coming down. We would love to have it repeated, wouldn’t we? “Oh that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down” as Thou didst for Moses, as Thou didst for Thine ancient people in Egypt. “I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt.”

Those of you this evening in sorrow, in affliction, remember that the Lord sees it. And He sees it not just with His omniscient eye; He sees it with that loving eye, that gracious eye. “I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters.” You believe that, don’t you, that the Lord hears your cries? It is a lovely word (isn’t it?): “He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry.” I find so often in the Word of God that the Lord is gracious, but I think this is the only place where it says He is going to “be *very* gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry.” It is at your *cry*. Why, because whether it is soul or circumstances, you hardly know what to pray for or what to say – it is a cry. But the Lord says it has a voice, and the Lord understands that voice. “He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry.” “I have heard their cry.”

“I know their sorrows.” Well, Almighty God knew it as He knows all things. But look at that short word in the spirit of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” “I know their sorrows; and I am come down.” Divine intervention – to do for ancient Israel what they could not do for themselves. This wonderful coming down. You read about it. The Passover night: “I am come down to deliver them.” The Red Sea: “I am come down to deliver them.” “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us.”

“Then let our humble faith address
His mercy and His power;

We shall obtain delivering grace,
We shall obtain delivering grace,
In the distressing hour."

O these wonderful comings down of Almighty God!

Then, beloved friends, you see it in all its glory and in all its fulness in the coming of the Son of God into this world of sin and sorrow. Many have believed this was the cry of the Old Testament church for the coming of the promised Messiah. They had the first promise: "the seed of the woman." They had the promises made to Abraham and then to David and through the prophets, but still Messiah had not come. O would He ever come? "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!" And they were not disappointed. In the fulness of time He did come. His coming was a coming *down*. And it was a coming down in this sense: matchless condescension. And, of course, that word which summarises it all: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." O what a coming down that was; what matchless condescension! "Being in the form of God, [He] thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." What a coming down that was!

"That the mountains might flow down at Thy presence." O what mountains were in the way of the incarnate Son of God! How could He become man without ceasing to be God? How could He be truly born and yet never be tainted by original sin? These mountains. But "eternal wisdom drew the plan." And that mountain – He must work out an everlasting righteousness. And that mountain – Gethsemane, the judgment hall and Calvary. O but didn't those mountains flow down at the presence of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

He rent the heavens and He came down. There is something else He rent: "The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." So that now there is "a new and living way" for the vilest of sinners even "into the holiest by the blood of Jesus" through the rent veil. The ceremonial law abolished, the One sacrifice now has atoned for sin; salvation is complete; that rending of the heavens, that coming down, that rending of the veil.

Then, of course, we think of the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came down in power. And didn't the mountains flow down that day when there were three thousand touched in their hearts? Their unbelief, their hardness, their rebellion – it all flowed down when the Holy Ghost appeared in divine almighty power. That which we long for, we pray for, we need so much today.

Then we just mention one further of these great and glorious comings down of Almighty God, and that is the Saviour's second coming when He shall appear in great power and glory to judge the world in righteousness. Then time shall be no longer and a never-ending eternity will be ushered in. And we have to say,

“Then O, my God, prepare
My soul for that great day;
O wash me in Thy precious blood,
And take my sins away.”

Well, then, those are just a few of the very special comings down of Almighty God in power and in glory as recorded in Holy Scripture. You see, in Isaiah chapter 64 God's ancient people felt this: Lord, we need it now; Lord, we need it again; Lord, we cannot do without it; Lord, nothing else will do; Lord, it is time for Thee to work. And surely, beloved friends, that is just how we feel this evening. I hope this prayer, this cry, touches a few of us; the suitability of it for the present moment. And it would be a wonderful thing if many went home tonight praying this prayer: “Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!”

This rending the heavens and coming down is a very striking expression, isn't it? It is hard to think of an illustration. But perhaps some loving father, and he is in his home and the doors are shut and they are locked, and he looks through the window and sees a little child in danger, and he breaks through everything and he bursts through everything; nothing is allowed to stand in the way. That is how the Lord deals with His people. “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky.” And you see these great mountains. I take it to mean these things are too hard for us. They are impossibilities. They are too high. We cannot move them. It is not just that the Lord can remove the mountains, but it is an easy thing for Him to do it. I take it that is what is implied in this word: the mountains flowing down at Thy presence.

Well, we have seen the snow melt recently, we have seen wax melt, but to think of a mountain melting! When the Lord comes down, the highest mountain, whatever it is, cannot stand before His almighty power.

“Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” Well then, what about us today? We think first of all of our country – and the mountains. The sin, the evil, the abounding wickedness, the bad laws, the increasing evil laws that are planned. And really we could speak this evening of this mountain and that mountain, and I am sure many of you are really concerned about it – the state of England and these terrible

things that we are witnessing and hearing of, fresh things day by day, and things in the future; especially in the last few months the incessant, dreadful attacks on the very name and being of Christianity – mountains. And we try to pray about these things (and there are one or two excellent Societies which try to do what they can, and we are so pleased when there is any measure of success). But so often nothing seems to be done, and it almost seems impossible that anything can be done. O, but let the Lord come down, let Him rend the heavens and this mountain will flow away, and that mountain will disappear. They used to sing,

“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And trusts in God alone,
Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries it shall be done.”

How many people are there here that really believe what we do believe? That “with God nothing shall be impossible.” Then have mercy on our country. “In wrath remember mercy.” “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee: the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.” God is in control. God will have the last word. But if the Lord ever appears, it must be on the grounds of mercy, and mercy alone.

“Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” Then we think of the church of God, whether you think of it generally or whether you think of our own churches – mountains. How we want the Lord to appear! Why do we see so few come to Zion’s solemn feasts? Why is it that so few seem to be called by the grace of God? Because in every heart there is a mountain of unbelief, a mountain of rebellion, a mountain of sin, a mountain of opposition to God. The poor preacher cannot move it. But let the Lord once come down; He has the key of every heart, as He had the key of Lydia’s heart. He opened the heart of Lydia and all the mountains flowed down. But a day or two later there seemed to be more terrible mountains in the case of the jailor, but they flowed down. When the Lord works, none can hinder. “For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”

“Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens!” May things be different in our churches. May the Holy Ghost powerfully work. May the mountains flow down, flow away. May Christ be exalted, “see of the travail of His soul, and ... be satisfied.” May we see sinners saved by grace; the new birth taking place; souls fleeing for refuge to the Saviour, finding a resting place and true peace in Him. May there be those sweetly enabled to declare it. May there be ministers raised up, godly pastors appointed. J.K. Popham always believed that we should see

greater days than have ever been seen before. The Lord can do it, if it be His holy sovereign will.

“Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” So the nation, the church of God, and now let us come to it personally. This large congregation this evening – have any of you got mountains? Things that are too hard for you; deep sorrows; impossible things; things in providence. “Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” Those of you walking a way of deep sorrow, those with your mountains of difficulty and danger in providence; do not forget there is still a word, “In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.” He makes your mountains His mountains, and He says, “I will make all My mountains a way.” And “In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.” And what shall be seen? “Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide.”

“Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” But there are spiritual mountains, mountains in our heart as well as mountains in our pathway, mountains in providence. Are any of you plagued with the temptations of Satan? O what a mountain that is! And it only flows down when the Lord comes down in love and mercy, when He comes down for your help. O, but you say, It is that coming down I feel to need. Why? Because I feel that I am down, I am low. I want the Lord in love and mercy to come *down* right where I am. “O when wilt Thou come unto me?” Like the good Samaritan he “came where he was.” And then you will “overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of [your] testimony,” be more than conquerors through Him that loved you, and your mountain will flow down at His presence.

What about this mountain of a hard heart? Now can you move that mountain? Or can you soften it? Can you melt it? Can you cause it to flow down? Or does your hard heart not trouble you? Do you know the difference between a hard heart and a soft? I would say this: always beware of hardness in the things of God. Seek to be kept tender in His holy fear. But when your heart is hard, then cry to the Lord that He will “rend the heavens and come down” and perform His ancient covenant promise, “I will take away the stony heart ... and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

“Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” Well, some of you say, It is my sin, and it is just like a great mountain; if only I could get rid of it, if only I could move it; but I cannot. Confession will not move it, though confession is right, neither will repentance, though repentance is right; it is the gift of God. But you say,

“Sins against a holy God;
Sins against His righteous laws;
Sins against His love, His blood;
Sins against His name, and cause;
Sins immense as is the sea
Hide me, O Gethsemane” –

and what follows from Gethsemane: Calvary and the cross. But that mountain!

There is only one thing that will move the mountain of guilt and that is the blood of Christ. And O what a glorious sound the gospel trumpet gives when “it speaks of pardon, full and free, through Christ, the Lamb once slain,” when it sets forth His one sacrifice, when it speaks of atonement made, when it speaks of precious blood, “a fountain opened ... for sin and for uncleanness.” When it speaks of a loving welcome for guilty sinners, how those with the leprosy of sin, like Naaman, can go “wash and be clean” as graciously led and directed by the Spirit of God. When brought to that open fountain, the blood of Jesus, there to prove that “sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.”

O the wonders of the Saviour’s death, that can remove that great mountain of the sins and iniquities of the people of God, cause them to melt, to fly away, to be seen no more! “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed [His people’s] transgressions from them.” That is the great mountain to a grace-taught sinner, and that is the removing of the mountain in the death of Christ. That ancient prophecy fulfilled, “I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” And that word, “In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” And then that glorious righteousness in which a sinner stands complete: “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee.” O to know these things! The urgency of this prayer, to know these things personally and savingly, and to know these things in providence and to know them in grace. The impossibilities flow down before our God.

“Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!” You know, there might be a mountain and it has not been mentioned this evening. You hear about one thing and you hear about another thing, but you think, If only he would mention *my* mountains. You know, like that poor old man we read of. He kept a few pigs. It was all that he had; he was very poor. One Sabbath morning before he came to chapel all his pigs were dead; he was ruined, he had no means of livelihood. And didn’t the minister preach well that morning, and didn’t the people appreciate it! And they said, “Didn’t you think it was good?” to the poor old man. Do

you know what he answered? He said, "I wish he had mentioned my pigs!" You know what he meant.

Well, beloved friend, if your mountain has not been mentioned this evening – I do not know what it is – but the Lord in love and mercy knows what it is. And if it has not been mentioned in the sermon, it is surely not excluded from the loving, sympathising heart of the Lord Jesus, our great and glorious High Priest.

"Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!" And then that last great mountain. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Never speak lightly of it. The world does today; it speaks so lightly of death. But,

"Who, except Jesus smiles within,
Can look the monster in the face?"

Then may we see that monster, that mountain, removed in the death and resurrection of Jesus. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"Yet, dearest Lord, when viewed in Thee,
The monster loses all his dread;
There all his frightful horrors flee,
And joy surrounds a dying bed."

But O to be made ready for that day that it may not come upon us unawares. Probably as a congregation we shall never all together meet again on earth, but we shall all meet at the judgment seat of Christ.

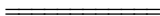
"But can you bear the piercing thought:
What if your name should be left out?"

You know, there is only one thing will do: a vital, personal, saving knowledge of the Son of God and an interest in His precious blood.

"In that dread moment, O to hide
Beneath His sheltering blood!
'Twill Jordan's icy waves divide,
And land my soul with God."

Or in the analogy here, the mountains will flow down at His presence.

"Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence!"



Penitent tears are undeniable ambassadors that never return from the throne of grace without a gracious answer.

Thomas Brooks

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY

*Report of the Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard
Aid and Poor Relief Society held on Friday, April 4th, 2008,
at Clifton, Bedfordshire,*

Because of difficulties at Westminster Chapel, the Meetings this year were held in the Bedfordshire village of Clifton. The downstairs of the large chapel was filled for the morning prayer meeting, and in the evening the gallery was completely filled as well. The friends at Clifton helped wonderfully in the arrangements for the day.

MORNING PRAYER MEETING

Mr. J.R. Broome (Trowbridge) read 2 Corinthians 6 and then spoke from verses 17 and 18: "Wherefore 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."

There are three aspects of this text resting on my mind; one is this – that the Apostle Paul knew a separation when he was a Pharisee. I would like to look at that separation and what was wrong with it. The second aspect I would like to look at is the power of Christ that separated him from that false separation. I would like to look also at the third aspect, which is what he came away from, and to examine in our own hearts whether we know any separation from an empty profession, "the world that lieth in wickedness," and whether we can trace in our experience what it is to be brought out.

Some years ago I attended these meetings, and the subject of the Lord's servant that day was "Exercise." I shall never forget how sweet that was to me, because I could, before my God, trace out an exercise of heart and soul.

I hope you may be able this morning, in your own heart and soul, to trace out something of this experience of separation and look back in your soul's pathway to see that you have in fact walked out the path of the Apostle Paul, because he ever spoke from his own experience, and that gave him a blessed authority.

Now if I might look at his pathway as a Pharisee: what a separation that was! The Pharisee said, "God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are." They said of the Lord Jesus Christ, "He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners." In their eyes He was not separate; He should have kept Himself away from publicans and sinners. Theirs was a separation of self-righteousness. The Apostle Paul in that separation was resting on his own works, keeping the law. "A Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee," and he was well-satisfied with it.

I feel today that we have a separation like this around us. We need to be brought to this place where the apostle was, to see the nature of that separation. It cuts off brethren, separates in a false way, while we condemn others and the Lord watches us. The apostle felt convinced he was right. Not only did he separate himself from the Lord Jesus and His followers, he persecuted them under a sense of separation. He was holier than them. He would not make himself unclean by coming near to them. But the Lord Jesus, in His prayer that concluded the Last Supper, prayed so differently. These Pharisees were like poor Luther when he went in to the monastery. He was going to separate himself from the world, cut himself off from them. But what a lesson Luther learnt! The Lord did not pray that His people might be taken out of the world: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world," they are to be in it, "but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." And then the Lord said, "They are not of the world." What a truth lies in that! To be in this world and not of it.

The apostle had to learn this lesson, and that leads me to the second part of what is on my mind, and that is the power that separated him. How great a power that was! There is a sweetness in this verse; it is a commandment; it is a divine call. Here is a power that separates God's people in the work of regeneration, the work of grace, and I believe that the apostle knew that power on the road to Damascus, when the Lord called him and separated him from the Pharisees for ever.

I think of the power that separated Nicodemus, not as suddenly as the Apostle Paul, rather like the words of Christ to him, "The wind bloweth." It was a gentle wind. It was a gradual work, but it was the same power that separated him. The words of Christ, as He spoke to him that night when he came to Him, entered his soul. We know this, and there was a gracious effect. Christ said to him, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" The day came when he did know them. There was a power in it, a gentle breath of heaven in his soul, and he was separated, a secret disciple like Joseph of Arimathea, but how blessed he was! The world saw that power. The Pharisees detected it. They could see there was some working of the Spirit in him. The world will see the change in our lives if the Lord separates us. When He separated Nicodemus the Pharisees said to him, "Art thou one of them?"

I would ask you, Has that power separated you? Has it brought you out of the company of the world and the company of religious professors? Has it brought you into the company of the living family of God? This power is the work of God's Spirit in the souls of His children when called out of nature's darkness. We read in the previous chapter to my text the apostle's words: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." There is a leaving of the world's deceitful shore, a leaving to return no

more. What a mercy if you and I can look back like the apostle to the moment when the Lord brought us out of a godless world for ever! We had to make it known that we were separated, and the world saw it and knew it. This, then, is what the apostle speaks of to the church at Corinth, a complete coming out.

I will now come to the third part of this subject, namely what the apostle came out of. John Bunyan in his book, *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, speaks of this coming out. He says that Abraham came out of Ur of the Chaldees, Lot came out of Sodom, Ruth left her father and mother, Peter left his nets, Matthew left the receipt of custom, and the apostle left the Pharisees. He was separated from them.

It made me think of my late grandfather. My mother told me that the night my grandfather's mother died, he got up and walked the streets of Southampton because he had no hope of her. There was a separation. What a bitter cup he was called to drink! He loved his mother, but they were separated. It was brought back to me last night when the Lord's servant [Mr. Stehouwer] was preaching in Luton and he spoke of separation from his brother. Jacob and Esau were separated in the womb. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."

What have you come out of? What did the Lord separate you from? Your companions, your worldly companions? Did He separate you from a light ministry that you could not profit under? As a student, I travelled miles to sit under a profitable ministry. I could not sit under one where there was no food, sweetness and blessing for my soul. I travelled to sit under the ministry of God's servants whose words were a savour, a sweet savour to my soul. They are now gone to glory but their memory is ever blessed. The Lord's people are brought out by a power, and we read in Scripture, they go to their own company. Blessed company! I went, as a student, to some of the mothers in Israel. My heart was drawn to them. I say this to the young here today. There is a bond between young and old in the gospel. The Lord calls His children out; the aged are praying for them and watching. They are carrying them in prayer. They are longing to see them separated from the world and brought out. The fruit of the Spirit is manifested in their separation. We see those who make a profession but still have one foot in the world. I did. I used to go to the chapel on a Sunday but spent the week in the world. It was gross hypocrisy, but the Lord separated me and brought me out. I know this, that it was only He that did it. It was a divine call to leave this world.

If we have any realisation of what the Lord suffered for us on Calvary's cross, what He went through, it will separate us. If the love of Christ is made known in our hearts, it will separate us from "the world that lieth in wickedness." "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" He has none. God's people are drawn to each other, not necessarily in

conversation. There is a quiet, silent bond that draws young to old, and there is a communion one with another.

May we be separated from “the world that lieth in wickedness,” and brought in love, affection and understanding to the living family of God to be united one with another. John the divine says, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ,” and if we have fellowship with Him, “we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Hymns 1056, 882 and 1002 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. F.A. Ince, (Fitzwilliam), Mr. J.O. Pack (Pastor, Irthlingborough), Mr. A. Rayner (Ebenezer, Luton), Mr. M.G. Bailey (Tenterden), Mr. D.J. Lawson (Clifton), Mr. T.H.W. Scott (Bethel, Luton). Mr. Broome closed with prayer and the benediction.

AFTERNOON MEETING

After the singing of hymn 796, the Chairman of the Society, Mr. G.D. Buss, called on Mr. A.W. Chapman (Ashwell) to seek the Lord’s blessing on the meeting.

The Chairman then read Mark chapter 4, verses 35 to 41.

CHAIRMAN: This may seem a strange word as part of God’s holy truth to read on such an occasion. I want, however, to draw your attention to one or two precious points in this well-known and well-loved part of the history of the ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which may be a guidance and a comfort, perhaps even a reproof, in the generation in which we live.

The first thing I want to notice, brethren, is: we read that He said, “Let us pass over unto the other side.” And we read in chapter 5, verse 1, “And they came over unto the other side.” God always fulfils His word. Whatever lies between the venture and the receiving of the promise, God always fulfils His word. Let that be our first comfort this afternoon. This is the Rock of Ages upon which the church of Christ is built. He is a faithful, unchanging, unfailing God whose purposes cannot be frustrated by winds and waves or darkness and fear, or even the unbelief of His dear children. “I will work, and who shall let it?” Not even the devil can hinder it finally.

Secondly, I would have you notice the little word, yet big word, precious word, *us*. *Us*: the Saviour and His disciples. The great Head of the church, who loves His church in the night seasons as well as in the day. He loves them in the winter seasons as well as in the summer. He loves them in adversity as much as in prosperity. And even though there are times when, for wise reasons and to teach His church more deeply, He may hide His face, yet, friends, even behind the darkest cloud behind

which He hides His face, He still loves. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." O, friends, to be among that people whom God has loved with an everlasting love! It was a union, in a natural sense, in this boat with Christ with them. But, ah, it is that spiritual union we want confirmed, is it not? But O, how we need the answer to the question of the good hymn writer, "Have I union to the church's living Head?" Friends, if we have not union with the church's living Head, the storms and the winds, why, they will separate. We will come to grief, we will not reach the other side. Union is so important. It is so vital.

Thirdly, notice, "And there were also with Him other little ships." It says, "with *Him*." I do like that. What were little ships doing on the sea? Why ever did they venture? Well, it seems to me, friends, they wanted to be in "the footsteps of the flock." They had not perhaps the closer communion of those that were in the boat wherein our Saviour was, but ah, they longed to be followers. "Little ships," like many of our little causes at the moment, "little ships." There are many "little ships" in our denomination at the moment, and we wonder, we tremble for them. And O these "little ships," you know, were as much in the care of the Saviour as the boat which He was in and in which His disciples were. And I am persuaded of this, they all got to the other side. After all He says, "And there were also *with Him* other little ships." Will He lose one of them? No. What did Moses say to Pharaoh when Pharaoh would have detained the little ones? And "not an hoof be left behind." The covenant of grace, sealed with the precious blood of Christ, ensures, "All Israel must to glory go, as trophies of His grace."

My next point. Though we may have a clear direction from the great Head of the church in a matter and may feel sweetly persuaded that it was the right path, and venture we did (we hope, by His love, by His grace), yet that does not mean there will not be storms. It does not mean there will not be darkness; it does not mean that there will be nothing to try your faith and test it. Just the reverse! "In the world ye *shall*," not might, "*shall* have tribulation." And in whose hand is that tribulation? The devil? The world? Sinners? They may be *under* God's control, but, dear friends, it is in God's hand. This storm was in God's hand; this darkness was in God's hand. Remember He "raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble." Then, O blessed be God for that "then"; for the Holy Ghost puts a cry in the hearts of His dear children. "Then," in their extremity; "then," when all self-help is gone; "then" when the only ground is mercy; "then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses." But ah, before their deliverance came, how trying it was!

The dear Saviour asleep, apparently unconscious of the need. It was not so. He slept in His humanity but His divine eye was everywhere. That is the eye that never sleeps, the ear that is never deaf, the heart that always beats for His dear children.

Can you call it a prayer when they awoke Him? What a weak, feeble prayer! I have not a stone to throw. But friends, what a weak prayer it was: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" Aren't you thankful, dear friends, sometimes God hears weak prayers? I am! How poor our prayers are! How plagued with unbelief, especially when guilt is on our conscience, our mouth is all but stopped! But O blessed be His holy name, He hears weak prayers.

"Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" But could they perish? There were three reasons why they could not perish. Firstly, friends, He had said they would get to the other side. Secondly, He was in the boat. And thirdly, more profoundly, could the Saviour sink to the depths of the Sea of Galilee? Was that the way He was going to lay down His lovely life a ransom for many? Was that the way He was going to atone for the sins of His church? No. Golgotha, Calvary, the cross, the thorns, the spear, lay before Him. No, this boat could not go to the ground, could not go to the bottom of the sea. No, our dear Saviour's work was not finished.

So with sweet majesty, precious love, glorious authority He arises: "Peace, be still." This peace, I say it most reverently, cost Him nothing. He commanded it; and when He commands peace no man can make trouble. But, friends, remember what the peace of atonement cost Him. It cost Him His whole life. It cost Him His agony, it cost Him His suffering, it cost Him His precious blood, it cost Him the hidings of His Father's face. O dear friends, what it cost Him! The precious blood of Christ redeems His dear people from all their sins and guilt and iniquity.

"Peace, be still." The wind knew its Master; the waves knew this voice. He had created the waves, hadn't He? He had created the sea. It was all part of His blessed work as the Creator. They knew their Master.

"There was a great calm." Friend, there is nothing troubling you this afternoon, or us as a group of churches (and there are many things that do), but it is under the control of the great Head of the church. Sometimes He permits troubles to rise, and they do. When He commands peace, not a dog can open its mouth; no tongue will move then because He has the authority, and bless God for it.

I would say two further things. The first is this, friends. You know there was another storm on Galilee's lake. What was that? Why, the storm of fear, unbelief, in the hearts of His children. "Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?" O it seems these waves had just about drowned all their religion, didn't it? Do you know what that is?

Some people call their religion to hand pretty quickly, but I believe a tried believer finds he cannot. But while we would not commend unbelief as a grace (God forbid!) nonetheless you will find in your storms, dear friends, you are dependent upon the Lord to give you the faith and the submission that you need for the hour. And so He calmed the storm in their hearts too, and the blessed peace followed them as well, as they came to the other side with that blessed declaration, "What manner of Man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

And dear friend, is there one here this afternoon that you not only wish the circumstance in your life would obey Him; it goes deeper. What about your poor heart, that unbelieving, fretful, restless, covetous, worldly heart you are plagued with every day? If only that could be conquered! Well, He who calmed Galilee's waves and Galilee's winds can calm and subdue the most restless, rebellious heart. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" May God add His blessing.

In giving a welcome, the Chairman explained that this is the first Meeting of the incorporated Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Societies (now joined together). He explained that we were unable to use Westminster Chapel or arrange another venue in London, and expressed gratitude to the Clifton friends for their welcome.

The Secretary, Mr. H. Mercer, then introduced the Report and Accounts for 2007. The published Report was not read. Copies can be obtained from the Secretary (for address, see cover page ii).

MR. MERCER: Mr. Chairman and dear friends:

We are very grateful indeed to our friends here at Clifton for making it possible for us to hold our Annual Meeting here. Our particular thanks go to Mr. Lawson for the hard work that he has put in to provide for us today. As many of you know, it was not possible to arrange the meeting this year at Westminster Chapel and we are pleased that so many of you have been able to attend here.

The Committee is burdened about the continuing decline within the churches and the drift away from the scriptural position which has been our foundation for so many years. There appears to be a solemn complacency and satisfaction with a form of worship with little power being felt in the ministry, although we trust that the pure gospel is still preached.

There are one or two places where versions of the Scriptures other than the King James Authorised Version appear to be used by some of our younger friends. It is claimed that these versions are easier to read, but there is a lack of reverence and some misinterpretation of the truth because of suspect translation. The Committee reaffirms its firm belief that the King James Authorised Version of the Holy Scriptures is the most accurate of all the English translations currently available and is the version that alone should be used in private, family or in public worship. It is proposed that the *May Gospel Standard* will include an article on this subject. In conjunction with the Trinitarian Bible Society, who

have kindly printed and made available to us a sufficient number of copies, a booklet distinguishing between the King James Authorised Version and other versions will be made available free of charge and sent to every individual subscriber to the *Gospel Standard* magazine. A small number of copies will be sent to each chapel to whom a parcel is dispatched.

Another major concern to the Committee is the Charities Act 2006. Without going into too much detail, the most radical change is that all religious charities are now going to have to register and to prove public benefit. There are a number of excepted charities listed in the legislation who will not have to register with the Charity Commission until 2012, if their turnover is less than £100,000, and it would appear that our churches are covered by these exceptions. This means that churches will not have to register immediately but will have to do so by 2012. There is a new requirement that charities must have regard to the Commission's guidance on public benefit, although this guidance would not appear to be binding. However, it should not be ignored. Advice to our churches will be given shortly on the whole issue of registration and of public benefit, either by the Society or by the Gospel Standard Trust. It seems that the major thrust of the legislation is that the benefits must be clear and related to the aims of the charity.

Our chapels are open for public worship and it would appear that there is no particular difficulty because the Commission accepts that religious charities need go no further than set out some of the tangible benefits they provide. Further details will be gladly given if requested.

There may be problems with our Society and with the Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund because it might be thought that the beneficiaries are too restricted. Clearly there will have to be discussions with the Charity Commission, by which we hope to preserve our charitable status. Whilst it would appear that there is no reason why our churches cannot continue to be charities, because they provide services of public worship which the public can attend, it should be borne in mind that because of the general secular direction of society at large, problems might arise in the near future. It is important that we are firm in our dealings with the Commission on what we believe. Should the charitable status of our Society be lost, there will be no further tax relief on gift aid donations and the income, after operating expenses, will be liable to income tax or corporation tax. Also community charge on property would become payable.

Our funds are in a healthy condition and have been substantially strengthened this year by legacies to the Society. Note 3 [in the printed Report] refers to further amounts that are anticipated from the estate of Mr. R.W. Shelton (deceased) when a bungalow and a one-sixth share in a commercial property has been sold by the executors. The additional funds will result in increased amounts of investment income. The number of beneficiaries from the Society does not increase overall, and the Committee will examine ways of using the income for the stated purposes.

During the year the funds increased by £437,495 after taking into account legacies of £383,026, and now total £2,386,168. The analysis in note 18 shows the breakdown between funds. The Aid and Poor Relief Society funds increased by £433,070 and the Magazine Fund by £5,244. This was largely due to cost saving as a result of voluntary help given and facilities freely provided. The

Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund distributed a little more than its net income, and these funds reduced by £819.

Grants of £65,511 were paid during the year, compared with £66,631 last year, and the reduction was almost entirely due to chapels who had received proceeds from the sale of chapels in their area no longer having a need of financial support.

When the grants were paid in March to individuals and chapels, a form requesting updated financial information was enclosed, and on receipt of these forms a review of the amount of the grants will be made. The Committee is deeply aware of its responsibility to use the Society's funds according to the stated objects and the Committee is always pleased to hear from any subscriber, of any individual or chapel where financial assistance would be appropriate.

We invite those who are not yet subscribers, and who support our doctrinal position, to become subscribers and give the Society their support. Subscriptions to the Society are received throughout the year on various dates, and it is proposed that any subscription received after October 1st will be deemed to be for the following year.

During recent months a number of our ministers have been afflicted and some have undergone major operations. We are thankful that a measure of recovery has been given and seek that the Lord would raise them up again to preach the everlasting gospel. There is a voice in these things, and the Committee's desire is that these afflictions may be sanctified to the ministers concerned and to the churches.

Shortly Mr. Robert Field is due to go to Canada to preach there and it is expected that in October Mr. Buss will go to Canada and Mr. Broome to the United States, if the Lord will. We seek that their labours may be abundantly blessed and that, in all things, God may be glorified.

The circulation of our magazines continues at a steady level, and we are thankful that many of our young people, when they are married and set up their own home, begin to take the magazines through either a chapel parcel or direct mailing. We pray that the Editors may be blessed in their labour and that the truths set forth may be used of the Lord for the edification of our souls.

The grant of £2,500 received from the Gospel Standard Trust by the Magazine Fund has been fully utilised in reducing the cost of postage of our magazines to overseas subscribers, and this has meant that although the dollar has depreciated in value against the pound, the impact of this has not been too severe.

We continue to send letters to the authorities about moral and religious issues but sadly no single reply has been received, either from the Home Office or the Prime Minister's office.

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Stehouwer, who is in this country for about three weeks, and seek that as he labours among the churches, he may feel graciously helped and see fruit to those labours. We are very thankful to Mr. Stehouwer for the substantial amount of work he does on behalf of the Society in collecting subscriptions to the magazines in the United States and remitting those funds to us here. This is a very important link with our friends and supporters in America.

The Committee values the prayerful concern of subscribers and friends that needed wisdom and strength might be given to its members in their responsibilities, and they seek a continuing interest in your prayers. We would be truly thankful to the Lord for His continuing mercy to us as a group of

churches, and although we mourn the solemn withholding of the power of the Holy Spirit among us, we are thankful that there are still evidences that the Lord has not utterly forsaken us. Our desire is that the Lord would restore unto us the joy of His salvation and uphold us with His free Spirit.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary, and especially for all that he does for the Societies and the Committee throughout the year, and during the past twenty years.

An opportunity was given for questions, but none were asked.

It was proposed by Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone) and seconded by Mr. M.P. Hydon (Attleborough) that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Societies for 2007 be approved and adopted. This was carried *nem con*.

MR. MERCER: Friends you will know that this is the first year that a ballot was taken for the election of the Committee members individually. The number of ballot papers sent out was 245; the number of returned ballot papers was 208, of which two were late and therefore barred from being counted. To be elected it is necessary for each member of the Committee to receive more than half of the votes cast on a valid returned ballot paper. All of the candidates received more than 80% of the votes cast. As a result of the ballot, Messrs. Ashby, Broome, Buss and Christian are re-elected to the Committee for three years; Messrs. Cottingham, Field, Hyde and Ince for two years; and Messrs. Izzard, Kerley and Woodhams for one year.

Mr. J.F. Ashby (Pastor, East Peckham), on behalf of the Committee, thanked the subscribers and friends for their confidence in the Committee. He said: "Brethren, pray for us." The two or three years that I have been on the Committee have been an eye-opener. The burdens, the various things that have to be dealt with, we do not feel we have sufficient grace, and when we meet there is much prayer that the Lord will guide us to do those things that are right in the Lord's sight. Many difficult decisions have to be made. We thank you for your confidence. We do plead for your prayers that the Lord will be with us whenever we meet, and guide us in all that we have to do."

The Chairman reported greetings received from Mr. Gordon Seymour from Australia; Mr. Michael Pickett from Choteau, U.S.A., and Mr. Gary TenBroeke from Sheboygan, U.S.A., and Mr. Martin Oudshoorn from the chapel at Nobleford, Canada. He also welcomed to the Meeting Mr. J.K. Stehouwer, who is here from Grand Rapids, U.S.A. We thank the Lord for the loyal support of the causes overseas, and especially we think of Australia where the congregations are very small, like those "little ships." We pray that the Lord will prosper His work out there and also at all the other churches overseas that are now connected with us.

The Gospel Standard Library has requested that the location of any portrait of denominational interest (in a chapel or private home) should be made known to the Librarians.

The date of the Annual Meetings for next year was announced: Friday, April 17th, if the Lord will.

Hymn 1049 was then sung.

The 1st Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund then followed (see later).

After hymn 208 was sung, Mr. J.K. Stehouwer (Pastor, Grand Rapids, U.S.A.) addressed the Meeting.

MR. J.K. STEHOUWER: I want to give my regards to the Chairman and to the others who so kindly invited me. I can honestly say that I have always had a love to this cause and to the *Gospel Standard* and its principles. I hope that I may know what it is at all times to contend earnestly for that doctrine for which they stand and I believe as also applied to my own soul.

I would like to draw your attention to two portions of Scripture. The first is found in Psalm 123; then I am going to read the first chapter in the book of Nehemiah – without a doubt portions, especially in Nehemiah, which have often been touched upon when we think of the need of a time of revival.

Mr. Stehouwer read Psalm 123 and Nehemiah chapter 1.

This word on my spirit more or less came to me prior to being invited. In fact, it has been on my mind quite often, as I think of our own state in our own nation and my beloved Zion at Grand Rapids. And I thought of this verse which is found in Psalm 123 and verse 3. And I believe, friends, it ought to be our united prayer as I believe we ought to be perplexed as to the state of the church of God today. It is this: “Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt” (Psa. 123. 3).

Without a doubt, friends, we have known down through the generations that truth has always been regarded with a contempt; that we should ever expect. And I do believe if we fail to receive any contempt from the world and others round about us, we might well believe that we are not putting up the banner, or we are not contending for the faith as we should. However, we look upon the history of the churches, and I look a little back on my life as a child, and I know the circumstances here. Our contempt today is a little different. I believe we have to say that the contempt is, that we have all been brought into such a low state. Instead of being a witness for the truth and the gathering of souls into the churches, we find just the opposite. I know the Lord has to build the church; and therefore I believe we can say, as the obligation of every one of us, that we know what it is to implore the almighty God that again He may send another time of reviving among us. But after having read the life of William Gadsby, it put a holy jealousy within me when we see there the calling out of souls out of the world, non-religion or false religion, and we have to say that it was another time of great revival which took place in that day.

But now I speak of myself. I come from a city that has a lot of churches, and some of them are well attended, but some are deceiving souls for an eternity. Then they will say to me, "How many do you have in your congregation?" I almost feel ashamed to say what I have, when they speak about theirs. And right away, if you do, they look at you with contempt. What is wrong with you? What is wrong with the young people? And then they will criticise our doctrine, criticise our practice. And I believe, friends, you have the same things today. Or they say, "Are your young people staying? Are you having people to join your church? Are you having any growth?" And right away you find this contempt, as it were, laid upon you. O what a mercy, friends, that we bind together and beg of the Lord again that we may have a contempt in a right way; I would not say in a wrong way, but in a sorrowing way, a way which often makes our feelings hurt. I know I have it too. They say, "Does somebody still attend with you?" And I say, "No, they do not." Right away they cast contempt.

Well, then I want to think about that first chapter in Nehemiah. Nehemiah heard the results of Hanani returning from Jerusalem and giving this sad report. We read that Nehemiah was greatly affected. He was living in luxury; he was living with the king; he did not have much to worry about. But his heart and his soul were for the honour and the glory of God and for the good of Zion. And what do we read there in the case of Nehemiah? Immediately we find there that he set his heart to pray.

It is well to notice for a moment something of the construction of that prayer. First of all, we can see here, he besought the Lord God in heaven to give heed to his petition. The first thing he came upon was the ground of God's covenant relationship to Israel (verse 5). Ah, friends, we can now know what it is in our prayers to come upon the covenant of grace which is made in eternity, and can implore the Lord, "O Lord, for Thy name's sake, for Thy glory's sake, come and revive us again."

And then we can come upon the ground, the Lord has said, "I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." O what a marvellous thing, friends, it does not say the gates of hell will not try to prevail, but the gates of hell shall *not* prevail against it. I am not much for hallelujah, but I could almost cry out, *Hallelujah* for such a God who reigns in heaven over all.

So he came upon the grounds of God's holy name. He came upon the ground of His honour and His glory, His name's sake. I realise, and I say it myself, I look through the Book of Acts and I see the holy jealousy which was found among the apostles, to send the truth out. I realise we could only wish there would be the opportunity to send forth missionaries or men out into the ministry of the gospel, and that we could

see yet many souls brought in. So I would say the first petition is this: he came upon the ground of God's mercies, upon the ground of that covenant. The church shall prevail.

Secondly, he came upon the ground of true, godly repentance (verses 6, 7). I often think of him, as well as many in the Word of God, who made those marvellous confessions of sin – such as Ezra and Daniel, and here Nehemiah. Friends, I really believe they were not involved with the sins of the idolatry of the children of Israel. I do believe Nehemiah kept himself free as well as Ezra and as well as Daniel, but when they looked upon the state of Israel, they included themselves. And I like that, “*We have sinned,*” “*We have departed.*” Now in what way would you say that they had sinned with the children of Israel?

Well, I often think of the case of Samuel. You remember the children of Israel were in a sad state. The Lord raised up Samuel at a time of reviving to the children of Israel. And the children of Israel asked Samuel to pray for them. Samuel said, “God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you.” How many sins have we got to confess? We need to pray for the state of Zion. I know we get discouraged but we have to look beyond the discouragement and look unto Him who is able to do all things, who is able to break the stoutest heart and call the greatest of sinners out of nature's darkness into His marvellous light.

I used to go to a Mission – they do not want my ministry any more so I do not go any more – but then speaking to those outcasts, I used to say to them, “Friends, I can tell you one thing, God saves sinners. Here is a great big sinner right in front of you, whom God converted.” They probably thought I was off the street. I was brought up in a Christian home. I was kept from many, many things, but it made no difference. In one respect, as the Lord worked in my soul, I found I was no different to the tramp upon the road. In other words, friends, there is no impossibility with our God.

“The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,
Is welcome to a throne of grace,
The Saviour's blood to plead.”

And that blood has never lost its power. There is nothing impossible with our God. So we find then there was much confession of sin.

And then you will notice the third part – and we have not time to go into great detail. The third part of this petition is this: he came upon the ground of God's grace. If salvation is not of grace, we are finished. But salvation *is* of grace. And when I say *free* grace, the word grace does not need the word free, but I am going to put it there anyway, as we might rightly do so. It is free grace. And not only is it grace and free grace, but

as we look upon the wonders of grace, we see something of sovereign grace. "Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding." So we come first of all acknowledging that covenant, the promise He has given unto the church. Secondly, that we may know much of true godly repentance before the Lord, and then plead upon the ground of His grace.

Now I thought a little bit later. There was a day when those walls were good around Jerusalem, and what happened? Why were they broken down? Truly we can say, sin, departing. But it does not take long to break down a wall. I am speaking spiritually. Put a little brick out of line, take a little more entertainment, make a little compromise with the world, and you have soon got the wall of truth, the wall of God's mercy, taken away. Then I believe our children all know that if you have got a little hole in the barn, or a little hole in the house, it is a good little place for a little mouse or a rat to come in. And if you do not quickly stop it up, you will have your house infested with these things that will be a plague to you. O what a mercy then when we know what it is! To have our eyes ready for anything, friends, that may prove to be a compromise.

I get these questions: What do you do for your young people? You know, there is a lot of religion. I get telephone calls. Do you have a young people's group? I say, Yes, we have a Sabbath school. Well, after talking a little while, I can find they want a young people's group that makes projects or puts puzzles together or colour with crayons or something of that nature. Then I tell them they can come and listen, and we hope they will. We can only hope one day someone might come in. I should not say someone, but many might come in.

I know, friends, I am not boasting, as I see a sad decline among us. But I come to this conclusion again, God is the same. Therefore, friends, how careful we have got to be! Those walls once stood firm and sure upon the foundation of the Word of God. We declare man's utter depravity: that before a holy and just God, by any righteousness of their own, they cannot stand before a holy God.

People hate the doctrine of election. Thankfully the Lord taught me and I loved it. I had no hope, but when the minister described something of man's utter depravity before God, he gave a description of what I was, and then he entered into that glorious doctrine of election. And when I heard it I thought there is hope for me. I had no hope any other way that I could be one of God's elect. At the time all I could see was God's love in election, in these firm foundations of God's truth, and also that firm foundation that there is salvation in no other name but in the name of a precious Jesus.

Now I say it to any minister and I say it to myself, the exhortation is this: Be faithful in season and out of season, times of discouragement

and when we have a time of a little help – a little time when we hear of someone showing some interest, or coming to speak to you about their soul, possibly coming into the church. We have to take it cautiously, prayerfully. We do not want to discourage and we do not want to encourage wrongly, and therefore it takes a great deal of wisdom. But how careful we have got to be, but yet stand firm upon these truths: salvation wholly and solely upon the ground of God's free and sovereign grace, and a hope of salvation which is found in the dear Lord Jesus Christ.

So the foundations were there, and I may believe that as time went on we can see a little breach in the wall, a little breaking down here and there, a little compromise, bringing in a little more entertainment, something which might attract to you. And you can soon see, friends, a solemn withholding of the Holy Spirit of God.

I think of the days with the children of Israel. There the glory of the Shekinah was upon the tabernacle. And when the temple was dedicated, such was the glory of God that filled the temple that the priests had to withdraw. God had entered into that temple; they realised the solemnity with man outside, and then finally, of course, brought in again. And as time went on, and I think I understand a little bit of that in Ezekiel. Apparently Ezekiel by prophecy gradually sees a little decay of the Shekinah glory over the tabernacle. A natural eye could never have seen it, it is so small, but it was so small it finally departed, and then it went and never returned. Well, I realise after the captivity there was a return. However, the Shekinah glory was not there; it was just the Lord's presence was there from time to time. And yet I read that the glory of the second temple would be greater than of the first (Haggai 2. 9). It was because the dear Son of God walked in the second temple. So, friends, how careful we ought to be.

Another point has come to me, and it is this. We look upon these walls and we want to make sure that they stand firm by prayers and supplications and seeking the Lord, examining the truth. I have already admitted something to which I want to go back now, if you do not mind, about the watchmen upon the walls of Zion. Watchmen upon the walls are vital. I realise you mourn over here. There do not seem to be the watchmen being raised up as we could wish. I am glad when I hear from some friends here and there that someone has gone forth. I do not know who they are; but I think of my age as well and look at the state of the churches in America.

Watchmen are needed but, friends, a watchman must know how to handle the trumpet wisely. Here I believe I have to speak for myself, and I feel that other ministers far exceed my ability or what I know. But it is this: how carefully we have to warn. When from a distance we see the

enemy approaching with something which is contrary to the Scriptures of Truth, it is a terrible thing if I do not take that trumpet in hand and set a warning – or to the inhabitants of Zion as well.

Again I have to come to this point: we need watchmen to be sent forth upon the walls. It is a sad affair, isn't it, friends? Here and there are some walls of truth; there is a gathering of a little group of people, but the watchman is not there. Marvellous, and yet preserved and kept, but how we ought to pray again, Lord, send forth watchmen, true and faithful watchmen upon the walls of Zion that know what it is to proclaim the truth and stand firmly upon the ground of truth and never to depart. So there is the need of watchmen.

And then we have to make sure that the enemy does not come and try to break the walls down. When you read something of the fact that Sanballat and his friends approach, on the surface, well, it does not look so bad. Maybe we could make a little compromise, who knows? Maybe they would like to join with us and eventually be more like us! What a mercy we find there in the heart of Nehemiah a good discernment! And when he discerned something which was not right, he immediately stood firm.

Now there is another thought that comes to me, and it is this: like in the case of Nehemiah, friends, we find only one man, all by himself, who we may say turned the whole of the state of Israel around. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Let me repeat it again: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." There was one man all by himself, made his petitions unto the Lord, and the Lord marvellously made open a way whereby he could come and deal faithfully with the matters, and was instrumentally used in the building of the walls of Jerusalem. Again there was another little time of grace and a little time of reviving. I know Nehemiah had his problems afterwards, but he was quick to see the problem and immediately put it in place. So we have to commend him highly.

I know, friends, it is not easy sometimes to stand alone, but it is in those times we should also find out: Did I stand alone? – No, there was One by me who supported me. I too would have failed if it was not for that gracious, kind Friend who loves the church and gave Himself for it. O friends, when we meditate upon the love of Christ for the church, He shed His precious blood. And again, friends, we only have to look upon Calvary to see something of His love for the church. He died for it, and in the dying for it, He cleanses it from all its sins and the day is coming when He will present it holy, spotless to the praise and the glory of His Father. That will be a happy day for the church of God and for the dear Lord Jesus.

So then, we think of Nehemiah. I believe we could think of a few more. I think of dear Moses. Truly the Lord worked marvellously with Moses. Moses was able to bring the children of Israel – I know the Lord brought them out, but Moses was instrumental in taking the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. And then we find the children of Israel had sorely sinned with their idolatry. And the Lord said unto Moses, “I will make of thee a great nation” (Exod. 32. 10). Moses’ holy jealousy was for the name of God, for the truth’s sake; it was not for his honour. And, friends, what do we read, a mighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth says to a worm Moses, “Let me alone.” Moses wrestling with a great God, he stood in the way and he came upon the same ground as Nehemiah did. What about Thy name, what about Thy covenant; and then he went on to speak, and with true repentance and upon the grounds of grace. So we see Moses. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

There is Moses, in a measure like Jacob wrestling with his God, and you know, I hope I say it sacredly, I do not know much about wrestling but I know there is a certain hold you can use that they cannot break. There is one hold that God cannot evade: a plea on the grounds of His word. He puts His word above all of His names. So Moses came upon the ground of His word. The same with Jacob, worm Jacob wrestling with God – yes, and he prevailed and he came out as prevailing Israel. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Some of those were just one man alone, weren’t they?

But then we could turn now to the New Testament as well. We only have to turn to the Book of Acts. On one occasion I typed in on the little hand computer the word *prayer*. Then I found prayer was found more in the Book of Acts than all the other books put together. Not that prayer is not in the other books, but prayer *is* in the Book of Acts. And even where prayer is not necessarily mentioned by word, yet without any question prayer was made. What about the time when Paul wanted to go to Bythinia and Asia (Acts 16)? The Lord forbade him. Do you think he was without prayer? No, he was not. If I know anything of labour in prayer – sometimes it is all my hope, I cannot deny it. I talk before the Lord, the Lord knows my groans and my sighs. But nevertheless how Paul laboured before the Lord in prayer, and the Lord sent a vision: “Come over into Macedonia, and help us.” He goes over there and finally comes to the city of Philippi, and he stays there for a few days waiting for direction, and then he goes out by the riverside, a few women gathered for prayer. “Prayer was wont to be made.” I do not know what they prayed for, but they must have prayed in faith, prayed in desire.

Then you just turn to the Epistle to the Philippians, and then you can see what their church really was. A church established in the truth.

When I read some of these epistles, I think we are not even there ourselves. It seems like the churches at Philippi and Ephesus had grown far more in grace than we have. But then I come again to this conclusion, that the prayer of a few saints of God, humbly seeking the Lord, tried and tempted and brought almost to despair, but nevertheless we see the Lord marvellously answering the prayer. And the Lord opened doors at Philippi and many other places.

Now something else comes to mind. I have often wondered what happened to these churches? I do not know, but I think if you go to Philippi you will find nothing. If you go to Ephesus, I am afraid you will find nothing; maybe a little group, I do not know. But I have often thought what happened to their history. A little bit here and there out of the way; a little here and there grieving the Spirit. Finally, there was a solemn withholding of the Spirit, and the Spirit of the Lord withdrew.

Before I close, I can remember as a child I was brought up in a church. When I was a child they discontinued the Dutch language, but there was a Dutch language service up until that time. The minister was there for about fifty years, and I believe a godly man. He had a stroke and had to give it up, and then he died. So one thing came in after another. Finally the group had to leave which is now Zion Baptist. We left in peace, we left in good brotherly love, but we said, "We cannot fellowship with you anymore." But going back, I know it sounds solemn, there was a time when I believe that man had much fruit upon his labour, and I think back, many souls were brought in like my parents and others. Well, I believe we have to say Ichabod is placed upon the doorposts. The glory is departed.

Friends, we need prayer, we need supplication. We need it badly in America, and I petition your prayers for us, because I wonder what is going to be in the future. I know this one thing for sure: the Lord says, "I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." But I have to be on guard. It does not say he will not try to prevail. I know in the final day he will not, but I believe we have to say there are places of truth no more, sad declension round about. May we know what it is to beg the Lord for the little remnant that remains here, and what little, little, little remnant remains in America, that the Lord will come and revive and stir us up to prayer. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

I feel I would just like again to read my text and it is this: "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt." Do you feel it, friends? Do you know what it is to be like Nehemiah, to know what it is to beg of the Lord that He might come and revive the churches? But there I must leave it.

Hymn 500 was sung, and the Meeting closed with prayer by the Chairman.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

1st ANNUAL MEETING

MR. HENRY MERCER (Chairman, Bethesda Fund): It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you to the 1st Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund. We are now holding our 1st Annual General Meeting following the changes to the rules governing the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund. These rules were changed under the powers contained in the existing scheme dated June 15th, 1999, by resolution of the Bethesda Fund Committee on October 5th, 2007, and by the resolution of the Gospel Standard Societies' Committee on October 12th, 2007. Copies of the resolutions were sent to the Charity Commission who accepted the changes that have been resolved. The Bethesda Fund is now a completely separate charity with its own subscribers and elected Committee members.

The published Report of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund was not read. Copies can be obtained from the General Secretary (for address, see page xiv).

The Bethesda Secretary, Mr. T.H.W. Scott, spoke as follows:

MR. SCOTT: Although our Chairman has already welcomed everyone here today, I would like to add my own thanks to the large number of people who have agreed to become subscribers under the new constitution. In the early stages a considerable number of comments were made which were helpful in formulating matters, and we thank you for that.

My first duty is to present to you the Annual Report and Financial Statements, following which I will make a few remarks on matters of current interest. The Annual Report for 2007 is the 63rd of such Reports, Bethesda having been founded in the year 1944. The document is much longer now than in former years with many requirements to be met under the Standard of Reporting Practice under which we report, generally known as SORP 2005. In addition to this Annual Report, a document known as a Summary Information Return is submitted to the Charity Commission, and this can be downloaded from their website if anyone is interested. For every 100 charities on the official Register of Charities, only three need to complete that return and Bethesda is one of those three, being classified as a large charity.

The principal accounting statement is the Statement of Financial Activities found on page 30 of the Report. Following the sale of the Tunbridge Wells Home, not surprisingly the year has produced a sizeable surplus. Legacy income has also been high with two major legacies having been received and nine smaller ones. We have also been much encouraged that voluntary income, that is chapel collections and personal donations including gift aid, is the highest in the history of Bethesda. We sincerely appreciate the generous help given by our chapels and others and also the kind and encouraging letters often received when gifts are sent to us.

One feature of the accounts this year is the large number of Restricted Funds now held by the Charity. Restricted Funds are subject to specific restrictions imposed by a legacy or a donor, normally that the money is to be spent only for the benefit of a particular Home. At the year end these Restricted Funds amounted to just over £537,000. Details of the funds can be found in the notes to the accounts.

Mr. Mercer has already referred to the Charities Act. The Charity Commission recently released the long-awaited general guidance on public benefit. The Act removed the presumption that has been held for well over a hundred years that religious charities are for the public benefit. In the future the onus will be on the charity to demonstrate that there is an identifiable benefit to the public or a section of the public rather than assuming that this is taken for granted. A key requirement is that people in poverty must not be excluded from benefiting through being unable to meet the charges that a charity makes for its services. We do feel, therefore, that it is very timely that Bethesda has been able to establish a sizeable fund for the help of poorer residents who may be unable to obtain funding for their care. As explained in the Trustees' Report, the sum of £500,000 from the sale of the Tunbridge Wells Home has been set aside in a special, designated fund specifically to assist underfunded residents. In this way we hope to be able to demonstrate that no one is precluded from Bethesda care by reason of insufficient means. This fund is shown separately in the Balance Sheet as a designated fund, and if any chapel or individual wishes to add to the fund they are, of course, welcome to ask for their collection or donation to be used for that purpose.

Three major capital projects have been undertaken during the year. First, at Brighton the car parking area has been much enlarged and improved, and a visitors' toilet has also been provided fairly near to the entrance of the Home. At Harpenden an extension has been built over the existing staff quarters to provide a twin-bedded room especially for people coming for short-stays, and also an additional office which was very much needed. All of these projects have been paid for from restricted funds arising from legacies left to those particular Homes. I would also mention that a new mini bus has been purchased for the Brighton Home and this too has been paid for from the legacy left by the late Mrs. Eunice Walker.

If at any time anyone would like any further explanation on any aspect of the Accounts, I shall be pleased to help if I can. It is difficult at a meeting like this to answer questions on facts and figures as they are somewhat complex, but please do feel free to write to me or speak to me if there is anything you would like to be explained more clearly.

The cost of caring for residents in the Homes continues to rise at a rate considerably higher than inflation, and the average cost for caring for a resident is now £464 per week. The basic Bethesda fee has increased from April 1st to £427 per week, with higher rates for those with higher care needs. There have been somewhat alarming predictions made lately by respected analysts, particularly Laing and Buisson, as to an expected sharp rise in the cost of care in the future. At present, one in six of those over the age of 85 are in long-term care, and with increasing life expectancy there will be many more elderly people in the years to come. There have been many warnings about the consequences of inadequate funding, but the government does little to resolve what is building up to a crisis. Failure to act now is undoubtedly storing up problems for the future.

Short-stays in the Homes continue to be a most useful feature of Bethesda, often at a time of crisis. Only recently one lady at the age of 89 was mugged and knocked to the ground and badly shaken up, and we were able to take her into care for a few days until she felt stronger. Others are brought into the Home at

short notice. For example, a lady of 91 fell in her garden early in the morning and lay there for some time on a very cold day and had to be taken into hospital, following which she was brought into Bethesda. We have also been pleased to have Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Woodhams in the Brighton Home following Mr. Woodhams' fall.

Our friend Mr. Jim Hart, retires from the Bethesda Fund Committee with effect from today's Meeting. I would like first to convey our very deepest sympathy to Mr. Hart in the sudden loss of his wife Winnie last week. Mr. Hart has served on the Committee since 1976 and was Chairman of the Committee from 1986 to 2003. His remarkable length of service of 32 years is the longest in the history of Bethesda with the one exception of Mr. Jesse Delves who served for 33 years. It would be right to mention the labour of love provided by Mrs. Hart who was Local Secretary of the Brighton Home for 18 years until 1991. In those days the Homes prepared a weekly payroll, which was quite a tie, but she was ably assisted by her husband who took a special interest in any financial matters. As Mr. Hart lays down his long association with Bethesda, may the Lord bless him and be with him in his now lonely pathway.

Once again our warmest thanks are due to our Home Managers and all the members of staff, and also the many volunteers for all they do to make our Homes what they are. To be a Manager today is no easy task, with many onerous responsibilities. Perhaps this is the place to mention the help frequently given by the residents themselves. If a resident is well enough, many love to help around the Home where they can. One resident I know whose job is always to open the curtains every morning in the Home, whilst another waters the greenhouse when the gardener is away. Only yesterday when I was at Studley, I noticed how the residents have been planting the seed trays ready for the summer plants. Often a resident who is able will take another resident under their wing, who needs much care and comfort. We do appreciate all these things.

We do not forget the flatlets at Harpenden and Redhill. Next Thursday, April 10th, will mark the 60th anniversary of the very first resident to enter a Bethesda Home. It was on April 10th, 1948, that Miss Georgina Godsmark entered the Redhill Home under the matronship of Miss E.R. Saunders. It is recorded that her fees at that time were £1.6.0d a week – so the fees have increased nearly 300 fold since those early days. We do have vacancies at the Redhill Flatlets, and if anyone is interested, please do make contact with either myself or our warden, Mr. Frank Hayden.

I would like to mention that next year will see the 40th anniversary of the opening of the Harpenden Home. We feel it would be right to mark the occasion with an open day and a service. I feel perhaps I am speaking a little out of order here because nothing has been decided but the most likely date will be the second Saturday in June, that is Saturday, June 13th, next year, if anyone wishes to make a note of it.

The year 2007 has been an important one in establishing for the first time a register of subscribers, which we feel can only strengthen the Charity. We have been encouraged by the large number of people who have already agreed to become subscribers and we hope that others will also do so. I have some forms with me today if any one would like one, or please do contact me at any time, particularly some of our younger friends who we would like to interest in the work of Bethesda.

It only leaves me to acknowledge the Lord's mercies through another year, for the help given in many difficult circumstances, and to pray that He will go before us in the future.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Scott for his Report and thanked him for all the diligent hard work which he constantly and willingly does for Bethesda.

An opportunity was given for questions, but none were asked.

It was proposed by Mr. J.H. Cottington (Blackboys) and seconded by Mr. K.M. Price (Pastor, Kendal) that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund for 2007 be approved and adopted. This was carried *nem con.*

MR. T.H.W. SCOTT: I will now announce the result of the election of the members of the Bethesda Fund Committee by postal ballot. As explained in the letter accompanying the ballot papers, to establish the three-yearly rota all members of the Committee, with the exception of Mr. J.A. Hart, offered themselves for election for the periods shown on the ballot paper. A total of 187 ballot papers were distributed to subscribers, of which 171 were returned. Of these, two were spoilt papers as the serial numbers had been removed and those two papers were therefore invalidated, reducing the number of valid papers to 169. As a result of the voting I am pleased to say that all seven members have been re-elected by a substantial majority, again all having received in excess of 80% of the valid votes cast. I am sure the Committee will wish me to thank you for your support and for the confidence shown in them.

CHAIRMAN: The Bethesda Fund Committee would like to express their gratitude to our friends and supporters for their continuing help. And especially we would acknowledge the help of the many volunteers that so willingly give their time locally to the Homes. That brings to a conclusion the Annual General Meeting of the Bethesda Fund.

TOBIAS CRISP

The name of Tobias Crisp (1600-1643) has always been well known to readers of the *Gospel Standard*. We are therefore pleased to draw their attention to a lecture on his life to be given under the auspices of The Protestant Reformation Society by its president, Dr. David Samuel.

The meeting will be held, if the Lord will, at Brinkworth Parish Church, near Swindon, Wiltshire, where Tobias Crisp was minister. The date is Saturday, June 14th, at 2.30 p.m., and tea will be served afterwards in the village hall.

The famous works of Crisp were edited by Dr. Gill and published under the title *Christ Alone Exalted*. This is the title for Dr. Samuel's lecture.

EXAMINING OUR REPENTANCE

By Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

If any shall say they have repented, let me desire them to try themselves seriously by those seven effects of repentance which the apostle lays down in 2 Corinthians 7. 11.

1. *Carefulness.* The Greek word signifies a solicitous diligence or careful shunning [of] all temptations to sin. The true penitent flies from sin as Moses did from the serpent.

2. *Clearing of ourselves.* The Greek word is *apology*. The sense is this: though we have much care, yet through strength of temptation we may slip into sin. Now in this case, the repenting soul will not let sin lie festering in his conscience, but judges himself for his sin. He pours out tears before the Lord. He begs mercy in the name of Christ and never leaves until he has gotten his pardon. Here he is cleared of guilt in his conscience and is able to make an apology for himself against Satan.

3. *Indignation.* He that repents of sin, his spirit rises against it, as one's blood rises at the sight of him whom he mortally hates. Indignation is a being fretted [distressed] at the heart with sin. The penitent is vexed with himself. David calls himself a fool and a beast (Psa. 73. 22). God is never better pleased with us than when we fall out with ourselves for sin.

4. *Fear.* A tender heart is ever a trembling heart. The penitent has felt sin's bitterness. This hornet has stung him and now, having hopes that God is reconciled, he is afraid to come near sin any more. The repenting soul is full of fear. He is afraid to lose God's favour, which is better than life. He is afraid he should, for want [lack] of diligence, come short of salvation. He is afraid lest, after his heart has been soft, the waters of repentance should freeze and he should harden in sin again. "Happy is the man that feareth alway" (Prov. 28. 14). A repenting person fears and sins not; a graceless person sins and fears not.

5. *Vehement desire.* As sour sauce sharpens the appetite, so the bitter herbs of repentance sharpen desire. But what does the penitent desire? He desires more power against sin and to be released from it. It is true, he has got loose from Satan; but he goes as a prisoner that has broken out of prison with a fetter on his leg. He cannot walk with that freedom and swiftness in the ways of God. He desires therefore to have the fetters of sin taken off. He would be freed from corruption. He cries out with Paul, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7. 24). In short, he desires to be with Christ, as everything desires to be in its centre.

6. *Zeal.* Desire and zeal are fitly put together to show that true desire puts forth itself in zealous endeavour. How the penitent does bestir [busy; rouse] himself in the business of salvation! How he does

take the kingdom of heaven by force (Matt. 11. 12)! Zeal quickens the pursuit after glory. Zeal, encountering difficulty, is emboldened by opposition and tramples upon danger. Zeal makes a repenting soul persist in godly sorrow against all discouragements and oppositions whatsoever. Zeal carries a man above himself for God's glory. Paul, *before* conversion, was mad against the saints (Acts 26. 11). *After* conversion, he was judged mad for Christ's sake: "Paul, thou art beside thyself (Acts 26. 24). But it was *zeal*, not frenzy. Zeal animates spirit and duty. It causes fervency in religion, which is as fire to the sacrifice (Rom 12. 11). As fear is a bridle to sin, so zeal is a spur to duty.

7. *Revenge*. A true penitent pursues his sins with a holy malice. He seeks the death of them as Samson was avenged on the Philistines for his two eyes. He uses his sins as the Jews used Christ. He gives them gall and vinegar to drink. He crucifies his lusts (Gal. 5. 24). A true child of God seeks to be revenged most of those sins that have dishonoured God most.... David did by sin defile his bed; afterwards by repentance he watered his bed with tears. Israel had sinned by idolatry, and afterwards they did offer disgrace to their idols: "Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver" (Isa. 30. 22). The Israelite women who had been dressing themselves by the hour and had abused their looking glasses to pride, afterwards, by way of revenge as well as zeal, offered their looking glasses to the use and service of God's tabernacle (Exod. 38. 8). So those conjurers who used curious arts or magic ... when once they repented, brought their books and, by way of revenge, burned them (Acts 19. 19).

These are the blessed fruits and products of repentance. If we can find these in our souls, we have arrived at that repentance which is never to be repented of (2 Cor. 7. 10).

WILLIAM GADSBY ON THE RESURRECTION

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power" (1 Cor. 15. 42, 43)

This chapter clearly shows the resurrection of the dead, and arguments are brought forward to prove it which are of the greatest force. Paul brings forward the objections that an unbelieving mind would make against it; such, for instance, as, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" His answer is, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." All the ear is not sown, but merely a bare grain that dies, and then it is quickened, and brings forth fruit according to its nature.

There are some who assert that in heaven the saints of God will differ from each other in glory as the stars, but there is no passage in Scripture to prove such a statement. Our bodies are sown in corruption, they shall be raised in incorruption; and thus the body raised in incorruption will differ in glory from what it was when sown in corruption, as the dimmest star differs from the brightest planet. God shall change it, and fashion it like unto His glorious body; the brightest minister will not shine one whit brighter than the humblest hearer. Hence we read, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Thus it does not appear that the ministers of the gospel, who have been the means of turning many to righteousness, will outshine those that be wise, or those whom they may have been the means, in the hand of God, of turning to righteousness. For these shall shine as the *brightness* of the firmament, not as the *dark* firmament which needs the stars to light it; but as when the sun is up in his meridian splendour, emitting its beams of light on the firmament, and causing it to shine with a glorious brightness.

Again, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3. 2). And if all who die in Christ, all who are raised in incorruption, raised to glory, will be like Christ, there can be no difference; for Christ hath not many likenesses. Some people say there are large souls and small souls. Now just notice a babe; it grows and gradually increases in knowledge. Its intellectual faculties become enlarged, but its soul is no greater, otherwise when it gets old it droops with the body, and becomes as the soul of a little child once more. I believe that the soul of every child which dies in its infancy will shine as bright and be as great as that of Paul or any of the apostles. I believe also that William Gadsby, vile and base as he is, will shine as bright as Paul too.

All men are in nature, of nature, and by nature corrupt. "Their throat is an open sepulchre." Now, a sepulchre is a place in which to deposit the dead, and is generally filled with a stench, proceeding from the corrupt bodies, and when it is opened it emits that horrid stench. So are we all by nature. O what wickedness proceeds from our bodies! Our tongues – what evil have they spoken! Our eyes – what lustful, proud and sinful acts have they committed! Let the glass tell what they have done! Our hands – how have they been laid on that which is unholy, unclean! Our feet – how have they run in the way of evil! And after all, our bodies must moulder away in the earth, be food for worms, and become a stench, a nuisance to the living.

But now let us look at the new man, which is Christ in us, and at the old man, which is sin in us. Both live in us. There is a difference

between you living in sin, and sin living in you. Sin lives in a child of God, and plagues and harasses him continually, but he does not live in it. He hates it and abhors it. This body, which is by nature corrupt, is actually the seat of all the inventions of Satan. And O how many there are who spend their whole time in washing, dressing and adorning it. They little think that at one time it will be raised, not in glory, but to their shame and confusion. The wrath of God shall come upon them, if grace prevent not, and they shall burn with unquenchable fire.

Again, "It is sown in dishonour." Our bodies are sown in sin. They are vile and polluted; but if changed by the regenerating grace of God through Christ Jesus, we shall be raised in glory. And that glory who can describe?

We cannot describe the glory which the disciples beheld on the Mount of Transfiguration; which glory was so great that the disciples fell at Christ's feet as dead. How can we then describe the glory that shall hereafter be when our bodies are raised, when God Himself will be our glory?

From the *Gospel Standard* 1872. This also appears in the volume of Gadsby's sermons.

THE GREATLY FAVOURED INVALID

Jane Walker, of Islip, near Oxford, died on November 16th, 1868. She had been bedridden for thirty-six years. Her affliction was a spinal complaint, from which she suffered much pain, and at times seemed brought near to death.

She lived with her parents until she was fifteen, at which time she obtained a situation at Watereaton, about half a mile from her home. The family she lived with removed to Oxford, and she was with them there about three months. While there she heard that a good man was preaching at St. Ebbe's Church, and she went to hear him. Before this, she had been accustomed to go to fairs and parties, but she now felt a death to all these things. In speaking of the preacher at St. Ebbe's, she said, "I went to hear him every opportunity I had, and I grew so fond of him that I much wished to be his servant. I thought I must be happy if I could but be with such a man. As for wages, I cared nothing about them, if I might but live with him. At that time, no-one knew my state of mind but the Lord. Little did I then know what the Lord had in store for me.

"How wonderfully did the Lord lead and prepare me for this long affliction, by weaning me from the things of this world, which now quite failed to comfort me! It was while I was hearing that good preacher at

St. Ebbe's that I was taken ill, and how I got back to where I lived, I know not. As soon as I did get there my mistress sent for a doctor, who said I must be sent home to my mother, as I might have a long illness."

After this she got better, and went into service [working as a servant] again, but was again taken ill, and returned home.

One day, when her mother was out, her anxiety for work induced her to begin a little washing. While so engaged she fell down from extreme pain in her back, and with great difficulty crawled upstairs. When her mother returned she was put to bed, where she remained until her death. Now her former religion was all gone, and her supposed comeliness was turned into corruption. Judgment was laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and she was filled with fear that she should die in her sleep and sink into hell. So much indeed was she affected by this fear that she desired her mother to awake her if she thought she were dying. She laboured under this feeling for a long time.

At length a curate, who was doing the duty at the church, called to see her, to whom she unburdened her mind. He said, "You want something to lay hold of; it is Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, you want. May the Lord give you faith to believe in Him that died on the cross to save such sinners as you feel yourself to be." He quoted several passages of Scripture, such as, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As soon as he began to speak of Jesus dying on the cross for sinners, her burden began to lighten, and she saw Jesus with the eyes of her mind, and seemed to hear Him saying, "Come unto Me." At this she became so lost in wonder, love and praise that she knew not when the curate left the room. But I can only hint at what passed at that time.

I will now try to relate a little of the dear Lord's special favour towards her in providence and grace during her long affliction.

Seventeen years ago, when I called to see her, she was very ill; the doctor said she could not live till morning. Her mother said, "I know not what I shall do for means to bury her." I said to her, "Leave that to me. I will call tomorrow evening, and should she be gone, I will measure her for her coffin and order one to be made." When I called the next evening she was so far recovered as to be able to speak to me.

The next severe trial she had was the death of her mother, and some time afterwards a beloved niece to whom she was greatly attached, and who had been a great comfort to her for years. In 1866 she was again taken very ill herself.

Her long illness and increasing weakness rendered additional attendance necessary, and just at the time a friend came to see her, and voluntarily remained with her for some weeks to assist the nurse. The Bicester Board of Guardians, hearing of it, cruelly took off the nurse's

allowance. Poor Jane thought she must now come to want, for how could she support two out of her small allowance? Satan at the same time suggested that her friends also would forsake her. Her poor heart seemed ready to break while she told me her sad state. I said, "Fear not, Jane, let them take it all away; you will not want while I have health and strength to work and a heart to pray for you. The Lord will surely provide." I spoke to one of the rich assessors, hoping he might show pity. He said she should be sent to the union [the workhouse]. I said she should not, unless they put me underground first. It was wonderful to see how her gracious God supplied her. Friends far and near, some who knew nothing of her peculiar trial, ministered to her, so that she was richly supplied.

In the following August she was mercifully preserved during the raging of a fire which destroyed well nigh every thatched building on both sides of the street, and had nearly reached her dwelling when its course was checked. I arrived at the scene, on my way to Oxford, just as the fire was at its height. I went to her room, where I found several kind friends, the rector and his wife amongst them, doing all they could to encourage her not to feel alarmed. She was remarkably calm, being enabled to trust in the Lord.

Most blessed have been the seasons we have spent together, especially within the last ten years, during which time I have lived within four miles of her house, and for that time did not miss seeing her on Sunday and Wednesday evenings more than about four times; and often when we have met we have

"Like saint to saint in days of old
Our sorrows, sins, and sufferings told."

If I have gone to see her with my mind sad, I usually rejoiced before I left her. She was a woman of good understanding in the fear of the Lord.

I called to see her three times during the last week of her life. On Sunday morning, when I went to her bedside, she said, "I had a glorious day yesterday. Is it to be Saturday?" – meaning the day before her eternal Sabbath. On the previous day (Saturday) she shouted out,

"O glorious hour, O blest abode!
I shall be near and like my God,
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of my soul."

She said, "Can you give me up now?" I said, "My nature shrinks at the loss, but my spirit says,

'Go, happy soul, to that blest home
Where pain and sorrow are not known.'"

She then said, "That is right," and added, "Turn me." I did so, but she soon asked to be placed in her former position. She then took a dear friend's hand in one of hers and mine in the other, and said, "Dear friends for many years." She then dozed off, and remained in that state all day.

I left at eight o'clock in the evening, after which she became a little restless until about twelve o'clock; then, placing her hands on her chest, she remained in that position until half-past nine the next morning, when she breathed out her soul so gently they could scarcely discern that her spirit had fled.

She has written an account of the Lord's dealings with her, from which I hope to give some extracts at some future time.

W.W.

Soon after Jane Walker's death a short biography was published.

BOOK REVIEW

Sermons on The Acts, by John Calvin; hardback; 658 pages; price £18.00; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is an interesting and valuable book which we enjoyed. Calvin (1509-1564) is usually thought of as the greatest theologian of the Reformation, and his commentaries, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* and other works have long been highly valued. But these are Calvin's sermons – and it is often forgotten that he considered himself above everything else as a preacher of Christ's gospel.

Here are forty-four sermons on Acts chapters 1 to 7 now translated into English for the first time. They were preached in Geneva between August 1549 and January 1551 – not lectures to scholars or students, but sermons to citizens, shopkeepers and merchants, persecuted refugees, the young and the old. So they are very different from Calvin's other works.

Many are surprised at the simplicity with which Calvin writes and preaches – completely different from the later Puritans. This is because he is dealing with "first generation" Protestants, and so many of the bare essentials need to be made clear.

In Calvin's sermons, it is not just "the five points of Calvinism" but solemn warnings and the vital necessity for a sanctified life. Of course, he speaks very strongly against Roman Catholicism and the Papacy and also (of modern interest) realises the great danger of Islam.

To consider two quite fascinating sermons – on Acts chapter 6, the election of the first deacons. Calvin makes some unusual and interesting points.

1. It was when the number of the disciples was increased that the first murmurings came in the early church. People, then, will say, "Better to remain few, and remain in peace." Calvin strongly rebukes this view as being

dishonouring to God. (Sadly, we have come across this in some of our congregations!)

2. The deacons at the front, and then holding the cup – a beautiful emblem of their office, and a token of their pledge to devote their whole lives to helping and visiting God’s people in affliction or need.

Our one difficulty is the roughness of the translation in many places (so different from the Banner edition of *Sermons on Galatians*, translated by Kathy Childress). For instance:

“Where I live, in what locate.” “The believers remained perseverant.” “Most of those who vent against the gospel are lowlifes.” “Capitalises the fact.” (Numerous other examples.)

Also the expression comes continually: “God wants ...”; “God wishes you to” But Calvin was so strong on: “Our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever He pleased.” We wonder what the original is? Occasionally it appears, “God’s will is that we” Is this the correct rendering?

We feel it right to mention these things – yet to emphasise that they do not spoil the book. In fact, we are most grateful to Banner of Truth for publishing such things, and realise that translation work of Calvin’s sermons must have been difficult, taken several years and was without doubt a labour of love.

NOTHING AMISS!

“This Man hath done nothing amiss” (Luke 23. 41)

Words that will live through the ages,
Uttered by one now in bliss;
Said the penitent thief, “We are guilty,
But this Man hath done *nothing amiss*.”

He was pure, undefiled, He was holy,
Sorely tempted; but listen to this,
Though being made sin for His people:
This Man had done “nothing amiss.”

There was “nothing amiss” in creation;
In nature all things were supreme;
There is “nothing amiss” in redemption,
Indeed it’s a wonderful scheme.

There is “nothing amiss” with the trial,
If this wonderful Man is your Friend;
There’s “nothing amiss” through life’s journey,
There’ll be “nothing amiss” at the end.

W. Calton

Written after hearing Mr. J.C. Fookes of Bethel, Luton, preach from the above text, March 29th, 1931

OBITUARY

Winifred Muriel Hart, the beloved wife of James A. Hart of Chippenham, passed peacefully to her eternal rest on Sunday, March 23rd, 2008 aged 90. She died in her sleep at the Royal United Hospital, Bath, where she had been admitted the previous Friday with fluid on her lungs. Most of the details following have been taken from the Chippenham church minute book when she transferred her membership from Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on May 1st, 1992.

She was born in Swindon on August 9th, 1917, a delicate child weighing only four pounds. Her parents, Michael and Rhoda Clifford, attended Rehoboth Chapel, Swindon, and Winnie was brought up to attend there with them. Her first spiritual impressions came when she was about nine years old. She said, "Eternity was made very solemn to me, though I would not say this was conviction of sin." When only eleven years old, her father died. Soon after this, Mr. J.K. Popham preached at Swindon on the sower. She said, "He spoke solemnly on the stony-ground hearer and I went home feeling that this was my case."

Shortly after this, Mr. H.E. Carr of Chippenham addressed the Swindon Sunday School. He spoke on the case of the Scottish Highland kitchen maid and the two prayers a visiting minister asked her to pray. These were, "Lord, show me myself," and later, "Lord show me Thyself." Winnie said, "For many weeks these were my prayers together with the opening lines of Hymn 471: 'Prepare me, gracious God, to stand before Thy face.'" She further said, "I felt condemned under a sermon preached by Mr. John Kemp of Luton on Psalm 1. 4: "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away," and also when her mother read Revelation 3, especially verse 16: "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth." She feared this was her portion.

Deliverance came at a prayer meeting at Swindon taken by Mr. P.D. Cooke. He read Ephesians chapter 2. The opening words, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins," she said, "seemed to stand out in letters of gold." Soon after this she saw a child crying near her home and called it by its name. It stopped crying, and the words came powerfully, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine" (Isa. 43. 1). She further said, "There followed a spirit of exercise, but especially the Lord spoke to me one night: 'I love thee well, My child,'" and the application of lines quoted at an ordinance address by Mr. C.H. Frost:

"But what can poor lost sinners say,
When once they get a view;
And hear the blessed Spirit say,
'All this was done for you'?"

caused her to rejoice.

She, however, sought confirmation from the Lord. This was received under a sermon by her pastor, Mr. C.H. Frost, on Isaiah 32 verse 18. He said, "Has the Lord ever said, 'I love thee well, My child'? or, 'All this was done for you'? Then these are sure dwellings." She tremblingly made application to join the church and felt that scripture, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him" (Col. 2. 6), applied with power. She also had the word,

"And when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod. 12. 13), spoken to her while in the kitchen. She was baptized at Swindon by Mr. Frost in October 1952.

She married her now widowed husband in January 1958 and they both lived with her aged mother until her death in April 1962. Winnie and her husband moved to Brighton in September 1962, and in due course they transferred their membership to Galeed, Brighton. She felt at home under the ministry of Mr. F.L. Gosden and felt specially helped under a sermon preached by him on 1 Peter 5. 6, 7: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." Also on another occasion nine years later when the Lord drew nigh after an operation for cancer and said, "This affliction is needful for thee."

She had felt exercised concerning the move in providence which took her with her husband back to Wiltshire, saying that for some time the word, "My presence shall go with thee," had followed her around. After settling at Chippenham she felt a spiritual union at the prayer meetings. This was followed by the application of the word: "I dwell among mine own people" (2 Kings 4. 13).

Her sorrowing husband feels his loss after fifty years together, but has felt supported by the words Job 1. 21: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

J.A.H.

Note by her Pastor, Mr. Gerald Buss

Our late friend Winnie Hart was, by grace, a humble believer in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Although she did not often speak about her innermost feelings, whenever personal religion was touched upon in conversation, it always evidently touched a chord with her. This was so on the last day of her life when one visited her in the hospital. In conversation she remarked how good the Lord had been to her throughout her long life and she believed He would not leave her now. Just at the time she passed away, early on the Lord's day, we were awakened with the words of the hymn:

"Our great High Priest, before the throne
Presents the merits of His blood;
For our acceptance pleads His own,
And makes our cause completely good."

On hearing soon after of her passing, immediately our mind went to these words, and a sweet persuasion was given that her cause was made completely good as she entered her eternal rest. She will be much missed by her dear husband and the church at Chippenham, but we believe she is "absent from the body, and ... present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5. 8).

He who makes it his business to eat daily of the tree of life will have no appetite for other fruit, even if the tree that bears them seems to stand in the midst of paradise.

John Owen

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JULY 2008

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

IS THERE NOT A GOD IN ISRAEL?

*Prayer meeting address given at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
on February 25th, 1974*

Reading: 2 Kings chapter 1

This was the last work the Lord gave Elijah to do, to send this message of death to that ungodly king Ahaziah. This Ahaziah, of course, was Ahab's son. He did not profit at all through all that the Lord did in the life and reign of Ahab. The ministry of Elijah, the slaying of the priests of Baal, the drought, the famine, the fire from heaven, the awful end to which his father came – he did not profit at all from this and he went on in the ways of ungodliness, departing from the God of Israel and worshipping Baal.

Then the trials begin to come. Moab rebels and then the king himself is upstairs in his house and something gives way and he falls through. He does not die but it seems he is taken up sorely wounded and illness follows. Then we find what is almost the greatest sin in the Old Testament: this king in his illness does not repent, he does not even pray the Lord to cause him to recover; he certainly does not get rid of all the idols – he sends a messenger to a heathen country, to a heathen god, to enquire whether or not he will recover! This must be one of the greatest sins of the Old Testament.

Ahaziah did not ask anything of the Lord, but the Lord answered him. This messenger never got to Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, nor to Ekron. He did not seek anything of the Lord – but the Lord answered him. He did not speak to God, but God spoke to him, and God had the last word. It was a most solemn rebuke that came back and it was a message of death. Never mind what the god of Ekron says, what Baal-zebub says, but it is what the Lord says: "Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die."

The application of it is solemn and the vital point in it is this, this question: "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?" Is not this the Lord's solemn word to our country at present? "Is there not a God in Israel?" Does He not live, and reign, and care for His people, and answer prayer? And where are the enquiries, the supplications, the prayers? only a going

up to the god of Ekron. The leaders of our country – where are their prayers, their longings, their desires, the seeking after the God of Israel?

In spirit our country and our leaders are given over to Baal-zebub. The Baal of carnality and sin and at its best worldly wisdom; and this word needs to be spoken: “Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?” We have gone after other gods.

To take it more particularly for a moment, O the superstition in this country! You can hardly pick up any newspaper or magazine, even some of what you would call the better magazines, but there is a page given over to astrology, to horoscopes, these same things practised by Baal-zebub and his prophets, the fortune tellers. The revival of falsely-called spiritualism – this should be called spiritism – and the way so many trust in their so-called lucky charms and amulets. And is there not a God in Israel? Look at all these things which belong to Baal the god of Ekron.

Now leave the nation and come to ourselves, to you and me. I suppose all of us would say there is a God in Israel still, and all of us would say that Israel’s God is a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God.

“With heaven and earth at His command,
He waits to answer prayer.”

And all of us, I suppose, would agree with that beautiful verse:

“There’s a God in Israel still,
Lives and reigns, and works His will,
Ever for His people cares,
All He is or has is theirs.”

But now come to it in reality, come to it practically. Are we continually found seeking the God of Israel? Is it not often this: “But thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel”? Then we are no better than ungodly Ahaziah. “Is it not because there is not a God in Israel?” O what a rebuke of prayerlessness, prayer languishing, sinful backwardness to come to the mercy seat! And trouble comes, and other things, and what do we turn to? Well, I trust that none of us outwardly would ever think of turning to a false god, an idol, but sometimes we turn to a friend and seek counsel of a friend and put our confidence in the flesh and not in the Lord God of Israel, and we come under this rebuke, “Is there not a God in Israel?”

Another thing: we can make a Baal of our own reason, can try to work things out ourselves, what we would do, what we ought to do, what we can do, and, “Is there not a God in Israel?” We also make a Baal, at times, of the means. How easy it is, even to speak to our children and tell them the doctor makes them better. No doctor ever made a child better; it is the Lord. And how easy to slip into the way, the manner of

speaking, the conversation of the world, and to glorify the means and to neglect God and not to honour Him. "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?"

One or two things. One is this: O that we may more and more realise the blessedness of there being a God in Israel who hears and answers prayer, and be daily, hourly, found at His feet. "In every thing by prayer and supplication ... let your requests be made known unto God." And then this: not just to do things, or to turn to our own wisdom or to seek counsel of a friend. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

"Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one." That was the Lord's counsel to Israel. Without going into details, the Urim and the Thummim were that in the high priest's breastplate by which a godly Israelite might be told the Lord's will. You see Saul, he went into such great sin. We are told the Lord did not answer him, not even by Urim and Thummim, so he went to a witch. "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one." Or in a gospel sense, would you seek to know the Lord's will, and no other? "Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one."

And then just this. You see, there is superstition in Ahaziah. He thinks he might die; he wonders if he will. We do not read a word about him seeking repentance or the trial being sanctified, or seeking to be prepared for eternity, and these are the vital things. Well, if we come into any affliction, any illness or disease, may the great point be, not just shall I recover or shall I not, but to seek that it might be sanctified; because whether I recover now or not, the time will come when I shall *not* recover. Then O to be prepared for that day!

"Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?"

For it is in the understanding of Scriptures, much as it is in the knowledge men have in logic and philosophy: if a scholar once come to understand the bottom principle, upon which, as upon its hinge, the controversy turns, the true knowledge of that principle shall carry him through the whole controversy, and furnish him with a solution to every argument. Even so the right knowledge of Jesus Christ, like a clue, leads you through the whole labyrinth of the Scriptures.

John Flavel

If at any time the heart be dead and hard, this is the likeliest means in the world to dissolve, melt and quicken it. Look hither, hard heart; hard indeed if this hammer will not break it. Behold the blood of Jesus.

John Flavel

BETHANY

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843)

“Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto Him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, He said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby” (John 11. 1-4).

“Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” Sickness goes round – it spares no family, rich or poor. Sometimes the young, sometimes the old, sometimes those in the strength of their days, are laid down on the bed of sickness. “Remember those that suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”

The reasons why God sends sickness are very various:

1. In some it is sent for the conversion of the soul. Sometimes in health the Word does not touch the heart. The world is all. Its gaieties, its pleasures, its admiration, captivate your mind. God sometimes draws you aside into a sickbed, and shows you the sin of your heart, the vanity of worldly pleasures, and drives the soul to seek a sure resting-place for eternity in Christ. O happy sickness, that draws the soul to Jesus! (Job 33; Psa. 107).

2. Sometimes it is for the conversion of friends. When the Covenanters went out to battle, they kneeled down on the field and prayed, and this was one of their prayers: “Lord, take the ripe, and spare the green.” God sometimes does this in families. He cuts down the praying child, the child that was half-ridiculed, half-wondered at, that the rest may think and turn and pray.

3. Sometimes it is a frown of judgment. When worldly people go long on in a course of sin, against the light of the Bible and the warnings of ministers, God sometimes frowns upon them and they wither suddenly. “He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov. 29. 1). “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11. 30).

4. Another case is now before us – that of a child of God sick, that Christ might be glorified in him.

I. The case – the person: “A certain man was sick named Lazarus.”

Lazarus was evidently a child of God, and yet Lazarus was sick. How he had come by His grace we are not told. His name is not mentioned before. If we may be allowed to guess, it seems probable that Mary was the first in the family who knew the Lord (Luke 10); then perhaps Martha left her “much serving” to come also and sit at Jesus’

feet; and both prevailed on their brother Lazarus to come also. At all events he was a child of God. He was in a godly family. All the house were children of God – one in nature and one in grace. Happy family at Bethany, going hand in hand to glory!

Yet here the hand of sickness entered in – Lazarus was sick. He was peculiarly loved by Christ: “He whom thou lovest.” “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.” Like John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, so Jesus had a peculiar love for Lazarus. I cannot tell you why. He was a sinner, like other men; but perhaps when Jesus washed and renewed him, He gave him more of His own likeness than other believers. One thing is certain – Jesus loved him, and yet Lazarus was sick.

1. Learn not to judge others because of affliction. Job’s three friends tried to show him that he must be a hypocrite and a bad man, because God afflicted him. They did not know that God afflicts His own dear children. Lazarus was sick; and the beggar Lazarus was full of sores; and Hezekiah was sick even unto death; and yet all were peculiarly dear to Jesus.

2. God’s children should not doubt His love when He afflicts. Christ loved Lazarus peculiarly, and yet He afflicted him very sore. A surgeon never bends his eye so tenderly upon his patient as when he is putting in the lancet, or probing the wound to the very bottom. And so with Christ; He bends His eye most tenderly over His own at the time He is afflicting them. Do not doubt the holy love of Jesus to your soul when He is laying a heavy hand upon you. Jesus did not love Lazarus less when He afflicted him, but rather more, “even as a father correcteth a son in whom he delighteth” (Prov. 3. 12). A goldsmith when he casts gold into the furnace looks after it.

II. The place: “Of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.”

Bethany is a sweet, retired village, about two miles from Jerusalem, in a ravine at the back of the Mount of Olives. It is at this day embosomed in fig trees, and almond trees, and pomegranates. But it had a greater loveliness still in the eyes of Christ – it was “the town of Mary and her sister Martha.” Probably the worldly people in Jerusalem knew Bethany by its being the town of some rich Pharisee who had his country villa there, or some luxurious noble who called the lands after his own name; but Jesus knew it only as “the town of Mary and her sister Martha.” Probably they lived in a humble cottage under the shade of a fig tree, but that cottage was dear to Christ. Often as He came over the Mount of Olives and drew near, the light in that cottage window gladdened His heart. Often He sat beneath their fig tree telling them the things of the kingdom of God. His Father loved that dwelling, for these

were justified ones. And angels knew it well, for night and day they ministered there to three heirs of salvation. No wonder He called the place “the town of Mary and her sister Martha.” That was its name in heaven.

So is it still. When worldly people think of our town, they call it the town of some rich merchant, some leading man in public matters, some great politician who makes a dash as a friend of the people, not the town of our Marthas and Marys. Perhaps some poor garret where an eminent child of God dwells gives this town its name and interest in the presence of Jesus.

Dear believers, how great the love of Christ is to you! He knows the town where you live, the house where you dwell, the room where you pray. Often He starts at the door; often He puts in His hand at the hole of the door: “I have graven thee on the palms of My hands: thy walls are continually before Me.” Like a bridegroom loving the place where his bride dwells, so Christ often says, There they dwell for whom I died.

Learn to be like Christ in this. When a merchant looks at a map of the world, his eye turns to those places where his ships are sailing; when a soldier, he looks to the traces of ancient battle-fields and fortified towns; but a believer should be like Jesus: he should love the spots where believers dwell.

III. The message.

1. They “sent unto Him.” This seems to have been their very first recourse when the sickness came on – “his sisters sent unto Him.” They did not think a bodily trouble beneath His notice. True, He had taught them that one thing was needful, and Mary had chosen that good part which could not be taken from her; yet they knew well that Jesus did not despise the body. They knew that He had a heart to bleed for every kind of grief, and therefore they sent to tell Jesus. This is what you should do: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me” (Psa. 50. 15). Remember there is no grief too great to carry to Him, and none too small: “In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” “Cast thy burden upon the Lord.” Whatever it be, take it to Jesus. Some trust Christ with their soul, but not with their body; with their salvation, but not with their health. He loves to be sent for in our smallest troubles.

2. The argument: “He whom Thou lovest is sick.” If a worldly person had been sending to Christ, he would have sent a very different argument. He would have said, He who loves Thee is sick. Here is one who has believed on Thy name. Here is one that has confessed Thee before the world, suffered reproach and scorn for Thy sake. Martha and Mary knew better how to plead with Jesus. The only argument was in Jesus’ breast: “He whom Thou lovest is sick.”

i. He loved him with an electing love. Freely from all eternity Jesus loved him.

ii. With a drawing love. He drew him from under wrath, from serving sin.

iii. With a pardoning love. He drew him to Himself and blotted out all his sin.

iv. With an upholding love. "Who could hold me up but Thou?" He for whom Thou diedst, he whom Thou hast chosen, washed and kept till now, "he whom Thou lovest is sick."

Learn thus to plead with Christ, dear believers. Often you do not receive, because you do not ask aright: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Often you ask proudly, as if you were somebody, so that if Christ were to grant it, He would only be fattening your lusts. Learn to lie in the dust, and plead only His own free love. Thou hast loved me for no good thing in me:

"Chosen, not for good in me;
Wakened up from wrath to flee;
Hidden in the Saviour's side;
By the Spirit sanctified."

Do not deny Thy love. Have respect unto the work of Thine own hands.

3. A holy delicacy in prayer. They lay the object at His feet, and leave it there. They do not say, Come and heal him; come quickly, Lord. They know His love; they believe His wisdom. They leave the case in His hands: "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." They "cast them down at Jesus' feet; and He healed them" (Matt. 15. 30). They did not plead, but let their misery plead for them. "Let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4. 6).

Learn that urgency in prayer does not so much consist in vehement pleading as in vehement believing. He that believes most the love and power of Jesus will obtain most in prayer. Indeed the Bible does not forbid you using all arguments, and asking for express gifts, such as healing for sick friends. "My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live" (Mark 5. 23). "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Matt. 8. 8). Still there is a holy delicacy in prayer, which some believers know how to use. Like these two sisters, lay the object at His feet, saying, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick."

IV. The answer.

1. A word of promise: "This sickness is not unto death." This was an immediate answer to prayer. He did not come; He did not heal; but He sent them a word enough to make them happy: "This sickness is not unto death." Away the messenger ran, crossed the Jordan, and before

sunset perhaps he enters breathless the village of Bethany. With anxious faces the sisters run out to hear what news of Jesus. Good news! "This sickness is not unto death." Sweet promise! The hearts of the sisters are comforted, and no doubt they tell their joy to the dying man. But he gets weaker and weaker; and as they look through their tears at his pale cheek, they begin almost to waver in their faith. But Jesus said it, and Jesus cannot lie: if it were not so, He would have told us. "This sickness is not unto death."

At last Lazarus breathes his latest sigh beside his weeping sisters. His eye is dim; his cheek is cold; he is dead; and yet Jesus said, "Not unto death!" The friends assemble to carry the body to the rocky sepulchre; and as the sisters turn away from the tomb, their faith dies; their hearts sink into utter gloom. What could He mean by saying, "not unto death"?

Learn to trust to Christ's word, whatever sight may say. We live in dark times. Every day the clouds are becoming heavier and more lowering. The enemies of the Sabbath are raging. The enemies of the church are becoming more desperate. The cause of Christ is everywhere threatened. But we have a sweet word of promise: "This sickness is not unto death." Darker times are coming yet. The clouds will break and deluge our country soon with a flood of infidelity, and many will be like Mary – heartbroken.

Has the Lord's word failed? No, never! "This sickness is not unto death." The dry bones of Israel shall live. Popery shall sink like a millstone; widowhood and loss of children shall come to her in one day. The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bow their knee to Jesus. Jesus shall reign till all His enemies are put under His feet, and the whole world shall soon enjoy a real Sabbath.

2. The explanation: "But for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." Some might ask, Why, then, was Lazarus sick? Answer: "For the glory of God." Christ was thereby in an eminent manner made known.

i. His amazing love to His own was seen when He wept at the grave.

ii. His power to raise the dead. He was shown to be the Resurrection and the Life when He cried, "Lazarus, come forth." Christ was more glorified far than if Lazarus had not been sick and died.

a. So in all the sufferings of God's people. Sometimes a child of God says: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? I will teach, preach, do great things for Thee. Sometimes the answer is: Thou shalt suffer for My sake.

b. It shows the power of Christ's blood, when it gives peace in an hour of trouble, when it can make happy in sickness, poverty, persecution and death. Do not be surprised if you suffer, but glorify God.

c. It brings out graces that cannot be seen in a time of health. It is the treading of the grapes that brings out the sweet juices of the vine; so it is affliction that draws forth submission, weanedness from the world, and complete rest in God. Use afflictions while you have them.

SLUMBERING AND SLEEPING

*A warning given by J.K. Popham in a sermon in 1900
on the wise and foolish virgins*

“They all slumbered and slept.” Ah, there is much in that word of Solomon; the sluggard calls for a little more sleep and a little more slumber, a little more folding the hands to sleep (Prov. 6. 9, 10). And what follows? So his poverty cometh like an armed man, as one that travelleth (v. 11). There the lazy creature is. Ah, I know him. Do you? He thinks it much to take his hand out of his bosom and convey food to his mouth, so indolent is he. Slothfulness and poverty are companions, and rags are the complement. Therefore, when you look at your soul covered with rags, when you perceive death and poverty and emptiness in your spirit, turn – and God help you, O believer in this sleep, this slumber – turn and rise from your bed. She said of old when the Lord came near: “My children are with me in bed” (Luke 11. 7); “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?” (Song 5. 3). You know the result; and some of us have experienced it....

This is part, and only part, of the slumbering and sleeping of the wise virgins. They have vessels of oil, but the lamps are almost gone out. It is dark night; God absent; truth, more or less, absent; hence this condition. One more point and then I will turn to the second part. There was a time when some of us felt a warm, burning zeal in our souls for the honour of God; it was dear to us. If anyone impugned the truth, O how it stirred us; if anyone seemed to contravene any word of God and go in any way that appeared to tarnish His honour, how it stirred us up! “Do not I hate them ... that hate Thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against Thee?” (Psa. 139. 21).

But *now* how is it? Ah, the spirit of the age is a deadly spirit. A man may now almost profess anything so long as he is sincere; and so long as his conduct is moderately straight, nothing must be said, nothing. O, if Luther were here, and if he were to repeat what he used to say in his preaching: “We may condone an error in a man’s conduct, but must not yield an hair’s breadth in doctrine; for doctrine is heaven,” what would be said to him? But it is so. O may we care for God’s honour more than

for anything else – for the Person, the immaculate, the mysterious, the glorious, the complex, the immortal Person of Immanuel, God with us. May we hold the immortality of His sacred humanity from the moment He was conceived. May we contend for and hold fast these merciful truths, without which we must be undone for ever and ever. Well, do you care for these things as you once did? I am speaking to the wise virgins, God's people. Do you care for the honour of God as you once cared for it?

Now I just commend these considerations, these points to you. If you are inside these remarks, call them *charges* if you will, do this – seek grace to fall under them; do not resist, do not object that the man is in a bad spirit, that he is gloomy. Any sort of thing the devil will cause you to say, if he can, to blunt the edge of truth, and take off the point of conviction; but O fall down, and confess, confess.

We turn now to the next part, the sleep of the foolish virgins, this is the sleep of death. They are dead in sins, dead in a profession, dead in formalities. Some here have that form of truth which we hold here, by reason of their constant attendance. Such everywhere are to be found. The land is full of these virgins. But as to any conviction of their state, any cry for mercy, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” as to such exercises, they are dead, fast asleep. O sinner, if the Bridegroom comes in some judgment, in some providence, or in the hour of death and awakens you only then, it will be a most awful awakening – a terrible awakening, never again to be lost in slumber. Never again will your conscience be soothed in guilty slumber; never again will your mind be eased by the soporific [sleep-inducing drug] of a wicked sleep, never. This is the sleep of death, the sleep of sin, the sleep of error; it is the sleep of guilt, the sleep of an unbroken condition of death, of alienation from God, from the life of God by wicked works. May the Lord awaken such sleepers in mercy and for the purposes of mercy, if it can be His holy will.

“At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him” (Matt. 25. 6). There is coming a time when there will be an awakening. May the Lord in His kindness awaken His poor, sleeping saints to a closer exercise, a more gracious believing, a warmer love, a more vigorous hope. If it can be His gracious will, may He do it for me and for you, my beloved friends. As I told you this morning, I am often in these days depressed and discouraged. We are in dark days. There is no denying it on the part of those who see things in the light of God's truth, who see and know what vital religion is. The Bridegroom is tarrying. There is a grievous withholding of the Holy Ghost, of gracious fear, of heavenly communications; and the sad effect, the guilty effect upon us, is this sleeping and slumbering.

May the Lord have mercy upon us poor, miserable creatures.

FREEDOM FROM SIN

*By Samuel Bolton (1606-1654), a member of the Westminster
Assembly*

We are freed from sin, by which I mean the guilt, the defilement and the dominion of sin. That none of our sins shall condemn us or bring wrath upon us, Christ interposes Himself between us and wrath, so that no one shall be able to condemn us: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8. 1). Christ Himself shall as soon be called to account for your sin as you yourself. If you have an interest in Him, sin shall never condemn you, for Christ has made satisfaction for it. "Those whose standing is in Christ have made satisfaction in Christ to all the requirements of God and His law" (Piscator).

It would not be righteous of God to require payment from Christ, nay, to receive the full satisfaction of Christ, and to require anything from you. This is what God has done: He "hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53. 6). This is what Christ has done: He paid God till God said He had enough. He was fully satisfied, fully contented: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3. 17 and 12. 18), that is, "in whom I am fully satisfied and appeased." Hence the apostle writes: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself ... for He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5. 19-21). God was paying Himself out of the blood, scourgings and sufferings of Christ; and in that, Christ made a full payment.

Hence Christ says: "I send My Spirit, and He will convince the world, as of sin so of righteousness, because I go to the Father and ye see Me no more" (John 16. 7-10). That is, you shall see Me no more after this fashion. You shall never see Me again as a sufferer, as a satisfier of God's justice for sin. I have completed this work. Indeed we should have seen Christ again if He had not satisfied justice. If the guilt of but one of those sins He bore had remained on Him unsatisfied for, it would have held Him under chains of death and the power of the grave for ever. He could never have risen, much less ascended and gone to the Father, if He had not met the claims of justice to the full.

For this reason the apostle throws down a challenge. He sets the death of Christ against whatever sin, Satan, justice and the law can say: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8. 33, 34). He does not say, Who shall accuse? but, Who shall condemn? Indeed, we may have accusers enough

– sin, Satan, conscience, and the rest – but none can condemn. The issues of life and death are not in their hand. And as none of our sins shall condemn us, so none of our sins shall ever bring us into a state of condemnation again, ever put us under the curse or under wrath again.

Likewise, none of our sins can bring upon us the consequences of divine wrath. We are freed from all miseries, calamities, afflictions and punishments which are the fruits of sin, so far as they have wrath in them. If you take away the substance, the shadow must needs depart also. Sin is the substance, punishment the shadow that attends it and follows it. Take away sin and then the punishments are also taken away. All God's dispensations are in mercy.

ALL THINGS YOURS

From J.C. Philpot on 1 Corinthians 3. 21-23

And “*the world*,” was that theirs too? What! the world? May a child of God stand upon London Bridge and say, “All the ships in the river are mine”? May he go to the Bank of England and say, “All the bullion in the cellars is mine”? May he stand upon St. Michael's tower in this town and say, “All Stamford is mine”?

Not in a worldly sense. But if he feels that his soul is worth a thousand worlds, and that it is saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation, then he may stand upon London Bridge and say, “O ye mighty ships that crowd the stream laden with all the world's wealth, what are ye compared to my soul? O ye cellars, full to overflowing with millions of yellow gold, what is the value of all compared with that eternity to which I am fast hastening? O Stamford, with all the houses and all the property and all the people in it, could you purchase a drop of water to cool the tongue of a miserable soul in hell? And is not my soul to me worth you all?”

So though he cannot lay a temporal claim to all the world, yet when he feels that his soul in his bosom is worth a thousand worlds, that that soul has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and will live in a happy and glorious eternity when earth and all its works under his feet will lie buried in the ashes of the general conflagration, the world is his because he is the master of it. He can put his foot upon it and say, “O earth, I only want enough of thee to take me safely and honourably through life; enough of thy bread to feed me; enough of thy wool and flax to clothe me; enough of thy stones to shelter me; enough of thy timber to make my coffin; enough of thy ground to give me a grave. I would not have thee for my portion, my master, or my idol.” When in faith and feeling he can thus speak, is not the world his? for faith makes

him master of that which is master of all. It is true he is not here often in feeling, but fact remains when feeling fails.

Nay, more, the Lord makes "the world" to serve him, and thus makes it his. Nobody can harm him but by God's permission, and this very permitted harm works for his good. God can make the world lie at his very feet so that not a dog shall move his tongue against him (Exod. 11. 7); the ravens shall feed him and he shall eat the riches of the Gentiles. For the gold and the silver are the Lord's, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; and He can give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert to His people, His chosen (Isa. 43. 20).

When, too, you can look around you upon the fields and meadows, trees and rivers, and meekly say, "My Father made them all," they are all yours because they are your heavenly Father's. I often walk in the beautiful park adjoining this town, and I have sometimes thought I enjoy it more than its noble owner, for I have had many a secret prayer and sweet meditation there, and I have the additional pleasure of admiring its beauties without the anxiety of proprietorship. Is not the park, then, mine – the trees, the avenues, the lake and the walks, all my own?

THE FINAL JUSTIFICATION OF THE SAINTS

From Mount Pisgah by Thomas Case (1598-1682)

I come now to one end of the saints' meeting with Christ in the air, and that is their full and final justification.

They shall receive public absolution. Pardon of sin is the privative part of justification; imputation of righteousness is the positive part. Pardon, or remission, is the sinner's justification from sin, both from the guilt of sin and from the sentence or punishment due to sin. "By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13. 39). This now must be one branch of the solemn justification of the saints at their meeting with the Lord Jesus in the air. As a Judge, He shall fully and finally, in open court, absolve the saints from all their sins, both guilt and punishment, from which there was no absolution ever to be expected by the covenant of works.

Sin enough there was for which God might sentence all the Jacobs in the world to condemnation, and cast all the Israels that ever were into the bottomless pit; but it is gone, it is forgiven. Pardon makes such a clear riddance of sin, that it is as if it had never been; the scarlet sinner is as "white as snow" (Isa. 1. 18), snow newly fallen from the sky, which was never sullied. The crimson sinner is "as wool," wool which never

received the least tincture in the dye. Here is the reason why, when the iniquity of Israel is sought for, there is none; and the sins of Judah, and they are not to be found: "For I will pardon them" (Jer. 50. 20). Yea, not forgiven only, but forgotten; and should they now be remembered? (Jer. 31. 34). The Judge had long since cast their sins behind His back, and He will not now surely set them before His face (Isa. 38. 17). He had cast them into the depths of the seas (bottomless depths of everlasting oblivion) that they might be buoyed up no more for ever; yea, the Lord Jesus nailed all their sins to His cross (Col. 2. 14), and buried them all in His grave; yea, and crossed the debt-book with the red lines of His own blood (Rom. 3. 25). If now He should call them to remembrance, to charge the saints with their sins, He should undo what He had done; He should cross the great design of His cross upon the matter, deny Himself to be risen again from the dead, and disown His own hand and seal (Rom. 4. 25). Upon this foundation stands the absolute impossibility that sin, the least sin, the least circumstance of sin, should be so much as once mentioned by the Judge in the process of that judicial trail, unless it be in a way of absolution; and so sin shall be mentioned indeed, but in order to the magnifying of their pardon and absolution.

The saints shall then be fully and finally absolved in their own consciences. It is true, there are some of the saints even in this life to whose consciences the Spirit of God doth evidence and seal up remission of sin, who are not only safe, but sure, and possess not only the blessedness of a pardoned estate, but the comfort and assurance of that blessedness. Nevertheless, not all the saints, nor any at all times, nor always in the same degree. They have their dark times, their eclipses, as well as their transfigurations; and no wonder, since the Sun of righteousness Himself suffered an eclipse upon the cross so dreadful as forced the great master of astronomy in Egypt to cry out, "Either the God of nature suffers, or the whole frame of nature is dissolved"; and caused the Lord Jesus Himself, to the just astonishment of heaven and earth, to cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Is it any wonder then, if many of the poor saints of God, like Paul and his shipwrecked company, see neither sunlight nor starlight for many days together, and no small tempest doth often lie upon them, so that all hope of being saved is taken away? (Acts 27. 20). Yea, not a few precious, deserted Hemans are there, who from their youth up are afflicted and ready to die, and while they suffer the terrors of God are distracted (Psa. 88. 15); yea, and that which is more tremendous, their sun, as to any observation which standers by could make, though very rarely, hath set in a cloud.

But now, at this blessed day, the Judge of the quick and the dead shall absolve the saints of God, not only at the tribunal of His own

justice, but at the tribunal of their conscience. He will proclaim that name in their bosoms, which He proclaimed before Moses, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin. And He will speak so audibly that every saint shall hear the voice, and so particularly that every one shall know He speaketh to him; and shall all echo back again with joy and joint acclamation, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" (Mic. 7. 18).

Also, the saints are then said to receive their full and final absolution; because then their absolution shall be proclaimed in open court; the Judge in person shall pronounce their absolution in the audience of God, and all the elect angels, and of the whole world of men and devils. What Christ in the days of His flesh said to one poor, trembling penitent, He will now say to all, Sons and daughters, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you. This will be good cheer indeed. These are the times of refreshment from the presence of the Lord, when the sins of the saints shall be blotted out (Acts 3. 19). Blotted they were before out of God's book; but now they shall be blotted out in the sight of all the world, so that now, indeed, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" since heaven and earth, yea, and hell itself must be witnesses to the crossing of the book and to the cancelling of the bond wherein they stood obliged to divine justice! O what inexpressible, inconceivable refreshment will this be to the saints of God, even the perfecting of all their former refreshments! The sense of their pardon pronounced by the Spirit to some of their consciences within was wont to be exceeding sweet; yea, any scriptural hopes of pardoning mercy, though apprehended by a weak and trembling hand of faith, were a reviving to their drooping spirits. What must needs then the highest plerophory [full persuasion] ratified by the most solemn proclamation of the great Judge (before the upper and nether world, as well as to conscience) be, but life from the dead? Surely it will be even heaven, before the saints come to heaven! Nor shall any reflection either upon sin or sorrow ever damp that joy any more; nor shall willow-boughs mix with the palms of the saints' triumph in that blessed jubilee; but joy shall be upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The second branch of the saints' justification is that the Judge will pronounce them perfectly righteous.

This may seem superfluous, as supposed to be included in the sentence of absolution. Not to be a sinner seemeth to imply a saint; to be pardoned all sin, and all the degrees of sin, and all kinds of sin, omissive as well as commissive, all defects of perfection, all want of conformity to, as well as transgression of the law of God, this seemeth to be perfection.

It doth seem so, and truly it doth but seem so, for pardon relates to what is past only: "remission of sins that are past" (Rom. 3. 25); it is but a freedom from guilt and a freedom from punishment; it doth not suppose any real and positive righteousness, which may set a man perfect before the tribunal of God's justice.

If a scholar in the university be a candidate for an office there, or a fellowship in a college, where the statutes do require such and such qualifications, and upon examination, he be found not guilty of murder, or sacrilege, or any other crime, this will not capacitate the candidate for the preferment: this is the case in hand. The saints are now candidates for heaven and glory, and absolution or pardon is not sufficient to capacitate them for this glory. Before he can be so capacitated, he must be constituted perfectly righteous.

The person under the notion of not guilty is an absolved person, and acquitted from hell and eternal damnation. And, as under the notion of righteous, he is capacitated for heaven and life everlasting. Not guilty relates to freedom from hell; righteousness relateth to heaven as the proper qualification thereof. Do this, and live; though, where the one is, there is the other, yet the one is not formally the other.

And according to these two capacities and places, there are two great works which the Redeemer did undertake for the redeemed: the one to make satisfaction for sin to divine justice by His blood, that is, by His death; the other, to yield most absolute conformity to the law of God, both in nature and life.

By the one, we may conceive the redeemed freed from hell and everlasting burnings; by the other, we may conceive them qualified for heaven and everlasting glory.

Interested in this twofold work of Christ, we may suppose the believing sinner appearing at the tribunal of the great God, pleading His righteousness, and pronounced righteous in the court of divine justice. Thus the sinner is brought in, as it were, in a way of judicial process (Isa. 45. 24), the Judge on the bench bespeaking him thus: Sinner, thou standest indicted for breaking the holy, and just, and good law of thy Maker, and hereof art proved guilty; sinner, what hast thou to say for thyself? (Rom. 3. 9). To this the sinner, upon his bended knee, confesseth guilty; but withal humbly craves leave to plead for himself full satisfaction made by his Surety: "It is Christ that died" (Rom. 8. 34). And whereas it is further objected by the Judge: But, sinner, the law requireth an exact and perfect righteousness in thy personal fulfilling of the law! Sinner, where is thy righteousness? The believing sinner humbly replieth, My righteousness is upon the bench; in the Lord have I righteousness; Christ my Surety hath fulfilled the law on my behalf. To that I appeal, and by that I will be tried. This done, the plea is accepted

as good in law. The sinner is pronounced righteous, and goeth away glorying and rejoicing! Righteous, righteous! "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa. 45. 25).

How does the prospect of being pronounced perfectly righteous, through the imputation of the positive righteousness of Christ, tend to the settling of solid peace in the conscience of the believing sinner! That justification by faith is the aptest medium to establish solid peace in the bosom of a poor, sensible sinner may appear by comparing works and faith together. Send a poor sinner to his own righteousness, which is of the law, his own good works, holiness, fasting, prayer or the best service that ever he did for God, they can afford him little ground of confidence. Alas, hence his fears, and doubts, and diffidence do arise: his prayers need pardon, his tears need washing, his very righteousness will condemn him (Job 10). Here is no place for the sole of his foot to stand upon. "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa. 130. 3).

This was that which scared Paul from coming to the law for justification. Why, saith he, "I through the law am dead to the law" (Gal. 2. 19); which denotes, I seek not to the law for justification and life; the law may thank itself. I come to the law for justification, and it convinceth me of sin. I plead my innocence, that I am not so great a sinner as others are; I plead my righteousness, my duties and good meanings, and good desires; and it tells me, they are all too light; the best of my duties will not save me, but the least of my sins will damn me (Job 9. 20, 21). It tells me, mine own righteousnesses do, as filthy rags, defile me, and my duties themselves do witness against me. I plead repentance, and it laughs me to scorn. It tells me, my repentance needs pardon, and my tears need washing. Besides, if they were ever so good, what careth it for my repentance? It looketh for my obedience, perfect and personal, which, because I have not, it tells me, I am cursed, and pronounceth sentence; and when it hath so done, it hath no mercy at all for me, though I seek it carefully with tears. What can I expect from so severe a judge?

I will come no more to that tribunal. Behold, I appeal to the gospel; there repentance will pass and tears will find pity; there imperfect obedience will find acceptance, though not to justification; there, there is a better righteousness provided for me, an exact, perfect righteousness, as perfect as that of the law; for it is, indeed, the very righteousness of the law, though not performed by me, yet by my Surety for me, the Lord my righteousness. Here is a foundation for the feet of my faith to stand upon. Here I can have pardon of all my debts, though the law will not abate me one farthing. Here are long, white robes, though I never spun a thread of them with my own fingers. To this tribunal will I come, and here will I wait for my justification. If I perish, I perish.

Here, may an objector say, is foundation for presumption to stand on; here is a bed for security to sleep in; here is a doctrine to send men merrily to hell – while they break the law, to tell them there is One that hath fulfilled it for them; while they sin, Christ hath righteousness enough to justify them. Surely this is a doctrine that makes God not only the justifier of sinners, but the justifier of sin too. So disputed the free-will men of former times against the apostles; and so the free-will men of our times against us: but, for answer:

First, the apostle disclaims the consequence with a vehement negation; God forbid any one should be so impudent to force such a scandalous conclusion upon such immaculate premises.

Secondly, he shows the reason of it; and the reason is taken from the new covenant, wherein God hath inseparably joined the merit of Christ's cross and the power of Christ's cross together; insomuch, that whosoever hath a share in the merit of His cross for justification hath also an interest in the power of his cross for mortification. He instanceth in himself, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2. 20), which denotes while, through grace, I appeal to the merit of Christ's death for my justification; I can also, through grace, evidence my appeal to be scriptural by the power of the cross, whereby the "world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6. 14).

And as it is with me, so it is with all truly justified persons; for they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof (Gal. 5. 24). They have crucified them, and they do crucify them; they are upon the cross and, with their Lord and Redeemer, refuse to come down till they can say with Him, "It is finished"; therefore, let the scandal of the cross and of justification cease for ever.

The sinner hath an indispensable necessity of such a righteousness to his justification, as for the securing of his appearance in the day of judgment. The great apostle, who had as fair a show for a legal justification as any other in the world, protesteth he dares not think of appearing without this positive righteousness in the last and dreadful judgment; but O that I may "be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law" (Phil. 3. 9). In Him, in Christ, not in myself; in His mediatorial righteousness, not in mine own personal righteousnesses. Away with them; they are but filthy rags, rotten rags in comparison with Christ's robes. Give me the righteousness which is of God by faith, of God's ordination and of faith's application.

And then again, how does this way of justifying believing sinners before the great tribunal exalt the infinite excellency of our glorious Redeemer, as set forth in Hebrews 7. 26: "Such an High Priest became us," saith the apostle, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

And as such a High Priest became us, so truly such a way of justifying believing sinners became Him; namely, it was becoming a Person of such transcendent worth and excellence, to justify His redeemed in the most ample and glorious way, by working out for them, and then investing them with a righteousness adequate to the law of God; a righteousness that should be every way commensurate to the miserable estate of fallen man and to the holy design of the glorious God. It was a becoming thing that the second Adam might restore as good a righteousness as the first Adam lost; that this should justify as fully as the other did condemn.

This is the very design of that famous parallel instituted by the apostle between the two Adams (Rom. 5. 15-21); namely, to signify an equality, not of number in the persons receiving, but of efficacy in the persons deriving, and communicating what was their own to either of their seeds; the first Adam to his natural seed, and the second Adam to his spiritual seed; to the end that men and angels might take notice that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, was not less powerful to save than the first Adam was to destroy. To which purpose it is of great use to observe how exact the apostle is in setting the specialties of either Adam's legacy one over against the other; the wound and the cure, the damage and the reparation. Observe the parallel, in Romans 5. 15-21.

<i>The first Adam propagates his:</i>	<i>The second Adam obtains:</i>
Offence	Forgiveness for many offences
Guilt	A gift of righteousness
Death	Life
Condemnation	Justification
Bondage, slavery	Reigning in life
Sin	Righteousness

Every way the salve is as sovereign as the wound was mortal, the cure as vital as the sickness deadly. Thus it became our High Priest to justify His redeemed! The great apostle cannot pass it by without special notice: "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Heb. 7. 25). To the uttermost of what? To the uttermost obligation of the law, preceptive as well as penal; to bring in perfect righteousness as well as perfect innocence; to the uttermost demand of divine justice; perfect conformity to the divine will, as well as perfect satisfaction to divine justice; to the uttermost indigence and necessity of the lost creature; qualification as well as absolution; to the uttermost of our High Priest's perfection, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

O for such an one to have saved a cheap way, to drive the purchase to as low a price as might be, by pardoning their sin, and making

reparation to divine justice; to satisfy for the wrong which man had done to the Creator and His law. This only, with reverence may we speak it, had not become so august a Redeemer as the Son of God was. But, to set him upon his legs again, to make him as good a man as he was in his created perfection, such as all the attributes of God should acquiesce in; to put him into a capacity of demanding eternal life, not by gift only, but by merit, through a Redeemer; yet so still, as it is the Redeemer's merit, not man's; not that Christ hath merited that we might merit (as the papists would vainly varnish that proud doctrine of merit), no: all was done by Him, and is ours only by imputation.

Such an High Priest became us, and such a glorious way of saving sinners became Him, who was made higher than the heavens; that is, than all created perfections whatsoever, angels, cherubim, or seraphim, or whatever order else may be possibly conceived.

This is the righteousness wherewith our Redeemer saveth us, and we need not fear to wrap up ourselves in this fine linen, to put on these robes; we need not fear to be made too rich by Christ, who, when He was rich, became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich (2 Cor. 8. 9).

And this righteousness, indeed, was made over to the saints of God by imputation at the very first moment of their conversion. In this they lived; in this they died, as standard-bearers wrapped up and buried in their colours: and in this they shall arise and appear at that glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who will then, and thus, be glorified in all them that believe, to the admiration of all the elect angels, the extreme horror of the reprobate, and the infinite joy and rapture of the saints, who shall then sing, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isa. 61. 10).

O how glorious will Christ be in His saints, when they shall all wear one and the same sparkling livery with Christ! And this shall be His name: Jehovah Tsidkenu, "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 23. 6).

Poor Christian, thou art troubled that thou canst not speak and pray so neatly, so handsomely, as some others can. But canst thou go into a corner, and there pour out thy soul affectionately, though not rhetorically, to thy Father? Trouble not thyself. It is better for thee to feel one divine impression from God upon thy heart than to have ten thousand fine notions floating in thy head. Judas was a man of parts, but what good did they do him?

John Flavel

THE ANSWER TO UNBELIEF

A letter from William Huntington

Dear Brother,

Grace, mercy and peace be with you through Jesus Christ our Lord. I received your melancholy epistle, which I believe to be expressive of the gloomy state of your soul. Your appearing in your own eyes one of the greatest of sinners is intended to erase the sandy foundation of human excellency, and to level the towering pinnacle of vain boasting, but is no argument against salvation by grace. This I tell you by the Word of the Lord, that there is not a single text in God's Book against a poor, sensible, heavy-laden sinner that is willing to renounce all confidence in the flesh and to submit to be saved by free grace through faith in Christ Jesus.

I do not wonder at the threatenings in God's Word levelling their contents at you; they will do this till your eye is singly fixed on Jesus Christ. When this is the case, the promises, as so many breasts of consolation, will meet you with cordials, and the threatenings will level all their arrows at your back, to keep you from looking again towards Sodom. After the Saviour had given His followers many admonitions, He bade them remember Lot's wife.

You would not have continued so long in your present situation if all your working abilities were exhausted; for God has promised to appear when His people's strength is all gone and there is none left; for by strength shall no man prevail. A legal hope dies hard, and it must be a killing sight and sense of sin that buries it. At the funeral of this wretched hope, deliverance will rise to you another way. "Let the weak say, I am strong." Moses must bring in many bills before our supposed wealth be expended. Insolvency is a cutting consideration to a man of consequence and reputation, nor can self-sufficient nature submit to the kind offers of a surety. But the family of God are all brought into this strait: "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." This step brings them in debtors to grace, and leaves them no stock in hand to boast of. "Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged."

If I had not been well acquainted with your occupation, I should have taken you to have been an advocate at a bar of judicature, for you labour as hard against a good cause as a counsellor doth when his arguments are driven home by a thousand pound bribe. If you were to use as many arguments in your plea for the atonement of Christ as you do against your soul's salvation, you would cut as good a figure at a throne of grace as any sinner that ever carried a plea into court.

Moses is said to accuse us for breaking his law, and Satan will accuse us, conscience will accuse us, and the world will accuse us. But we have no reason to puzzle our judgments and strain our nerves to assist any of them. Plead your own wretchedness and a Saviour's fulness, and that will silence every accuser. Your despairing of the mercy of God under a sense of want, and nursing unbelief, are the greatest sins you ever committed, and are daring reflections cast on Him who saves to the uttermost.

I believe you will be eternally saved, and if your faith has given up the ghost, you ought not to labour so hard to knock down mine also. We are commanded to bear each other's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Beware that there be not in thy heart a secret thought of meriting something by thy long suffering. There is also a kind of mock modesty that often possesses us under our first legal convictions. This appears when we endeavour to put away from us what we hope to enjoy. Job said, "I shall come forth as gold," and yet he refused to be comforted.

I believe if death were to stare you in the face, I should find it hard work to dispute you out of your right and title to those gospel blessings, which you now labour so hard to put far from you. Farewell. "Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee." As soon as unbelief has influenced thee to patch up another epistle, you will be so kind as to let me have it, for I am still in hope that my patience will weary out your unbelief.

Thine to command in all godliness,

W.H., S.S.

Winchester Row, July 6th, 1784

GOD'S DEALINGS WELL ORDERED

Letter from Samuel Rutherford to Lady Kenmure

Madam, Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied upon you. I received your Ladyship's letter, in the which I perceive your case in this world smelleth of a fellowship and communion with the Son of God in His sufferings. Ye cannot, ye must not, have a more pleasant or more easy condition here than He had, who through afflictions was made perfect (Heb. 2. 10). We may indeed think, Cannot God bring us to heaven with ease and prosperity? Who doubteth but He can? But His infinite wisdom thinketh and decreeth the contrary; and we cannot see a reason of it, yet He hath a most just reason. We never with our eyes saw our own soul, yet we have a soul. We see many rivers, but we know not their first spring and original fountain, yet they have a beginning.

Madam, when ye are come to the other side of the water, and have set down your foot on the shore of glorious eternity, and look back again to the waters and to your wearisome journey, and shall see, in that clear glass of endless glory, nearer to the bottom of God's wisdom, ye shall then be forced to say, "If God had done otherwise with me than He hath done, I had never come to the enjoying of this crown of glory." It is your part now to believe, and suffer, and hope, and wait on; for I protest, in the presence of that all-discerning eye who knoweth what I write and what I think, that I would not want [be without] the sweet experience of the consolations of God for all the bitterness of affliction. Nay, whether God come to His children with a rod or a crown, if He come Himself with it, it is well. Welcome, welcome, Jesus, what way soever Thou come, if we can get a sight of Thee! And sure I am, it is better to be sick, providing Christ come to the bedside and draw by the curtains, and say, "Courage, I am Thy salvation," than to enjoy health, being lusty and strong, and never to be visited of God.

Worthy and dear lady, in the strength of Christ, fight and overcome. Ye are now yourself alone, but ye may have, for the seeking, Three always in your company, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I trust they are near you. Ye are now deprived of the comfort of a lively ministry. So was Israel in their captivity, yet hear God's promise to them: "Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God; although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come" (Ezek. 11. 16). Behold a sanctuary! for a sanctuary, God Himself in the place and room of the temple of Jerusalem! I trust in God, that carrying this temple about with you, ye shall see Jehovah's beauty in His house.

The Lord Jesus be with your spirit.

Your Ladyship's at all obedience,

S.R.

Anwoth, June 26th, 1630

Think not so much on your gracious relations as lying in the grave, their beauty turned into rottenness and deformity. Think not of them as, possibly, by a premature death (as you may think) snatched from an earthly inheritance before their time, but think on them as co-heirs with Jesus Christ, riding now in triumph with Him and with the whole general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, to take possession of their inheritance with the saints in light. Thus behold them, not as they are in the night of the shadow of death, but as they shall be in the morning of the resurrection, when God will bring them with Him and, I had almost said, "Mourn if you can."

Thomas Case

THE LAWFULNESS OF HYMN SINGING

We are averse to controversy, especially with godly people, but we have been wearied by the continual attacks, month by month and year by year, on the practice of singing hymns in public worship.

Hymn singing has been the constant practice of almost all professed Christians in England – with the Dissenters since the 1700s and the Established Church a century later. If we *are* mistaken, if hymn singing (“uninspired hymns”) is so dishonouring to Almighty God, then we should repent and cease; general practice and antiquity do not give sanction to what takes place in the house of God.

But is hymn singing wrong? And does it dishonour the Most High God? Is it displeasing in His sight? Apart from what we believe to be the beauty of so many of our Christ-exalting hymns, and the evident blessing of the Holy Spirit which has rested upon them, we give the following reasons for believing that hymn singing is not only lawful but God-honouring. (Several others could be given.)

We completely agree with Dr. Watts (who has been called “the father of English hymnology”). As he said, the chapter read in public worship is often from the gospels or the epistles concerning the glories of Christ. In prayer, the name of Jesus is our only plea. In the sermon, “We preach Christ crucified.” But if singing is limited to the Psalms, then the name of Jesus is never mentioned. True we sing of the coming Messiah, but so often the gospel is in veiled language.

We absolutely and entirely agree that the Psalms are the infallible Word of God, which our hymns are not. But when the inspired Psalms were written, Christ had not yet come. It was still a shadowy dispensation. The way into the holiest was not yet manifest. Christ had not yet cried, “It is finished.”

Really our hymns are the substance of the Psalms in a gospel sense, in the spirit of the Epistle to the Hebrews. We agree with Dr. Watts that it is better to sing of the blood of Christ than the blood of bulls and goats; not of David but of Christ; not of long life and abundance of wealth but spiritual riches and life everlasting; not of David’s personal enemies but of sin, Satan and the world.

For instance, the 51st Psalm, verses 14-17 in a gospel sense:

“No blood of goats nor heifers slain,
For sin could e’er atone;
The death of Christ shall still remain
Sufficient and alone.”

Surely this is the way that our Psalm-singing brethren would preach from Psalm 51 and quote it in prayer (in human words). Then why not in singing?

Was an old, godly believer mistaken, when fellow church members were contending for nothing but Psalms, when he said, "It will be a sad day if we are no longer allowed to sing, 'How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!'"?

We subjoin extracts from J.C. Philpot.

Review of *Sacred Hymns from the German and Hosannah to the Son of David*, by William Williams, June 1859

Psalms still remain as the enduring expression of every gracious feeling of the regenerate heart, as a precious manual of living souls, embracing the whole compass of Christian experience; as a sympathising friend and faithful guide of the church of God, that can sink with her into the lowest depths of sorrow, or soar with her to the loftiest heights of joy. This wondrous depth and variety of experience, so suitable to all the states and stages of divine life, has made them the daily companion of the family of God, soothed many an aching heart, laid them on many a dying pillow, and inspired the last whisper of many an expiring breath.

It is true that we do not, indeed cannot, sing the Psalms. A song requires poetry, and that such as the natural ear has moulded into the form adapted to the native language. Prose cannot be sung unless chanted, as in cathedrals, or in a solo voice, as recitative, both of which are not only highly artificial, but destructive of the combined voices of a congregation. Thus, though the Psalms are Hebrew poetry, and were sung in the temple as poetical and musical compositions, they cannot, as translated into English prose, be sung now in our assemblies, for the form of poetry cannot be transferred from one language to another by simple translation, but must be adapted to the peculiar shape, such as metre and rhyme, which English verse requires.

The Psalms cannot, therefore, be sung as they stand in our Bibles; and as to the attempts which have been made to versify them, and thus adapt them to singing, we all know what miserable failures have been the almost invariable results of such attempts, from Sternhold and Hopkins to the latest versifier.

Hymns, then, have naturally and necessarily come to occupy the place of the Psalms in Christian churches, and this not only because poetical form is indispensably necessary to tune, but because they can set forth Christian truth in a way which the Psalm could not possibly do. Until Christ came in the flesh there could be no clear revelation of His Person and work. The Psalms, therefore, though as interpreted by the light of the gospel full of blessed truth, are inadequate exponents of Christian doctrine; and we might as well accept the preaching of the Old Testament prophets as fully adequate to the proclamation of the gospel as confine our singing to the Psalms as amply sufficient for the utterance

of Christian truth and the expression of gospel praise. Mr. Romaine used to object to the singing of hymns in public worship, as being mere human compositions. But, with all our respect for Mr. Romaine, might we not ask him if his sermons were not human compositions, and yet he preached them in the public worship of God; and were not the prayers that he read human compositions also? Nay, the very Psalms themselves, for which he so strongly pleaded, being versified by modern pens, were human compositions also, unless he believed that the same Spirit who inspired David to write them in the Hebrew, inspired Tate and Brady to translate them into English verse.

Hymns, then, as written by godly men, are to singing, as a part of the worship of God in our Christian assemblies, what the preaching of the servants of the Lord is to the proclaiming of the gospel; and we may add, what prayer by men of God is to the worshipping of Him in spirit and in truth. The Lord, in tender mercy, as ever mindful of the wants of His people, has bestowed upon some of His saints and servants the grace and gift of experimental and poetical utterance, and has highly honoured with His blessing the hymns written under His teaching and unction.

Review of *Hymns of the Reformation*, by Martin Luther, May 1856

If the family of God were severally and individually asked what means of grace had been most blessed to their souls, we think they would answer with one accord, and without hesitation: "The Scriptures." But what next? "The preached gospel." And what next? "Hymns." That the blessing of God has rested in a special manner upon hymns is unquestionable. Scarcely is there a gracious deathbed recorded where the happy sufferer (how grace harmonises two such discordant sounds as happiness and suffering!) does not either obtain help and comfort from some verse of a hymn, or does not give vent to his feelings of sorrow or joy in some well-known line.

This, what we may almost call the secondary use of hymns, is distinct from, and independent of, their original and primary intention, that of being sung in the public worship of God. But it shows how the Lord honours and sanctions them. They are thus attended with a double blessing. As sung in the assemblies of the saints, they are not only tributes of praise, and if sung "with the spirit, and ... with the understanding also" (1 Cor. 14. 15), a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2. 5); but, by being thus fixed in the mind and memory, they become, as it were, locked up in a storehouse, out of which the blessed Spirit takes in times of trouble and sorrow such portions as He sees good to apply with a divine power to the heart. For this purpose they are eminently qualified for several reasons.

1. They are, for the most part, truth condensed into a short compass – if we might venture upon such a figure, truth *crystallised*, and thus presented in a clear, transparent shape, purified from all that muddy mass of words with which we in our sermons and writings are so apt to overload and thus confuse it.

2. As being the utterances and breathings forth of the experience of the saints, they become responsive echoes to the cries of the Spirit in the heart of all the subjects of grace; and

3. When they are richly impregnated with the dew and savour of the Holy Ghost they are, so to speak, vehicles of grace, performing that office which the apostle speaks of as the fruit of godly conversation, “ministering grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4. 29).

Amongst the benefits and blessing of the blessed Reformation (and never was there a more suitable epithet attached to the word Reformation than the term “blessed”), was the birth of hymns in the language of the people.

JOHN KERSHAW’S BAPTISM

I was brought up amongst the sect calling themselves Independents, so that all my earliest attachments were to that people. The ordinance of baptism I was taught to believe was that of infant sprinkling. After my cousin left my father’s house, he began to attend the Baptist chapel at Rochdale, and I heard that he and some others were to be baptized by immersion. Moved by curiosity, and attachment to my relative, I went to see the ordinance administered. I got there in good time, and had a seat where I could see the whole of what was attended unto.

Mr. Littlewood [the pastor] preached upon the ordinance, proving that believers are the proper subjects, and that immersion was the scriptural mode of its administration. He was an able advocate for the doctrine, though what he said had not the least effect upon my mind in convincing me it was right. After the sermon he left the pulpit, and a hymn was sung, during which time my mind was filled with anxiety. The minister and candidates for baptism came out of the vestry, and, standing by the water-side, the minister delivered a short address. They then, like Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, “and he baptized them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” As I sat and looked on, my mind was greatly affected. I said within myself, “This is the baptism of the Bible.” I thought of John baptizing at Enon, near to Salim, because there was much water there, and of Jesus being baptized by John in the River Jordan.

From this time I became a decided Baptist in principle, and nothing that I have ever heard or read against it since has in the least tended to move me from it, but rather to establish my mind in the truth of the doctrine. The arguments raised in support of infant sprinkling I conceive are founded upon supposition, drawn from circumstantial evidence, viz., supposing that there were infants in those households that were baptized in the apostolic age without having one "Thus saith the Lord" to build upon. A friend put into my hand Wilson's *Scriptural Manual upon Baptism*, which tended greatly to confirm and establish my mind in the truth of it. I know that it is of God, not only because the precept is so clearly revealed in the Scriptures, but from having proved it to be "the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and also from having felt my Master's solemn and blessed presence with me so many times in the administration of it to others. In many instances I have seen the blessing of the Lord attending it to others of His people who, like myself, were spectators. So let men, and even men of God and ministers of Jesus Christ, say what they may against it, none of these things move me. In writing this memoir, it is not my province to write a defence of the ordinance. This has been done by far abler hands than mine, and in a way that can never be overthrown.

On one occasion, when in London, I had to baptize ten persons. A few days before the time I met an old Christian friend. As we shook hands he said, "I hear you are going to baptize before you leave town." I told him I was.

"And are you going to baptize the dead or the living?"

I looked at him, and for a moment was rather staggered at the question, but replied, "Sir, I trust I am going to baptize both the dead and the living; such as are dead to the law by the body of Christ and to all hope of salvation by works of righteousness done by them, having felt the truth of Paul's words: 'For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' They are such also as I trust are alive, being blessed with a good and lively hope through grace of an interest in Christ, living a life of faith upon the Son of God, who hath loved them and given Himself for them."

He exclaimed, "Go on, my friend, baptizing both the dead and the living, and the Lord has promised to be with you, and bless you" (Matt. 28. 19, 20). None have a scriptural right to be buried with Christ in baptism but such as are dead, for in nature none are to be buried but the dead. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

On another occasion, when examining a candidate for baptism who was giving "a reason of the hope that was in him with meekness and fear," he spoke of his desire to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,

and from love to Christ to keep His commandments by bowing to the sceptre of King Jesus and being baptized in His name.

I said, "Do you think you shall be any better when you have been baptized?"

He replied, "Yes, I trust I shall, for it has been a long time upon my mind, and my conscience has accused me for the neglect. It is said to be 'the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'; and if I be baptized and enjoy this, I shall be better as regards my feelings than I have been for two or three years past." We were much pleased with the honesty and simplicity of this man's remarks.

Baptism sets forth the solemn, awful and overwhelming sufferings of Him who said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" When in the Garden of Gethsemane, He resisted unto blood, striving against sin, travelling in the greatness of His strength. In the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God due to the sins of His people, He stained all His raiment, so that He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. The sprinkling of a few drops of water upon the face is a faint emblem of the overwhelming sufferings of Christ and the "fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." The immersion of the body in water is by far the most scriptural, strong and striking emblem of the sufferings of Him of whom the poet so sweetly and solemnly sings:

"Thy body slain, sweet Jesus, Thine,
And bathed in its own blood,
While all exposed to wrath divine
The glorious Sufferer stood."

It is a great mercy to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings as set forth in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, being made conformable unto His death....

Having the love of Christ shed abroad in my heart, and as one of His sheep, I heard His voice saying unto me, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." I had been a Baptist in principle from the first time I saw it administered, as previously mentioned. I now felt it to be my duty and privilege to follow my Lord and Master in that solemn ordinance.

The nine persons who were separated from the church in Town Meadows, under the pastoral care of Mr. Littlewood, agreed to be formed into a church. As my heart and soul were more united to them and Mr. Gadsby than to Mr. Littlewood and the people who remained with him, though I loved them much, and felt it a trial to leave them and the place where I had thought to have been buried, I resolved to join their

little community. They were my most intimate companions. I attended their meetings, to consult what steps we should take, there being several individuals who had not been baptized who wished to unite with them.

A special meeting, therefore, was appointed to hear their experiences. The Lord laid it upon my mind that I must attend. I had much exercise of soul respecting this affair. My father was rather against it; not that he was opposed to the ordinance itself, but in consequence of my youth. Not being yet seventeen, he had his fears lest I should be drawn aside by sinful lusts and pleasures, and he wished me to defer it until I was older. What he said had its due effect, knowing in some measure my own weakness, and that I had fallen into sin before, so that I was much cast down at times when I thought of being baptized and joining the church. I saw it was according to God's Word, and I knew the Lord had done great things for my soul, whereof I was glad. I loved Him too, and had it in my heart to honour and obey Him by bowing to His sceptre in attending to the ordinances of His house.

The day came when the experiences of those who wished to join should be heard, and such were the feelings of my soul that I could not keep away. Before going I went into a barn to pray that the Lord would go with me, and if it was His blessed will that I should join His church and people, He would be with me to keep and preserve me from evil, so that I might not bring a reproach upon His cause, which He knew lay nearer my heart than either father or mother, or even my own life.

I found the friends assembled. The meeting commenced with singing and prayer to the great Head of the church for His blessing to attend us as a people uniting together in church fellowship. Along with the rest who were to be baptized, I gave a reason of the hope that was in me with meekness and fear, but had not that liberty which I expected in declaring what the Lord had done for my soul. The friends agreed to receive us, but said that Mr. Gadsby, who was to administer the ordinance, wished to hear us relate the dealings of God with our souls. We should, therefore, have to meet him at a certain time appointed for that purpose. I trembled at the thought of having to be examined by so excellent a man.

When the time came, he brought a minister with him from London [possibly Jonathan Franklin], who also wished to hear what we had to say. My turn came. Like Ephraim, I began to speak tremblingly; but the Lord was graciously pleased to shine into my soul and upon the path wherein He had led me, so that I had sweet liberty and enlargedness of heart in declaring the things which the Lord had taught me. When I had finished, Mr. Gadsby asked me several questions upon the doctrines of grace, and my views respecting the ordinances of God's house, baptism and the Lord's supper.

I well remember the last question, which was this: "John, you are very young, and you will be exposed to many snares and temptations. Do you think you can stand your ground, and not bring a reproach upon yourself and the cause of God and truth?"

I replied, "Yes, the Lord keeping and preserving me; as Paul said, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.'"

He smiled, and said to his London friend, "Have you anything to ask this lad?"

He replied, "No; there is everything in him that can be desired. I am well satisfied that the good work of grace is begun in his soul."

The 24th of May, 1809, being Wednesday in Whit-week, was the appointed day for baptizing and planting the church. As we had neither chapel nor baptistery, the question arose as to where the ordinance was to be administered.

One of the friends, a farmer, said he had a small stream of water running through one of his fields which could be made use of for that purpose. This was agreed to. When the day came, nearly two thousand people were assembled. Professor and profane were gathered together to witness the ordinance of baptism by immersion. Mr. Gadsby stood on the bank of a reservoir, which served as a kind of gallery where many sat, the great body of the people being before him in the field. He preached from John 5. 39: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." At this time he was about thirty-six years of age, and such was the power of his voice that the sound of it was heard nearly a mile off, but not to distinguish the words. After the sermon he baptized six persons. In an hour after, we met together in the farmhouse, were formed into a church, and partook of the Lord's supper. This was similar to the apostolic custom, when the churches met in private houses for breaking of bread and prayer.

I have a sweet and solemn remembrance of the day when fifteen souls were thus united together. They have all long been gone but myself. Many have been the changes I have seen since that day. But, having obtained help of God, I am still continued. Bless the Lord, O my soul, for He has wrought wonders amongst us. Three churches have sprung from us. In each case I have organized them, by the mutual consent of our church, it being done for the furtherance of the gospel, that Zion's cords might be lengthened and her stakes strengthened. We have also had removed by death at this time (1866) 170 members, many of whom have left a blessed testimony behind them that they died in the Lord, and about the same number remain as members [i.e. communicant members].

THE CHURCH'S COMPLAINT.

"I sought Him, but I found Him not" (Song 3. 1)

Behold the spouse, replete with fears,
Seeking her absent Lord in tears;
In great distress she seems to be,
And pants His sacred face to see.

Like her my soul has often been,
When clouds and darkness intervene;
I've sought in vain that face to see,
Disfigured once with blood for me.

I sought Him in His temple, where
His saints to worship oft repair;
Yet even here, so hard my lot,
I sought Him, but I found Him not.

I sought to find Him on my knees;
I sought Him in His promises;
But His dear face I ne'er could see,
'Twas like the barren heath to me.

The sacred page no hope revealed,
With seven-fold might the Book was sealed,
Nor hope nor comfort could afford,
For I had lost my only Lord.

At length His lovely face He showed,
And joys divine my heart o'erflowed;
My sorrows fled when Jesus smiled,
And called me still His undefiled.

I then could, in seraphic lays,
Have sung His everlasting praise;
But silent bowed at love so free,
And wept o'er Him who died for me.

John Kent (1766-1843)

LARGE PRINT MAGAZINES

It is some time since mention was made of large-sized print copies of our magazines, which can still be obtained from: Mr. John Crowter, Haystacks, Green Lane, Potter Heigham, Norfolk, NR29 5LP.

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We are grateful for this service provided.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
AUGUST 2008

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

KEEPING THE LORD'S COMMANDMENTS

*Sermon preached by J.S. Green at Gower Street Memorial Chapel,
London, on August 27th, 1957*

Text: "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" (John 14. 21).

To be enabled to keep the commandments of God aright, we need the Holy Spirit to come into our hearts and to bless us with these two graces – with faith and with love. We cannot keep the commandments of God aright unless the Holy Spirit thus blesses us. There are many, I believe, who have gone through the sacred ordinance of believers' baptism who have been persuaded by men, and some by good men and good women; they have not left the work to the blessed Holy Ghost, and it is very solemn when there is an outward obedience and not the gracious preparation of the heart. So the Holy Spirit must prepare the heart by His grace, and He prepares it by giving to His people faith and love. They are very wonderful graces indeed, and it is very blessed to know something of the work of God the Holy Ghost in our hearts.

Now there are many commandments in God's Word. I shall not be able to speak of them all this evening, but as helped I will try to set a few before you.

The Lord Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another." Now it is a great blessing to know in our hearts a little of that real love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a little of that real love to His people, to feel enabled by free and sovereign grace to obey that commandment from your heart. There may be no outward sign of it – I mean, you may not go to a child of God and tell him that you love him for Christ's sake, but you feel secretly in your heart that love towards them. You may have observed them; you may have heard one call upon the Lord in prayer and you have felt that spiritual attachment, you have felt that spiritual unity, and from your heart, for Christ's sake, you have felt that you loved that fellow sinner. You may have heard one or two in conversation being enabled to speak of the things the Lord had done for them, and as they related their experiences, what a union was formed, what love, what heavenly affection you felt towards them! And you felt

you could indeed and of a truth leave the world, and from your heart could say of the people of God: "This people shall be my people."

Now that is keeping that commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in John's Epistle we read these wonderful words: "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Can we truly say that tonight? Have we that mark of grace in our hearts, with all their failings, we find that love to the people of God, and from our hearts can say,

"Numbered with them may I be,
Now and through eternity"?

You say, I feel such a poor, unworthy sinner. I feel unworthy to associate with the people of God, but unworthy as I am, I do feel that I love them; grace has enabled me to keep that commandment which the Lord Jesus Christ set forth.

Now, if the Holy Spirit by faith and love has enabled us to obey this commandment, it is certain we shall get to heaven when we die, and it is certain that God has begun that good work of grace in our hearts; and if He has begun that good work in our hearts, He will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. God's people sometimes, before they get the real, sweet, full assurance of faith, they have this blessed earnest, this witness of the Holy Spirit, and amidst all their doubts, amidst all their fears, amidst all the trial of their little faith, they feel, Yes, I do love the Lord's dear people; they are to me the excellent of the earth.

Well, it shows that there is life in our hearts, spiritual life implanted there, if from our hearts we keep this commandment the Lord Jesus Christ has given us. And as we journey on we need grace to keep this commandment continually, for various things may creep in. There is nothing that Satan delights in more than to bring in division among the people of God, to separate those who have walked together in love and in fellowship, and he often brings about this separation in a very subtle way. One of the worst things that he brings into the heart, even of a child of God, is that spirit of jealousy, and that has worked more havoc in the church of God than anything else, and there is not one of us can say that we are not liable to be tried with this fearful and terrible thing. We shall find, my dear friends, that we stand in constant need of the Holy Spirit's grace to obey that commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is another commandment that has been much upon my mind, and it is this (a word not spoken to the worldling, not spoken to the ungodly, but to the people of God): "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." Now what a mercy if we can look into our hearts and feel the Holy Spirit has separated us and is separating us from an

ungodly world, a world which is fast ripening for destruction, from the religious world, those who are satisfied short of the Holy Spirit's teaching. There will be, I believe, if the Holy Ghost is teaching us, this separation; we shall not follow the fashion of this poor, dying world, and our prayer will be that the Holy Spirit will enable us to keep that blessed commandment more and more.

It will not be with us, dear friends, how much of the world may I have? How near to the world may I go? But our prayer will be, Lord, help me to keep Thy commandments; give me grace that shall separate me more and more from the world and the spirit of the world. And when the Lord answers such a prayer and gives you to feel in your heart that union to Himself and that union to His people, you will not have much trouble to say with one:

“Let worldly minds the world pursue,
It has no charms for me;
Once I admired its trifles too,
But grace has set me free.”

Now, my friends, has there been a keeping of this commandment? O look into your hearts. Some of you young friends may remember how the world began to encroach upon you; you began to feel more and more attracted by it and the things which are in it, but in some way or other your eyes and hearts were opened to see the emptiness of everything under the sun, and you felt an aching void the world could never fill, and your poor heart began to pray and to plead that God would bless you with something real from Himself. Then you have been enabled to keep this commandment; grace has enabled you to keep it, and you will need as I need the Holy Spirit constantly to give us grace that we may live separate from this ungodly world. We possess hearts which by nature are opposed to the ways of God. We, each one of us, however favoured we may have been in days past, we have still a carnal, worldly heart, and we need the Holy Spirit's power, and we shall down to the end of our lives, to preserve us and enable us to keep that commandment the Lord Jesus Christ has given us.

There is another commandment and a very solemn one (probably there was never a day when those who have made a profession of the name of Christ need to be reminded of it more than at this day): “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is ... and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Probably nothing causes God's servants more sorrow than to see those who have made a profession of God's name to grow lukewarm, careless and indifferent; and so with some, one service now in a week will do; let anything else come along, anything that they can in any wise call lawful. O yes, they can leave everything else and go that way, because there is

a little bit in it that pleases the flesh. Is not that solemn, most solemn? And you know, my dear friends, some have gone on like this, and they have proved in the end to have neither part nor lot in this matter; all their religion came easily; they put on a profession easily; and it is not of first importance with them.

May the Holy Spirit give us grace to take careful heed to this commandment. The Lord Jesus Christ said: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." They are His own words. Now what a favour it is then to be enabled to keep this commandment, to find that your heart is in the Lord's house, to find that your heart is amongst His people, to feel that real love to His earthly courts, and love to assemble with His people; to long to come and hear the Word preached, that there may be a crumb of mercy for your poor soul, that there may be a little help by the way, in the midst of the many cares and anxieties of life.

And what a difference sometimes a service makes to the children of God! They may be tempted and assailed by Satan; they may fear it is not any good coming to chapel tonight: I am too overdone, too weary; and yet they venture, and the Lord does bless them, favour them, takes away all that weariness, fills their heart with a little love to Himself, and they feel it has been good to go up to the house of the Lord; it has been good to leave the world awhile.

So may we have grace, that grace of faith, and that grace of love, that we may give heed to that commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ and not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. How easy to find excuses, to put this in the way, or the other in the way! I pray that each one may be blessed with much faith, and with much love, that as they journey on they may pay gracious heed to this commandment given by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then there is the commandment regarding the sanctuary, and my mind has gone to those words of the Lord Jesus just before His ascension into heaven, and He was speaking to His disciples, to those ministers of the early church, and He said to them: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Now, my friends, God's people receive this commandment. My text says: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them." It may be a little heavenly love has sprung up in their hearts; they have felt their hearts sweetly drawn to the Lord Jesus; the word has come home with sweetness and power: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments"; and there is a blessed response in that sinner's heart. They may feel they do not as yet love the Lord as they would like to love Him; they are not so

sure of things as they would like to be; but there is that real, sweet, sacred receiving of the commandment, and so there is constraining love in that sinner's heart. Now that is the way I received this blessed commandment, as I observed a few godly people partaking of the Lord's supper – O what love flowed into my heart, how I felt I love those people, and I felt I would have given anything to have been permitted to have sat down with them, but then I could see the right way to sit down with them was to obey the commandment of the Lord Jesus.

Now, you know, there is not any rest in that sinner's heart when this exercise is created, no peace, and under the preaching of the Word how exercised that sinner becomes. They feel so unworthy; they feel so unfit; they feel such poor beggars; I can never come, and yet they do feel it is as expressed by one: "If you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all"; if you wait until you really feel fit, you will never come at all. And so the right way to this ordinance is to come as sinners, lost and undone in and of ourselves, but having some sweet hope in the mercy and in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, my friends, some of you who have made a long profession of Christ's name, did you receive this commandment? Can you say the Holy Ghost gave you this commandment? Some say, Well, it is clear enough in God's Word. I know it is, but the Holy Spirit must truly lay the commandment in our hearts and give us that spiritual longing, that spiritual willingness to take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. One of you may have received it as the Lord's servant was preaching. It dropped into your heart, and you felt you had His commandment within; you felt you must pay your vows unto the Lord; you could keep back no longer. Well, that is the right time, yes that is the right time, and a mercy then not to be left to give ear to unbelief and to Satan, a mercy to have our eyes taken off ourselves and placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and to venture in His name, relying upon Him, relying upon the Holy Spirit's grace. O this is a sacred commandment; there is very much in it, and it does set forth the work of Jesus very, very sweetly.

"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them." O sinner, have you got the commandment in your heart, and yet have not kept it? What a sad thing to feel the sweet constraining of the Holy Spirit, and for some reason or other to be disobedient, to give way. Now if everyone gave way, there would soon be no church; we should not be able to have the Lord's supper; the church would become extinct. We do need the Holy Spirit in His love and mercy to give us in our hearts these commandments, and to give us grace humbly and sincerely to keep them. Some of you may, as you look back, feel there are many things you regret in your life. I look back and I feel there are many things I regret, many

things make me mourn, but I hope I can say I have never really regretted following the Lord Jesus; I have not regretted being enabled to take up my cross and follow Him. What a great blessing it will be to come to our end and feel that the Holy Spirit gave us that faith, and that love, and that willing mind to follow the meek and lowly Jesus so that we in our hearts heard that word and were enabled to obey it: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me."

There is another commandment, and that is the Lord's Supper. "This do in remembrance of Me," said the Lord Jesus just before those awful sufferings in Gethsemane and upon Calvary's cross. "This do in remembrance of Me." I am afraid that this sacred ordinance means very little to some who have made a profession of Christ's name. O I pray that we may be blessed with the Holy Spirit, that we may be enabled rightly to keep it, and to enjoy a little of that real, sweet communion at the Lord's table. My dear friends, this is heaven, a real sweet foretaste of heaven, when we can sit around the Lord's table, when faith and love are in sweet exercise, when we view the wounds of which He died and our own sins the cause, and thus enjoy that true fellowship. And when you enjoy this you will feel that real outflowing of love to the people of God. It is a wonderful, sacred, blessed experience, and I believe this is the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." Here, my friends, is the fruit of love, the real fruit of love in obeying the words, the commandments of the Lord Jesus. And Christ said: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." And one of the sweetest fruits is real obedience, loving obedience from the heart. "He it is that loveth Me." I believe we have felt in our hearts a little of that real love to that Three-One God. Our hearts have glowed with love toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is love to Him that constrains us to desire to keep His commandments.

"And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father." What precious, sacred promises are attached to real obedience! When this text came forcibly, powerfully to me, I believe my heart did go out in prayer that these blessed promises in God's own time might be applied to the hearts of the people. "For he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father." Now, it does not mean that *because* we love the Lord Jesus that God loves us; no, for we firmly believe that all God's people He has loved with an everlasting love. It was because He loved them that He gave His dear Son to be their Saviour; it was because He loved them that He afflicted the Lord Jesus and laid all their sins upon Him. But I believe the meaning of these words is this, that as we are enabled to love the Lord Jesus, to love Him not in word only, but in deed and in truth, we shall find in our hearts the approbation of God the Father; we shall find that His love in an especial way flows into our hearts. What a great

blessing to feel we have got heaven's approbation upon any step we take, to feel that God's smile is upon us and that He does not frown!

Now we may have to wait after we follow the Lord Jesus before we get this sweet assurance of faith. There may come a time, a season of sore temptation; we may be greatly harassed by Satan, but this in the end will prove to be for our real good, and it will make us feel more than ever we have felt our need of the application of His precious blood and the imputation of His righteousness, and the blessed sanctification of the Holy Ghost. And so when we are brought through, and so blessed and favoured to feel that God loves us, that He smiles upon us, that He approves of us in His dear Son, the Lord Jesus, our joy will be very, very great, and we shall find that in the keeping of His commandments (not just *for* the keeping of them, but *in* the keeping of them as constrained by the Holy Spirit), there is real spiritual profit and blessing. And what blessing could be greater than to feel that Jesus loves us, and that God the Father loves us?

"And he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him." And I believe the Lord does come into the hearts of His people, and there He sheds abroad His love; and the more He sheds abroad His love in their hearts the more they love Him – they do. If we know but little of the love of Jesus, we love Him little, very little; but O, if there is that outpouring by the Holy Spirit of the love of Christ into our hearts, then we shall love Him in deed and in truth.

"And I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." Now, you know, the Lord Jesus has very sweetly joined these sacred things together, and they are the truth. Some of us can, I believe, very humbly testify that they are the truth. What can be better, what can be more blessed than the fulfilment of this last clause, for the Lord of life and glory to come into our hearts and to manifest Himself unto us, manifest Himself unto us as our Jesus, so that we are enabled to claim Him as our own divine Portion; manifest Himself unto us in His sufferings in the Garden of Gethsemane, and for the Holy Spirit to bear witness and say, All these sufferings were for you, sinner? Then, for Him to manifest Himself to us upon that wondrous cross on which He died, and to hear again in our hearts by faith those wondrous words, "It is finished." You will love Him then.

Some of us felt when we had this sacred manifestation of Christ to us in His fulness, in His offices, in His blessed Person, O how willingly we would, had it been necessary, have followed again through the sacred ordinance of baptism. It would not have been in any wise irksome to us. No, that it would not! May it be our favoured lot to be enabled to put the dear Lord in remembrance of this His precious word of promise. He said, "I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." Amen.

SPIRITUAL COMMUNION IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

*Communion address given by Dr. John Owen (1616-1683)
on September 20th, 1682*

It is a common, received notion among Christians, and it is true, that there is a peculiar communion with Christ in this ordinance, which we have in no other ordinance; that there is a peculiar acting of faith in this ordinance, which is in no other ordinance. This is the faith of the whole church of Christ, and has been so in all ages. This is the greatest mystery of all the *practicals* of our Christian religion – a way of receiving Christ by *eating and drinking* – something peculiar that is not in prayer, that is not in the hearing of the Word, nor in any other part of divine worship whatsoever – a peculiar participation of Christ, a peculiar acting of faith towards Christ. This participation of Christ is not carnal, but spiritual.

In the beginning of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He began to instruct them in the communication of Himself and the benefit of His mediation to believers, because it was a new thing, He expresses it by eating His flesh and drinking His blood: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6. 53). This offended and amazed them. They thought He taught them to eat His natural flesh and blood. “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” They thought He instructed them to be cannibals. Whereupon He gives that everlasting rule for the guidance of the church, which the church forsook, and thereby ruined itself. Saith He, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” It is a spiritual communication, saith He, of Myself unto you; but it is as intimate, and gives as real an incorporation, as if you did eat My flesh and drink My blood. The church, forsaking this rule of a spiritual interpretation, ruined itself and set up a monster instead of this blessed, mysterious ordinance.

We may enquire, therefore, how faith doth peculiarly act itself towards Christ in this ordinance, whereby we have a distinct participation of Christ, otherwise than we have by and in any other ordinance whatsoever. And I would mention four things unto you which you may make use of:

1. That faith hath a peculiar respect to the *sole authority* of Christ in the institution of this ordinance.

All other ordinances draw upon the light of nature and upon the moral law, as prayer, preaching the Word and singing of psalms to the praise of God; but this, that we should receive Jesus by eating of bread and drinking of wine, has no respect to the light of nature or the moral law at all; and we should as soon choose to honour God by sacrifices and eating the flesh of them, if it were not for the authority of Jesus Christ. Herein doth faith give honour to Christ in His *kingly office*. This is the

most direct profession of the subjection of our souls and consciences to the authority of Christ in all our religion. We can give no other reason, we can take no allusion from things, but merely this – Christ would have it so.

2. Faith hath a peculiar respect to *the love of Christ in dying for us*, making the atonement for us by His blood, and therein the glorifying of the wisdom, love and grace of God the Father. Faith is led into special communion with Christ as dying for us to make the atonement; and therein we give glory to Christ in *His priestly office* in a peculiar manner in this ordinance, it respecting the sacrifice of Christ whereby He made atonement for us.

3. Faith hath respect to *this special manner of the exhibition of Christ to the souls of believers*, under the outward signs and symbols of bread and wine, by His institution making such a sacramental union between the thing signified and the sign, that the signs remaining to be what they are in themselves, they are unto us the thing that is signified, by virtue of the sacramental union that Christ hath appointed between His body and blood and the benefits of it; and this bread and wine, though not changed at all in themselves, yet they become to us, by faith, not what they are in themselves, but what is signified by them – the body and blood of Christ. Herein we give glory to Christ in *His prophetic office*. It is He who has revealed, taught and instructed His church in this truth, which depends on the sacramental union which follows by His institution. That is the third thing wherein faith peculiarly acts itself in this ordinance.

4. The fourth thing is the *mysteriousness*, which I leave to your *experience*, for it is beyond expression – the mysterious reception of Christ in this peculiar way of exhibition. There is a reception of Christ as tendered in the *promise of the gospel*; but here is a peculiar way of His exhibition under outward signs, and a mysterious reception of Him in them, really, so as to come to a real, substantial incorporation in our souls. This is that which believers ought to labour after an experience of in themselves, to find that indeed, under these four considerations, they submit to the authority of Jesus Christ in a peculiar manner, giving Him the glory of His *kingly office*, mixing faith with Him as dying and making atonement by His blood, so giving Him the glory and honour of His *priestly office*; much considering the sacramental union that is, by His institution, between the outward signs and the thing signified, thus glorifying Him in His *prophetic office*; and raising up their souls to a mysterious reception and incorporation of Him, receiving Him to dwell in them, warming, cherishing, comforting and strengthening their hearts.

I have mentioned these things as those which lie in your practice, and to obviate that (if I may mention it) which you may be tried with.

There is but one plausible pretence that our adversaries, who design to oppress us, have in this business: if, say they, there be not a *real presence* and a real, substantial transmutation of the elements into the substance of the body and blood of Christ, show you a way whereby you may have a peculiar communion with Christ, any more than in the Word preached. We say, we have in these things experience of a peculiar communion with Christ in a way made proper to this ordinance, which is not to be found in any other ordinance.

SIN AND SALVATION

By Ralph Venning (c. 1622-1674)

Being about to treat of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is not only expedient but necessary that I preface and premise certain things:

1. *That God made all things very good* (Gen. 1. 31). They were all endowed with the perfections which were suitable to their several beings, so that none of them could find fault with or complain of God, as if He had owed them anything or had made them defective.

2. *Yet of these the two most eminent and principal degrees of creatures quickly degenerated.* Some of the angels sinned and kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation (Jude 6). And by giving way to their subtle insinuations, the man Adam, who was a common person, sinned also (Gen. 3). And thus “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5. 12).

3. *As to the angels that fell, God left them irrecoverable.* For God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (2 Pet. 2. 4), and has reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day (Jude 6). Christ Jesus, the Mediator and Redeemer, took not on Him angels or, as it is in the margin, takes not hold of angels (Heb. 2. 16). But it pleased God to pity man; His saving grace and lovingkindness have appeared to man, and that in Christ Jesus (Tit. 2. 11, 3. 4). His delight was with the sons of men, the habitable parts of the earth (Prov. 8. 31), and therefore He took on Him the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2. 16).

4. *This doctrine of God our Saviour, the gospel-doctrine, supposes that man is a sinner.* It is a faithful saying, and worthy of the best and all acceptance and reception, that Christ Jesus came into the world (on this very errand and for this purpose) to save sinners (1 Tim. 1. 15). The doctrine of repentance supposes also that man has done amiss (Matt. 9. 13). The doctrine of faith in another for righteousness and hope

concludes man to be without righteousness and hope in himself (Eph. 2. 12, 13). The end of Christ's sending the Holy Spirit was that He might, in the first place, convince of sin (John 16. 8).

These things being so, beside others which might be considered, it cannot but be extremely useful to let men see what sin is: how prodigiously vile, how deadly mischievous, and therefore how monstrously ugly and odious a thing sin is. Thus a way may be made,

1. For admiring the free and rich grace of God.
2. For believing in our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. For vindicating the holy, just and good law of God and His condemnation of sinners for breaking it.
4. For hating sin, and repenting for and from it, thereby taking a holy, just and good revenge on it and ourselves.
5. That we may love and serve God at a better rate than we ever did in the little and short time of innocence itself.
6. And lastly, that this black spot may serve to set off the admirable, incomparable and transcendent beauty of holiness.

ELIJAH BENEATH THE JUNIPER TREE

From Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

“And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God” (1 Kings 19. 1-8).

One would have expected, after such a public and sensible manifestation of the glory of God and such a clear decision of the controversy depending between him and Baal, to the honour of Elijah, the confusion of Baal's prophets and the universal satisfaction of the people – after they had seen both fire and water come from heaven at the

prayer of Elijah, and both in mercy to them, the one as it signified the acceptance of their offering, the other as it refreshed their inheritance, which was weary – that now they would all, as one man, return to the worship of the God of Israel and take Elijah for their guide and oracle, that he would thenceforward be prime-minister of state, and his directions would be as laws both to king and kingdom.

But it is quite otherwise. He is neglected whom God honoured; no respect is paid to him, no care taken of him, nor any use made of him, but on the contrary, the land of Israel, to which he had been and might have been so great a blessing, is now made too hot for him.

1. Ahab incensed Jezebel against him. That queen-consort, it seems, was in effect queen-regent, as she was afterwards when she was queen-dowager, an imperious woman that managed king and kingdom and did what she would. Ahab's conscience would not let him persecute Elijah (some remains he had in him of the blood and spirit of an Israelite, which tied his hands), but he told Jezebel all that Elijah had done (verse 1), not to convince, but to exasperate her. It is not said he told her what *God* had done, but what *Elijah* had done, as if he, by some spell or charm, had brought fire from heaven, and the hand of the Lord had not been in it. Especially he represented to her, as that which would make her outrageous against him, that he had slain the prophets; the prophets of Baal he calls *the prophets*, as if none but they were worthy of the name. His heart was set upon them, and he aggravated the slaying of them as Elijah's crime, without taking notice that it was a just reprisal upon Jezebel for killing God's prophets (chapter 18. 4). Those who, when they cannot for shame or fear do mischief themselves, yet stir up others to do it, will have it laid to their charge as if they had themselves done it.

2. Jezebel sent him a threatening message (verse 2), that she had vowed and sworn to be the death of him within twenty-four hours. Something prevents her from doing it just now, but she resolves it shall not be long undone. Note, carnal hearts are hardened and enraged against God by that which should convince and conquer them and bring them into subjection to Him. She swears by her gods and, raging like one distracted, curseth herself if she slay not him, without any proviso of a divine permission. Cruelty and confidence often meet in persecutors. "I will pursue, I will overtake" (Exod. 15. 9).

But how came she to send him word of her design, and so to give him an opportunity of making his escape? Did she think him so daring that he would not flee, or herself so formidable that she could prevent him? Or was there a special providence in it, that she should be thus infatuated by her own fury? I am apt to think that though she desired nothing more than his blood, yet at this time she durst not meddle with

him for fear of the people, all counting him a prophet, a great prophet, and therefore sent this message to him merely to frighten him and get him out of the way for the present, that he might not carry on what he had begun. The backing of her threats with an oath and imprecation does not at all prove that she really intended to slay him, but only that she intended to make him believe so. The gods she swore by could do her no harm.

3. Elijah, hereupon, in a great fright, fled for his life, it is likely by night, and came to Beer-sheba (verse 3). Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not. Where was the courage with which he had lately confronted Ahab and all the prophets of Baal? Nay, which kept him by his sacrifice when the fire of God fell upon it? He that stood undaunted in the midst of the terrors both of heaven and earth trembles at the impotent menaces of a proud, passionate woman. *Lord, what is man!* Great faith is not always alike strong. He could not but know that he might be very serviceable to Israel at this juncture, and had all the reason in the world to depend upon God's protection while he was doing God's work, yet he fled. In his former danger, God had bidden him hide himself (chapter 17. 3), therefore he supposed he might do so now.

4. From Beer-sheba he went forward into the wilderness, that vast, howling wilderness in which the Israelites wandered. Beer-sheba was so far distant from Jezreel, and within the dominion of so good a king as Jehoshaphat, that he could not but be safe there; yet, as if his fears haunted him even when he was out of the reach of danger, he could not rest there, but went a day's journey into the desert.

Yet perhaps he retired thither not so much for his safety as that he might be wholly retired from the world, in order to a more free and intimate communion with God. He left his servant at Beer-sheba that he might be private in the wilderness, as Abraham left his servants at the bottom of the hill when he went up into the mount to worship God, and as Christ in the garden was withdrawn from his disciples, or perhaps it was because he would not expose his servant, who was young and tender, to the hardships of the wilderness, which would have been putting new wine into old bottles. We ought thus to consider the frame of those who are under our charge, for God considers ours.

5. Being wearied with his journey, he grew cross (like children when they are sleepy) and wished he might die (verse 4). He requested for his life (so it is in the margin), that he might die; for death is life to a good man; the death of the body is the life of the soul. Yet that was not the reason why he wished to die; it was not the deliberate desire of grace, as Paul's, to depart and be with Christ, but the passionate wish of his corruption, as Job's. Those that are in this manner forward to die are not in the fittest frame for dying. Jezebel has sworn his death, and therefore

he, in a fret, prays for it, runs from death to death, yet with this difference: he wishes to die by the hand of the Lord, whose tender mercies are great, and not to fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel. He would rather die in the wilderness than as Baal's prophets died, according to Jezebel's threatening (verse. 2), lest the worshippers of Baal should triumph and blaspheme the God of Israel, whom they will think themselves too hard for, if they can run down His advocate.

He pleads, "It is enough. I have done enough. I am weary of living." Those that have secured a happiness in the other world will soon have enough of this world. He pleads, "I am not better than my fathers, not better able to bear those fatigues, and therefore why should I be longer burdened with them than they were?" But is this that my lord Elijah? Can that great and gallant spirit shrink thus? God thus left him to himself to show that when he was bold and strong, it was in the Lord and the power of His might, but of himself he was no better than his fathers or brethren.

6. God, by an angel, fed him in that wilderness, into the wants and perils of which he had wilfully thrown himself, and in which, if God had not graciously succoured him, he would have perished. How much better does God deal with His froward children than they deserve! Elijah, in a pet, wished to die; God needed him not, yet He designed further to employ and honour him, and therefore sent an angel to keep him alive.

Our case would be bad sometimes if God should take us at our word and grant us our foolish, passionate requests. Having prayed that he might die, he laid down and slept (verse 5), wishing it may be to die in his sleep and not to awake again; but he is awakened out of his sleep, and finds himself not only well provided for with bread and water (verse 6), but, which was more, attended by an angel who guarded him when he slept and twice called him to his food when it was ready for him (verse 5, 7). He needed not to complain of the unkindness of men when it was thus made up by the ministration of angels. Thus provided for, he had reason to think he had fared better than the prophets of the groves that did eat at Jezebel's table. Wherever God's children are, as they are still upon their Father's ground, so they are still under their Father's eye and care. They may lose themselves in a wilderness, but God has not lost them; there they may look at Him that lives and sees them, as Hagar (Gen. 16. 13).

7. He was carried in the strength of this meat to Horeb, the mount of God (verse. 8). Thither the Spirit of the Lord led him, probably beyond his own intention, that he might have communion with God in the same place where Moses had, the law that was given by Moses being revived by him.

The angel bade him eat the second time, because of the greatness of the journey that was before him (verse 7). Note, God knows what He designs us for, though we do not, what service, what trials, and will take care for us when we, for want of foresight, cannot for ourselves, that we be furnished for them with grace sufficient. He that appoints what the voyage shall be will victual the ship accordingly.

See how many different ways God took to keep Elijah alive: He fed him by ravens, with multiplied meals, then by an angel, and now, to show that man lives not by bread alone, He kept him alive forty days without meat, not resting and sleeping, which might make him the less to crave sustenance, but continually traversing the mazes of the desert, a day for a year of Israel's wanderings; yet he neither needs food nor desires it. The place, no doubt, reminds him of the manna, and encourages him to hope that God will sustain him here, and in due time bring him hence, as He did Israel, though, like him fretful and distrustful.

THE REDEEMED IN HEAVEN

*Comments on the Scripture reading by J.C. Philpot,
Lord's day morning, December 8th, 1861, at Stamford*

Reading: Revelation 7. 9-18.

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

I have been a reader and, I may say, a student of the Scriptures for thirty-four or thirty-five years, and I hope the Lord has given me some entrance by faith into the meaning of His holy Word. But there are parts of the Scripture which to me are very dark, and of which I have not, as I feel, any real knowledge. Such is the Book of Revelation. No part of Scripture has more perplexed me to understand its meaning than this holy book. And yet there is a promise: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein" (Rev. 1. 3).

But though much of the Revelation is so dark and mysterious, yet there are blessed portions of it which are full of sweet, experimental instruction; and such is the passage before us where John "beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

These seem to signify the elect church of God, the whole assembly of the redeemed; for John views them in their glorious church state at the

second coming of the Son of God, when all the saints will come with Him and will form a great multitude which no man can number. Now John saw them stand before the throne, and they were collected of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, to show the universality of the gospel, and how the Lord chooses of every nation where the gospel is powerfully preached as a seed to serve Him. They stood before the throne of God and before the Lamb who sat upon the throne. And how did they stand? "Clothed with white robes," which signifies that they stand before God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, as being washed in the atoning blood of the Lord the Lamb, and thus free from blemish in the eyes of Him who is of infinite purity. And they bore "palms in their hands," which were marks that they had fought the good fight, had overcome, and had achieved the victory; in memory of which the palm, which was borne by the ancient victors, was put into their hands, that they might bear it before the throne and wave it triumphantly over their heads.

And John heard them cry "with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," ascribing all the praise and glory of their salvation to God who sat upon the throne; tracing it all up unto the eternal purposes and electing love of God the Father, and to the atoning blood and dying love of God the Son. And they all joined in one universal chorus. There was no discordant note among them. They all as with one united voice cried aloud and ascribed salvation for ever and ever, with all its blessings, as belonging to our God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto His dear Son.

"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God."

This throne of God was surrounded by thousands and tens of thousands of bright and holy angels. Now you will observe that first there is the throne on which God sits; then there is the Lamb who sits with Him on the throne; then there are the elders that represent the churches; and lastly the four disciples or living creatures which represent the ministers; and these all stand before and close to the throne. And then in a circle round about it stand the holy angels as witnesses of the triumphs of the cross of Christ – as joining, not in the song of redeeming love, for they were not redeemed, but still with holy approbation they unite in praising and blessing Jesus, the Lord God Almighty; for they are represented as falling before the throne on their faces, with all humility and prostration of mind, and worshipping God in union with the church.

And what do they say in this holy song? They give to God a seven-fold blessing: "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.

Amen.” They said “Amen,” assenting to God’s purposes, yielding a solemn “So be it” to the work of redeeming love, and ascribing to God all the blessings of salvation, and the sense of their own standing, and all the glory of the scheme of salvation, and all the wisdom which prompted the Almighty to devise it; and thanksgiving, as being the subject of eternal praise; and honour, as justly belonging to Him from whom it came; and power, whereby He accomplished it all; and might, whereby He gained the victory. This seven-fold blessing they ascribed to God. And then, with loud acclaim, they added, “So be it.”

“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?”

This question was put, not as though the elder did not know it, for he was going to give the answer, but to call John’s attention more especially to it. But John did not know it. Therefore he said, “Sir, thou knowest. Tell me.” Then comes the answer from the mouth of the elder who speaks in the name of the church: “And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

They came out of great tribulation: it is “through much tribulation” we are to enter the kingdom. They were in it and came out of it through the power and might of God displayed in them; but this was not their title to eternal bliss. Not all their sufferings nor sorrows gave them any power to inherit glory. This was their title, that they had “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” They disclaimed all goodness of their own. They had a view of the fountain of Christ’s blood; they descended into that fountain as Naaman descended into the River Jordan; and in that fountain they washed away all their sins, as Naaman washed away his leprosy in Jordan’s waters. They “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.”

Why are they before the throne of God? Because they have “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Whom do they serve? God. Where do they serve Him? In His temple. How long do they serve Him? Day and night; because being sanctified spirits, having immortal souls and immortal bodies, they are able to render Him unceasing service. “And He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”

“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.” To the sun of temptation or the heat of God’s anger they shall not be exposed any more.

“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them,” with manifestations of His Person; “and shall lead them unto living

fountains of waters” – that is, the rivers of pleasure which are at God’s right hand for evermore; “and God Himself” – their God and Father – “shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

O what a glorious company! O what a mercy it will be if we, in this vale of tears, should ever reach that heavenly shore, stand before that throne in robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and join in singing that immortal song which saints and angels will sing in sweet unison!

BETHANY: THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST’S LOVE

By Robert Murray M’Cheyne (1813-1843)

“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was. Then after that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judæa again. His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and goest Thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him” (John 11. 5-10).

I. Jesus’ love: “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister [Mary], and Lazarus.”

1. These are the words of John. He knew what was in the heart of Christ, for the Holy Spirit taught him what to write, and he leaned upon Jesus’ bosom, and knew the deepest secrets of Jesus’ heart. This then is John’s testimony: “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” You remember they had sent this message to Jesus: “He whom Thou lovest is sick.” Some would have said, That was a presumptuous message to send. How did they know that Lazarus was really converted? – that Jesus really loved him? But here you see John puts his seal upon their testimony. It was really true, and no presumption in it: “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”

How is it saints know when Jesus loves them? *Answer:* Christ has ways of telling His own love peculiar to Himself. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” How ridiculous is it to think that Christ cannot make known His love to the soul! I shall mention one way – by drawing the soul to Himself: “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31. 3). “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 sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with

thee ... and thou becamest Mine" (Ezek. 16. 8). "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6. 44).

Now when the Lord Jesus draws near to a dead, carnal sinner, and reveals to him a glimpse of His own beauty, of His face fairer than the sons of men, of His precious blood, of the room that there is under His wings; and when the soul is drawn away from its old sins, old ways, away from its deadness, darkness and worldliness, and is persuaded to forsake all and flow toward the Lord Jesus – then that soul is made to taste the peace of believing and is made to know that Jesus loves him.

Thus Lazarus knew that Christ loved him. I was a worldly, careless man; I mocked at my sisters when they were so careful to entertain the Lamb of God; I often was angry with them; but one day He came and showed me such an excellence in the way of salvation by Him; He drew me, and now I know that Jesus has loved me.

Do you know that Christ loves you? Have you this love-token, that He has drawn you to leave all and follow Him, to leave your self-righteousness, to leave your sins, to leave your worldly companions for Christ, to let all go that interferes with Christ? Then you have a good token that He has loved you.

2. Jesus loved all the house. It seems highly probable that there was a great difference among the family: some of them were much more enlightened than others; some were much nearer Christ and some more like Christ than others; yet Jesus loved them all. It would seem that Mary was the most heavenly-minded of the family. Probably she was brought first to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. She sat at the feet of Christ when Martha was cumbered about much serving. She was also evidently more humbled under this trying dispensation than her sister was, for it is said, "She fell down at His feet." She seems also to have been filled with livelier gratitude, for it was she that took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Christ, and wiped His feet with her hair. She did what she could. She seems to have been a very eminent believer – very full of love, and of a teachable, meek, quiet spirit. And yet Jesus loved them all. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." Every one that is in Christ is beloved by Christ, even weak members.

Good news for weak disciples. You are very apt to say: I am not a Paul, nor a John, nor a Mary. I fear Jesus will not care for me. *Answer:* He loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus. He loves the weakest of those for whom He died. Just as a mother loves all her children, even those that are weak and sickly, so Christ cares for those who are weak in the faith, who have many doubts and fears, who have heavy burdens and temptations.

Be like Christ in this. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations"; "We then that are strong ought to bear the

infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. 14. 1; 15. 1). There is much of an opposite spirit, I fear, amongst us. I fear that you love our Marys, and Pauls, and Johns – you highly esteem those that are evidently pillars; but can you condescend to men of low estate? Learn to stoop low, and to be gentle and kind to the feeble. Do not speak evil of them; do not make their blemishes the subject of your common talk. Cover their faults. Assist them by counsel, and pray for them.

II. Christ's delay: "When He had heard therefore that he was sick, He abode two days still in the same place where He was."

Here seems a contradiction: Jesus loved them, and yet abode two days. You would have expected the very reverse; Jesus loved them, and therefore made no delay, but hastened to Bethany. This is the way with man's love. Human love will not brook delay. When you love anyone tenderly, and hear that he is sick, you run to see him and to help him.

These were two important days in the cottage of Bethany. The messenger had returned, saying, "This sickness is not unto death." They knew that Jesus loved them and loved their brother tenderly, and therefore they expected Him to come every hour. Martha, perhaps, would begin to be uneasy, saying, Why does He tarry? why is He so long in coming? can anything have kept Him? Do not fret, Mary would say. You know that He loves Lazarus, and He loves us; and you know He is true, and He said, "This sickness is not unto death."

The dying man grew weaker, and at length breathed his last sigh into their affectionate bosoms. Both the sisters were overwhelmed: He loved us, and yet He tarried two days. So with the woman of Syrophenicia.

Such are Christ's dealings with His own still. Although He loves, He sometimes on that very account tarries. Do not be surprised, and do not fret.

Reasons of delay:

1. Because He is God. He sees the end from the beginning. Known unto Him are all His works from the foundation of the world. Although absent in the body, He was present in the sick man's room at Bethany. He saw every change on his pale features and heard every gentle sigh. Every tear that stole down the cheek of Mary He observed, put into His bottle and wrote in His book. He saw when Lazarus died. But the future was before Him also. He knew what He would do – that the grave would yield up its dead, and that He would soon turn their weeping into songs of rejoicing. Therefore He stayed where He was, just because He was God. So when Christ delays to help His saints now, you think this is a great mystery; you cannot explain it; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. Be still, and know that Christ is God.

2. To increase their faith. First of all, He gave them out a promise to hold by. He sent word by their messenger: "This sickness is not unto

death." This was an easy and simple word for them to hold by; but ah, it was sorely tried! When he got worse and worse, they clung to the promise with a trembling heart; when he died, their faith died too. They knew not what to think. And yet Christ's word was true, and thus their faith was increased ever after. They were taught to believe the word of Christ, even when all outward circumstances were against them.

So Matthew 8. 18. One evening Christ gave commandment on the Sea of Galilee to depart to "the other side"; and as they sailed He fell asleep. Here was a simple word of promise to hold by in the storm. But when the storm came down and the waves covered the ship, they cried, "Lord, save us: we perish." And He said: "Where is your faith?" By that trial the faith of the disciples was greatly increased ever after.

So it is with all trials of faith. When God gives a promise, He always tries our faith. Just as the roots of trees take firmer hold when they are contending with the wind, so faith takes a firmer hold when it struggles with adverse appearances.

3. To make His help shine brighter. Had Christ come at the first and healed their brother, we never would have known the love that showed itself at the grave of Lazarus; we never would have known the power of the great Redeemer in raising up from the grave. These bright forth-shinings of the glory of Christ would have been lost to the church and to the world. Therefore it was good that He stayed away for two days. Thus the honour of His name was spread far and wide. The Son of God was glorified. "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise." This is God's great end in all His dealings with His people – that He may be seen. For this reason He destroyed the Egyptians: "That the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord."

If Christ seems to tarry past the time He promised, wait for Him, for He will come, and will not tarry. He has good reason for it, whether you can see it or not. And never forget that He loves even when He tarries. He loved the Syrophenician even when He answered her not a word.

III. Christ's determination: "After that saith He to His disciples, Let us go into Judea again."

1. The time: "After that." After the two days were over. Christ waits a certain time without helping His own, but no longer. Christ waits a certain time with the wicked before destroying them. He waited till the cup of the Amorites was full before He destroyed them. He waited on the fig tree a certain time. If it does not bear fruit, then, "after that thou shalt cut it down." O wicked man! you have a certain measure to fill; when that is filled, you will sink immediately into hell. When the sand has run, you will be cast away. So Christ has His set time for coming to His own. "After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight" (Hos. 6. 2).

i. In conversion: "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5. 6). When God awakens a soul by the mighty power of His Spirit, He takes His own time and way of bringing the soul to peace. Often the sinner thinks it very hard that Christ should be so long in coming; often he begins to despair, and to think there is something peculiar in his case. Remember! wait on the Lord. It is good to wait for Christ.

ii In answering prayer. When we ask for something agreeable to God's will and in the name of Christ, we know that we have the petitions which we desire of Him. But the time He keeps in His own power. God is very sovereign in the time of His answers. When Martha and Mary sent their petition to Christ, He gave them an immediate promise; but the answer was not when they expected. So Christ frequently gives us the desires of our heart, though not at the peculiar time we desired, but a better time. Do not be weary in putting up prayers, say for the conversion of a friend. They may be answered when you are in the dust. Hold on to pray. He will answer in the best time. "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

iii. In His own second, glorious coming. Christ said to the church long ago: "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." And still the time is prolonged. The Bridegroom seems to tarry, but He will come at the due time. He waits for infinitely-wise reasons, and the moment that He should come, the heavens shall open, and He will appear.

2. The objection. The objection was, that it was dangerous to Him and to them, because the Jews had sought to stone Him before. Another time Peter made objection to Christ, saying: "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." How selfish are even godly men! The disciples did not care for the distress of Martha and Mary. They did not care for the pain of their friend Lazarus. They were afraid of being stoned, and that made them forget the case of the afflicted family.

There is no root deeper in the bosom than selfishness. Watch and pray against it. Even the godly will sometimes oppose you in what is good and right. Here, when Christ proposed that they should go into Judæa again, the disciples opposed it. They were astonished at such a proposal. They, as it were, reproved Him for it. Think it not strange, dear brethren, if you are opposed by those who are children of God, especially if it be something in which you are called to suffer.

3. Christ's answer. The path of duty Christ here compares to walking in the daylight. "If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not."

As long as a man has got a good conscience and the smile and presence of God, he is like one walking in the daytime; he plants his foot firmly and boldly forward. But if a man shrink from the call of God, through fear of man, and at the call of worldly prudence, he is like one walking in darkness: "He stumbleth, because there is no light."

O that you who are believers would be persuaded to follow Jesus fearlessly wherever He calls you! If you are a believer, you will often be tempted to shrink back. The path of a Christian is narrow, and often difficult. But what have you to fear? Have you the blood of Christ upon your conscience and the presence of God with your soul? "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" Are we not all immortal till our work is done?



REMEMBERING ALL THE WAY

An address given by Charles Henry Gascoigne of Wellingborough following his 70th birthday in 1928. Though providential, we feel it will be of interest to those who revere Mr. Gascoigne's memory, or who have heard of some of the Lord's remarkable dealings with him. (We cannot understand why the address was given at Forest Hill.)

Now, friends, I have just a little matter to attend to, yet to me it is a very solemn matter, and a very wonderful matter. I would put it in as few words as possible. Since we stood here last we have kept and celebrated our seventieth birthday, on April 10th. I firmly believe the Lord laid it upon my mind when I was fifty years of age – I am going to tell you something I have named only once before – to have Jubilee Services and to ask two men of God to come and preach, and I can say in my heart my motive was for the honour and glory of God. The devil said, "You can't afford to do it free." We had a wonderfully good day; the gospel was preached, and I never reckoned it all up until six weeks after. Now on that occasion it cost me exactly fifty sovereigns to a penny. A customer who left England and went to America in our debt came back for his second wife, and he said, "I owe you some money, and I can pay it to you. What I owe and the interest comes to £49. 15s. Now," he said, "I beg your acceptance of this fifty pounds." That fifty pounds covered everything.

Well, as I approached the seventieth birthday, I thought, "Can I keep my birthday better than with the people of God?" and so with many fears and tremblings we arranged it. A very dear friend of mine, Mr. Pack, and another man of God from Luton, Mr. Fookes, preached the gospel in our chapel. There have never been so many in the chapel since it was built. Now lastly (I never was more surprised in my life), Mr. Pack handed me

a wallet with £98. 16s. in it, and in a very few minutes it was made up to £100. Thirty-two churches from various parts sent help.

I cannot help but say this. In 1882 (forty-six years ago) I first stood up in the pulpit. I had a County Court summons in one pocket and a lawyer's writ in the other. The firm that served this writ upon us was in the Black Country, at Tipton. In the office was a young man who feared God. He met with a young lady at the station, and fell in love with her. She lived in Wellingborough, and he agreed to go to serve the writ upon us, and when he came to Wellingborough he turned into our chapel for that once only. When he got back home on the Monday he went to his master and said, "Governor, I want to have a word with you. If you carry out that writ at Wellingborough you will suffer for it. I heard Mr. Gascoigne preach last night; you withdraw that writ"; and a telegram came to say, "Pay when you can." I could not help but mention that. "This is the finger of God" (Exod. 8. 19). The County Court summons was met in an agreeable way.

Well, when I had finished preaching, and turned to come down the pulpit steps, this word came to me, and I believe it came from heaven, although it does not read just like that, "Thou shalt take no money for thy service; for the Lord thy God, He it is shall bless thee." Now if a thing comes from heaven you will act upon it. The dear old deacon kissed me, and he said, "I say, old friend, I shall give you a sovereign." I said, "John, I dare not take a sovereign." He said, "But you are poor enough" (he did not know about the writ and the summons). I said, "I dare not take a sovereign, or a shilling," and then I told him. Friends, I have stood up at Wellingborough all these years; I believe that scripture came from heaven, and I have never had a penny. I am not complaining; I have been pleased to be there. Hundreds of times I have preached for the last time, but I still keep on. God has upheld me.

Now another thing. Fifty years last August I finished my apprenticeship in the little town of Oundle. My governor was badly off; he owed me thirty shillings, and he could not pay me a shilling. My goods and chattels consisted of a cap, a waistcoat, a collar, Hart's hymnbook and my Bible. I wrapped them up in my blacksmith's apron, and so I started to walk from Oundle to Wellingborough, eighteen miles, without a penny. When I got to Thrapston a woman came out; she wiped her eye and said, "You look to me just like a blacksmith, young man. I have been asking God to send somebody to do an hour's work; our two men are bad, and my husband is ill in bed. Will you weld up these two small tyres for Farmer So-and-So's gig?" I worked for about an hour, and she gave me sixpence and a good dinner, and knelt down and asked God's blessing upon me. On my way I gave a halfpenny to a tramp who used to call at our shop. So I entered Wellingborough with fivepence-

halfpenny. My father said, "Let's ask God to find you a situation." While my father was on his knees a lad came to the door and said, "My father wants a man; come and start work tomorrow morning." So I did, and eventually we started in business; never wanted work; all the years I was in business never had short time. And when God opened my mouth, shall I tell you what word He gave me? "Behold, I have set before thee an open door" (Rev. 3. 8); and all these years (except through illness) I have had a vacant Lord's day only three times, and those three times were the most wretched Lord's days I ever had.

Thirty-five years ago I was engaged for Wellingborough, and a dear friend was taken ill in Camberwell. On that particular day there were two people engaged for Wellingborough. The other friend took my place and I came up to London. Never shall I forget sitting in that seat on my right hand, and when dear Prince [George Prince, the old pastor at Forest Hill, London] preached, he preached into my heart; it came like this to me, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did" (John 4. 29). Now I say it with affection and tenderness, not with lightness: on the Saturday night I had told my wife that is now, "Lizzie, after all these years, I shall have to give up thoughts of getting married; I have no money; I can't afford it." I shall never forget some things your dear old pastor said. After the service I said, "Lizzie, we can get married." When I got home to Wellingborough Station (what does this Book say? "Let Mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab" [Isa. 16. 4]), I met a wicked man, and he said, "I can't sleep for you. There is a place, a shop, that will just suit you. You haven't any money, but I have."

But I will not keep you. So we have been held up and held on; and, to crown it, when we were seventy – not a word, not a whisper did we hear – a hundred pounds was put into our hands. Let me tell you that on my knees I have thanked you in the name of the Lord a good many times. The Lord richly reward you for your kindness to this unworthy wretch, and to Him be all the praise!

Think not so much on your gracious relations as lying in the grave, their beauty turned into rottenness and deformity. Think not of them as, possibly, by a premature death (as you may think) snatched from an earthly inheritance before their time, but think on them as co-heirs with Jesus Christ, riding now in triumph with Him and with the whole general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, to take possession of their inheritance with the saints in light. Thus behold them, not as they are in the night of the shadow of death, but as they shall be in the morning of the resurrection, when God will bring them with Him and, I had almost said, "Mourn if you can."

Thomas Case

THE SORELY AFFLICTED FARMER

*An account of Charles Green of King's Cliffe, Northamptonshire,
written by his brother in 1859. We like the artless way in which he
writes.*

I am now about to address you concerning my dear brother who is, I trust, now singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Feeling my own ignorance and inability, I know not how to proceed; but as it was my dear brother's wish that the tried and afflicted of the Lord's dear family should, if it were the Lord's will, hear through the *Gospel Standard* a little of the lovingkindnesses of a covenant and longsuffering God to his soul, this, and this only, causes me to make an attempt. I am a poor, unlearned man, and have not had the opportunity to be possessed of much education; so on this ground I hope you will overlook all the errors and ignorance I have no doubt you will discover in me.

It pleased the Lord to call my dear brother by His grace about seventeen years ago. He began to find, as the blessed Spirit was pleased to convince him, that he was a lost and ruined sinner as he stood in Adam, and was taught by degrees the emptiness of a form of godliness without the power. He felt dissatisfied with church-going and all freewill worship, and was compelled through sheer necessity to fall in with a free grace gospel, and was made glad to embrace the Rock for want of a shelter.

Thus the Lord brought him under the ministry of Mr. Ireson,* and as he was going one day to Ketton, the blessed Spirit was pleased to lead him to the fountain open for sin and uncleanness; and then he could sing the new song (Isa. 12) and for a time could trust and not be afraid, for the Lord Jehovah was his strength and his song; He also had become his salvation. Thus he was fed with the finest of the wheat, and allowed now and then to drink of that fountain or river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God.

But whom shall the Lord cause to understand doctrine but those that are drawn from the breast and weaned from the milk? It pleased the Lord to lead him about to instruct him, for he was very zealous for the Lord of hosts after he had obtained the pardon of his sins, and was ready to cut everyone off that made a slip or a fall through the deceitfulness of sin and the power of temptation. He was never left to fall into any gross sin, I mean outward sin; but when the Lord maketh darkness, then it is night, and soon the beasts of the forest creep forth. The Lord saith, "The lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day

* R.H. Ireson (d. 1860), minister at King's Cliffe. Many of his letters appear in the old *Gospel Standards*.

of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (Isa. 2. 11, 12). Yes, he was brought to this. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy great name be the praise." He would sometimes say that a man has no true religion in him but when Christ is in him, and he is well broken down.

He was married to a God-fearing woman in 1846, who shared with him in his trials. He was naturally of a warm temper, but if he said anything that he thought was not right in the sight of God, he could not rest till he had spoken to the person again, and so could hold out for nothing but what he thought was truth. He was a lover of the gospel of truth, and was one that sighed and cried at times for the abominations done in the city, but more especially, toward the close of his life, for his own sins. He would show himself at the house of prayer at every opportunity when he had strength, and would be vexed with those who could make frivolous excuses. He was one that courted no man's smile but Christ's, and feared no man's frown but His. He would speak his mind before any man. I have often said to him, "Charles, it is not always wise." But he would say, "I cannot help it, so it is no use talking. The Lord knows what I mean; He knows that I mean right."

It pleased the Lord in His infinite wisdom to take a mysterious course with him in providence the last nine years of his life. He became possessed of three cows; how much he set his mind upon them I must leave with the great Searcher of hearts. But the Lord began to cross him in all he put his hand to; as Hart says,

"Whom He loves He oft reproves,
And chastens whom He loves."

He was soon involved in difficulties. He borrowed money to begin with; was thwarted in His expectations with the cows; rents had to be made up, little coming in, and he was crossed in all he put his hand to.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation," saith Christ. He has fixed the bounds of our habitation, nor can all our planning and scheming deliver us from that path of tribulation. He hath ordained us to pass through that way. Our fleshly wisdom thinks to escape. This is often the very way the Lord in His wisdom brings us into it. Take, for instance, Abraham, the friend of God, and Isaac his son; but God watched over them; yea, "He reproved kings for their sakes, saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm." The Lord saith, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." He will bring the third part through the fire; they shall call on His name; He will hear them; He will say in the furnace of affliction, "It is My people"; yes, and they shall say, "The Lord is my God."

He knew his brothers were poor, and could not help him. This drove him to his God to try and prove a throne of grace, and the Lord was intreated of him, and answered his poor prayers as he called them, and sent him money from his employers when he never expected getting any. He was soon obliged to part with two of the cows, because they became barren and useless, and to buy another instead; and this cow had but just come into profit when she was choked with a piece of turnip.

Now again, he was distressed on every hand, not a friend to look to but God, and the Lord was pleased to raise him up a friend, Mr. R., a young farmer. This man was brought by the teaching of the Spirit, under the preaching at Oakham, to feel himself a lost sinner; and his conscience was made tender, so that he could not stand behind the counter and sell inferior goods at the best price, and was obliged to give it up, and bear the sneers of brothers and the anger of friends. The Lord is a swift witness when He comes near to judgment. This man was brought in the Lord's providence to King's Cliffe, and was a friend to my brother to the day of his death.

During this outward affliction, the Lord was pleased to favour him with many testimonies of His everlasting love to his soul, and gave him faith to believe He would deliver him out of trouble; I mean those outward embarrassments. It pleased the Lord to deliver him from those gloomy forebodings in which he was held so long. I have often heard him say, if the Lord had not stayed his mind and kept him waiting and looking unto Him, he must have sunk under the trial. The Lord says, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass"; and, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

The Lord had not long brought him out of that trial and caused the work of his hands to prosper, before He saw fit to lay His hand upon his tabernacle. About four years ago he felt a pain in his side; this was followed by a violent cold, and this we believe paved the way for that disease which ended in his death. He now began to fall off from his work, and could only do a little now and then, and was obliged frequently to lie down. As time grew on the pain became more severe, and the glands of his neck swelled into a hard substance; it became evident that something serious had befallen him. The doctor seemed to have some idea what the complaint was, and gave but little hope of his recovery. The following winter he advised him to apply to his friends to get him into the Stamford Infirmary; but before arrangements were made he became so ill we all thought the Lord was about to take him to Himself.

But the Lord's time was not yet come. His soul became dark, and death wore a gloomy aspect; his sins all stared him in the face and lay upon him like a heavy burden, and his evidence for eternal glory was obscured. But the Lord was pleased to break through the clouds of

darkness, and said to his soul, "I am thy salvation," and that He had loved him with an everlasting love, and had drawn him with lovingkindness. He thought himself his time was short, and then he called upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and who had answered him in the day of his distress; but the Lord had not as yet weaned him from the ties of this life.

He loved his wife. He said, "If it be the Lord's will, I must go; but if I be honest to speak my mind, I should like to stay with you a little longer."

In the winter of 1856 he went to the Stamford Infirmary. He was there about eight weeks, and returned, as he thought, and ourselves too, something better. But it was the Lord's will he should wade through deeper waters and endure a hotter furnace of affliction. He dragged through the summer very heavily afflicted, able to do but very little work, night and day continually racked with bodily pain and darkness of soul. But the Holy Spirit was pleased again to shine into his soul, and then all was right. Several times he said to his wife, "I can thank the Lord for affliction. If it had not been for affliction, I should have been a proud man, but now He holds me with affliction."

He went one day to try to mend a cow-crib, but the pain was severe, and his misery was great upon him, so he could do but little at it; but the Friend of sinners drew nigh, and his pain and distress were lost in blood and love. He told his wife that if the Lord were to bless his soul in such a way as he had done that afternoon, he could not desire to live. Thus it was with him as Hart sings:

"Tortured with bliss, I cry, Remove
That killing sight; I die with love."

At another time he told me he was standing between the barn door and the post, and Christ melted him into love to and union with Himself. He told me the left hand of the Lord Jesus was under his head, and His right hand embraced him.

The infinite wisdom of God was preparing him for a journey. The angel of the Lord had bidden him rise up and eat, for the journey was too great for him, and he went in the strength of that meat forty days. So it fell out; for on March 1st, 1858, a bitter cold day, he, willing to try to work a little, took a pan of coals into the shop; but, unable to work, he was obliged to give over, and he took the pan out again and, as he thought, left all safe; but it was not so, for a spark escaped, and soon the premises were in flames. He did not know it until someone came from the field and gave the alarm, and soon almost everything was lost or burnt. This was a time not easily to be forgotten by me. This dreadful

event was a deadly blow to sense and reason; but that indestructible principle, true faith, Hart says,

“Lives and labours under load;
Though damped, it never dies.”

Now was Satan’s hour and the power of darkness. I felt his fiery darts and the poison of his arrows. “Where is now thy God? Persecute him, and take him; there is none to deliver him.” I was between hope and despair; but there was that blessed something gleaming now and then, “Hope thou in God.” Then again the devil would point to a hundred obstacles, and roar out again, “Where is now thy God?” Here was my poor brother dragging about an afflicted body, something akin to poor Job. The fire from God had fallen from heaven and burned down his house. I felt persuaded that it was of the Lord, let men think what they please. My brother William’s tent joined hard to his house; this was saved, but his few goods were terribly shattered.

But as morning drew near the enemy’s fire was a little abated, and I had but just time to swallow down my spittle, when the Lord put a cry into my soul to cry unto Him to appear for us, for rottenness had entered my bones, and I trembled within myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble. I stood in awe of His terrible majesty, and was brought to acknowledge His right to take away as well as give. The Lord was pleased to give me a spirit of prayer and supplication to plead with Him on the ground of His great name as being gracious and merciful and ready to forgive; for He had said to my soul, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” This was as the waters of Noah, for like as He had sworn that the waters should no more go over the earth, so had He sworn He would never be wroth with me nor rebuke me, so as to cast me out of the covenant; but He saith, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”

My poor soul went out unto the Friend of sinners to show Himself friendly. He gave me faith to believe all hearts were in His hand, and He could turn them as rivers of water; and to the honour of His great name He put it into the hearts of three men to come forward and try to raise a subscription, and a Mr. W. took an active part in it. They collected £19 some shillings. Thus the Lord was pleased to break the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder; He led them by a right way. “He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then they are glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them into their desired haven.”

(To be concluded)

The whole world cannot weigh against this one comfort, that God is ours.

Sibbes

BOOK REVIEW

Believing and Sealing, by John M'Kenzie; 54 pages; paperback; price £3.20 including postage; published by The Huntingtonian Press, 72a Upper Northam Road, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 4EB.

This is a new reprint of a well-known and well-received sermon which was preached in 1842 and reviewed in the *Gospel Standard* the following year. Two letters are also included: "To the praise of the glory of His grace," and, "The love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost." In opening up the text, John M'Kenzie speaks from his own experience, as he also does in the two letters, the inclusion of which enhances the value of the reprint.

There is an interesting preface by Mr. Henry Sant in which he states, speaking of Mr. M'Kenzie, "He evidently felt that the Lord, in His dealings with his soul, had opened up this Scripture to him ... what is found here constitutes vital godliness." But sadly he also questions the interpretation of the original Greek rendered in the text "after that ye believed," citing John Owen, and further says, "It might be argued that this sermon on Ephesians 1. 13, 14 is marked by a faulty exegesis; nonetheless it is full of excellent, practical divinity." As John M'Kenzie preached the sermon from the text as printed in the Authorised Version of the Holy Bible, this is really a criticism of that translation which your reviewer cannot overlook as he feels it mars the reprint.

We recommend the prayerful study of this reprint to our readers.

J.A. Hart, Chippenham

Beautifully produced, the Editor's little book on the life of Joseph, **Behind a Frowning Providence**, is now available (see wrapper, page vii). Though intended for young people, we trust under God's blessing it will also be profitable to older readers who, like Joseph, know God's "frowning providence."

WHY WEEPEST THOU?

O wherefore art thou sighing,
 Thou drooping, downcast child?
 Why from thy Father flying,
 Who speaks in accents mild?
 His eye is still upon thee,
 His heart with pity moves,
 And melts with lovingkindness
 Toward the child He loves.

Come, gather up thy trials,
 Thy sorrows all recount;
 When weighed in mercy's balance,
 How small is their amount!
 All lighter far than shadows,
 Or feathers in the air,
 When with the weight of glory
 Thou dost them well compare.

The fire of tribulation

May scorch and wound thy flesh,
And Satan, by temptation,
May shoot his fiery darts;
Thy dearest friends may fail thee,
Thine unbelief dismay,
And everything around thee
May tend to lead astray.

But He who dearly bought thee,
Is stronger far than all;
He never would have sought thee,
And leave thee now to fall.
O no! His arms are round thee,
Those blessed arms of love;
And though thy foes surround thee,
Thy Father is above.

O! how this thought should cheer us
Amid the darkest night,
That God – our God – is near us,
Our everlasting Light;
Come, banish every murmur,
Heed not the tempter's lure;
Let faith in God be stronger,
For thou shalt yet endure.

Haste, then, dear child of sorrow;
Press onward to the prize!
The trials which perplex thee
But point thee to the skies!
The mourner's home is yonder,
The crown of glory there;
And saints, with joy and wonder,
That diadem shall wear!

Come, join the general chorus
Of saints in earth and heaven;
For honour, praise and glory
Shall be to Jesus given.
His arm has brought salvation,
His ransom paid our debt;
Let every tongue and nation
The joyful truth repeat.

E.B.M., *Gospel Standard* 1859

God, in the great day, will recompense His people before all the world for every secret prayer, and secret tear, and secret sigh, and secret groan that has come from His people.

Thomas Brooks

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
SEPTEMBER 2008

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

OUR GOD IS ABLE

*Sermon preached by Mr. C.A. Wood at Ebenezer Chapel, Luton,
on June 19th, 1982*

Text: “If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3. 17, 18).

When I awoke this morning, the very first thought in my mind, I trust from heaven, with power, were these words: “Our God is able.” As far as I can recollect, no other thought whatsoever had entered my mind. As this word came in such a way, I had a humble persuasion that it was to be the text, at least for this afternoon. But with it came this thought – it might have been a temptation – “You have preached from that here before.” I believe that is true. Then I thought, “Well, I must turn to another word.” My brethren, I believe if I turned this afternoon to some other word, I should be disobedient to my God. For what purpose this has been spoken to me I know not. It may be for myself personally; I trust it is in that way. I may never know if there is a manifest purpose that we should attempt, God helping us, to speak from these words this afternoon.

Now in the first place, as we turn to this text, we observe this testimony of these three godly young men. They could, in the fear of God, with faith in God, say, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.” This was a true profession of faith; it was with sincerity.

I would first seek to speak of these words: “Whom we serve,” as we examine them in the life of these three young men. They were taken, as we believe, in early life, captive to a strange land, a land of idolatry, a land where the Lord God was not served nor worshipped. Though in the midst of such surroundings, they sought to walk in the fear of God and to honour God, and not to be ashamed of their God.

It is significant to notice that when those young men, with Daniel, were brought to the prince of the eunuchs their names were changed. Daniel’s name was changed to Belteshazzar, Hananiah to Shadrach, Mishael to Meshach, Azariah to Abednego. There is instruction here. Why were their names changed? These Hebrew names had meanings. They spoke of God, the God of Israel. Daniel, for example, God is my Judge; Hananiah, the grace of God; Mishael, who is a god like our God?

and Azariah, the Lord is my Helper. They took those names away and gave them Babylonish names: Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Just as their Hebrew names had spiritual meanings and spoke of the God of Israel, so these heathen names spoke of the names of heathen gods and idols such as Bel, for example, and Nego. They would seek to remove from these young men all that had to do with their religion and with the God of Israel.

Such power is found in the land that we love. Doubtless in school life there will be an attempt to remove the Bible from instruction, not to speak of the God of Israel to those who are young. My dear young people, the dear children here, you may hear much, and doubtless do, that is spoken against God and His Word. The Lord help you to stand fast, to hold to the Word of God, to read God's Word, to pray that God will help you understand it, that you may not be turned away from it.

They changed their names, but blessed be God, they could never remove that inward work of grace manifested in the fear of God and in the faith of God. I would just name in passing, when they were given that food sent down from the king which was contrary to the Word of God, Daniel and his friends stood fast and would not defile themselves with the portion of the king's meat. There is instruction for us here. As these men, Daniel particularly, stood fast, they did not do it as some do, sad to say, in a contentious spirit. They spoke with respect, and yet with firmness. We are exhorted to contend earnestly – not contentiously – for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Again, with the dear children and young people as a weight and burden upon my spirit, I would speak a word to you again, and that is this. If there is that that you are tempted over, something that is said, something that people ask you to do, and you are not happy in your mind, you feel that this is against God and against His Word, against the Bible, ask God to help you to stand and not to do what is wrong in the sight of God. Now this is not easy. It may be, and doubtless will, that you will stand very much alone, on your own. You may even be laughed at, scorned, reproached. Ask God to help you. Seek grace to stand to God's Word, and may the Lord help you and bless you. We in the pulpit are not unmindful of these difficulties of boyhood and girlhood years and teenage years, the conflicts and difficulties that arise when they would seek that you should do something and you know that to do it would be wrong, that you could not ask God to bless it. Ask God to help you; ask God to give you grace and strength and courage. Remember this. I often think of my late, beloved mother. She used to tell me in my boyhood days to seek to make a stand *from the beginning*. It is not easy to do that. To make a stand from the beginning is right and God will honour it; God will help you. It is better to have the blessing of God and the frown of

all the ungodly than to have the smile of the ungodly and the frown of God upon us.

Trials of faith sometimes come very unexpectedly. My brethren, I am completely perplexed as to why I should try to speak like this this afternoon, but I just cannot get away from it. I wonder whether there is someone here (maybe an older friend) that has suddenly been brought into some place and trial where you are faced with this: Do I give way or do I stand for what is right? This can come in an unexpected way. I have thought with these three Hebrews that as this king set up this image of gold and made this proclamation, the image was so high – about eighty feet – it could be clearly seen. Nobody could say that it was so small they could not see it. The sound of the music would be so loud that no-one could say that they could not hear it and the command was that when this music sounded, all without exception should bow down and worship the image that the king had set up.

One has wondered why Nebuchadnezzar set this image up. We have been led to consider the previous chapter, and that dream of Nebuchadnezzar and the interpretation revealed to Daniel by God, that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold of the image in his dream (Dan. 2. 37, 38). There is nothing so easy as to look at Nebuchadnezzar and say what a proud king he was. It is another thing to look at self and say what proud creatures we are. We are guilty, very guilty, and prone to set up some idol to feed our pride. We need to watch against it. I name this in passing because there is very much instruction in the Word of God. We pray that God will speak to us, not only a word of comfort, but a word of counsel, a word of correction, a word of warning, to show us that we too have got such a wicked heart by nature, so proud, that we too can be guilty of setting up an image or seeking in a wrong way the praise of men.

These three men, then, were faced with a great decision, a sudden time of test and trial. Now, you three men, is it not better to go with the crowd? Is it not better to mingle with them just this once? You cannot offend the king; you must not offend the people. But what about offending God? These three men, by the grace of God, stood fast and stood firm, and you know it made them stand out alone. We might picture the great multitude as they were all bowing down prostrate to the ground and these three, I am sure, standing together. They did not bow down. What a lonely path for these three, and yet, as our text declares, “Our God whom we serve.” We do not serve God just like a man with a hard taskmaster; we serve God because God has put love in our heart to Him. We love our God; we love what He tells us; we love what He commands us, and therefore we seek in love to serve Him, to do what He bids us, for we know that His commandments are right, that His Word is good. To serve God, “whom we serve.” To put God first, whatever the cost.

“Our God.” I thought that is very sweet and precious. These three men were as one; they were united together. “Our God.” We walk the same path; we love the same God, and in serving our God we do so in love. “I love my Master.”

This meant that these three men, as we have read, were brought before the king and the king was very angry. Now comes what was, to my mind, an even greater test than any that they had gone through before. It was a great test to stand out as three men alone out of a great multitude and not to bow down to that image, but I see yet a greater test still. The king said, “Now if ye be ready that at what time” – next time, as it were – “ye hear the music sound and you fall down and worship, it is well.” As it were, “I will pass over what you have done on this occasion. I am not willing that you should be put into a furnace; I am willing to show mercy. Give in, give way.” The king is kind; he is understanding. Friend, what a dangerous temptation this is! The hardest of all! How firm did these dear men stand, in their loneliness trusting in their God.

I have often, in thinking of this, remembered something I read many years ago of a dear Christian girl who lived long ago in one of the Arab states. There this young woman was brought to the knowledge of the truth and manifested true faith as a Christian and because of it she was threatened with the most terrible torture and persecution to give it up and renounce her faith. She said that she feared, she trembled, she was afraid, but that God would be with her to help her. They then said, “Now if you renounce your faith, you may have the hand of So-and-so in marriage. You can have all that this world can give” – the very best of earthly things, and all that a woman could desire in that land in those days. What a temptation! My friend, God makes a way out of our temptations. We are not to find our way out of them, the easy path to flesh. God will make a way of escape. But that dear woman, by the grace of God, stood firm in that double test, and the second test might almost have been the severest one, that she might very easily have given way to. She stood firm.

What grace we need, what help we need! By nature our flesh is very weak. We do not want to suffer; we do not want reproach; we do not want scorn. But if you and I are helped to look on the loneliness of Jesus, the reproach of the Saviour, what He suffered for our sake, and there to prove, as I hope, to know that support of His presence, that communion with Him, what a blessing this is, and we shall then not seek to find our way out. Pray for grace. We think of these lines:

“Dare to be a Daniel;
Dare to stand alone;
Dare to say, ‘The Bible’s true’;
Dare to make it known.”

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." They could look on Nebuchadnezzar and all his power and all his might and earthly pomp and glory and look up to God, the God of heaven, and put their trust in Him. It is not too hard for God to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver. There are times when, under the sweet influence of the Spirit, faith strengthened, we are enabled to say, "He will deliver. He is going to bring me to heaven." Not always do we live in the enjoyment of it. But, my friend, it is true. Dear child of God, O beloved, it is true. He that "delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." Deliver us out of six troubles, yea seven also.

"But if not." Is this a lack of faith? Is this fear? I think not. "If not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." If it means the fire, if it means death, "we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

We always seek to be very careful how we interpret the Word of God, but here we have *enduring* faith. In the seventeenth verse we have *overcoming* faith. I name this because some say, "I do not find that the way out is made for me as it was for these three. I seem to have to pass through much trouble, many fears, and it does not seem that I am given that liberty or that victory or that loosening of my bonds." But, my dear friend, there is enduring faith. God is a Sovereign. God is love. God knows what is needful for you and for me.

Let me just enlarge on this point for a moment. Look at the latter part of the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews. There the apostle says the time failed him to speak of these others, when he spoke of those who, "through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." That was the victory of faith; that was the triumph of faith, the great deliverance that God wrought from time to time for His dear people, and He still does it today. There are times when we believe this triumphant faith is given and this victory and this overcoming and this strengthening, but it is not always so. There are times when the way is very dark and there seems no deliverance. Is something wrong?

Well, look again at God's Word. We have just said that there were those who by faith escaped the edge of the sword. We read that there were some "slain with the sword," some "tortured, not accepting deliverance." There were those that dwelt in dens and caves of the earth. There were those that suffered. Was something wrong, something lacking, something failing? And we say it with reverence, the heathen would say, "Where is your God?" There is nothing failing. Faith will

never fail, and I think of the prayer of Jesus for Peter and His dear people: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee." You may fail; your flesh may fail; but never your faith; it will never be destroyed. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." But it is tried.

Let us tarry another moment here by way of explanation. Just take those two scriptures that would *seem* a contradiction: by faith "escaped the edge of the sword"; by faith "slain with the sword." How can it be? Let us go to the early church. There was that wicked Herod, who took James, put him into prison and beheaded him. Was something wrong with James? He was a real Christian, but taken from earth to glory, his head literally severed from his body, but never his soul from the love of Christ. What about Peter? The church is praying, and the Lord in His sovereign purpose sends an angel and the way of escape is made.

So if I speak to any this afternoon who may be on the darker side of things, you may have said, "I know what trial and loneliness and temptations are, but I do not know what victory is. I do not seem to know much of this liberty. If not, if it means that I should suffer, that the trial should be lengthened, if it should be a loss in body or circumstance, I must serve my God. I will not bow down. I will not serve thy gods, because my God will help me. My God is able to deliver me, to help me in the darkest hour, the longest trial, and He in His time and in His way will bring me through. And if there is not liberty, if there is still a measure of bondage, if there is darkness and not light, if it seems that the devil is gaining the victory, my God will help me, my God will deliver me."

After the anger of the king, the fury of the ungodly, the furnace was heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated. Friend, there are times when we walk in life's path and we feel it is just like that; it could not be more difficult; it could not be more lonely; it could not be more painful. And yet God is able to deliver us in it. Dear Mr. Frank Gosden once said that he felt if one more trial was added to him he would sink. When he got home there was another greater trial, and what did the dear man say? "Yes, I sank, right down into the everlasting arms." What a mercy to have a God to go to, to trust in, and for faith in exercise to believe,

"Too wise to be mistaken, yea,
Too good to be unkind."

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver." There is something very solemn here. The mighty men of the army bound these three men, and as they cast them into the fire, the margin tells us the spark slew them. "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye," saith the almighty God. It is a warning for Christians to be very careful how we

speaking about others and how we act concerning others. May the Lord keep us very tender in His fear and loving in our spirit. Remember the sad and solemn end of these men. Mighty men they may be, but a spark from God's fire can consume them. Hell will never make an atonement for sin, the wrath of God for ever and ever. My friend, beware how you speak and act. I need this myself; I preach to myself.

They fell down bound into the furnace. I have read that it is thought that they were bound together as one. We know not, but bound they were.

You say, "But this is the Old Testament. Things do not happen like that today." Not, perhaps, in the exact outward sense of it as we might say, but are we entire strangers to the loosening of bonds in the fire, and to the presence of Jesus? Some of my sweetest blessings have been in my deepest trials. When you were so lonely and felt everything was against you, suddenly someone came – Jesus. You say, "How does Jesus come?" He comes with a word, comes with a sense of His presence, grants us a sight of Himself and strengthens our faith and draws our wounded spirit and tempted soul into His heart and we walk with Him; we are not alone. He bears us up and blesses us in the fire, and we come forth out of the flame singing His praise, blessing God for the trial. It is made heaven on earth and we come out of it with a spiritual knowledge: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

My brethren, this is a very sacred experience. I believe twice, at least, in my life I have been thus favoured in some little measure. O what a sacred season it is! Once when my dear one was undergoing the first of two operations, a big operation, and I was in the pulpit at Clapham. If ever I felt the presence of Jesus, I did there. My friend, these things are real.

Another time, in the depth of sorrow and distress and heartbreak, Jesus came. It was in His Word and ever so simple, but O so precious, "And He was there." You will find that in Mark chapter 1: "And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted." But it was just this: "He was there." He knows all that you are going through; He has been through it and suffered more than you. Here is thy Saviour, thy unfailing Friend. What comfort this brings! "By these things men live."

But now just by way of closing. "Our God whom we serve is able." Our God is able. Yes, and what does the Word say? Do you say, and the devil says, that you are too black for Jesus Christ, and yet in your heart there is a longing for the Saviour, a longing for salvation? Well, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost" – to the uttermost ends of the earth, to this uttermost salvation – "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." There is a word for you. Our God is able.

You say, "I know He is able, but will He?"

"If I ask Him to receive me,
Will He say me Nay?
Not till earth, and not till heaven,
Pass away."

I thought of the leper. "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He did not doubt the power, but the willingness. Jesus said, "I will; be thou clean." It was this same Jesus. Our God is able.

And then you may be in temptation. He is able to succour, able to make a way of escape. You may say, "But those promises, can they ever be fulfilled?" What He has promised, He is able also to perform.

I leave these thoughts with you, something for faith to lay hold on, something to take in prayer to our God. You may say, "I am so insufficient. My responsibility increases in the ministry, as a deacon, as a member of the church or congregation." "God is able to make all grace abound toward you." You may be weak, but He is able to make you strong and help you. He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," and able to keep us. We are afraid of falling and our God is able to keep us from falling.

Well, the time has gone. Our God is able, blessed be His name. He will bring His dear children at last right through to glory. "The righteous shall hold on his way." "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand," because "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us." The Lord bless His Word. Amen.

BEARING THE DYING OF THE LORD

By Dr. John Owen

"Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus"
(2 Cor. 4. 10).

The apostle has a great and glorious word concerning himself: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." I acknowledge, the words are usually applied to the representation of the sufferings of Christ in the sufferings of the ministers of the gospel, concerning which the apostle there discourses; but the antithesis in the following words: "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body," does certainly lead to a larger sense.

Then, brethren, we may have an experience of the power of Christ in us, when we can say we always carry about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus, carry it in our meditation, carry it in our conversation, carry it in our constant, universal endeavours for conformity to it; and without

this we have not experience of the power of His death in us, and it will not avail us to have the nature of His death represented to us.

1. We are always to carry about the dying of Jesus Christ in *our thoughts and meditations*. O that our thoughts were much fixed upon it! I verily believe that the life of faith doth answer in proportion to our thoughts about the dying of Jesus. The dying of Jesus compriseth the love from whence He died, the death itself He died, and the end for which He died. Let us carry about us always thoughts hereof, for His sake who loved us, and who died for us. Meditate more on these things.

2. *In our conversation*. It is not a time to reflect upon any, unless I did it upon myself. But truly, brethren, I am afraid we do not carry about and manifest to all the dying of the Lord Jesus in our conversation; or perform all things so as it may appear and be made manifest to ourselves and others that our hearts are set upon His dying love, and that we have not such quick, such active and vigorous affections to the world and the things of the world, nor that fury of diligence after them and in them, as other men have, and we have had; *we* cannot do it – the dying of the Lord Jesus crucifies our hearts. These are hard words, I know – how far from our practice! But if we live not in an endeavour after it, in all things to manifest that our hearts are full of the dying of the Lord Jesus, we have not experience of the power of it in our souls. These things depend on one another. If we dwelt more upon this subject in our meditations, we should manifest it, and carry it about and represent it more in our conversation.

3. Carry it about in *a constant endeavour for conformity to Jesus Christ in all things in His death*. Did Christ die, and shall sin live? Was He crucified in the world, and shall we have quick and lively affections to the world? O where is the temper and spirit of that apostle who, by the cross of Christ, was crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him? If there be any among us that should be indulgent to the life of any one lust or corruption, that soul can have no experience of the power of the death of Christ in himself, cannot carry about him the dying of Christ. Endeavour to destroy sin, that we may be like unto Christ.

I will not make particular application of these things to all the concerns of our walk, but leave it with you with this word, begging of you and my own heart, and of God for us all, that having these blessed representations of the death of Christ to us, we may have no rest in our spirits but when we have experience of the power of the death of Christ in us.

Faith makes us draw all our comforts from a fountain that will never fail.
Halyburton

THE CROOK IN THE LOT THE REASONS FOR IT

By Thomas Boston (1677-1732)

I enquire, *why God* makes a crook in one's lot. And this is to be cleared by discovering the *design* of that dispensation, a matter which it concerns everyone to know and carefully to notice in order to a Christian improvement of the crook in their lot. The *design* thereof seems to be chiefly seven-fold.

Firstly, The *trial of one's state*, whether one is in the state of grace or not? Whether a sincere Christian, or a hypocrite? Though every affliction is trying, yet here, I conceive, lies the main providential trial a man is brought upon with reference to his *state*: forasmuch as the crook in the lot, being a matter of a continued course, one has occasion to open and show himself again and again in the same thing; whence it comes to pass that it ministers ground for a decision in that momentous point.

It was plainly on this bottom that the trial of Job's state was put. The question was, Whether Job was an upright and sincere servant of God, as God Himself testified of him; or but a mercenary one, a hypocrite, as Satan alleged against him? And the trial hereof was put upon the *crook* to be made in his lot (Job 1. 8-12 and 2. 3-6). Accordingly, that which all his friends, save Elihu the last speaker, did in their reasonings with him under his trial aim at, was to prove him a hypocrite; Satan thus making use of these good men for gaining his point. As God took trial of Israel in the wilderness, for the land of Canaan, by a train of afflicting dispensations, the which Caleb and Joshua bearing strenuously were declared meet to enter the promised land, as having followed the Lord fully, while others being tired out with them, their carcases fell in the wilderness, so He takes trial of men for heaven by the crook in their lot. If one can stand that test, he is manifested to be a saint, a sincere servant of God, as Job was proven to be; if not, he is but a hypocrite; he cannot stand the test of the crook in his lot, but goes away like dross in God's furnace.

A melancholy instance of which we have in that man of honour and wealth who, with high pretences of religion, arising from a principle of moral seriousness, addressed himself to our Saviour, to know what he should do that he might inherit eternal life (Mark 10. 17, 21). Our Saviour, to discover the man to himself, makes a crook in his lot, where all along before it had stood even, obliging him, by a probatory command, to sell and give away all he had, and follow Him (verse 21). "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor ... and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." Hereby he was, that moment, in the court of conscience, stripped of his great possessions; so that thenceforth he could no longer keep them with a good conscience, as he might have done

before. The man instantly felt the smart of this crook made in his lot: "He was sad at that saying" (verse 22). That is, immediately upon the hearing of it, being struck with pain, disorder and confusion of mind, his countenance changed, became cloudy and *lowring*, as the same word is used (Matt. 16. 3). He could not stand the test of that crook; he could by no means submit his lot to God in *that* point, but behoved to have it, at any rate, according to his own mind. So he "went away grieved: for he had great possessions." He went away from Christ back to his plentiful estate, and though with a pained and sorrowful heart, sat him down again on it, a violent possessor before the Lord, thwarting the divine order. And there is no appearance that ever this order was revoked, nor that ever he came to a better temper in reference thereunto.

Secondly, Excitation to duty, weaning one from this world, and prompting him to look after the happiness of the other world. Many have been beholden to the crook in their lot for that ever they came to themselves, settled and turned serious. Going for a time like a wild ass used to the wilderness, scorning to be turned, their foot hath slid in due time; and a crook being thereby made in their lot, their month hath come, wherein they have been caught (Jer. 2. 24). Thus was the prodigal brought to himself, and obliged to entertain thoughts of returning unto his father (Luke 15. 17).

The crook in their lot convinces them at length that here is not their rest. Finding still a pricking thorn of uneasiness, whensoever they lay down their head, where they would fainest take rest in the creature, and that they are obliged to lift it again, they are brought to conclude there is no hope from that quarter, and begin to cast about for rest another way. So it makes them errands to God, which they had not before; forasmuch as they feel a need of the comforts of the other world, to which their mouths were out of taste, while their lot stood even to their mind. Wherefore whatever use we make of the crook in our lot, the voice of it is, "Arise ye, and depart, this is not your rest." And it is surely that which of all means of mortification of the afflictive kind doth most deaden a real Christian to this life and world.

Thirdly, Conviction of sin. As when one, walking heedlessly, is suddenly taken ill of a lameness, his going halting the rest of his way convinceth him of having made a wrong step, and every new painful step brings it afresh to his mind: so God makes a crook in one's lot, to convince him of some false step he hath made, or course he hath taken. What the sinner would otherwise be apt to overlook, forget, or think light of, is by this means recalled to mind, set before him as an evil and bitter thing, and kept in remembrance, that his heart may every now and then bleed for it afresh.

Thus, by the crook, men's sin finds them out to their conviction, as the thief is ashamed when he is found (Num. 32. 23; Jer. 2. 26). The

which Joseph's brethren do feelingly express, under the crook made in their lot in Egypt: "We are verily guilty concerning our brother" (Gen. 42. 21); "God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants" (44. 16). The crook in the lot doth usually, in its nature or circumstances, so natively refer to the false step or course that it serves for a providential memorial of it, bringing the sin, though of an old date, fresh to remembrance, and for a badge of the sinner's folly, in word or deed, to keep it ever before him.

When Jacob found Leah, through Laban's unfair dealing, palmed upon him for Rachel, how could he miss of a stinging remembrance of the cheat he had seven years at least before put on his own father, pretending himself to be Esau? (Gen. 27. 19). How could it miss of galling him occasionally afterwards during the course of the marriage? He had imposed on his father the younger brother for the elder; and Laban imposed on him the elder sister for the younger. The dimness of Isaac's eyes favoured the former cheat; and the darkness of the evening did as much favour the latter. So he behoved to say, as Adoni-bezek in another case: "As I have done, so God hath requited me" (Judges. 1. 7). In like manner Rachel, dying in childbirth, could hardly evite [avoid] a melancholy reflection on her rash and passionate expression, mentioned Gen. 30. 1. "Give me children, or else I die." Even holy Job read in the crook of his lot some false steps he had made in his youth many years before: "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth" (Job. 13. 26).

Fourthly, Correction or punishment for sin. In nothing more than in the crook of the lot is that word verified: "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee" (Jer. 2. 19). God may for a time wink at one's sin, which afterward He will set a brand of His indignation upon in crooking the sinner's lot, as He did in the case of Jacob, and of Rachel, mentioned before. Though the sin was a passing action, or a course of no long continuance, the mark of the divine displeasure for it, set on the sinner in the crook of his lot, may pain him long and sore, that by repeated experience he may know what an evil and bitter thing it was.

David's killing Uriah by the sword of the Ammonites was soon over, but for that cause the sword never departed from his house (2 Sam. 12. 10). Gehazi quickly obtained two bags of money from Naaman in the way of falsehood and lying; but as a lasting mark of the divine indignation against the profane trick, he got withal a leprosy which clave to him while he lived and to his posterity after him (2 Kings 5. 27).

This may be the case, as well where the sin is pardoned as to the guilt of eternal wrath, as where it is not. And one may have confessed and sincerely repented of that sin, which yet shall make him go halting to the grave, though it cannot carry him to hell. A man's person may be accepted in the Beloved, who yet hath a particular badge of the divine

displeasure with his sin hung upon him in the crook of his lot: "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance on their inventions" (Psa. 99. 8).

Fifthly, Preventing of sin: "I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths" (Hos. 2. 6). The crook in the lot will readily be found to lie cross to some wrong bias of the heart, which peculiarly sways with the party; so it is like a thorn-hedge or wall in the way which that bias inclines him to. The defiling objects in the world do specially take and prove ensnaring as they are suited to the particular cast of temper in men; but by means of the crook in the lot, the paint and varnish is worn off the defiling object, whereby it loseth its former taking appearance, so the fuel being removed, the edge of corrupt affections is blunted, temptation weakened, and much sin prevented; the sinner after gadding about so much to change his way returning ashamed (Jer. 2. 36, 37).

Thus the Lord crooks one's lot, "that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man"; and so, "He keepeth back his soul from the pit" (Job 33. 17, 18). Everyone knows what is most pleasing to him, but God alone knows what is the most profitable. As all men are liars, so all men are fools too. He is the only wise God (Jude 25). Many are obliged to the crook in their lot that they go not to these excesses which their vain minds and corrupt affections would with full sail carry them to; and they would from their hearts bless God for making it, if they did but calmly consider what would most likely be the issue of the removal thereof. When one is in hazard of fretting under the hardship of bearing the crook, he would do well to consider what condition he is as yet in, for to bear its removal in a Christian manner.

Sixthly, Discovery of latent corruption, whether in saints or sinners. There are some corruptions in every man's heart which lie, as it were, so near the surface that they are ready on every turn to cast up; but then there are others also which lie so very deep that they are scarcely observed at all. But as the fire under the pot makes the scum to cast up, appear a-top and run over, so the crook in the lot ariseth up from the bottom, and brings out such corruption as otherwise one would hardly imagine to be within.

Who would have suspected such strength of passion in the meek Moses as he discovered at the waters of strife, and for which he was kept out of Canaan? (Psa. 106. 32, 33; Num. 20. 13). So much bitterness of spirit in the patient Job as to charge God with becoming cruel to him? (Job 30. 21). So much ill-nature in the good Jeremiah as to curse not only the day of his birth, but even the man who brought tidings of it to his father? (Jer. 20. 14, 15). Or, such a tang of atheism in Asaph as to pronounce religion a vain thing? (Psa. 73. 13). But the crook in the lot,

bringing out these things, showed them to have been within, how long soever they had lurked unobserved.

And as this design, however indecently proud scoffers allow themselves to treat it, is in no wise inconsistent with the divine perfections, so the discovery itself is necessary for the due humiliation of sinners, and to stain the pride of all glory that men may know themselves. Both which appear in that it was on this very design that God made the long-continued crook in Israel's lot in the wilderness, even to humble them and prove them, to know what was in their heart (Deut. 8. 2).

Lastly, The exercise of grace in the children of God. Believers, through the remains of indwelling corruption, are liable to fits of spiritual laziness and inactivity, in which their graces lie dormant for the time. Besides, there are some graces which, of their own nature, are but occasional to their exercise, as being exercised only upon occasions of certain things which they have a necessary relation to, such as patience and longsuffering. Now, the crook in the lot serves to rouse up a Christian to the exercise of the graces overpowered by corruption, and withal to call forth to action the occasional graces ministering proper occasions for them.

The truth is, the crook in the lot is the great engine of providence for making men appear in their true colours, discovering both their ill and their good; and if the grace of God be in them, it will bring it out, and cause it to display itself. It so puts the Christian to his shifts that, however it makes him stagger for a while, yet it will at length evidence both the reality and the strength of grace in him. "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth ... might be found unto praise" (1 Pet. 1. 6, 7). The crook in the lot gives rise unto many acts of faith, hope, love, self-denial, resignation and other graces; to many heavenly breathings, pantings, longings and groanings, which otherwise would not be brought forth.

And I make no question but these things, howsoever by carnal men despised as trifling, are more precious in the sight of God than even believers themselves are aware of, being acts of immediate internal worship; and will have a surprising notice taken of them, and of the sum of them at long-run, howbeit the persons themselves can hardly think them worth their own notice at all. We know who hath said to the gracious soul, "Let me see thy countenance ... thy countenance is comely" (Song 2. 14). "Thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes" (Song 4. 9). The steady acting of a gallant army of horse and foot to the routing of the enemy is highly prized; but the acting of holy fear and humble hope is in reality far more valuable, as being so in the sight of God, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. This the

psalmist teacheth (Psa. 147. 10, 11): "He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."

And indeed the exercise of the graces of His Spirit in His people is so very precious in His sight, that whatever grace any of them do excel in, they will readily get such a crook made in their lot as will be a special trial for it, that will make a proof of its full strength.

Abraham excelled in the grace of faith, in trusting God's bare word of promise over the belly of sense; and God giving him a promise that He would make of him a great nation made withal a crook in his lot by which he had enough ado with all the strength of his faith, while he was obliged for good and all to leave his country and his kindred, and sojourn among the Canaanites, his wife continuing barren, till past the age of child-bearing; and when she had at length brought forth Isaac, and he was grown up, he was called to offer him up for a burnt-offering, the more exquisite trial of his faith that Ishmael was now expelled his family, and that it was declared that in Isaac only his seed should be called (Gen. 21. 12). "Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Num. 12. 3). And he was entrusted with the conduct of a most perverse and unmanageable people, the crook in his lot plainly designed for the exercise of his meekness. Job excelled in patience and, by the crook in his lot, he got as much to do with it. For God gives none of His people to excel in a gift, but some one time or other He will afford them use for the whole compass of it.

EJACULATORY PRAYERS

By Thomas Boston (1677-1732)

I shall speak a word on ejaculatory prayers [uttered suddenly].

1. It has been the practice of the saints. Thus Jacob, when making his testament, says, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord" (Gen. 49. 18). And when giving charge to his sons concerning Benjamin, "God Almighty give you mercy before the man" (Gen. 43. 14). Moses, when brought into a great strait at the approach of the Egyptians, "The Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward" (Exod. 14. 15). David, when told of Ahithophel's being among the conspirators with Absalom, says, "O Lord, I pray Thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness" (2 Sam. 15. 31). And Nehemiah, when in the king's presence, and asked by him his request, says, "I prayed to the God of heaven" (Neh. 2. 4).

2. Such prayers are very necessary. Light and strength for duty, against temptation, etc., are often needed, when we cannot get to our knees.

3. They are very useful for present help, and are notable means to keep the soul habitually heavenly and in a proper frame, when we make more solemn approaches to God.

4. It is no small mercy that God's door stands always open, and that our prayers may be at heaven, before we can be at a secret place.

THE FRIEND OF SINNERS

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843)

"These things said He: and after that He saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. Then said His disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11. 11-16).

I. Christ's love to a dead Lazarus.

1. He calls him friend. An eminent infidel used to say that neither patriotism nor friendship was taught in the Bible. He only proved that he neither knew nor understood the Bible. How different the sentiment of the Christian poet, who says,

"The noblest friendship ever shown,
The Saviour's history makes known."

Ah! it is an amazing truth that Jehovah-Jesus came and made friends of such worms as we are. True friendship consists in mutual confidence and mutual sacrifices.

Thus God dealt with Enoch: "Enoch walked with God three hundred years." Enoch told all to God, and God told all to him. Blessed friendship – between Jehovah and a worm! So God treated Abraham. Three times in the Bible he is called "the friend of God" (2 Chron. 20. 7; Isa. 41. 8; Jas. 2. 23). He "raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to His foot." The God of glory appeared unto Abraham, and we find God saying, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Gen. 18. 17). So God dealt with Moses: "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exod. 33. 11, 14). "When Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he took the vail off" (Exod. 34. 34).

Thus did Christ deal with His disciples. Though He was the holy Lamb of God, yet He says: "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the

servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15. 15). He admitted them to the closest fellowship, so that one leaned on His breast at supper, and another washed His feet with ointment. He told them freely all that He had learned in the bosom of His Father – all that they were able to bear – of the Father's glory, the Father's love.

Thus He dealt with Lazarus: "Our friend Lazarus." Often, no doubt, they had sat beneath the spreading fig tree at the cottage of Bethany and Christ had opened up to them the glories of an eternal world.

This is what you are invited to, dear friends – to become the friends of Jesus. When men choose friends, they generally choose the rich, or the wise, or the witty; they ask those that will invite them back. Not so with Christ. He chooses the poor, the foolish, babes, and makes them friends – those of whom the world is ashamed. The world changes friends. In the world, if a rich friend wax poor, if overtaken by a sudden failure and plunged in deepest poverty, friends like butterflies in the rain fly quickly home; they look cold and strange, as if they did not see you. Not so Jesus, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. A true friend does not hide anything from another which it would be good for him to know. Neither does Christ: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?"

2. Even when dead: "Our friend Lazarus." Few people remember the dead. They are "a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again"; "The place that knows them shall know them no more for ever." In some of the countries where I have been, there are immense burying-grounds where cities have been, but where not a living being now remains. There is not one to remember their name, or to shed a tear over their memory. Even among yourselves, how soon are the dead forgotten! Although you loved them well when living – "lovely and pleasant in their lives," yet when they are out of sight, they are soon out of mind. But Christ's dead are never forgotten. There is one faithful Brother who keeps in mind the sleeping dust of all His brothers and sisters. Death makes no change in the love of Christ; death cannot separate us from His love; death does not take us off His breastplate. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth."

Ah, my friends, this is to take the sting away from death! You will, no doubt, be forgotten by the world; if you are Christ's, they never loved you, and will be glad when you are gone. Living sermons are no pleasant objects in the world's eye. They will be glad when you are under the sod. Even believers will forget you. Man is a frail creature, and memory is fading. But Christ never will forget you. He that said, "My faithful martyr Antipas!" when all the world had forgotten him, remembers all His sleeping saints, and will bring them with Him.

II. The mistake.

In the last chapter we had a specimen of the selfishness of the disciples, here of their stupidity. They were beloved disciples, had left all to follow Christ, sincerely believed His word and loved His person; and yet what remains of blindness in the understanding! "If he sleep, he shall do well."

1. To sleep, was the common expression for the death of saints in the Old Testament. Thus God said to Moses: "Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers" (Deut. 31. 16). And to Daniel: "Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Dan. 12. 2). To King David: "Thou shalt sleep with thy fathers" (2 Sam. 7. 12). "Now shall I sleep in the dust" (Job 7. 21). "Lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Psa. 13. 3). Surely, if they had thought a little, they might have found the meaning!

2. What would have been the use of going to awake him out of a refreshing sleep? Did they think so lightly of their Master, as that He would run into personal danger to awaken a sleeping man?

Do not wonder when disciples mistake the meaning of Christ's words. They have done so before, and may do it again. Every gracious man is not an infallible man. Learn to search patiently into the meaning of His words by comparing scripture with scripture, and especially going to Him for light. When you are reading in a dark room, and come to a difficult part, you take it to the window to get more light; so take your Bibles to Christ.

What was the cause of their mistake? *Answer:* Fear. They did not want to go into Judea again. They were afraid of being stoned. They saw their Master was bent upon going, and they wanted to dissuade Him. They misunderstood His words, because of the averseness of their hearts to His will. This is the great reason of all blindness in divine things: "Through the blindness of their hearts"; "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine."

The reason why many of you do not understand your lost condition is not that it is not taught in the Bible, not that the words are difficult (the Bible is a plain, simple Book), but it is that you do not wish to be convinced of sin; you do not want your fine dreams of your own goodness and safety to be dashed to pieces. The reason why many of you do not understand the way of forgiveness is that you do not like it; your heart is averse from God's way; you cannot bear to have all your righteousness accounted rags, and to be beholden entirely to the righteousness of One. The reason why many saints among you cannot see your rule of duty plain is that you are averse to the duty. You want to have your own way, and you cannot understand the scriptures that contradict it.

This was the case with the apostles. This is frequently the case in entering into marriage, or a servant fixing on a place. When once a strong desire is formed in the heart, it blinds the mind to the Scriptures. O pray for a pure heart, that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will, that you may walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing!

III. The explanation. Christ here explains two things:

1. His words; and,
2. His absence.

1. Jesus said plainly, "Lazarus is dead!" His disciples had shown great selfishness, great blindness of heart, great stupidity; and yet He was not angry, neither did He turn away. But He said plainly, "Lazarus is dead." When He had been teaching them many things, He said, "Have ye understood all these things?" (Matt. 13. 51). Another time, when He had been telling them of the Father's house, Thomas said: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest." With the same admirable patience and gentleness He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." He "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." Perhaps some of you feel dead and ignorant; you need not keep away from Christ on that account. Take your blind eyes to Him that He may give you sight. He will have you to understand His way and His will.

2. He explains His absence: "I am glad I was not there." The objection would immediately arise in the breast of His disciples. If Lazarus be dead, why did our Master stay these two days? Therefore He explains that it was for their sakes. Had Christ been there, He felt that He must have healed Lazarus. Had He been there, Lazarus had not died. Christ could not have stood in the cottage of Bethany, and looked on the face of His dying friend, and seen the silent tears of Mary, and heard the imploring words of Martha without granting their desire.* Therefore He says, "I am glad I was not there." Ah, learn the amazing love of Christ to His own. He cannot deny their prayer.

When Moses was pleading with God, God said, "Let Me alone." God could not destroy Israel so long as Moses pleaded for them. So God had to tell Jeremiah, "Pray not for this people." And so when God wants to destroy, He shuts up His saints that they cannot pray. Jesus kept away, that He might not be overcome by their prayer. The uplifted hand of a believing Mary is too much for Jesus to resist. The tearful eye of an earnest believer is "terrible as an army with banners." "Turn away thine eye from Me, for thou hast overcome Me."

But why was He not there? "For your sakes, to the intent ye may believe." Previously, we saw He delayed for the sake of the cottagers at Bethany; here is another reason: "For your sakes." "All things are for

* Not all would have interpreted this passage the same way.

your sakes” (2 Cor. 4. 15). For the sake of believers this world was created: the sun made to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night. Every shining star was made for them. All are kept in being for your sakes. Winds rise and fall; waves roar and are still; seasons revolve, seedtime and harvest, day and night, all for your sakes. “All things are yours.” All events are for your sakes. Kingdoms rise and fall to save God’s people. Nations are His rod, His saw and axe to hew out a way for the chariot of the everlasting gospel, even as Hiram’s hewers in Lebanon, and the Gibeonite drawers of water were building up the temple of God. The enemies of the church are only a rod in God’s hand. He will do His purpose with them, then break the rod in two and cast it away. Specially all the providences of believing families are for your sakes. When Christ is dealing with a believing family, you say, That is no matter of mine; what have I to do with it? Ah, truly if you are of the world, you have no part or lot in it! But if you are Christ’s, it is for your sake, to the intent that ye may believe. The dealings of Christ with believing families are very instructive, His afflictions and His comforts – His way.

O learn to bear one another’s burdens, to see more of Christ’s hand among you, to the intent ye may believe!

“There’s not a plant that grows below
But makes His glory known;
And thunders roll and tempests blow
By order from His throne.”

IV. The zealous disciple: What voice is that? It is Thomas, unbelieving Thomas.

1. True love to Christ here. He saw that Christ was determined to go; he saw the danger; counted the cost. Well, says he, “Let us go also.” Strange, that following the Lamb of God should endanger our very life; yet in how many ages of the church it has been so! “The time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.” What a cloud of witnesses has Scotland seen, all saying, like Thomas, “Let us go and die with Him!” Ah we do not know the value of Christ, if we will not cleave to Him unto death!

2. True zeal toward others: “Let us go.” He does not say, like Peter, “I am ready to go with Thee,” but, “Let us go.” Whenever we clearly apprehend the path of duty, we should persuade others to come along with us. It is not enough for a believer to go in the way himself; you must say, “Let us go.” So Israel: “Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord” (Jer. 50. 5). So Moses to Hobab: “Come thou with us.” So the converted Gentiles: “O house of Israel, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” A Christian should be like a river that fertilizes while

it runs, carrying ships and all that floats upon its bosom along with it to the ocean.

Yet sin mingled with it. Jesus spoke not of dying; on the contrary, He spoke of “not stumbling.” But Thomas was full of unbelief and full of fear. He heeded not the word of Christ. Learn how much sin and weakness mingles with our love and zeal, and what infinite need we have of one who bears the iniquity of our holy things.

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST 42nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at Uffington Chapel, Chapel Lane,
Uffington, near Faringdon, Oxfordshire, on Saturday afternoon,
May 17th, 2008*

The chapel was almost full for the meeting, which began with hymn 14. The Chairman (Mr. G.D. Buss) read Ephesians chapter 3 and asked Mr. C.A. Wood to pray. In his welcoming address, the Chairman spoke of the spiritual note which had rested on his spirit as the chapter was being read, the expression “that ye being rooted and grounded in love.” The love of God in Christ Jesus, working in the heart by the Holy Ghost, brings a rooting and a grounding and brings forth fruit in due season. It nourishes the soul. Without the Spirit’s work it is dry doctrine, it is just theory. His desire was that we might each be found amongst those nourished by love and grounded in it.

The Trust Secretary, Mr. Playfoot, then introduced the Annual Report and spoke about the work of the Trust. There had been a net outflow of funds for the year of almost £66,000 in providing help to the churches. Not many grants are made but each one has to be considered by the Committee according to need. The largest grant paid out last year was for £50,000 to the friends at Ebenezer Chapel, Ossett, who had demolished and rebuilt their chapel. Re-roofing of larger chapels can be very costly; hence at Matfield about half the £40,000 cost had been provided by the Trust. A bridging loan of £160,000 had been made to help the pastor at Nottingham move closer to his chapel.

The Secretary then dealt with Compliance issues which affect us in so many walks of life today and which are affecting chapels and the running of the Trust. For example, we now have to have a trustees induction and training policy for new trustees. We also have the Charities Act 2006 and the Public Benefit requirements which not only will we have to comply with but also the chapels. We do not have the resources which are available to other church charities but in recent years

we have issued circulars on such matters as the Disability Discrimination Act, Asbestos and Fire Regulations, and that week we had circulated amongst the chapels a check list which we hoped would be of some help in complying with rules and regulations.

Then there is the requirement for churches to register as charities with the Charity Commission, which is unlikely to be until 2012 although any churches with annual income in excess of £100,000 may have to register from October this year. We are trying to monitor the situation and shall hope to advise the churches when registration is required. Then on the Public Benefit front all charities, including those for the advancement of religion, will need to be able to demonstrate benefit to the public. The Charity Commission did issue in February for consultation draft guidance on Public Benefit within the advancement of religion. It appeared that the activities of the Trust and of our churches will satisfy the Public Benefit test but further detailed consideration of this subject is required.

Sales of publications at £34,000 were up by about 11% but the total number of items sold in 2007 at 13,751 was a little lower than the previous year, partly due to only two new books being published. The main new book, the detailed account of *The Life and Times of Anne Steele* by John Broome, sold 389 copies. The *Miracles* series, *Mary Jones and her Bible* and *Bible Doctrines Simply Explained* again accounted for well over half the sales. *Gadsby's Hymns* are still selling well amongst our own chapels as well as other places of worship, often in America, and for private use.

There is a large publication programme for 2008 and about twelve books should become available. These include another small doctrinal book *God Manifest in the Flesh*, which is extracted from the sermons of Thomas Jacomb, one of the Puritans, based on the first four verses of Romans chapter 8, which seek to glorify Christ, the great Rock of our salvation in His glorious divine and human natures. There is a new book in the *Miracles* series called *Paul, Follower of Jesus* as well as a new version of *Mercies of a Covenant God*, the autobiography of John Warburton. This is being divided into paragraphs and chapters to make it easier to read. The Lord's blessing was desired on these books as they are sent forth.

Deep appreciation was expressed for the labours of all concerned with the work of the Publications. With the day of Mr. Pearce's retirement approaching, we looked forward to Dr. Philip Skelton joining us as Publications Manager, if the Lord will, on August 4th, when he will work closely with Mr. John Kingham, Publications Director. The subscribers and the chapels were thanked for their continuing support of the Trust.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for his report and for all his labours for the Trust. The resolution to receive the Annual Report was passed. The three retiring committee members, Messrs. T. Abbott, S.A. Hyde and J.A. Kingham, were each re-elected by separate resolution with none against.

The Chairman then spoke of the diligent labours of the Publications Manager, Mr. Caleb Pearce, which the Lord had enabled him to perform faithfully and lovingly for many years. The Committee felt that there should be some form of recognition. So on its behalf the Chairman first presented to Mr. Pearce and his wife a Bible suitably inscribed. Secondly, he presented Mr. Pearce with a glass plaque inscribed, "Presented to Mr. Caleb Pearce in warm appreciation of all his work for the Gospel Standard Trust Publications and especially as Publications Manager 1996-2008 remembering your labour of love in the sight of God and our Father." Thirdly, as Mr. Pearce hopes still to be involved, the Committee had asked him to go over with his wife to the U.S.A. and Canada to forward the work of the Trust among the churches there, probably later this year or early next. Mr. Pearce, in expressing his thanks, felt quite unworthy. His prayer was that the Lord would bless and prosper the work of the Trust and that He would help Dr. Philip Skelton as he takes over.

After the singing of hymn 1147, Mr. Stephen Hyde addressed the meeting on "Why we use the Authorised Version." Whilst this was a vast subject, he could and did give a very simple reason: that it is the most accurate version in the English language. He then laid the foundation to his address in tracing a little of the path of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew as commenced by Moses about 1500 BC and its preservation through the time of the captivity, the translation into Greek (the Septuagint) about 250 BC and beyond the coming of Christ. Likewise he referred to the original writings of the apostles in Greek and how the truth and accuracy had been preserved through the centuries.

Various attempts were made to translate the Bible into English and it was not until 1382 that a truly English translation was made by Wycliffe, although that was not from the original languages but from the Latin Vulgate. Nevertheless God greatly blessed that work. Greek learning was alive for many years until the Renaissance and following the fall of Constantinople in 1453, many of the learned Greeks fled to Europe.

It was from the original Greek that William Tyndale translated his New Testament issued in Germany in 1525. Tyndale was born in England in 1494. He was an educated man; he could speak eight languages fluently as though each was his natural language. Whilst tutor

in a family, he was appalled at the ignorance of the clergy and he resolved to “cause a boy that driveth a plough to know more of the Scripture than they.” Driven from England, he fled to Cologne and then to Worms. He sacrificed much and for his efforts was martyred at Vilvorde in 1535. How thankful to the Lord we should be that this man, with all his abilities, should have given himself to spending much of his life in a small, cold room translating the Scriptures by candlelight! It is reported that on one voyage he was shipwrecked and lost all his work. You would think naturally, “Well, surely God’s hand has gone out against me and I should not be doing this work,” but Tyndale went back and started again and so by the grace of God he produced that wonderful version in English. When he died, Miles Coverdale took up the battle and published a complete translation of the Bible in 1535. Further translations followed, including the Geneva Bible from the original languages in 1560.

In the opening months of 1604, a conference of divines was held at Hampton Court Palace, presided over by James I, at which it was agreed that there should be a new translation of the Bible as consonant as could be to the original Hebrew and Greek. This resulted in the Authorised Version of 1611. It has been revised on four occasions since, the last being in 1769, and it is this edition which is used by most as the Authorised Version today. These were minor amendments, principally spellings, etc.

Mr. Hyde explained the importance for translation to be carried out carefully using “formal equivalence” where the form and structure of the original language are reproduced as nearly as possible. There is also the need to maintain the great importance of the Deity of God. These points stand out in the Authorised Version. Also the translators were honest when they were not sure which word to adopt so they put an alternative reading in the margin.

He considered the Authorised Version to be the best translation because of these points and because of the spiritual and linguistic qualifications of the translators. He blessed God for Tyndale because much of the New Testament in the Authorised Version, in actual fact about 92%, is Tyndale. The phrases of beauty that have been admired such as, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,” and “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,” we have in our Bible in exactly the same form as they were taken directly from Tyndale by the Authorised Version translators.

He said that the Authorised Version is the English translation that had borne the test of time and had been the means under the blessing of the Lord of the salvation of millions of people throughout the English-

speaking world. Although there have been more than a hundred other versions of the English Bible published in recent years, it is still acknowledged as being the standard Bible in the English language. Many fundamental verses are omitted from the N.I.V. and other modern day versions. A number of examples were given including Matthew 18. 11: "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost," and Acts 8. 37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." You can hardly believe that these words have been omitted. He also mentioned Acts 9. 6 concerning the Apostle Paul, "And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" How often surely we come and pray, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and yet in other Bibles these words do not even exist.

Finally Mr. Hyde touched on the position of preachers and hearers. The Bible is a book to be preached and it is the duty of ministers to open the meaning of the texts to their hearers. We are so favoured to have such a reliable translation in English. Do we really appreciate it and read it as we should? Let us read it and may God bless it to our souls for His honour and glory and for our eternal good.

In thanking Mr. Hyde, the Chairman commented how vital it is that He who guided the tongues and the pens of holy men of old, even the Spirit of truth, should write the Word in our hearts, that it might not just be the letter of the truth on the page but the Word of God in our hearts. Then we shall know that this blessed Book is the Word of God.

The Meeting concluded with the singing of hymn 352 and the benediction.

D.J.P.

Copies of Mr. Hyde's address can be obtained from the Secretary.



Godliness is the worshipping God in the inward motions of the heart and the outward actions of the life. Where the spring of the affections is clear and the stream of the conversation runs clear, there is true godliness. The Egyptians, of all fruits, would make choice of the peach to consecrate to their goddess, and they gave the reason for it: because the fruit thereof resembleth a heart and the leaf a tongue. As they gave heart and tongue to the false god, we must to the true God. Heart-godliness pleaseth God best, but life-godliness honours Him most; the conjunction of both make a complete Christian. In a godly man's heart, though some sin be left, yet no sin is liked; in his life, though sin may remain, yet no sin reigns. His heart is suitable to God's nature, and his life is answerable to God's law, and thence he is fitly denominated a godly man.

George Swinnock

THE SORELY AFFLICTED FARMER

*An account of Charles Green of King's Cliffe, Northamptonshire,
written by his brother in 1859.*

(Concluded from page 262)

One circumstance I might name in the winter of 1856. I was one night in his house; he was rolling about with pain. I felt much cast down in my soul, wondering what the Lord was about to do with us as a family, when these words dropped into my soul: "I will show Myself marvellous in a strong city" (see Psa. 31. 21). Whether this was from the Lord, I must leave; but I am inclined to think it was by the power that accompanied it. Yes; and my poor soul has had cause to rejoice, and been allowed to rejoice in the mighty arm of my God. I did not intend to say much of myself, but as some parts of my experience are so closely connected with his, I hope this will be overlooked. It is not my desire to extol self, nor yet my poor brother, but Him that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, who hath entered into heaven by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

My poor brother was now without a home, cast upon the mercy of friends. I housed my brother William, and my younger brother housed my brother Charles. It was the will of God now to leave my poor brother to grope in the dark; for when He hideth Himself, who can behold Him? At this time he was fretful and murmuring. Although there was a gloom cast over him by the Lord's cloudy dispensation towards him, yet death had lost its power over him. Faith did sometimes look beyond the tomb, and I have heard him say, "It will all be right some day. It does not depend upon me. I know in whom I have believed. I know what He hath once done is done for ever. His gifts and callings are without repentance. Having loved His own that are in the world, He hath loved them unto the end." Thus he knew for himself that he was predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, and accepted by God the Father through the mediatorial work of His dear Son, and that the blessed Spirit had testified this by speaking it home to his soul.

After a long season of drought the Lord was pleased to make the obituary of Mr. Joseph Brimble, in the *Gospel Standard* of July 1858, a great and exceeding blessing to his soul. His wife read a little to him just as he could bear it. He could not bear anyone to talk much to him at a time; pain and weakness had unnerved him. He interrupted his wife now and then: "O that man is me! O that man is me! Thank the Lord for His mercy! O that man is me!" and tears of gratitude rolled down his cheeks. He knew that neither affliction nor trouble, though the Lord often makes them instrumental, could move him. The prospect of death could not soften his hard heart; none but God alone could melt it. This greatly

encouraged him; his soul could again hope in God, who was the health of his countenance, and his God.

It pleased the Lord again to go up from him, and he returned to his old place, as Hart says, "To mope, and mourn, and tire, and faint." About the month of October, the Lord gave him a wrestling spirit, and he entreated his wife to kneel with him. She told me she should not easily forget with what earnestness he pleaded with the God of his life until he got a blessing. I had, in the Lord's providence, slipped down in Stamford and sprained my ankle. This event made way for me to see more of my poor brother than I could have done otherwise, and I was led to esteem it as a kind interference of my God, not only for the soul benefit I received by it, but that it was made a little encouragement to him.

I called upon him a short time after the Lord had given him a word of encouragement. The dew was still upon the branch, and as he told me of the goodness of God to his soul, the tears of gratitude rolled down his cheeks, and it produced a softness in my heart which none but God the Spirit can give. "The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him." From what I had learned by former experience, I was on the look-out for another trial; as Hart says,

"Boast not, ye sons of earth,
Nor look with scornful eyes;
Above your highest mirth
Our saddest hours we prize.
For though our cup seems filled with gall,
There's something secret sweetens all."

The king of Israel said, "Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down." He knew the blessedness of what it was to be lifted up into communion with his God, and it was that that made him feel so keenly the fall (Psa. 102. 10). David says, "Thou hast shewed Thy people hard things." Jeremiah says, "He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, He hath covered me with ashes."

In course of the Lord's providence, my poor brother prepared for removing his stuff, for he had since the fire been at the house where my younger brother was, and now my younger brother had removed to another; and as this was very inconvenient for Charles, he had taken a house for himself, and he was obliged to leave at a certain time. The day arrived that he was to leave. There was no chance whatever of getting into the house he had taken, for the parties were not out. But the Lord opened a way. What with his great weakness, the opposition he met with, the Lord's crosshand dealings with him, and the powerful temptations from without – these meeting together overwhelmed him. The Lord had given him this precious promise: "Are not the cattle upon a thousand hills Mine, and all hearts at My disposal?" For while he was in that dark state

of mind, his great fear was that he should come to want a bit of bread; but then he could tell me, with tears in his eyes, he should never come to want, for the Lord had told him so. And I believe it was that blessed promise being applied with divine power, and the encouragement he received from Mr. Brimble's last words, which gave him a desire that an account of his chequered path might be seen in the *Gospel Standard*, as others of the Lord's people were in the furnace of affliction. But I fear my inability is too great, and that I shall only hinder a blessing. Yet, as it was his desire, I am afraid to draw back, and must leave it in the hand of God to do with it as seemeth Him good.

On the morning of October 16th he was very ill, and his wife getting ready for removing, and more to do than she was able, he tried for the last time to milk the cows, desiring her to fetch the milk, for he could not carry it, and he took the cows away to a small field some distance from home. This was a day of temptation, the devil strongly suggesting to him to cast himself over a bridge as he was crossing it. But although he was much exercised through weakness and half distracted with temptation, the Lord was pleased to sound these words into his soul: "Look right on thy way; turn not to the right hand or the left." Although he was so weak and much distressed, he went round, instead of coming the nearer way home, to escape the temptation and the water side.

At the close of this day he began to be very rambling in his mind or delirious, so much so that we thought the Lord had deprived him of his reasoning powers. This cast a gloom upon all who were concerned for his welfare.

"To cause despair's the scope
Of Satan and his powers;
To believe in hope against hope,
My brethren, must be ours."

My soul found plenty of work for faith to do. Hope was removed like a tree, and love was buried in the dust of death. O, I thought, what will professor and profane say? "Here is a man who has put his trust in the God of the whole earth, and who believed he was loved with an everlasting love, and that his name was enrolled in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world." I have placed all my hope for salvation on this Rock, and have been taught by a painful experience that nothing either in heaven or on earth could keep my soul from black despair but a hope in the everlasting love and the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 77. 3 was the feeling of my soul. O my friends, ye that know something of the power of temptation, the rage of this lion when he is permitted to range in the forest of our wild nature, and poor Jacob is pent up in a corner, this makes him cry out of violence, "Lord, save, or I perish! One more wave, Lord, and I must sink to rise no more."

“Dream not of faith so clear
As shuts all doubting out;
Remember how the devil could dare
To tempt e’en Christ to doubt.”

But,

“Prayer was appointed to convey
The blessings God designed to give.
Long as we live should Christians pray,
For only while we pray we live.”

“Tremble, thou earth ... at the presence of the God of Jacob.” The poor sinner learns here something of the value of the mercy of being allowed to pray, allowed to call upon God, permitted to exist upon the earth. The psalmist knew something of this, and it drew from him those words in good earnest, “Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul”; and this made him entreat the Lord that the pit might not shut her mouth upon him.

The doctor charged us to keep all knives and razors out of his way. But amidst all my low sinkings, I felt a secret persuasion that the Lord would keep him from self-destruction. Although I had taken but little rest for several nights and days, and knew not scarcely how to move, I could neither sit nor stand still; but when we got him to bed I was left alone with him. Now poor Jacob was allowed to wrestle. “And there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day ... and he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh.” “No,” said my poor soul, “I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me.” And He blessed me there with these words,

“Fear not, His merits must prevail;
Ask what thou wilt, it shall be done.”

Thus poor Jacob came off a prevailer, and the following day the Lord began to restore my brother’s reasoning powers. He was now something like his Master; he had nowhere to lay his head; he was cast upon the mercy of God and his friends. His few things were put some in one place and some in another, and this my poor soul was led to esteem another mercy, for had he not removed that day, and been cast for a time into the tent the Lord gave me, we could not have rendered the assistance we did. His poor wife could have done nothing with him by herself, but now he was surrounded by friends. The Lord’s way is in the sea, and His path is in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known. Even while he was in that state of mind, his countenance sometimes bespoke a calmness, though at others he appeared to be suffering under temptation.

All this exercise and exertion of body brought him very low and weak, and we could perceive a great change in him. We thought his days could not be many on earth, and he was often heard to entreat the Lord to

take him from this vale of tears and suffering. After a few days the Lord gave him strength to crawl out again a little, and he met my younger brother at a house. "Ah! my boy," he said, "I know you have got plenty to do with your young family, and I know what affliction is, but I wish you had as good a hope as I have got. My time cannot be long here, but I have a good home to go to." Thus the Lord weaned him from all things here below, and he was looking forward to the time when the Lord should take him home. Thus the Lord showed Himself marvellous in a strong city.

It was evident to us that he daily became weaker. I called to see him on November 10th, as I had got to work again, though very lame; and he had moved into the house, but remained very ill. I helped him up to bed. He was exhausted through pain and weakness, and after he had recovered he clasped his hands, with a look I shall not easily forget, and said, "O Lord, have mercy upon me! O Lord, have mercy upon me! O Lord, have mercy upon me! If it please Thee, give me a little ease!" Like Job's friends, for a few moments I could do nothing but look on, for his grief was very great. Then he put out his hand, and we locked each other's together; and he broke silence, and said, "There is nothing now but death before me; I have ceased to think of getting better now." "Ah!" I said, stroking his hair with my hand, "you will soon be singing the new song in the regions above." "Ah!" he said, "I shall, shan't I?" and at that moment His countenance testified that he was enjoying that peace which passeth all understanding, and his poor, wasted visage glowed with the image of Jesus. I said, "It will all be over soon; your trials here will make your joys greater hereafter." "Ah!" he said, "It will soon be all right; my God is too wise to err. The Lord bless us both, the Lord bless us both. I must say, Good night; I am wearied out. I hope the Lord will of His great mercy give me a little rest. Good night, my boy, good night!"

November 11th – Our poor mother called to see him. She asked him the state of his mind. He said, "Pretty comfortable; it is beclouded a little sometimes; but I trust Christ has completed all for me."

November 12th – His dear wife asked him how his soul felt. He answered, "I can praise the Lord!" and fixing his eyes towards heaven, he said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name." The night of the same day he seemed somewhat revived, and he talked freely to his younger brother about the selling of the cows, and such things as belonged to the keeping of them, and said he hoped there would be enough to meet expenses. He had consented to their being sold, and the auctioneer had been spoken to, for there was not sufficient coming in to meet expenses or pay for hire. He said to his wife, "You must do as well as you can; I am too far gone to take any part in it; I have done with all things below." After this he was not able to talk much more.

About half past two o'clock in the morning of the 13th, a cold, clammy sweat came over him. He asked his wife whether she thought he was dying, or whether she thought he should die suddenly. He said these words once struck him forcibly, "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." He rose up this morning, with help, about seven o'clock, which was much earlier than usual. Poor mother again asked him the state of his mind. He whispered, being unable to speak out, "Pretty well."

I called to see him at dinner time. I looked at him, and asked him how he was. After pausing some time, he said, lifting his eyes towards me, "I am very bad." Perceiving his extreme weakness, I was afraid to ask him any more, and for the last time we shook hands. I felt persuaded I should not see him many more times alive.

Soon after I was gone, my younger brother came to see him; he sat in a chair and leaned on a table. This was about the same time of day as the cold sweat came over him in the night. He said, "I must go to bed, I am so overpowered." His wife took a pan of coals to warm the bed, and he then made an attempt to go upstairs, with the help of my brother, and having a stick in his own hand. He managed to get to the bottom of the stairs, and set his foot on the first step; but unable to raise it to the second, he said, "Call Eliza!" – that was his wife. He said to my brother, "Do not let me fall." No doubt he felt himself sinking into the arms of death.

At that instant there was a gurgling in his throat, and a little water gushed from his lips. He was placed in a chair, but his redeemed soul had fled, and left this mortal clay without giving it a groan or the least struggle. Although he was not permitted in his last moments to rise in exultation, as some of the Lord's people are, I cannot but exult in the grace of Christ Jesus, who was the Author and Finisher of his faith, who alone could and did enable him to hope unto the end, and girded up the loins of his mind, and for the encouragement of my soul, showed His marvellous power in a strong city.

The gentleman whose premises were burnt down sent him a sovereign, and God so managed his earthly concerns as to enable him to pay twenty shillings in the pound where it was due. This I know by experience is no small consolation to those who are often put to it to know how it can be done.

Thus ended the days of Charles Green, aged 41. [This would be 1858.]

Closet duty speaks out most sincerity. He prays with a witness that prays without a witness.

Thomas Brooks

BOOK NOTICE

A small consignment of the long-expected children's book *Paul, Follower of Jesus* has arrived. The rest of the books should arrive, if the Lord will, before the end of the month.

Paul, Follower of Jesus is exactly in the style of the "Miracles Series." It was believed that this series had been completed with the final book of the set of eight dealing with the life of the Lord Jesus. However, there were so many requests for something similar that one more has been added with a title to fit in with the series: "Paul, Follower of Jesus."

We hope it will be received as well as the earlier books were (the first appeared as far back as 1978) and above all that God's blessing will rest upon it. The price is £3.95 (plus £1.63 extra if by post).

Sadly, there are so many children's books about, which have pictures of the Lord Jesus, and in many cases the illustrations are "cartoon" illustrations. We believe it is vital that great reverence should be shown for the Person of the Lord Jesus and for the Word of God.

GOD-GIVEN THORNS

Strange gift indeed – a thorn to prick,
To pierce unto the very quick,
To cause perpetual sense of pain;
Strange gift! And yet, was given for gain.

Unwelcome, but it came to stay;
Nor could it e'en be prayed away.
It came to fill its God-planned place –
A life-enriching means of grace.

O much-tried soul, with fainting heart,
The thorn with its abiding smart,
With all its wearing, ceaseless pain,
Can be the means of priceless gain.

And so whate'er thy thorn may be,
From God accept it willingly;
But reckon Christ, His life, His power,
To keep thee in the trying hour.

And sure – thy life will richer grow;
His grace sufficient will bestow;
And in heaven's morn thy joy will be
That by this thorn He strengthened thee.

Author Unknown

Erratum: August *G.S.* page 263, Book Review, third paragraph, line 6: "marked" should read "marred."

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
OCTOBER 2008

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

GREAT THINGS THE LORD HAS DONE

*Sermon preached by Jesse Delves at Ebenezer Chapel,
Richmond, Surrey, on January 16th, 1947*

Text: "Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice; for the Lord will do great things" (Joel 2. 21).

These prophecies are indeed a very solemn, searching, warning, penetrating voice to us. God speaks in them to His ancient people in pertinent rebuke and reproof for their many departures from Him. He speaks in them to us also in reproof and correction, and how wholesome it will be for us if we can have searching of heart as before our God in the light of these prophecies! O what an awful, woeful, darkening, deadening thing is sin; what affliction, tribulation, pain and woe it has brought upon man! It has, as it were, permeated itself into the very fibres of our being. We are by reason thereof utterly lost; and if, indeed, we feel it to be so, that is a mercy.

But there are also very confirming promises, notwithstanding these alarming predictions. The Lord speaks very tenderly and graciously to truly penitent people, to those who are brought to fall before Him under the pain of their guilt, to seek His mercy and forgiveness for their transgression.

To my feeling this is a very wonderful chapter. Following these very solemn indications of judgment, desolation, famine, ruin and death, the voice of mercy is heard thus: "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning" (verse 12). I wish we could! I could wish that we did, because if that spirit were in us we could hope for the Lord's return in blessing to us. But it must be a real repentance, not a superficial thing, not a form. It must be a real repentance, a rending of the heart and not the garment; not in outward ostentation, but in inward grief for sin. Dear friends, I do not believe there has ever yet been a case where God has rejected a truly penitent soul.

This chapter, while it refers to His national people, is a voice to the church. Then we have to come to our own personal case. Sometimes I feel, "O, if I had grace to weep more before the Lord, as in verse 17, how much better it would be for my people." But it is very sweet when the

Lord breaks, so to speak, into a lump of sin, making that sinner's eyes a sluice, and producing this confession and worship. What an amazing mercy it is that God has made it possible for a sinner to have contact with Him and live! If God had done nothing more than to banish us to perdition, surely His glory would shine in it. But, there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared (Psa. 130. 4).

What a pertinent exhortation this is to repent! Who knoweth if He will return and repent too? (verse 14). Not that God changes His mind, but He changes the disposings of providence as to the issue thereof, in response to the prayers of a penitent people. What hope there could be for our poor country if the people (yes, and we with them) were truly humbled before our God. There is a promise of blessing in verses 13 and 14, followed by a very solemn duty conjoined upon the priests: they are to blow the trumpet in Zion – not to play with it, but to blow it with no uncertain sound. They are to be faithful to their charge, faithful watchmen with some consciousness of their grave accountabilities. I tremble sometimes before the Word of God in respect to the ministry and what is said to the Lord's prophet Ezekiel concerning the obligations of a faithful watchman. What a sacred position it is to hold!

“Blow the trumpet” and gather the people together – elders, children, babes, all – let them come, and let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar (verses 15-17). If we could but see that in the Established Church, in the other denominations, yes, and if we could be helped to do it more ourselves, for we have to come to our own case denominationally! O was there ever, dear hearers, a greater need for this repentance, this mourning, this weeping before God? “Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach” (verse 17). Sometimes it seems as though it will come to reproach, decay and death. But still God has a favour to His own. The days are dark and, as described in the beginning of the chapter, a day of “darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains” (verse 2).

What a graphic description in this chapter of a rebellious people, of God's just and solemn judgments, and yet what a sweet opening of the promises of divine mercy to a broken heart! O that the Lord would come to us and grant that repentance, that reviving with His good Spirit. What can I wish for you here more than this? It would be very confirming to see a numerical increase, to see this little chapel filled with people every Sabbath as it is today; but you could have a greater blessing than this – yea, that in itself would not be a blessing if the Lord were not here. The greatest blessing you could have is the unction of His gospel in your souls in worship. Nothing can take the place of that. It is wonderful for a poor sinner to enter the sanctuary and worship God in it.

I have often admired what one old divine said: "Jesus Christ is most glorified in secret." I have said "Amen" to that in my heart many times. Real worship will be a secret in your heart even if you are in the public assembly; it is between your soul and God. What can be sweeter than worship? May this blessing of real worship often be given in this place, and may there be some fulfilling of these great promises, in verses 18-27, though they seem too great to anticipate in these dark days. In these days of decay, desolation and death, it seems too great, but here it is, and I have felt drawn to it for you. I would seek it for myself, for my people, and the denomination; but I particularly desire it for you here, in some fulfilling of the promise: "Fear not ... for the Lord will do great things."

There are many things that give occasion to fear in these days, and there can be a very wholesome fear. It is dangerous to be self-confident with respect to God. But when the spirit is humbled by grace, there may be a wholesome fear lest, after all, our profession should be counterfeit – lest after all, we should be weighed in the balances and be found wanting. It is wholesome to fear ourselves, for this self can be one of our worst enemies. I am often afraid of myself, fearful of what I might say or be left to do. I would ever thus be fearful of myself.

But there may be unbelieving fears; fears which have a very sad alloy in them; fears which arise from a distrust of the faithfulness of our God; fears which arise from over-concentrating upon difficult things and circumstances – mountains of difficulty. We look at them and are afraid – we tremble. Many fears arise through shortsightedness, shall I say? We look not beyond our difficulties to God. But when faith is wrought in us and we lay hold of Him and receive of His strength, we can then go on in a gracious – not a vain – confidence. The more the power of the gospel enters, the more fearful of ourselves shall we be – and yet we shall be strong in Him. I would live like this.

"Fear not, O land" – fear not, you people here – "be glad and rejoice." Is there not reason to be? With so many depressing elements, it would seem to be almost wrong to rejoice in anything. But even in the darkest times, at moments a poor sinner may rejoice in his God. You can rejoice when He comes into your concerns, into your soul. When you get a touch of His love in your heart, then you can rejoice in Him, and how sweet that is! It is so strengthening; you can go on; you come up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved (Song 8. 5).

What a wonderful thing it is to have a real religion! We have just as much religion as we have knowledge of God. And how much is that? Very little, at least in the pulpit this afternoon. But it is good to be searched, good to be brought before the Lord as to our real case; and yet a poor, dark, empty sinner, when the Lord comes, can be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"

(Col. 1. 9). O that I could live nearer to Him, and see by faith more of the wonders of that blessed cross and weep there! How much better it would be for me and many of my hearers.

“Be glad and rejoice.” We are not where we might have been. Had we been banished to perdition, under the wrath of God for ever, we could not have replied against it. We should have no answer; we could never justify our case; we could never satisfy justice. Therefore we should have to lie under the curse we deserved. But at times we can rejoice in the fact that the Lord has revealed a channel of mercy for a wretch, and opened the door of heaven to a coming sinner through a bleeding Jesus, and now and again brought a little of that sweet gospel into the heart, broken us down, and enabled us to offer the sacrifice that He loves – the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit. Do you ever offer that? Did you ever see this God in Christ? We could never survive otherwise. His majesty out of Christ would consume us, but He is approachable in and through His Son.

“Be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things.” I would like to speak as I may be helped a little with respect to the great things the Lord has done – that is, in a spiritual sense – for His redeemed people. They are all great things; there is no little thing in salvation. He has done great things for His people, and to consider this we must, as it were, go back into or reflect upon eternity. It is beyond our grasp, I know. An eternal Being is beyond our conception – a God who ever was, is, and will be what He was, and will never be different, can never change. What He is as an eternal, self-existent Being is incomprehensible to us, but this God is revealed as doing great things.

He did a great thing for His people in His choice of them. How clear this great doctrine is in the Scriptures. Nothing is more decisive than that God separated a people to Himself in His eternal mind, according to the immutable purpose of His sovereign will – such a choice as could never sustain a revision. What a mercy that is! The predestinating decrees of God in election stand firm through the ages of time, while the subjects thereof are being effectually convinced, quickened, born again and brought manifestly to be His people. But just think of this – the eternal mind of the eternal God decreeing to save sinners! When darkness was upon the face of the deep, before the world was, God had thoughts of peace to His people, to give them an expected end!

Was not that a great thing? It will be a great thing for you if you were there, and for me if I was there. But it has sometimes seemed more than I could grasp, to think that the eternal God should consider an insignificant mortal in purposes of love and grace. But He did. “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the

world" (Eph. 1. 4). That means separation – it means that everyone in this congregation stands on one side or the other; a very solemn consideration! Yes, and what a wonderful thing it would be if the eternal destiny of one soul was effected savingly by the services of this day! May it be so, if the Lord will. He has chosen His people. There is no real ground to question that truth. However nature or reason may resent this doctrine, it will be our mercy to fall before Him and seek for some personal evidence that we are in that choice.

And then again, the Lord did a great thing in the covenant He made with His people. This is an amazing consideration, is it not? I have been looking at that verse in Isaiah where the Lord by His prophet says, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (55. 3). Not, "I *have* made a covenant," but, "I *will* make a covenant with you." How can that be? For it was an everlasting covenant, a covenant with the blessed Trinity from all eternity, a glorious contract, shall I say, wherein each divine Person contracted and agreed as to His part in the ultimate salvation of the church, and the glory of God therein.

But there is something more than that, connected with it and flowing from it. He makes a covenant with His people. How does He do that? Why, when He brings this gospel into your heart, He makes a covenant with you. He will never go back on a promise, and if you get a promise of the gospel in your soul, then you are an heir of heaven. Say you, "But I don't know where I stand"? No, but if you are in an uncertainty as to this, wait on God. "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Psa. 35. 3). The great trouble today is, people take things too much for granted in religion. There is such a propensity to be satisfied short of that which is vital. The Lord keep me clear of your blood in this. Seek for a personal revelation of the gospel in your soul. It is to be had. We would not discourage any seeker who may feel to lack this, but if the Holy Spirit is teaching you, any of you, He will not let you rest until you get some distinct testimony from God in your conscience.

And is that possible? Yes, and when you get it, then God has made His covenant with you. It will not issue in proud, carnal self-confidence, but in humility and brokenness. Nothing brings a proud spirit down like the gospel. But the point is this: He makes a covenant with His people – has He ever made a covenant with you? Could you go to any spot in your life and say, "He blessed me there"? I believe some can. If so, then all the devils in hell will never rob you of it, though you may often be tried and shaken concerning its reality.

He will do great things. He has done! The Lord has done great things in the provision He has made for His people. What a provision!

A little while ago, being favoured in reading the twenty-third Psalm, I seemed to see, so to speak, heaven in that Psalm. What a provision! Everything prepared for poor, hungry sheep. The church of Christ is here blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1. 3). There is no lack in God. He says, “I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread” (Psa. 132. 15). Is not that true? If the gospel once flows into your heart, you will be satisfied, sweetly satisfied! This poor world will be like a bursting bubble. For the time you will be sweetly satisfied; there will not be much between your soul and heaven.

But here is the provision, the gospel provision: blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” He has done great things in this. He gives liberally, and is none the poorer for what He gives. What a gospel it is! How free the invitation – and whosoever will may come! “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters” (Isa. 55. 1). Has the Lord put that will into your heart enough to make you say, “Give me Christ, or else I die”? What a mercy if He has brought you truly to say, “Lord, I must die without Thee”!

But what a free, sweet, rich provision the gospel is! We need nothing beside it, do we? No, there is sufficient in it for the whole church. It is an exhaustless and everlasting gospel. Sometimes my soul loves it a little. Do you love this gospel? You may say, “I have not a great religion.” No, we do not need that. We are better possibly to be stripped of much, but to spend a moment under a view of the cross, to mourn and rejoice, to see that blessed Lamb of God slain for us, and to creep beside Him as a worm. That is the religion my soul loves. But O the poverty, the distance, the coldness, the death! Where do you stand?

“The Lord will do great things.” And then this: the Lord has done great things in removing the curse from us. What a scene of matchless grace is Jesus in the sinner’s place! It was the only way whereby a sinner could be delivered from a just and a condemning law. The only way! Salvation is decreed by substitution. Divine appointments are in all this – in the gift of the Saviour by the Father, and in the Son of God accepting the mighty undertaking, knowing well what it would cost Him. Perhaps I might repeat what I said to my people last night – that it cost the Son of God just as much in suffering, agony, groans, wounds, wrath, blood and death to save one sinner in this chapel as it cost Him to save the whole church.* If that be true, then let us not the cost forget.

This deliverance is a deliverance purchased at an inconceivable price. “He hath poured out His soul unto death” (Isa. 53. 12). For some

* How infinitely beyond human computation is the vast mystery of Christ’s substitutionary sufferings, and of His wondrous love in bearing all the sins of *all* His unworthy people in His own body on the tree! The church – the body of Christ – is indivisible, and inseparable from its once-suffering now-glorified Head. *Note by former Editor, J.H. Gosden.*

in this chapel He poured out His soul unto death. I am ashamed of myself often when I contemplate the cost of redemption. For God is as just in the gospel as He is in the law. His justice and glory would shine if we were grovelling eternally in the bottomless pit. His glory shines in a poor sinner receiving pardon through the cross. His glory shines in the gospel, in that a sinner's salvation is by satisfaction rendered to all the claims of justice by one innocent Person, the only competent Person to undertake such a mighty contract.

The Lord has done great things. If we have ever had a moment in our experience when we could hope, at least, that the curse was removed for us, and have seen that Lamb of God by faith, we have had something that has made a mark in our lives that will last for ever. Think of the cost, and mourn for your sin. A sight of Christ will make sin bitter and mercy sweet. Think of the cost and weep, sinner; think of the cost and weep!

He has done great things. He has done great things in providing a righteousness. It might seem as though that were all-sufficient for the Saviour to suffer the curse of a broken law, for that means more than ever we can conceive – but He did more than that, and it was necessary too. He wrought a righteousness by His perfect obedience. He honoured the law, He magnified it, yet He suffered the penalty as though He had broken it. What a gospel it is! He provided a righteousness to cover a wretch who has nothing of his own but filthy rags, and whose poor heart is like a loathsome dungeon, as Hart expresses it:

“Swarms of ill thoughts their bane diffuse,
Proud, envious, false, unclean;
And every ransacked corner shows
Some unsuspected sin.”

Yet His mercy can come and remove that, and give a change of raiment; can cover a sinner with His own spotless obedience, so that he stands justified as though he had never sinned.

How can we speak of these profound mysteries? But they are very real things and, if this be a day when we are favoured with some sweet receiving of them, it will be “the day which the Lord has made” to us.

There are many other points which might be considered in relation to the blessed mediation of the Saviour in heaven and the work of His good Spirit in the hearts of His people. Has He not done great things? It is also a great thing to be shown the inherent evil of the heart. What a sickening sight! And yet, what wholesome teaching! He does a great thing when He opens a poor sinner's eye to see his own need of divine mercy. This works humility, and is very different from a high, towering profession; from being religious, as they say. Truly to feel the need, to believe there is a remedy for that need, and to have that remedy *applied*

– the healing balm of Gilead for the wounds of sin – this is indeed a great thing.

He will do great things. He does great things in bringing before the soul the attractions of Jesus. Everything pertaining to Christ is attractive to faith, though repugnant to nature because salvation by grace means that the flesh must be crucified. You will never see by faith a crucified Christ without being crucified yourself, never. That will strike, shall I say, the mortal blow, and lay you in the dust, and yet will bring all heaven before your eyes. Yes, He has done great things, and I believe I can say when the soul is lively there is an attraction to faith in every personal excellency of Christ and in every part of His work. Yes, there is an attraction, a sweet attraction – not a fancy, not an imagination, but the soul is drawn. Are you? “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me” (John 12. 32). Does He? Has He drawn *you*? Some of us know a little of this moving of the affections to a condescending God. That is real worship.

“The Lord will do great things.” He will never forsake His people, never. Are you tired of this gospel? “The Lord will do great things.” He will do a great thing if He prepares us for heaven, and if one day we, the most unworthy and the vilest of the vile, as we may feel ourselves to be, are taken there to see Him as He is. That will be a great thing. O to get well home at last! We live in an unsettled, distressing, bewildering age, and we wonder what the issue of all these things will be. But if by faith we see God, we shall lose sight of the world, we shall look beyond the portal of the gloomy grave to see what God has prepared for them that love Him. Do you ever long to be free from sin? Not to get to heaven because there is so much trouble here, but do you ever long to be free from sin? Now and again there is, to my feeling, a heaven in conformity. Yes, we shall need no greater heaven than to see Him as He is and to be like Him. “Fear not ... let us be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things.” Now I must close these few observations with the desire that it may please God to make the place of His feet glorious in this little sanctuary. For other churches, too, we would seek it – for all His churches, and for His ministers. Yes, we would have rightly a large heart in this, and pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

As when the guards are watching at the court-gate or on the stairs, and examining those that go in, it is a sign the king is within, so when the fear of God stands at the door of the heart to examine all that go in lest the traitor sin should steal in slyly, it is a sign that God is within, that He sits upon throne of the soul, and is worshipped there.

George Swinnock

FROM DUNGEON TO PALACE

*Prayer meeting address given at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
on January 24th, 1972*

Reading: Genesis 40. 14-23

God is a God of impossibilities. You say, was it possible that a poor prisoner in an Egyptian dungeon should soon be next to Pharaoh? Was it possible? It was a complete impossibility, but God decreed it, and it was so.

I believe Joseph was a man of prayer, and he did pray to the Lord. The Psalms make it very clear the awful trial of his faith when he was in that dungeon. Joseph did pray to God, and God answered his prayer. But the point with me is this: with Joseph everything seemed to be going wrong, and yet everything was going right; and it may be like that with your prayers. You feel you are blessed with a spirit of real prayer and you plead before the Lord either your soul's concern, or something in providence, something in your soul, something in the church of God, and yet everything seems to be going wrong.

“Without cessation pray,
Your prayers will not prove vain.”

Look at Joseph being cast into the dungeon! Look at the awful shame he had to bear! Who would believe that he was innocent? It was both his sufferings in the dungeon, also the bitter shame he had to bear. “Well,” you say, “everything is going wrong.” But this was one step toward his exaltation. And then when he is in the prison. I do not know what you think of this last verse: “Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.” It seems to me reading these verses as we did, Joseph thought: “Now my prayer is going to be answered; after these gloomy years in the dungeon there is a ray of hope here; my prayers are going to be answered.” “Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.” And perhaps that is just the point you have come to tonight. After so many months of exercise and prayer to God, who you believe can perform impossibilities, who can do the thing you want, you get a little gleam of hope, and then it is all dashed to the ground.

O how earnestly Joseph pleaded with the butler! “Think on me when it shall be well with thee”! He thought there was a gleam of hope, and it was all dashed to the ground. But have you ever thought, it was part of the mysterious providence of God that the butler should forget? You know, sometimes the Lord causes people to remember, and sometimes He causes them to forget. The Lord can both sanctify a bad memory and He can also sanctify unkind forgetfulness. What would have happened if the butler had immediately remembered Joseph? Well,

perhaps Pharaoh would have listened; and if he did, all that could happen would be that Joseph might have his freedom. And what could he have done in that far-off land of Egypt? But there came an appointed time and then prayer was answered.

“Without cessation pray,
Your prayers will not prove vain.”

God is almighty, but He is not in a hurry. And because He has not answered immediately, it does not mean He never will. And because He has not answered, it does not mean that He has not heard. When the time came for Joseph to be exalted over the kingdom, then prayer must be answered. When the butler could not forget one moment longer, then something pricks in his heart: “I do remember my faults this day.” And as the butler remembers, then this is the appointed time when none but Joseph could help, and Joseph coming then, with one step strides from a dungeon to next to the throne. Perhaps it is a special point to you beloved prisoners of hope in *your* dungeon. The Lord in a moment will bring you out of your dungeon and exalt you to the throne.

THE LOVE OF GOD

Fragments of sermon by William Gadsby, 1836

The love of God! Whenever we venture on a subject of such importance, we venture on a profound deep.

There is a love which God, as the God of nature, bears to creation as the work of His own hands; for He saw that it was very good. But the love of God as shed abroad in the heart of a believer as far exceeds that as heaven exceeds earth.

God’s love, as a covenant God, the love of each glorious Person in the Trinity, was fixed on His people without any reason assigned for it only His own sovereign pleasure. Not because they were lovely more than others in themselves; for considered as sinners, had Jehovah never loved us until we had turned our hearts to love Him, or until He had seen some beauty in us, He would never have loved us at all. But God loves us because He would. This is the only reason He assigns for it.

And this love is bounded by God’s sovereignty; we cannot get an iota beyond it, nor can any who were not interested in it in eternity ever creep into a knowledge of its infinite excellence. When Paul is entering into this solemn mystery, he stands amazed, and prays that the church at Ephesus might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the height and depth and length and breadth thereof. Neither angels nor men can ever sound the depth, scan the height, or measure the length of this love.

It is deeper than all our miseries and woes. It is higher than all the rebellion of our hearts; in its length, it is from everlasting to everlasting; it reaches through all the dark avenues of time and beyond all the wanderings of the affections of His people. Therefore it is underneath them, above them, behind them, and before them. In short, they are hemmed in on every hand with this love.

Now this love of God is shed abroad in the heart of a believer. Each glorious Person in one undivided Jehovah has evidenced this in a wonderful degree. What induced the Father to give His only Son to be stricken, smitten and afflicted? Love. What induced the Son to stoop to come to this lower world and take our nature, to suffer, bleed and die? Love. He had fixed His heart on His people, and though He knew that Zion would prostitute herself, yet He never took His heart away from her. He will never divorce His spouse nor for one moment forsake her.

Love binds her to His heart, and as a proof that He loved her, He took her nature into union with His Godhead that He might be able practically, fully and efficaciously to follow her through all the dark avenues where sin might drive her; and He put away her transgressions by the sacrifice of Himself, and will at last bring her to glory. "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." And He loves His people the same now He is in glory as He did when He appeared on earth as the despised Nazarene; and He sympathises with them in all their trials, temptations and distresses. There is not a temptation of any description that His people can have but He has endured the same that He might be able in His great love to succour them.

The love of the Spirit is seen in shedding abroad this love of God in our hearts. I know some of God's people are saying, "This love cannot be shed abroad in my heart. I am so wretched, so loathsome, so destitute of life, there can be no love of God in me." Well, what has put you out of conceit with yourselves? There was a time when you thought so well of yourselves that you said, "If I am not saved, God help such an one." But now you begin to think you are as far from God as the vilest of the vile. How came this change about? It is a measure of the love of God shed abroad by the Spirit in your heart; its shining there has made you see yourselves as vile as the devil can make you, and wonder that God will have anything to do with you except it is to send you to hell. Through the love of God shining in a measure in your heart, you see yourselves just the very reverse of what you once thought you were.

"Well," says another child of God, "I once thought I had the love of God shed abroad in my heart, and thought I enjoyed it; and O what sweet moments I had then! I could pray and praise and sing, and be joyful in God. But now my heart is quite out of tune, and I seem unable either to

pray or praise. If there be any passage that suits me, it is that I have lost my first love.” Indeed! there is no such passage. It says: “Thou hast *left* thy first love”; not *lost* it. God will take care we shall never lose it. “Well,” say you, “I have left it. I cannot sing, I cannot rejoice; and therefore whatever may have been my case, there is no love of God in my heart now.” You are a little mistaken, poor soul. It may be covered with a little lumber, but it is there. Perhaps you made more of your feelings of love than you did of the God from whence they came, and therefore God is now letting you know that you must not rest upon your feelings, but upon Him. The people of God are prone to stumble here.

Though a religion without feelings is not the religion of Christ, and though no quickened child of God can be satisfied without a feeling religion, yet when we are left to lean upon or trust in our feelings, the Lord for wise ends withholds them for a season that we may know more sweetly and blessedly how to appreciate the glorious truth couched in the following texts: 2 Sam. 23. 5; Heb. 6. 17, 18; Micah 7. 8-10, 18, 19. But when darkness envelops the mind, and the heart feels almost as cold as ice and as hard as a stone, it needs more than the efforts of nature to enable a poor sinner to realise an interest in the precious things of God as couched in the just-named Scriptures.

Perhaps some poor, trembling, tortured sinner is now saying, “I am both cold and dark and wretched beyond description, and I dare not say that these passages of God’s Word belong to me, but I can say I do not feel at home nor can I be satisfied with my present feelings.” Well, poor child of God, here you are, groaning and sighing and mourning, because you cannot enjoy God, the God of all your hope, because you cannot sweetly trace your interest in Him. Now, if there were no love at the bottom, there would be no uneasiness on that account. You want to have sweet intercourse with God, to have your heart more in communion with Him, and to worship Him more sweetly and blessedly. Now, did you ever desire communion with any character you hated and abhorred – that your heart is at enmity with? Then if your grief is that you cannot enjoy God more, that you cannot have more sweet access unto Him, that you cannot pour out your soul more freely to Him and tell Him your whole heart, that you cannot enter more deeply into His secrets, then God’s love must be there; for nature can never rise above its own source; no stream can rise above its fountain.

But though the quickened children of God have the love of God in their hearts, yet it may be there like moisture in a sponge and needs the powerful hand of the Spirit, who first communicated it to the heart, to press it or draw it forth into act and exercise, or there will be no flowing out. If you are brought in real feeling before God to say, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. O wretched man that I am! who

shall deliver me from the body of this death?" the love of God is at the bottom. "Then," say you, "O when shall I come and appear before God? Search me, Lord, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." If this be your case, there is the love of God at the bottom and most assuredly in the Lord's own time this love will spring up and you shall know that God Himself was underneath the whole [of your experience]. But we must wait His time, for no man can get at it of himself: it is God's special gift.

As far as God enables me, I like to pick up poor, forlorn creatures in the hedges and highways. You know the commission of old was to compel such to come in. "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord; because they called thee an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after." Bless your souls, the gospel is for those with whom none but God and poor sinners like themselves will have anything to do. God takes such in hand and brings them to banquet upon His love, causing them to rejoice in His blessed name.

We may – some of us have – put to sea in a vessel of our own rigging. The sails of our zeal have, as we thought, been well arranged and we have sailed along expecting to reach the end of our voyage in eternal matters without having ever to tack about. But anon a storm has arisen; your sails have been torn to shreds, and we have expected every moment to be dashed against the rocks and drowned. Just at that moment the Captain of Everlasting Love has grappled hold of us, put us in His own vessel, and made known to us that His watchful eye has all the while been over us, and though we seemed ready to perish, love has been in it all.

There are solemn moments when such a sweet measure of God's love is shed abroad in the heart as to deaden it to the world, driving out everything connected with the world, and the man can say feelingly before God:

"I love the Lord with mind and heart,
His people and His ways;
Envy and pride and lust depart,
And all His works I praise."

His language then is: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Everything that honours God is esteemed by him, and he seems swallowed up in obedience, thanksgiving and praise.

How solemn this worship is! Could you follow him to his secret place, there might not be much noise; but he is in God's sanctuary, consecrated ground, secluded from the world. The heavens are opened, the Son of Man appears on the right hand of the Father, and there is a solemn going up to God and coming down from God, and the Person,

blood, righteousness and love of Christ are shed abroad by the Holy Spirit. An indescribable pleasure fills the heart in which the love of God is shed abroad. No fear of parting with right hands or right eyes here; for the soul feels that he could part with every fleshly thing for God.

Give up the truth for fear of persecution, or be alarmed at the idea of losing his popularity? No. God's love being thus shed abroad in the heart leads him to rest in divine faithfulness, being persuaded that though "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed," yet God's kindness shall not be taken away. The brook may be dried up, but the spring-head is the same, and God will see to it nothing shall hurt him. Torturing fear cannot possibly enter the heart while there is this glorious shedding abroad of the love of God. The believer can then view all circumstances chained to the throne of God, and with solemnity of heart can sing:

"Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown,
Hang on His firm decree;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave TO BE."

Not a sparrow can fly without His notice, or a hair of our head fall to the ground without His bidding. He marshals all creatures, circumstances and events for the well-being of His family; and faith working by love says in solemn confidence: "This God is my God for ever and ever: He will be my Guide even unto death." Thus there is a sweet springing up into the Lord when His love is shed abroad in the heart by the blessed Spirit.

Well, brethren, how many of us are here? Very few; and when we are there we do not stay long; we soon get on the back ground again. But while we are there it is sweet. We want nothing to be done but what will crown the Lord's brow. Reason gives way to revelation; faith takes God's Word as a rule; and hope confidently looks forward to the fulfilment of the precious promises therein revealed. The believer feels as though he has not soul enough to show forth the praises of God, and calls upon all His saints to unite, saying, "O love the Lord, all ye His saints"; "and let us exalt His name together." These are sweet and blessed expressions of a heart that has the love of God shed abroad in it.

Stephen was full of this love and of the Spirit and of power when he saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. They stoned him, but what did he say? "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." He had too much to do with God's love to want to be revenged of his enemies. He greatly rejoiced in the Lord and his soul was joyful in his God.

O brethren, when faith can say, "My God," and "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of

righteousness," it has well-nigh grasped in all the blessedness that we can enjoy while travelling below: for if God has covered us with the robe of righteousness, He has wrapped us up in the righteousness of His Son, and heaven has no better to give, for it is perfect. When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, faith sees everything, in measure, as God sees it. God says, "There is no spot in thee," and faith sees that there is no spot, and thus beholds a blessedness in the righteousness of the Son of God more prizeable than all the kingdoms of the world.

This love is the spring-head of all prayer, praise, faith, peace, joy, hope, humility, patience and every other grace. I stand in need of it myself for the reviving of every grace, and none more than patience; and yet I am almost afraid sometimes to pray for it, lest I should have more trouble. For God does not give patience to play with. It is by tribulation we arrive at patience (Rom. 5. 3).

This love is what Paul had in view in 1 Corinthians 13, which he there calls charity: "Now abideth faith, hope, charity; these three; but the greatest of these is charity"; because it is the greatest teeming out of God's heart to the sinner and the sinner's to God: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee."

If this love is shed abroad powerfully in the heart, it is sure to lead to obedience: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Love makes us wishful continually to keep idols from the heart. I have heard some professors say, "Ah well, I know I did wrong at such a time; the Lord delivered me then, and I believe He will again." It is tempting God, and insulting His blessed Majesty. If you are a child of God, you will be made to smart for it; and if you are not, you may go on until you open your eyes in black despair.

This love is shed abroad in the heart as God's gift to us. God has given Himself and His Son, and to complete the blessedness He has given the Holy Spirit. How highly honoured are God's people, to have the Trinity in unity made manifest in their hearts as their God for ever!

This Spirit is the Spirit of life to quicken our dead souls. He is the Spirit of power to subdue our iniquities and raise our hopes to God; of prayer and praise, to draw out our hearts in supplication, thanksgiving and adoration; of truth, to seal it on the heart; and indeed, of all blessedness; for He shall take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us, so that strictly speaking, He is the hand of God to hand down the blessings of salvation to suit the wretched sinner's case.

With such a gift as this, what can we need? He is given us to protect us, to defend, to guide and to do all in us and for us and by us that we shall stand in need of through this wilderness. Thus have we secured to us all that is required to make us holy and happy.

Brethren, are we concerned about this gift? Is it your desire to possess it, to nourish it, and to refuse everything in the way of

[opposition to] it? May it be our happiness to know and feel the importance of being interested therein, for His name's sake. Amen.

WHY DOES GOD AFFLICT?

Part of a letter by John Newton, 1772

I had been wishing to hear from you, that I might know where to write. I hope I can assure you of a friendly sympathy with you in your trials. I can in some measure guess at what you feel, from what I have seen and felt myself in cases where I have been nearly concerned. But my compassion, though sincere, is ineffectual: if I can pity, I cannot relieve. All I can do, as the Lord enables me, is to remember you both before Him.

But there is One whose compassion is infinite. The love and tenderness of ten thousand earthly friends, of ten thousand mothers towards their sucklings, if compared with His, are less than a drop of water to the ocean; and His power is infinite too.

Why then do our sufferings continue, when He is so compassionate, and could remove them with a word? Surely, if we cannot give the particular reasons (which yet He will acquaint us with hereafter, John 13. 7), the general reason is at hand: He afflicts not for His own pleasure, but for our profit; to make us partakers of His holiness, and because He loves us.

“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace:
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.”

I wish you much comfort from David's thought: “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then Thou knewest my path” (Psa. 142. 3). The Lord is not withdrawn to a great distance, but His eye is upon you, and He sees you, not with the indifference of a mere spectator, but He observes with attention, He knows, He considers your path; yea, He appoints it, and every circumstance about it is under His direction. Your trouble began at the hour He saw best: it could not come before, and He has marked the degree of it to a hair's breadth, and the duration to a minute. He knows likewise how your spirit is affected; and such supplies of grace and strength, and in such seasons as He sees needful, He will afford. So that when things appear darkest, you shall still be able to say, Though chastened, not killed. Therefore, hope in God, for you shall yet praise Him.

ALL OF GRACE

By John Hobbs (1796-1871),

the blind minister at Haberdashers' Hall, London.

His autobiography appeared in the Gospel Standard in 1980.

O how does a full, free and complete salvation suit poor, helpless sinners! It is free, as it flows from the everlasting love of God; it is complete, as finished by the incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection and intercession of Jesus the Saviour; and it is full, as revealed in the hearts of poor sinners by God the Holy Ghost. All the blessings that accompany salvation, and which are essential to it, flow to us from God's free, sovereign grace alone, without either worth or worthiness on our part.

Jesus saith, "Ye must be born again." Now this new birth is God's work wrought in us, and that without anything done by us. "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." It is a new creation, and no creature could ever assist in producing itself. The begetting, quickening and bringing forth are all of God; it is He that hath made us new creatures in Christ, and not we ourselves.

Repentance unto life is necessary to salvation, and this repentance also is God's own gift (see Jer. 31. 18-20). Jesus gives this repentance unto Israel, and it is joined with the forgiveness of sins.

Furthermore, we must be all washed in His precious blood if we ever enter His kingdom: "If I wash thee not," Peter, "thou hast no part with Me." His righteousness revealed to, and put on by faith, is another of those things which accompany salvation: no acceptance at the marriage-feast without the wedding garment. And that faith, without which it is impossible to please God, and through which all these blessings are received in the heart of a poor sinner, is God's own gift, and flows only from His grace.

Once more, all that we ever know, or can know, believe, experience or enjoy of His everlasting love to us poor, lost, ruined, undone sinners, is from Himself alone. We live, because He quickens us into life; we repent and turn to Him, because He turns us to Himself; we believe to the salvation of our souls, thus giving glory to Him, because He works this faith in our hearts, and grants us renewed supplies of the spirit of faith from that fulness that is in Jesus; and we love Him, because He first loved us. Thus there is no room for boasting. All the benefit is ours, and all the glory shall be His.

THE LOSS OF A FAITHFUL PASTOR

Dear Mr. Watts,

I am truly grieved to hear of the sudden death of your faithful and beloved pastor [Mr. J.C. Fookes]. For to him to live was Christ, and to die was his gain. He has exchanged the "sword" for a "palm," and the warrior's "armour" for "white robes." He has entered into the joy of his Lord.

A very heavy responsibility has fallen upon yourself and Mr. Gurney. May "My grace" be made sufficient for you (2 Cor. 12. 9), that you may "occupy till I come" (Luke 19. 13). You are in a day of trouble. May power be given to call upon God so as to receive the promised deliverance (Psa. 50. 15), clear direction and heavenly wisdom. Good Jeremiah concludes his exquisite Lamentations with his anchor firmly fixed in the everlasting Rock: "Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever."

It is significant that your pastor's last reading should be such a word as Ecclesiastes 3 and the 64th hymn, and that his last text (Eph. 4. 17, 18) should respect your future walk: "Henceforth."

I deeply feel for you. May the voice of God be heard and regarded. You will need a gracious resoluteness; for losing the steadying influence of a wise pastor almost invariably discovers unstable elements. To have a prayerful exercise maintained in your own soul, to walk humbly with God in His tender fear, for the life of God constantly to hunger and thirst after righteousness, to find Christ in the gospel increasingly precious, both by increasing *need of Him* and increasing *attraction in Him* – these things – holding faith and a good conscience – will so establish and strengthen you as to give you that sober judgment and proper authority you will so much need.

It did me good to observe by your letter the sober effect of this sudden and solemn crisis in the cause at Bethel, and in my poor prayers I desire ever to remember you, together with so many other pastorless churches. Zion truly languishes. "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth."

My Christian love to you,

Yours very sincerely,

F.L.Gosden

November 20th, 1944

The infinite and glorious God, though He be so high that He "humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven," and so holy that the heavens are unclean in His sight, is yet so gracious that He condescendeth to, and converseth with, poor, sinful dust and ashes.

George Swinnock

HE DOES ALL THINGS WELL

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne

“Then when Jesus came, He found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off; and many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world” (John 11. 17-27).

I. Christ orders all events for His own glory. One day, when Christ had healed a man deaf and dumb, the multitude cried, “He hath done all things well.” Ah! this is true indeed of the Lord Jesus Christ. “He is head over all things to the church.” He that died to redeem us from hell lives to make all things work together for our good. “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names” (Psa. 147. 3, 4). The same hand that was nailed to the cross for us brings out Arcturus and the Pleiades and guides the sun in his journey – and all for us. A striking example of this we have now before us.

1. In the time: “He found that he had lain in the grave four days already.” We saw that when He heard that Lazarus was sick, He remained two days in the same place where He was. Then slowly and calmly He left the secluded glens of Mount Gilead and crossing the Jordan came on the fourth day to the village of Bethany. The shady ravines of Mount Olivet wore an aspect of gloom. The village was silent and still, and perhaps around the cottage door of Lazarus a group of mourners sat upon the ground. Jesus and the disciples halted a little way from the village, as if unwilling to break in upon the scene of deep sorrow.

At length a passing villager tells them that Lazarus is dead, and this is the fourth day he has been lying in the cold, rocky tomb. The disciples looked at one another and wondered. Four days dead! Why did our Master tarry? Why did we lose two days on the other side of Jordan? The sisters also thought Jesus came too late. “If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” The Jews also wondered. Yet Jesus came at the right time. Had He come later, the sensation would have passed away – the death of Lazarus would have been forgotten in the whirl of the

world. We soon forget the dead. Had He come sooner, the death of Lazarus would not have been known. He came in due time. He orders all things for His glory – He doeth all things well.

2. In the place: “Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem.” The place of this wonder of grace was also chosen with infinite skill. Bethany was a retired village, in a shady, secluded ravine entirely removed from the bustle and noise of the city, so that there was opportunity for Christ to exhibit those tender emotions of pity and love – weeping and groaning – rather than in the bustle of a crowded city. And yet Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs, or two miles, so that many Jews were present as witnesses, and the news of it was carried in a few hours to the capital, and spread over all Jerusalem and Judæa. Had it been done in a corner, men would have derided and denied it. But it was done within half an hour’s walk of Jerusalem, so that all might ascertain its reality. Christ chooses the place where He does His wonders wisely and well – all to show forth His own glorious name. He chooses the spot where to break the alabaster box, so that the ointment may be most widely diffused.

3. In the witnesses: “Many of the Jews.” From verses 45 and 46 we learn that the company were far from being all friends of Christ. Perhaps they would not have come if they had known Christ was to be there. But they were friends of Martha and Mary, and though they did not like their serious ways, yet in an hour of affliction they could not but visit them, to give them such comfort as they were able. This is the way of the world. There is much natural kindness remaining in the bosom even of worldly men. Christ knew this, and therefore chose this very time to arrive.

Ah, friends, He doeth all things well. You often wonder, often murmur, at the way that He takes you. Learn that if you are His, He will make all things work together for your good and His own glory. Learn to trust Him, then, in the dark, in the darkest frowns of providence, in the most painful delays. Learn to wait upon Him. “It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” He is good to the soul that waiteth for Him.

II. The weak believer. Jesus and His disciples had halted a little way from the village, under the shade of the trees; but word soon came to the ear of Martha that the Saviour was come. She immediately hastened to meet Him. Ah! who can tell what love and compassion must have appeared in His eye, what holy calmness on His brow, what tenderness upon His lips? He was the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys. Yet Martha is not hushed at the sight. She bursts out into this impassioned cry: “Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” Observe,

1. Her presumption. "If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." How did she know this? What promise of the Bible could she name upon which this expectation was grounded? God had promised that His own shall never want bread, any good thing, that He will supply all their need, that they shall never perish, that He will be with them in time of trouble; but nowhere has He promised that they shall not die. On the contrary, "Israel must die." David prays: "Make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days." And Job: "I would not live alway."

2. Her limiting of Christ: "If Thou hadst been here." Why so? Am I a God at hand, and not afar off? "Is My hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem?" She forgot the centurion of Capernaum: "I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only" (Matt. 8. 8). She forgot the nobleman's son at Capernaum: "Sir, come down, ere my child die." "Go thy way, thy son liveth" (John 4. 50). Her grief and anguish kept her from calmly remembering the works and power of Jesus.

3. Her unbelief: "But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." This was faith, and yet unbelief. She believed something, but not all, concerning Jesus. She believed in Him as an Advocate and Intercessor, but not that all things were given into His hands, that He is Lord of all, Head over all things to the church. Her grief and confusion and darkness hid many things from her.

4. And yet she came to Jesus. Though grieved, she was not offended; she did not keep away from Him. She poured out all her grief, her darkness and complaint into His bosom. This is just the picture of a weak believer, much of nature and little grace, many questionings of Christ's love and power, and yet carrying your complaints only to Him. It was not to the Jews Martha told her grief, it was not to the disciples – it was to Jesus Himself.

Learn that afflicting time is trying time. Affliction is like the furnace – it discovers the dross as well as the gold. Had all things gone on smoothly at Bethany, Martha and Mary had never known their sin and weakness; but now the furnace brought out the dross.

Learn to guard against unbelief. Guard against presumption – making a Bible-promise for yourself, and leaning upon a word God has never spoken. Guard against prescribing your way to Christ and limiting Him in His dealings. Guard against unbelief, believing only part of God's testimony. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." Remember, whatever your darkness may be, to carry your complaint to Jesus Himself.

III. Jesus reveals Himself. Not a feature of Christ's face was ruffled by the passionate cry of Martha. He was not angry, and did not turn away, but opened up more of Himself than He had ever done. "Thy

brother shall rise again.” He comforts her by the assurance that her brother shall rise again, and then leads her to see that all the spring and source of that is in Himself. Two things He shows in Himself.

1. I am the Resurrection: “He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” Christ here reveals Himself as the Head of all dead believers.

i. He shows what He is: I am the author or spring of all resurrection. The fountain of the resurrection is in My hand. It is My voice that shall call forth the sleeping dust of all My saints. It is My hand that shall gather their dust and fashion it like My own glorious body. All this is Mine. At My command Enoch was translated. I also carried away Elijah. I will raise the myriads of sleeping believers also. Believest thou this? Believest thou that He who has sat so often under thy roof and fig-tree, at thy table, that He is the Resurrection?

ii. He shows the certainty that all dead believers shall live: “He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” If I am the Resurrection, then surely I will raise every one for whom I died. I will not lose one of them.

Here is comfort for those of you who, like Martha, weep over the believing dead. Thy brother shall rise again. Jesus, who died for them, is the Resurrection. That great work of gathering and raising their scattered dust is committed to Jesus. “They shall be Mine ... in that day when I shall make up My jewels.” O what unspeakable comfort it will be to be raised from the grave by Jesus! If it were an angel’s voice we might wish to lie still; but when the voice of our Beloved calls, how gladly shall we arise!

“Sweet thought to me!
I shall arise,
And with these eyes
My Saviour see.”

O what unspeakable terror it will give to you that are Christless, to hear the voice of Jesus breaking the long silence of the tomb!

2. I am the Life: “He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.” Christ here reveals Himself as the Head of all living believers.

i. He directs her eye to Himself: “I am the Life.” This name is frequently applied to the Lord Jesus: “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1. 4). “For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3. 4).

4. And therefore Jesus says: “Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.” In My hand is the source of all natural, spiritual and eternal life. Everything that lives derives its life from Me. Every living

soul, every drop of living water flows from My hand. I begin; I carry on; I give eternal life.

ii. He shows the happy consequence to all living believers. "They shall never die." Their life suffers no interruption by the death of the body. Death has no power to quench the vital flame in the believer's soul. If I be the Life, I will keep all Mine, even in the valley of the shadow of death. They shall never perish. Believeest thou this?

Here is comfort to those of you who, like Martha, tremble at the sight of death. Ah! it is a ghastly sight when it comes – the terror of kings and the king of terrors. There is something dreadful in the still features, the silent lips, the glazed eye, the cold hand that no more returns our fond pressure, but rather sends a chill through the blood. Ah! you say, must we all thus die? Where is the gospel now? *Answer:* Jesus is the Life – the spring of eternal life to all His own. Believe this, and you will triumph over the grave.

IV. Martha's confession.

1. When her faith flowed out. When the south wind blows softly upon a bed of spices, it causes the fragrant odours to flow out. So when Jesus breathed on this believer's heart saying, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," it drew from her this sweet confession: "Yea, Lord: I believe." This shows how faith and love spring up in the heart. Some of you seek for faith much in the same way as you would dig for a well; you turn the eye inward upon yourself and search amidst the depths of your polluted heart to find if faith is there; you search amid all your feelings at sermons and sacraments to see if faith is there; and still you find nothing but sin and disappointment. Learn Martha's plan. She looked full in the face of Jesus; she saw His dust-soiled feet and sullied garment, and His eye of more than human tenderness. She drank in His word: "I am the Resurrection and the Life"; and in spite of all she saw and all she felt, she could not but believe. The discovery that Jesus made of His love and power as the Head of dead believers and the Head of living believers revived her fainting soul, and she cried, "Yea, Lord: I believe." Faith comes by hearing the voice of Jesus.

2. Upon what her faith flowed out: upon the Person of Jesus. It seems probable that Martha did not comprehend all that was implied in the words of the Lord Jesus. Something she saw, but much she did not see. Still on this one thing her faith fastens – that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. So do you, brethren, when glorious promises are unfolded, whose full meaning you cannot comprehend; embrace Jesus and you have all. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God by us." Much you cannot comprehend, for it doth not yet appear what we shall be; yet take a whole Christ into the arms of your

faith, and say, "Yea, Lord: I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

FROM DEATH TO LIFE

*By George Humberstone, who died November 3rd, 1977, aged 83.
Mr. Humberstone has become quite well known in the U.S.A. through
a number of his sermons appearing in Zion's Witness.*

Being born into this world the youngest but one of eight children, and my father dying when I was three, my early days were spent in very poor circumstances. I had no religious teaching, except a year or so at the Parish Church Sunday School in East Ardsley, near Wakefield, Yorkshire, the village in which I was born. At thirteen I had to leave week-day school, as each of us had to do, to bring in a little help toward our keep. I also dropped off the Sunday School. The whole family were worldly – public houses and all the attractions of this world, theatres, music halls, fiction reading, etc. We all grew up just living for these things.

When I was about sixteen, I began to feel a measure of condemnation of my ways and sometimes felt a consciousness of the being of God who saw me through and through. Under these feelings there came such a longing for a different life to what I was then living; some things I left off. I found at times such a longing for perfection, but what a love to sin and my evils I found too!

Just about this time a brother of mine, older, took up physical culture, and obtained literature on the subject which I read. In it I was told that by a regular system of exercising the body, clean living, proper diet, etc., a person could get back to the perfection Adam and Eve were in before they fell into sin. I did not know anything about the fall of man; I never read the Bible at all for years. But there was this longing in me for perfection, and here there seemed to be the very thing to bring it about – physical culture.

So I set to work with a will, and for two years I adhered to a system of daily exercises and really obtained a high degree of health and strength of body. And all seemed well and I was very happy, indulging in wrestling, boxing, weight-lifting, etc. Even an evil thought I imagined I could turn out of my mind.

What a degree of perfection I fondly thought I had now attained! But alas, in one week O how my castle was brought down in ruin! In that never-to-be-forgotten week every sin imaginable sprang up in my heart. Besetments that I thought were dead and buried rose up within with such force, I had no power against them. What a state of

condemnation and hurt pride followed until I was like one desperate! Yet all this time I had no thoughts of religion; there was none around me, and I had no thought of attending any place of worship. True, my sister and mother attended the Particular Baptist Chapel at Leeds, a five mile train journey away, but they did not influence me in the least. I was not at all desirous of going with them as yet. Often I was tempted to plunge headlong into sin, yet a power held me and I was kept *outwardly*.

My sister some years before had given me a penny New Testament which I had stowed away in the pocket of an old coat I had at work, which I kept to put on to do a dirty job with the machine I worked on (brick making). I had never read it, having no interest in it. At that time I could watch the machine and read a good deal too, but I had read nothing but fiction before. But one morning, in the midst of my frustration and trouble within, I took out this New Testament and began to read it, not with any felt regard for it, I was so ignorant. However, I began to read it and something within impelled me to keep on reading. Until then I had hardly any knowledge of what it contained literally.

I read on in it, in a few days, until I came to the Epistle to the Romans, and as I read the first three chapters it seemed as if scales fell from my eyes. I read of the state of all humanity through the fall of our first parents, and all at once such a solemn feeling of the being of a holy God came into my heart and such light upon the dreadful state of all humanity, myself included. In a moment I saw how abortive were all my strivings after perfection, as all the sin I had ever committed sprang from the heart I was born with, which was full of evil through the Fall. Mercifully I was held up in that awful moment as a holy God drew near; I can never forget it.

What a solemn falling down before that holy God I felt! I lifted my eyes to the ceiling and I said, "O God, Thou wouldest have been perfectly just if Thou hadest damned me at my first breath." Truly, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." O what a separation I felt from the world! I kept to myself. The vanities of the world, the fiction reading, and all the worldly things I had delighted in now lost all their attraction. As I read on from day to day (there was now no other book but the Bible), I saw very plainly in Romans that God had elected a people out of all humanity, and that none could ever, but for this election, be saved. How they were saved I knew as yet nothing. I knew nothing of the finished work of Christ. At that time I burned a pile of books.

For about a fortnight I kept my feelings and what I had seen in the Scriptures to myself. But then I felt drawn to speak and tell mother what I had seen and felt. I shall never forget how her face lit up and she said, "Aye, lad, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but the Holy

Ghost.” She told me these very things were believed and preached at the Particular Baptist Chapel at Leeds, so I needed no persuasion to begin going there with her. This was in October 1913. O what love I felt to the people there; I felt they were God’s elect. [It seems unbelievable that his mother had never taken him there!]

The first two Sundays I went I could not understand much of the preaching; they had supplies. I had not been to a place of worship for years. The third Sunday, however, I shall never forget. The late Mr. Broomfield from Warrington, Lancashire, was there. His morning text was, “But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Romans 11. 7). What a power there was to me in all that sermon! Mr. B. described all I had passed through for years in my feelings. He quoted in conclusion, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” This word was sealed home to my heart with a wonderful power. It filled me with hope that I was one of the elect, and it was the beginning of teaching me to look to and seek for Christ to be revealed to my soul, though I was yet very ignorant of the way of salvation.

I was brought very low indeed before He did reveal Himself to me, yet received many helps. One Lord’s day morning Mr. George Brown of Morley preached from the words, “This Man receiveth sinners.” O how my heart was melted as he exalted “this Man.” I was the sinner, blessed with repentance! My tears flowed down! What a love I felt to this precious Christ! How sweet it was! At another time the second verse of hymn 143 was very powerful to me: “Not the labour of my hands, can fulfil Thy law’s demands,” etc.

In the early part of 1915 I was brought extremely low in my soul, but on this never-to-be-forgotten Lord’s day, I went to chapel, when I was filled with ardent longings after Christ. The word kept bubbling up within, “Give me Christ, or else I die,” yet nothing in the services all day came with any feeling to me until when they were singing the last hymn in the evening. Nothing in the hymn was used, but while they were singing I felt despair seizing me, when all at once everything faded away from my sight, and Christ seemed to stand before me in glorious white, and looking at me with love which filled my heart, He smiled and said, “Where I am, there shall My servant be also.” I can never describe the love and the deep solid peace that filled me, the blessed comfort. O what a change indeed from guilt, bondage and despair to heaven in my soul! The vision was before my mind’s eye for many days, and the sweet peace for some months.

But not very long after this what a wilderness I came into, for I was very soon after in the army in the first World War.

THE FATHER SENDING HIS SON

Thomas Jacomb (1622-1687) deals with the argument of those who wrongly say: If the Father sends the Son, the Son must be inferior.

See Book Review, page 326

To remove a difficulty or answer an objection about the Father's sending the Son – Christ not inferior to the Father

I proceed to answer an objection, or to remove a difficulty which here lies before us. That which hath been spoken seems to derogate from the greatness and glory of Christ's Person; for did God thus send Him? Surely then, as some argue, He is a person inferior to the Father; this sending seems to be inconsistent with His equality to His Father; if He was sent, and thus sent, doth not that speak His inferiority to that God who sent Him, and by consequence that He is not God? Thus the Socinians argue from it; and this is one of those heads from which they fetch their arguments against Christ's deity.

For the explaining of the thing, and the answering of the adversary, divines commonly lay down two things about it:

1. That sending doth not always imply inferiority or inequality; for persons who are equal, upon mutual consent, may send each the other, and if the person sent doth freely concur and consent with the person sending, there is no impeachment or intrenchment then upon the equality between them. And thus it was between God the Father and Christ. Had He been sent merely from the will of the Father, whether He Himself would or no, then indeed the case had differed, and the objection would have carried strength in it; but it was quite otherwise. For Christ readily consented to and perfectly concurred with the Father, and He was as willing to be sent as the Father was to send Him: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God."

When the master sends the servant he goes because he must, but when the Father sends the Son He goes readily, because His will falls in with His Father's will; He obeys not upon necessity, but upon choice and consent. So it was with Christ in reference to His Father's sending of Him; the will of the Son was as much for the work as the will of the Father Himself.

You must not look upon Christ as merely passive in the sending, for, in some respects, He sent Himself; and His coming upon that great errand of man's redemption was His own act as well as the Father's. As the Father is said to sanctify Him (John 10. 36), and yet He also is said to sanctify Himself (John 17. 19); and as the Father is said to give Him (Rom. 8. 32), and yet He also is said to give Himself (Gal. 2. 20); so here the Father is said to send Him, yet He also, as He was one in nature and

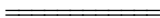
in will with the Father, may be said to send Himself. Thus Augustine opens it.

The expression in the text, "God sent His Son," doth not exclude the Son or the Spirit from the sending, or wholly appropriate it to the Father; it only notes the order of the Persons in their working. The Father being the first in working, therefore the sending of Christ is ascribed to Him; but there being nothing more in it than so, that will not prove any inequality in the Persons, or any superiority that one hath over the other.

This is one answer for the clearing up of the difficulty, and the weakening of the objection which we have to do with.

2. The learned further distinguish of a twofold inferiority; one in respect of nature, and one in respect of office, condition or dispensation. As to the first, Christ neither was nor is in the least inferior to the Father, both having the same nature and essence, in respect of which He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. 2. 6). As to the second, Christ being considered as Mediator, as having assumed flesh, put Himself into the sinner's stead, and undertaken to make satisfaction to God; so, without any derogation, it may be said of Him that He was inferior to the Father. In reference to which it follows in the forementioned place, verses 7, 8, He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And upon this He saith, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14. 28).

He was in nature every way as great as the Father, but He having submitted to be made man, to be a surety, having condescended to the office and work of a Redeemer in our flesh, so in respect of economy and dispensation the Father was greater than He. And by virtue of His superiority over Christ, as considered in this His voluntary examination [death], so He sent Him, and laid His commands upon Him, and dealt with Him as you have heard; but yet His natural and essential greatness or equality with the Father was not at all by this impaired or lessened, which was the great truth to be secured against the adversary.



The servant must obey his master with fear and trembling (Eph. 6. 5); the wife must see that she reverence her husband (Eph. 5. 33). If there be such reverence due from one creature to another, when they were all made of the same coarse, earthly mould, and must all be buried in the bowels of their common mother; when there is no essential, but only an extrinsical [not inherent or essential] difference between them; what reverence is due from poor dust and ashes to "the God of the spirits of all flesh," the King of kings, and Lord of lords, between whom and His creatures there is an infinite distance?

George Swinnock

BOOK REVIEWS

The Diary and Journal of David Brainerd, edited by Jonathan Edwards; 792 pages; hardback; price £17.00; published by Banner of Truth and available from Christian bookshops.

David Brainerd (1718-1747) was an American minister and missionary to the Indians; it is his labours amongst the Indians for which he is best known. The current edition contains in one volume his Diary, Journal, a few short writings, and a number of letters. The edition ends with Jonathan Edwards's "Reflections" on the life of David Brainerd. The Diary and Journal of Brainerd have long been regarded as a Christian classic, and rightly so. It is recognised as the first missionary biography, and one that has been greatly used of God ever since it was first published in New England in 1749.

The book (most of which consists of Brainerd's own writings) shows his remarkable labours in the gospel ministry and his unflinching exposure to innumerable hardships and dangers. After a long season of apparently little fruit amongst the Indians, he saw a remarkable revival by the power of the Holy Spirit. Many Indians in gross pagan darkness were brought to a deep conviction of sin and into the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ, after which they were formed into an orderly church. Though young, he suffered much from ill health, eventually having to leave his beloved Indian congregation in the charge of his brother. Much of his last year on earth was spent being cared for by the family of Jonathan Edwards, the esteemed minister and theologian. It was in Jonathan Edwards's home in Boston that he died, but not before he offered many words of spiritual counsel that were blessed of the Lord. In his dying condition, he was also favoured to see arrangements being made for the preaching of the gospel more widely amongst the Indians.

The Diary describes his inmost experiences, trials, blessings, and his battle with indwelling sin and melancholy (depression) that often beset him. In his Diary we see his unshakeable belief in the sovereignty of God and man's utter inability to save himself, yet how he laboured night and day in prayer, fasting, travelling and preaching in the Lord's service. We see his great concern and watchfulness over his own soul, but also his wrestling in prayer and his labours in the public ministry for the souls of others. Brainerd's experimental godliness puts the lie to the oft-repeated claims that a belief in sovereign grace diminishes zeal for the conversion of the ungodly, and that to be greatly concerned about the souls of others must mean a lack of concern about one's own soul. Brainerd's example shines forth by the grace of God, yet Brainerd himself felt to be the least of all saints and unworthy. He strove above all things for the honour and glory of God.

The Journal describes his journeys and ministry amongst the Indians, including the events of the revival. It recounts the pagan beliefs and practices of those who were then delivered into the glorious light of the gospel. We also see the enormity of his labours, the discouragements he faced and defeated through the Lord's gracious power.

However, it is with some sadness that we cannot recommend Edwards's "Reflections" on the life of Brainerd, that occupy the final fifty pages of the book. The current publishers very prominently recommend them. However, they are strongly set in the context of church trouble in New England in the 1740s, which

is not clearly explained to today's reader. During a period of revival, there had been an unseemly appearance of false fire. This led to many claiming to have had visions, portions of Scripture spoken to them directly by God and extremes of agonies and joys. These appearances did not, for the most part, prove to be of God, since they gave rise to spiritual pride, disorder and rebellion against the standing ministry in churches. Most bore no true fruits of the Spirit, and proved to be stony ground hearers. Brainerd and Edwards publically denounced these fanatics.

However, it is evident that the "Reflections" exceed proper bounds and condemn the experiences of many of the Lord's true and humble children (note Matthew 13. 24-30). Remarks are made in "Reflection 1" that appear to deny that the Lord applies with power particular texts of Scripture to individuals personally. (We note that the "Reflections" are written in a very complex and confusing style, quite unlike the Diary and Journal which are very readable.) The "Reflections" also place too much store by Brainerd's experiences, implying that as he approached death his judgments became almost infallible.

However, let us not forget that we remain ruined sinners and subject to corruption until taken to eternity, no matter how graciously taught we may be. Our only standard must be the inerrant and infallible Word of God, written and incarnate. Many previous editions of Brainerd's Diary and Journal have discreetly omitted the "Reflections," and we can see why.

Nevertheless, we conclude that the Diary and Journal themselves are most godly and gracious, and we whole-heartedly recommend them. They are very searching and lead one to prayerful concern and self examination in the light of the Scriptures.

I.A. Sadler, Chippenham

God Manifest in the Flesh, by Thomas Jacomb; paperback; 146 pages; price £3.50 plus postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ.

We are glad that the Trust is publishing extracts from the old godly writers. Beautifully produced, and well edited and set out by Timothy Abbott, *God Manifest in the Flesh* consists of extracts from Thomas Jacomb's large work on the first four verses of Romans chapter 8. Thomas Jacomb (1622-1687) was a London Puritan preacher who was among those ejected from the Church of England in 1662.

At first we wondered if the publication was necessary as Banner of Truth have published the complete work, but then we realised that this was as far back as 1996.

God Manifest in the Flesh is not easy reading – very deep and weighty – but in thorough Puritan style Jacomb ably deals with the vital truth concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus. His remarks are based on: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."

The three points that are handled are:

1. That Christ was sent, and sent by God the Father.
2. That Christ, thus sent, was God's own Son.
3. That Christ, God's own Son, was sent in the likeness of sinful flesh.

Jacomb is extremely clear on the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ in His divine Person. He is equally clear on His real, proper, sacred humanity, body and soul, united to His divine Person.

Jacomb does not hedge round any difficulties. For instance, he is very careful on the meaning of “the likeness of sinful flesh,” why the expression was used, seeing that the Lord Jesus is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens.” The reason He gives is that the flesh He took was capable of suffering and dying. Again, he deals with the contention that if the Father *sends* the Son, then the Son must be inferior. (See page 323.)

We recommend this book, which will need careful reading.

Lloyd-Jones: Messenger of Grace, by Iain H. Murray; hardback; 274 pages; price £16; published by the Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

It may be said, “Why another book about Dr. Lloyd-Jones nearly thirty years after his death?” These books continue to come, and Martyn Lloyd-Jones still has an amazing following.

Dr. Lloyd-Jones was a remarkable and admirable man. He sacrificed a wonderful medical career as a Harley Street specialist, and held a vast congregation in London for thirty years. His services were very simple and reverent, and he abhorred humour in the pulpit. He always kept to the Authorized Version.

A Calvinist himself, he did much to encourage the republication and reading of Puritan writers.

We never met Dr. Lloyd-Jones, though we had occasion once to correspond with him, when we were amazed at the self-effacing humility with which he replied. This marked his life and ministry.

Our great difference with Martyn Lloyd-Jones was that the boundary he set, in contending for divine authority, was between Evangelicalism on the one hand and Modernism on the other. We believe the boundary should have been much more carefully placed, between Calvinism and Arminianism (or free grace and free will).

The early chapters of this book are excellent, emphasising some of the things that Dr. Lloyd-Jones stood for, and which we love – especially the vital necessity of the Holy Spirit’s work. Some of the later chapters deal more with some of the controversies which have followed – what he did and said – for instance, what was his attitude to the charismatic movement. (In his insistence that the sealing of the Spirit mentioned in Ephesians 1. 13 was a blessing *after* conversion, Dr. Lloyd-Jones affirmed his agreement with *The Sealing of the Spirit*, by John M’Kenzie, first Editor of the *Gospel Standard*.)

As with all Iain Murray’s books, this is well written, and we found some parts of it very profitable. Probably there is much in it which would not interest many of our readers. But as our young people are constantly being brought face to face with these things, we feel it right to give our opinion as to how far we agree.

Man Overboard: The Story of Jonah, by Sinclair B. Ferguson; paperback; 98 pages; price £6; published by the Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

We are not enamoured by Sinclair Ferguson’s style of writing, which in places seems too glib. However, there are some most solemn warnings in this book – how far a child of God can go, and yet fall through disobedience and carelessness. These warnings are very needful and profitable.

“THY WAY IS IN THE SEA”

“Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known” (Psa. 77. 19).

“Thy way is in the sea,”
Thy path in waters deep.
When in sore trial, O may we
This thought in memory keep.

“Thy way is in the sea,”
Thou hast a perfect right
To deal with us – poor, finite worms –
As seems good in Thy sight.

“Thy way is in the sea,”
Hidden to mortal eyes;
And if we cannot trace Thy hand,
We know that Thou art wise.

“Thy way is in the sea,”
When all things dark appear.
We would have faith to trust in Thee
Although our way’s not clear.

“Thy way is in the sea,”
Thy footsteps are not known,
And filled with unbelief and fear,
Thy people often groan.

“Thy way is in the sea,”
Here wisdom is displayed;
For, could we all Thy goings see,
We should not seek Thy aid.

“Thy way is in the sea,”
Thou knowest the way we take;
And if that way be rough or smooth,
O do not us forsake!

“Thy way is in the sea,”
O give us then to feel
That what we know not now, Thou wilt
At length to us reveal.

“Thy way is in the sea,”
O may we be resigned
To all Thy will, and know Thou art
Too good to be unkind.

S.H.H., March 5th, 1905

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
NOVEMBER 2008

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

A CALL TO PRAYER

Remembrance Sunday this year comes on November 9th. However the world remembers it, the Lord's people think of the Lord's mercies to our nation over the years. While we think especially of the wonderful deliverance in two World Wars, we go even further back to such events in November as the failure of the Gunpowder Plot and the Glorious Revolution under William III. But what wretched returns from us!

It is felt that at the present time there is the need for special prayer among our churches, and the Gospel Standard Committee suggests that the week following Remembrance Sunday is a most suitable time for this – whether special prayer meetings are called, or remembrance is made at the weekly prayer meeting.

It is clear that our national situation is serious, with the present financial crisis. But above all there is the abounding wickedness in our nation's rejection of God.

But coming closer, we are so concerned about the state of our churches – older ministers, afflicted ministers, the lack of a gracious effect following the preaching of the Word. Few seem to be quickened into life; many of those who do fear the Lord lack the sweet assurance of faith, and so not many are able openly to profess the Lord's name. There is a solemn withholding of the Spirit with the resulting lukewarmness in the things of God.

Our only hope is in the riches of the Lord's grace and mercy as displayed in His dear Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is still almighty, still on the throne; and He is still gracious. May He return to Jerusalem with mercies (Zech. 1. 16).

“Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants.

“O satisfy us early with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

“Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

“Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.

“And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it” (Psa. 90. 13-17).

STRENGTH IN SITTING STILL – NOT GOING DOWN TO EGYPT!

*Sermon preached by Mr. G.D. Buss at the Meetings of the
Gospel Standard Society at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester,
on September 13th, 2008*

Text: “For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still” (Isa. 30. 7).

The surrounding context of our subject this afternoon is a very solemn one. The solemnity lay in this: that Isaiah had to preach to rebellious children. They were children, but they were rebellious. Generally speaking the preaching that God gave to His servants Isaiah, Jeremiah and others of that generation was not received by the people of God. I speak, of course, about the professing people of God, those who professed to be His children.

The situation was this: that after many, many years of God forbearing, and after many, many years of sending prophets to warn, and to rebuke, and to reprove His ancient people, now God’s judgment, the captivity, was imminent. The Assyrians were on the doorstep, and behind them were the Chaldeans. And it seemed that the nation that had been the land of promise would soon be no more a nation even to speak of.

But there are two things we must ever remember. The first is this: that these were God’s judgments. They had not come by chance. They had not come by miscalculation. They were God’s judgments. This was God’s purpose.

And the second thing to remember is this: that God’s dear people – that means His exercised people, His living people – would have sought grace to obey what we read of in one of the minor prophets: “Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.” So there were men like Jeremiah, Baruch and others who in their generation understood the judgments of the Lord, understood why the enemy had been permitted to come in like a flood, understood why things were at such a low ebb and the strength of the nation had gone. They knew why it was, and they heard the rod and who had appointed it. But it seems that there were very, very few in that generation who heard, or even began to understand the dealings of God with that nation.

Now carnal wisdom in the natural man will ever be seeking a way to escape God’s rod; that is natural to us all. If we can find a way out, a way of escape of our own making to escape the rod, then our natural man will soon be hurrying through that door. And so it was. The political classes of the day, we may say, the king and his counsellors,

thought they saw a way out, and they said they would enter into an alliance with Egypt – that nation of whom God had said, “Ye shall no more return that way again,” when He delivered them from Egyptian bondage. And there they were seeking to go back to the very land that God had delivered them from, from the very people whom God had separated them from. It seemed the obvious thing to do politically; Egypt was strong, Egypt had many armies, Egypt had many weapons, many nations were afraid of Egypt. O to get Egypt on their side would be the very thing to do. And no doubt there were those who applauded the diplomacy of the king. But what did the Lord say about it: “For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still.”

We will come to the meaning of sitting still in a moment, but just notice this. When God purposes a thing, it cannot be disannulled, it cannot be overthrown. All the negotiations and scheming of proud man will not alter God from His purpose one iota. “He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth.” “I will work,” He says, “and who shall let it?” Who shall hinder it, who shall turn it back? This is the first lesson this afternoon – His purposes are those that will stand. His counsel is that which will be fulfilled, and all other purposes, and all other counsels must yield, must give way. But, dear friends, there is a silver lining to the cloud for God’s dear people when they are under God’s judgments:

“By His saints it stands confessed,
That what He does is ever best.”

Sooner or later, under God’s judgments, a child of God, an exercised, living child of God, will approve of the rod, approve of the justice, approve of the judgment, and approve of what Paul experienced when he said, “The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”

So here is the background to our text this afternoon. I want, with God’s help, to look at it, first of all, as a solemn warning, and then, secondly, as a word of promise – because couched beneath the warning is a promise to those who are enabled to sit still. “Their strength is to sit still.” You may have come to God’s house this afternoon seeking a word of direction. Here it is: your “strength is to sit still.” With God’s help we will explain what that means in a moment, but first of all *the warning*. “The Egyptians shall help in vain.” Now you say, We would not look to Egypt now for help, would we? Friend, we would by nature, spiritually speaking. Let me put it this way. In three ways we are prone to look to the Egyptians for help.

First of all, you see, there is that profane world in which we live, worldly counsel and worldly wisdom. You know, it is natural to our fallen nature. It just fits in with our carnal mind and our natural man. "The wisdom of this world is foolishness," God says, but how sometimes even the wisest people left to themselves have to prove that they are no match when they come face to face with the world's wisdom unless God protects, God preserves and God keeps. O may we be delivered from looking to the world for our help, to worldly schemes and worldly advantage. I do think dear Abram sets a wonderful example in this, you know, when he came back from the slaughter of the kings, and those three kings met him. The King of Sodom in particular wanted to reward him for the victory that had been gained, and Abram said, "I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God ... that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet ... lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." O he did not want worldly support, he did not want carnal wisdom, he did not want anyone to say, Well now, Abram got that because of this world's wisdom and this world's goods. No, this dear man put his trust completely and absolutely in the God of heaven and earth. Then may the Lord deliver us, first of all, from worldly wisdom. May we be separated from it, sequestered from it, as we sang just now in that little hymn (991). Sequestered from it because it will do us no good whatsoever. You may say, Yes, but this man does it that way and look how he has prospered. But, dear friends, our text says to the child of God, "The Egyptians shall help in vain."

Secondly, we must remember this. If we have been called by God's grace, we profess to have been separated from a dead religion, a false religion, a religion that satisfies our poor, fallen nature, and we need not go back to that for any help. You say, Is it likely? You ask the Galatians about it. The Galatians had professed to have been called by grace and been brought into the knowledge of the covenant of grace through a precious Saviour, by the teaching of the Spirit. And yet there were those who wanted to go back to the law and the covenant of works as the foundation of their hope, adding something to the gospel that God never intended to be added to it. And the apostle had to say very strongly, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you ... let him be accursed."

"The Egyptians shall help in vain." Friends, this is a word for us in our generation also you know. Things are at a low ebb. There is a withholding of the Spirit. How shall we remedy this? The natural, religious man says, Well we will change this, and we will change that. We will change the hymnbook perhaps, amend the version perhaps, do something to attract the young perhaps. O we will fill the pews, they say. What does God say about it? "The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to

no purpose.” You can be sure, friends, that when this begins to take place in the house of God, the candlestick is being removed. Ichabod will soon be written over the door; the glory has departed. May we be delivered from the Egyptians in that respect. Whenever the Holy Ghost is withdrawn, there is a vacuum, undoubtedly; we feel it, we mourn over it, but let us not seek carnal means of filling it. Rather, O rather, may our prayer be,

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

Many, many years ago in a church meeting one of the aged deacons got up and made this profound comment. (I have never forgotten it.) He said, “Whenever the Holy Ghost has withdrawn from a church, there is a vacuum and a natural tendency to fill it up with something other than the blessed Spirit.” O friends, may we not be left to do it. “For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose.”

Then there is one other way in which “the Egyptians shall help in vain,” and that is what I might call self-help. “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.” “Lean not unto thine own understanding.” The Word of God has said it. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: and who can know it?” The Word of God has said it. O that we might be given that grace to leave ourselves behind.

“O crucify this self, that I
No more, but Christ in me, may live;
Bid all my vile affections die,
Nor let one hateful lust survive.”

O dear friends, we need more of the crucifixion of self, for self-will will not help. Self-help is no use in this path that you and I are in this afternoon. O may we be delivered from that sinful independence that is in us, that self-will, that self-righteousness, that self-sufficiency, that sinful independence from the God of all grace, from the Holy Spirit, from the unction of the Holy One. “The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose.” Is there one here this afternoon who needs the Lord’s help? You are in some particular trouble and trial, in some particular corner? You look this way, you look that way. Well, friends, take this as a warning. Ask God to deliver you from Egyptian help for it will be to no purpose; it will be vain. “I will overturn, overturn, overturn,” the Word of God says it.

Now what does the Lord then say in a positive way? “Therefore have I cried concerning this.” I like this word *cried*. There are times when the Lord cries. Now do not mistake me. We read of the still small

voice, and that is also an inner persuasion. But here God says, "Therefore have I cried concerning this." Friends, we need the Lord in our day to come with power, do we not? We need Him to come with the unction of the Holy One. We need Him to give power to the ministry and power to the Word. "Therefore have I cried concerning this." How the Lord said to Isaiah later on, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Now may the Lord help us to hear the cry, for there are many other voices, aren't there? Unbelief, the world, the flesh, carnal wisdom, the Egyptians, they will all be speaking much. But O when this cry goes forth, they have to be still. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" "Be still and know that I am God."

"Therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still." I have sometimes thought of the Lord Jesus Christ standing up in the boat on Galilee's lake. The wind was raging, the waves were roaring, the boat no doubt was rocking to and fro, the disciples were full of fear, darkness reigned. O what a scene of confusion! But O with those blessed words, "Peace, be still," He rebuked the winds, He rebuked the waves and the fears of His disciples, "and there was a great calm." That is what we need this afternoon: the cry of the Lord to come forth over all our unbelief, all our temptations, all our sins, all our guilt, all the comings and goings of our poor, natural man. "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters." "Be still, and know that I am God."

"Therefore have I cried concerning this." Concerning what? This. This path you are in; this corner that you are found shut up in; this deep water that you are out of your depth in; this fiery trial through which you are passing; this unknown future you are dreading; this new chapter in your life that seems so uncertain. I have cried concerning this.

I will just divert for a moment. You know it is a wonderful thing when the Lord comes to us in our path and speaks a word in season. You may have to wait many a day, many a month, many a year sometimes for a word like this. But when it comes it exactly suits the case, exactly suits the path you are in. It exactly suits the need you are in. In a moment it takes up the whole matter, and you feel it is in the Lord's hands.

"Therefore have I cried concerning this." And you know, dear friends, if the Lord is silent at the moment concerning this, then may you be much on your knees that He will break His silence. "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." O come Lord to my aid, come to my need, come to my path, come into my poor, troubled sea. "Therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still."

Now the word of admonition was this: that if they humbled themselves under the mighty judgments of God at that time the Lord would honour them. You know, we have a distinction between two of the kings in these last days before the captivity: King Jeconiah and King Zedekiah. Both of them were under the ministry of Jeremiah in particular. Jeremiah said to Jeconiah, If you submit under the Lord's hand, surrender to these enemies the Lord has sent, the Lord will preserve your life. And Jeconiah and his court listened, and they did submit, and though they were taken down into captivity and it was thirty-seven years that Jeconiah was in prison, but after that he was brought out of prison, clothed in the king's garments; he sat with the king's sons, he was given the meat and the drink that they had for the rest of his days. Zedekiah refused to hear the word of the Lord, and instead of submitting to the judgments of the Lord he tried to go down to Egypt literally, and he was taken and his sons were slain before his eyes, and his eyes were put out, and he was taken to Babylon and he died in prison. See the difference. Jeconiah's example, friends, is the one which we need grace to follow. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." Yes, there may be judgments, there are chastenings, but, child of God, you will get no good by kicking against the rod. Rather humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. That is the first lesson in our text.

"Their strength is to sit still." That is their strength. This is their safest course. This is the safest way under God's judgments. Humble yourself. Acknowledge the justice of it. Even go further with God's help, "compared with what your sins deserve, how easy are your pains." Acknowledge this:

"What though I can't His goings see,
Nor all His footsteps find?
Too wise to be mistaken, He,
Too good to be unkind."

Remember that. There is no unkindness of God in the dealings with His dear people. No, it is the Father's hand that has prepared the cup. It is the Father's hand that holds the rod. And "Their strength is to sit still." "Be still, and know that I am God." "Sit still." Stand still.

"Their strength is to sit still." So in the second part of our subject, the first admonition is *humility*. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." O what grace we need to be humble! It is not natural to us, is it? Our natural man resents it. I remember hearing of a godly minister from these parts who once went into one of the woollen mills in Rochdale. He told us how they were showing him round and what went on in the woollen mills. He said that he was shown the raw

wool that was brought off the hills after it had been shorn from the sheep. He noticed that nearly all the sacks had burst open, and he asked why was this? The man said, Well it is very strange, but however tight we seem to tie the neck of the sack, sooner or later the force of the wool inside, the elasticity of it, it bursts the sack open. And that dear man of God said, That is just like me, sometimes I think I am humble, and quiet, and patient, and then something rises up and just like that sack it bursts out and I realise that humility is a grace.

“Their strength is to sit still.” Secondly, what does this mean to us this afternoon, what is this sitting still? Is it fatalism? Is it a careless indifference? Indeed it is not! God forbid you should think that. Friend, your soul is too precious to be indifferent about it. Your eternal destiny is too important for you to be negligent about. The matters that concern you are of eternal importance; it is no time for indifference or fatalism. God forbid you should think *that* is a doctrine of grace. It never has been and it never will be. No.

Then what is it, you say, to sit still? One good man once said this, speaking about the word in the Song of Solomon, “I sat down under His shadow with great delight.” He said, Faith is never more active than when it is sitting still. I knew what he meant. When we are enabled to sit still, to rest as it were on the arm of the Lord in quiet contentment at His dear feet, then we are indeed in a healthy state spiritually; faith is indeed active, blessedly active. Then we know what that word means, “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” Then we know what it is to “rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.”

“Their strength is to sit still.” This is where you get your strength from, child of God, by leaning hard upon your Beloved. This is where you get your resources, by living close to the well, Christ Jesus. “Their strength is to sit still.” O for that grace to lean! We stray from the well, we stray from the arm, we lose our strength. We do. So your strength is to sit still.

“Nearer, nearer to Him clinging,
May my helpless soul be found.”

“Their strength is to sit still.” Then it is for the one who is sitting still to have a gracious confidence in the One who is not sitting still. While His people are sitting still, God is working for them. That is where Ruth had to rest. “Sit still, my daughter,” said Naomi, “for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.” She sat still while Boaz worked. And so it is, dear friend, with a child of God. When they are enabled to sit still, you can be sure God is working for them. When they are enabled to “be still and know that He is God,” you

can be sure His arm is outstretched on their behalf – and the more we are still the more certain it is that God is working on our behalf.

“Their strength is to sit still.” God is not sitting still. We were reminded this morning by our dear friend the Lord’s servant, God does not need reviving, does He? No, He ever lives in the Person of His dear Son to make intercession for His dear people. His loving heart is always full of love to His dear people. His eye is never parted from them. “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.” O, friends, God is working on behalf of His dear people. What good William Cowper said is true:

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

“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”

“Their strength is to sit still.” It has this in it too, and we are not often in this place: “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” The disciples were not for sitting still, were they? One took up a sword to defend the Saviour. He said, “Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” What an example for you and me this afternoon. Has God put a cup of affliction in your path, a cup of bereavement in your hand, a cup of disappointment, a cup of discouragement, a cup of difficulty? “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?”

“Thrice comfortable hope
That calms my stormy breast;
My Father’s hand prepares the cup,
And what He wills is best.”

“Beneath thy fainting head
Thy Father and thy Friend
His everlasting arms has laid,
To succour and defend.”

Yes. What a mercy!

“Their strength is to sit still.” Here, while Ruth sat still on that memorable day, there was Boaz managing it all; well, God managing it through Boaz. It was not easy for Ruth to sit still as there was the other kinsman who had the nearer right. That wasn’t the one she loved, that wasn’t the one she was exercised about, and, friends, this is where the faith of God’s people is tried in this matter of sitting still. He often

permits something to rise which seems to militate against the very cause and concern they have, to try their faith, to test it. And He did Martha's. Martha for a moment could say, "Thou art the Christ," that One who is the Resurrection and the Life. Then you see, when our Lord came to the grave of Lazarus, her faith sunk. She remembered how long ago he had been buried and what nature had done to the body. "Lord, by this time he stinketh." Martha, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" And so it was with Ruth, you see. There was that nearer kinsman – yes. Whatever was he going to do, and how is it going to work out? "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." For the Lord did it, didn't He? That is a beautiful word in Psalm 138, verse 8: "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine own hands." I like that word. I have had to plead it many a time, and I have proved it, and so have some of you in the pew this afternoon. How did you prove it? When you were brought to sit still; when you, as it were, had to leave all schemes and all thoughts of your own. Lay them all aside and say, Lord, I cannot manage this matter, it is beyond my wisdom, my strength, my patience, my endurance. Lord, I am completely inadequate, ineffectual. I am a poor fool. Manage it for me, undertake for me. Like Hezekiah said, "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." And the Lord does it, doesn't He? "The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it."

"Their strength is to sit still." If you go through the Word of God – I have mentioned Ruth already – you will see the great benefit God's dear children have had throughout the ages when they have been enabled to sit still or stand still. You go for example to the Red Sea. It is easy for us to read the account – we know how it turned out – but there were the Israelites, and it was no easy matter. The wilderness on either side, Pharaoh thundering up behind with his iron chariots and armed men, the Red Sea with its waters before them. They really were hemmed in, hedged in, entangled in the wilderness, in a net. What were they to do? "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you this day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." The Lord made a way; He kept the Egyptians back; He divided the Red Sea. "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward," and forward they went. "He led them on safely so they feared not, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies." O the power and the strength God gave them when they stood still. They did not flee in confusion, did not turn back, did not compromise with their enemies but leaned hard on their covenant God.

You come to Jehoshaphat. There is that vast army from Moab and Edom and the Ammonites who came against him. They thought they had got their moment to crush little Judah. What did Jehoshaphat do? What would you have done? O you say, you would have been very busy. I would have called my chief captains and I would ask how many chariots have we got, and how many men can be called to arms and this, that, and the other, I would not have wasted time. Well, I am afraid if left to your own wisdom that is just what you would have done. But Jehoshaphat called a prayer meeting. They “stood before the Lord,” we read, “with their little ones, their wives, and their children”; all Judah stood there. Listen to the prayer of that godly king; he was the man who was sitting still: “O our God ... we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee.” Just as it was in Psalm 25. The psalmist speaks of being in the net, doesn’t he? And then he says, “Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net.” For the Lord wonderfully worked for Jehoshaphat. “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle”: it is the Lord’s battle, “stand ye still.” And they saw the Lord work on their behalf.

O the blessing of being able to sit still. Mary found it at the feet of Jesus, didn’t she? Poor Martha on that occasion was “cumbered about much serving,” and she soon found her strength going, her patience worn out. O Martha, before you did your serving you needed to go to the feet of Jesus, then you would have done it in a different spirit. “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” Where did she choose it? She sat at Jesus feet; the place of contentment, the place of teaching, the place of submission, the place of fellowship, the place of communion, the place of felt union. That is where she got her strength from. We sang just now,

“Larger communion let me prove
With Thee, blest Object of my love;
But O for this no power have I!
My strength is at Thy feet to lie.”

“Their strength is to sit still.” This may well be a word of direction to someone this afternoon, but you need grace to walk it out. If it is indeed so to one of you this afternoon, then what you need is the grace to do what the Word of God says – “Sit still.” You say, What is it then I must be doing? Well, Philipians chapter 4 gives you three blessed pieces of advice. Firstly: “Be careful for nothing.” It does not say be careless. You cannot be careless about this path, can you? It is oppressing your poor spirit, it is weighing you into the ground, it has left you with much pain in your breast, it has kept you awake many a night

and filled your day with many a fear; you cannot be careless. The Word of God does not tell you to be careless. But "be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." And there is no better proof that God has your case in hand than when at the throne of grace He gives you liberty and when, as the fruit of that liberty, a sweet peace rests in your soul that your case is heard and your cause is being dealt with.

"He engaged to manage all,
By the way and to the end."

The second piece of blessed advice and help to you is in Philippians 4: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Paul had learned how to be full, how to be empty, to be shut up in prison and to be at liberty. O the many things he had to learn. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Paul how did you do it? Listen, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

And that is why Elijah could sit still at Cherith, that lonely place. The only comfort was the brook and the ravens morning and evening bringing bread and flesh. And it was not a banquet, was it? But it was God's provision and he was content with it. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Now the third piece of blessed encouragement in Philippians 4. Listen. "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Is this matter beyond His wit, and will, and wisdom? Is it beyond His resources? To whom else will you go with your trouble, your trial, your difficulty, your case? "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The good hymn-writer sums it up so well, doesn't he? And I will leave it with this:

"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."

Not while his life lasts, not when he comes to the valley of the shadow of death, not to an endless eternity.

"For the Egyptians shall help in vain and to no purpose. Therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still."

THE GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY NORTHERN MEETINGS

*Report of Meetings held at Rochdale Road Chapel, Manchester
on Saturday, September 13th, 2008*

PRAYER MEETING

Mr. B.E. Izzard (Pastor, Fenstanton) in the Chair, read 2 Kings 13 verses 20, 21, Psalm 85 and Ephesians 2 verses 19-22, and then addressed the Meeting:

By the help of God I desire to turn with you again to Psalm 85. We read from verse 6: "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

Dear friends, we can never be too low whilst on praying ground for God's reviving. How needful, that reviving of God's own hand! You know, we need it in the church of God, we need it personally, we need it in the churches, we need it in our land. But let us consider this sweet truth: God needs no reviving. We do, and may we be brought to it, and may there be a sweet knowledge of the truth in these words; it is God's own reviving, and it is the prayer of importunity. "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" Divinity needs no reviving. May we know such truth in our hearts. How needful God's own reviving! "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?"

We do not intend to be long, but we notice very quickly how personally we need such a reviving of God's own hand. Friends, it is salvation. It is the work of God in our sin-forfeited lives, and the Lord's people feel to need much of the reviving hand of God, when the Spirit of God quickens into life. We will need that reviving which is the resurrection power of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, nothing short of it. And so there is perhaps a sweet echo in the hearts of the Lord's people: "Wilt Thou not revive us again?" It is the importunity in it. How needful!

It is necessary to speak a little of this reviving, not only in our own hearts – that is where we begin, and how as we have been coming, we have thought of the need of an honest heart. "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" Personally then, we need such reviving of God's own grace and the maintaining truth of it by the blessed Spirit of God. No reviving without the Holy Spirit of God.

Perhaps upon my mind especially (I hope I have been guided aright), I feel such a burden, others do, that the dear Lord might turn unto the churches, might so revive us again. Friends, we cannot be too low for such a reviving. May God grant it! In that part of God's Word we have read, after Elisha had died and they had buried him, "And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of

men”; and soon we read this: “When the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.”

Now friends, it is Christ in all the Scriptures, isn’t it? And how we need such a reviving just like that! We want no new Bible, no other gospel – the same blessed truths made known in sinners’ hearts. And this reviving, we may say, is the reviving we need of God’s right hand. “When the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.” Now we build on no man’s parts, on no man’s merits, but here there is sweet teaching to us. As we have read in the Ephesians (which seems to bear much upon that particular part of God’s Word): “And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.” How favoured we have been, especially the dear friends here in years gone by! We have often felt such a union in coming among them, we hope with the same truths of the gospel. What we need is the power of God’s reviving hand upon our “dry bones” and in the churches. We notice this: we need the same blessed truths made known by the Spirit of God, and that reviving of godliness of which we read, or sing:

“Godliness in all its life
At Jesus’ cross we find.”

Now let us be clear. This is reviving that God only can give. Let me speak of it in this way. It is the same need today as it was in years gone by. We need the same gospel, the same truth, but we need to be brought back to those truths in vital doctrine and experience. We need no other gospel. Those that know the truth will know what I mean. It is when the Lord brings us out of nature’s darkness and sets us down in our hearts with love for the truth, the same truths that were blessed, the same knowledge of Christ known by the love of God. It is made known in this way: by faith that God gives and that faith purges the heart, and brings poor, wretched sinners to God, and is a sanctifying, purifying faith. It is the faith of God’s elect.

Let me speak ever so plainly. It is not nominal faith. It is not “any faith,” but it is the faith that God gives, and it flows in the Person of the dear Redeemer, and the finished work of Christ. Moreover, we need to be kept close to the same truths as of old. What effect was known in years gone by, when sinners were brought like that man that we read of, that touched the bones of Elisha, in a gospel sense. O what a union, what love to the people of God, to the ways of God. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me.” The sanctifying power of true faith. Without it we drift, we begin to look one way and turn another. I often say at home, we need to be kept by the power of God. Let us be ever so clear. We need

no other reviving than of God's own right hand. How the flesh may creep in! How there is a watering down, a compromising of these blessed truths! It is when God works in the heart, there is such a God-given change that gives glory to God, and "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." You know, it is the sweet truth as it is in Jesus. "Wilt thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?" What a rejoicing there is when poor sinners are led to know the sweetness of the name of Jesus!

Now it will have an effect of separating us and bringing us unto the truth. It will bring us to this place – I hope I know it – it will bring us back again and again, and lay us low at the feet of Jesus, knowing something of the application of the precious blood of Jesus. That will surely revive the church of God. May God grant the knowledge of sin, the conviction of it as in days gone by. May He grant also revelation of the Person of Christ as "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." And then truly we need to be kept close. "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.... In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Now I will not speak any further. May God help us to search our hearts, and bring us again to the sweet doctrines of grace and a knowledge of them by faith, and the purging effect of true and living faith, and may we drift no more. Amen.

Hymns 1023, 1033 and 208 were sung during the meeting. Mr. P. Hill (Manchester), Mr. T. Abbott (Ossett), Mr. D.J. Christian (Bethel, Luton) and Mr. F.A. Ince (Fitzwilliam) prayed. Mr. Izzard then closed the meeting with the benediction.

BUSINESS MEETING

After the singing of hymn 1063, Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone) asked God's blessing on the meeting.

Mr. G.D. Buss (Chairman of the Gospel Standard Society) read Mark 13, verses 31-37, and then spoke as follows:

Four times in those few verses the dear Saviour mentions the word *watch*. This is the word of exhortation for the latter days, the days that precede His second coming on the face of this earth. "Watch." The second coming of the Saviour is something that is perhaps not often referred to in our pulpits. One thing is evident, it is an absolute certainty that it will be so. Our Saviour has said He will come again, as we have just read; His words cannot fail. He may delay His coming. It may seem to us with our poor, finite understanding that it will not be so, but faith, blessed be God, lays hold upon what the Saviour has promised, "I will

see you again.” He will return, and how imminent that is none of us know.

Secondly, we are told it will be a surprise, unexpected, unlooked for, the world continuing as it always has been ever since creation, people marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, children playing in the streets, the world going on as if there were always a tomorrow. And yet, dear friends, there will be a day when there will be no more time, no more tomorrows, and unexpectedly the Redeemer will return.

And thirdly, we notice this: it will be a decisive day. We read in another part of God’s holy Word of “the valley of decision.” Well friends, this will be a decisive day, because on the right hand of the Redeemer will be gathered that vast, innumerable company for whom He suffered and bled and died, who were given to Him by His heavenly Father in the covenant of grace, and in this time state were quickened into divine life, prepared while they were here below for that vast, great congregation and for that long eternity. How solemn! But there is another side on which will be gathered the impenitent, the unbeliever, those who lived and died out of Christ. How solemn! One will hear that blessed word, “Come,” and the other will hear that solemn word, “Depart.” Now says the dear Saviour to this generation, “What I say unto you I say unto all, *Watch*.” What are we to watch for?

First of all, dear friends, we are to watch ourselves. Self examination is very vital in this matter.

“Am I quickened by His Spirit;
Live a life of faith and prayer?
Trusting wholly to His merit;
Casting on Him all my care?
Daily panting,
In His likeness to appear?”

O to be watchful. Am I His, or am I not? This is one of the most important questions that could ever exercise our hearts.

Secondly, we are to watch against the world, the flesh and the devil, those inveterate enemies of the church and of the life of God in the soul and of the truth. We are to watch by God’s grace against them lest error should creep in, flood in, lest the world should overtake us, lest we should be deceived in the vital matter concerning salvation. O to watch against those things. “Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

Then we are to watch for His coming. The Lord Jesus Christ said when the things that are beginning to take place on the earth in our day come to pass, “Look up ... for your redemption draweth nigh.” Friends, we live in a very dark day, nationally, internationally, denominationally, personally in many ways, but O what a mercy when we have that faith to look up! Jesus said, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look

up.” Why? Because within the veil, the throne of God is established immutable, unchanging, unchangeable. The purposes of God are not thwarted. The counsels of God are not annulled. “I will work,” He says, “and who shall let it?” Then may we know the sweetness as well as the solemnity of what Paul reminds us: “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” “What I say unto you I say unto all, *Watch*.” May God give us the grace so to do and not be sleepy in this solemn day.

CHAIRMAN: It is my privilege to welcome you to this gathering of the Society of the Gospel Standard and we do very much appreciate the opportunity given to us by our Northern friends to give a little account of our efforts, we trust, in the Lord’s name as He may help. We have just read that the Lord hath appointed to every man his work, and it is the work which we hope God has appointed us to, so may He make and keep us faithful in it.

The Secretary of the Society, Mr. H. Mercer, then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD AID AND POOR RELIEF SOCIETY

Mr. Chairman and dear friends,

We meet here today with a desire to remember the Lord’s mercies and to record His goodness to us in maintaining the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society through another year. The temporal needs of the Society have been abundantly supplied and those who founded the Societies could never have anticipated the present financial position. What is sad is that the spiritual prosperity of the churches now does not bear comparison to the spiritual condition in the late 19th century when the Societies were constituted. Whilst the Committee is thankful that the Lord has maintained the work of the Societies of giving financial assistance to a number of our friends, it is solemnly concerned about the spiritual declension that is so apparent today. Recently the Committee has spent a considerable amount of time discussing the low state of our churches and the reason for this, which is the withholding of the power of the Holy Spirit attending the preached Word.

We are thankful that the gospel is still preached, but if there is to be any spiritual profit, it must be by the application of the Word by the power of the Holy Spirit to sinners’ hearts, and this is what is sought. Prayer is our only weapon, and we seek that a real spirit of prayer might be given for a return of the Holy Spirit to us. The Committee seeks that a true spirit of repentance might be given to us each and that there will be a turning away from those things which are so grieving to the Holy Spirit, and a willingness to walk in the ways of truth.

Turning now to the financial position, the funds of the Society are such that the grants and relatively small costs of administration do not absorb all of the income of the Society. The grants that are paid quarterly have all been reviewed following reassessment in the light of financial details supplied by the recipients,

and generally there will be a moderate increase in the amounts paid. As mentioned on many occasions, the Committee is always pleased to consider a needy case brought to its attention by a subscriber.

Legacies amounting to £143,026 have been received by the Society during the six months ended June 30th, 2008, and bank interest increased compared with the same period in the previous year by £12,082 because of the higher rate of interest received and the interest on the investment of the legacies received during the year ended December 31st, 2007. Grants were £4,200 more than in the six months to June 30th, 2007. The cost of the Annual General Meeting this year was £960 compared with £3,152 in the previous year. Without taking into account the legacies received, there was a net cash inflow for the six months to June 30th, of £21,554.

Regular quarterly grants are paid to some chapels for the support of the ministry and, with the substantially-increased cost of travelling, it is important that ministers are reimbursed their travelling costs in full. To assist with this, the Society is always willing to consider making a quarterly payment to a chapel for the support of the ministry. Any causes that are in need are welcome to contact the Secretary.

We are grateful to our subscribers who loyally support the Society financially and prayerfully. New subscribers are invited, and the Secretary will be pleased to make available forms of application. There are some at the rear of the chapel today.

The Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund continues to be loyally supported by those who take collections for and make donations to it. Other churches are invited to remember the Fund when deciding the recipient of special collections because the number of needy persons considered by the Committee of the Fund increases and at the present time their needs are likely to become more pressing. To date only a few chapels have returned the application forms sent out requesting help for members of their congregations. We would encourage pastors and deacons to consider the needs of members of the congregation and to return the forms before the end of October. Some payments are made through chapels but many more are made direct to recipients. The Gadsby Memorial Fund has received a legacy of £2,000 in the six months to June 30th.

It is customary at this meeting to indicate the cost of the magazines for the following year, and the only factors affecting the prices are increased postage costs and currency fluctuations. The Committee has agreed that the annual subscription for a *Gospel Standard* must increase by 50p and of the *Friendly Companion* by a similar amount. One of each magazine will only cost 50p more to cover the increased postage. The annual cost of a *Gospel Standard* for a subscriber in the United States will increase by \$1 to \$40 and the cost of a *Friendly Companion* will increase by \$1 to \$32. One of each magazine will cost \$54. Because of the strength of the Australian dollar, the cost of a *Gospel Standard* will reduce by Aus \$4 to \$45, the cost of a *Friendly Companion* by \$3 to \$35 and one of each magazine by \$6 to \$59. The euro is stronger against the pound than last year, therefore the cost of a *Gospel Standard* will reduce by 3 euros to 30 euros, a *Friendly Companion* by 2 euros to 25 euros and one of each magazine by 3 euros to 40 euros. There will be no increase in the cost of advertisements next year.

We are thankful that the Editors continue to be helped in the arduous work of preparation of the monthly magazines and pray that the readers will from time to time receive spiritual benefit. The circulation of the magazines remains fairly constant and some of our young people are now beginning to take their own copy of the magazines through their chapel parcel.

Recently there have been problems with the production of the magazines. They have been sent out late, which means that advertisements for special services to be held in the first few days of the following month are not seen until after the services have been held. The importance of prompt dispatch of the magazines has been stressed to the printers. Also the picture on the front of the *Friendly Companion* for September was printed in red whereas it should have been in black and white, and steps have been taken to ensure that when the bound volumes are produced, a black and white cover is included.

The Committee has decided that, if the Lord will, the Annual Meetings will be held again at Clifton next year [Friday, April 17th]. We are very grateful to Mr. Lawson and the friends at Clifton for the efficient way in which the arrangements for the Annual Meetings were made. We were thankful for the fine day and a large number of friends expressed satisfaction with the location. It proved no more difficult to travel to Clifton than to London. Most importantly, many felt that the Lord blessed the gathering together with a sense of His presence.

Once more we express our sincere gratitude to the friends here at Manchester for the warm welcome that is given to us and the preparation that goes often unnoticed is really appreciated.

Our Chairman expects to travel to Canada and Choteau in October to undertake preaching engagements and Mr. Broome expects to travel to America in October to preach at Sheboygan and Grand Rapids. We seek that the Lord will bless their labours and preserve them in safety to return home again.

Friends will have noticed that recently the Bishop of Rochester, Dr. Nazir-Ali, spoke out boldly about the collapse of Christianity in this country and has declared that this has destroyed family life, leaving the country defenceless against the rise of radical Islam in a moral and spiritual vacuum. He also said that this country has become mired in a doctrine of endless self-indulgence and has criticised the response of politicians to these deep-rooted problems. The Committee felt constrained to write a letter of support to the Bishop thanking him for his courageous stand and assuring him of our prayerful support of the principles for which he stands.

The Committee appreciates the prayerful concern of our friends and the practical support given in many ways both here and overseas. May the Lord who seeth in secret be pleased to reward them openly. These are very difficult days, and we seek that all needed grace and steadfastness will be given to hold fast to the truth.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Mercer for his report and for all that he does for the Society behind the scenes in this arduous work. He said if any friends had any questions to ask Mr. Mercer, he would be pleased to attend to those during the interval.

Mr. T.H.W. Scott (Bethesda Secretary) then read his report.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

Mr. Chairman, subscribers and dear friends,

It is always a pleasure to be able to give a short report at these Meetings on the work of Bethesda.

This year has been a significant one with the holding in April of Bethesda's first Annual General Meeting following the changes in our constitution to allow Bethesda to have its own body of subscribers. We have been pleased with the large number of people who agreed to become subscribers, but we welcome others too. Currently the list of names stands at 207. I have with me today subscriber application forms and if anyone would like one, then please do ask.

As many of you will know, our Homes are currently inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. It is only a few years since that body was set up and took over from the National Care Standards Commission, but now the Government is proposing a totally new regulatory system which will operate from April 2010. A new regulator is to be set up, which will be known as the Care Quality Commission. Having just got to grips with the National Minimum Standards introduced by the present system, we are told that the new system will differ vastly from the present system and will introduce a new suite of quality and safety standards. Although there will no doubt be much work in implementing the new standards, there do seem to be some real improvements proposed, particularly those relating to registration of service providers and the registration of home managers. These changes we welcome. The new Act received Royal Assent in July this year.

We are pleased to add that under the new star ratings system introduced this year for care homes across the country, all three Bethesda Homes have been awarded a two star rating, which places them in the "good" category. [Since then Harpenden has been awarded three stars, which is the "excellent" category.]

The Government has launched a discussion document with the title *Why England needs a new care and support system*. A consultation period runs until November 2008 when all those with a stake in care can put their views. The debate focuses mainly on the balance between targeting government resources at those who are least able to pay and having a system that also supports those who plan and save for the future. The question being asked is whether the Government should do more to ensure that people prepare for the cost of their own care, for instance by making some sort of saving for these costs compulsory. There will always be a need to make sure that the poorest people in society are supported, but the present system can be perceived as penalising people who have worked hard and made prudent financial decisions at earlier points of their life.

All charities have been giving consideration to the Charity Commission general guidance on Public Benefit which was published in January this year. Four supplementary guidance papers have been published during the year, and the consultation periods accompanying these have now ended. The onus has now been firmly placed on the charity to demonstrate that there is an identifiable benefit to the public or a section of the public. A key requirement is that people in poverty must not be excluded from benefiting through being unable to meet the charges made by a charity for its services. Most of you will be aware that Bethesda has now established a sizeable fund specifically to help underfunded residents. In this way we hope to be able to demonstrate that no-one is precluded from Bethesda care by reason of insufficient means.

Turning to the Homes, last year we reported on improvements made to the car parking area at the Brighton Home, and this year we have gone through a similar exercise at Harpenden. The entrance driveway has been realigned and the area generally widened and extended where possible without encroaching too much onto the garden. Development at the Harpenden Home is not easy as there are many mature trees on the site. The parking has remained virtually unchanged in the Home's forty years of existence, but today almost every member of staff is a car owner, and there are many visitors, too. Also, we are in the unusual position at Harpenden of having three residents owning a car.

At Harpenden we have been examining ways in which the dining room could be extended. For the number of residents, the dining room has never been particularly spacious, especially when there are residents in wheelchairs, and on occasions the residents from the adjacent flatlets also take meals in the Home. A planning application has now been lodged with the District Council.

One further development has been the building of a replacement garage for the Harpenden Flatlets, something that had been planned for some years, but for various reasons was not proceeded with until this year. The garage has a large storeroom at the back, where we plan to place freezers for the use of residents, as the flatlets themselves are quite small with little space for a freezer. The room can also be used for the storage by the residents of other items that most of us at home would perhaps keep in the loft.

Since the beginning of the year ten residents have passed away, and there have been five admissions, resulting in eleven vacancies throughout the three Homes. Once more, quite a number of people have come for short stays, which is something we are always pleased to cater for if rooms are available.

We are sorry that our friend Mr. Jim Hart felt the time had come to retire from the Bethesda Fund Committee, which took effect in April. Mr. Hart served on the Committee for thirty-two years, and for seventeen of these years was Chairman. You will remember that he attended these Northern Meetings as often as he could, frequently combining his trip with a visit to the Haydock Home where he stayed overnight. A framed montage of all the Bethesda Homes and Flatlets was presented to him, which has given him much pleasure. We do wish him the Lord's blessing as he lays down his long association with Bethesda. This year we have been pleased to welcome Mr. Michael Bailey of Tenterden and Mr. Mark Wiltshire of Studley as additional members of the Committee.

Our Home Managers have no easy task these days, with endless paperwork to contend with. We have already referred to the new Care Quality Commission. Other legislation which will affect the running of the Homes includes the Mental Capacity Act which has now come into force to protect people who may lack capacity to make decisions for themselves.

We believe we can say that the care given to the residents is of a high standard, and there continue to be many expressions of gratitude given by both residents and their relatives. One recent case involved a resident moving a considerable distance from relatives in order to enter a Bethesda Home, and at first they were not altogether in favour. However, having seen at first hand the care given, and the love and affection displayed by the staff, they were more than happy for their relative to become a permanent resident, and could not speak too highly of the Home. Our warmest thanks are due to every member of staff, in whatever capacity they serve, for their contribution towards making our Homes

so special. In August, our staff member Miss Marguerite Chapallaz completed forty years employment at the Brighton Home, a truly remarkable period. A special tea was held and presentations made to mark the occasion.

The times of morning and evening reading and prayer are much valued, and the relaying of chapel services to the Homes, with the facility to extend the relay into individual rooms if a resident is unable to come into the lounge, continues to be a very great boon to those unable to get out to chapel. We do thank those of the Lord's servants, and all others too, who visit the Homes and residents when they are able.

Finally, I would just mention that, if the Lord will, there will be an Open Day and thanksgiving service at the Harpenden Home next year to mark the 40th Anniversary of the opening of the Home. The date has been fixed for the second Saturday in June, that is, Saturday, June 13th, and all are most welcome on that occasion.

Our desire is that the Lord might continue to grant His blessing on the Homes and Flatlets, and to go before us in whatever the future may hold.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Scott for his report and said he deeply appreciated all that he does and all that the Bethesda Fund does for the aged residents. He said Mr. Scott would be pleased to answer any questions that friends may have in the interval.

CHAIRMAN: I have one or two final points. The Gospel Standard Trust continues its work and you will know that Mr. Caleb Pearce has now retired and we do wish him well in his retirement and thank him very much for all he did on behalf of the Trust. Mr. John Kingham and Dr. Philip Skelton have now taken over the work that our friend Mr. Pearce so ably did for so many years. We wish them the Lord's blessing as they take up this work.

[The Chairman then mentioned a few books soon to be published.]

You may be interested to know that the Gospel Standard Library is in the process of obtaining the scanning of the bound volumes of the *Gospel Standard* and other reference books. This project should eventually make it much easier to pinpoint and access material for private reading or research.

On these occasions we do miss our esteemed Editor, Mr. Ramsbottom, who so often for many years laboured here and took these meetings so ably. We do send him our warmest Christian love and remind him he is not forgotten by us today.

I would echo the thanks of our Secretary to the friends at Manchester for their very warmhearted hospitality, and we do appreciate it. May the Lord prosper and increase his little remnant here and elsewhere in our northern churches which we do love dearly for Christ's sake.

The meeting concluded with the singing of hymn 644, and prayer by the Chairman.

GRACE

From a sermon by J.K. Popham

“And grace upon grace.” Grace on grace, money on money, wealth on wealth, riches on riches; durable riches and righteousnesses are with Him, and He gives them out. No scant supply is here. A full God for an empty sinner; a mighty Saviour for a great sinner; mighty forgivenesses for dreadful sins. Grace on grace.

Grace fifty years ago was very great to some of us, but today in our estimation it is immeasurably greater. Some of us thought we knew Him then, and we did; but O today we can say, we scarcely know Him! And yet how many times we have seen Him by faith! I hope never to forget when I first saw Him by faith. Blessed sight, when I was sure of going to heaven! Perfectly sure about it. When I said, “Now it would be as easy for me to die as it is laying my head on this pillow.”

But then I did not know much. Like the dying thief you are ready to go to heaven when He first comes to you and you see Him. Later you are a worse person than the dying thief; sin is worse; more, more powerful in your sense of things sometimes, and you are more black, more uncomely, more lost, further off in your experience. O but does not this make room for the Lord Jesus? O doesn't it make room for Him?

Greater emptiness, greater weakness, greater propensity to sin. Is this consistent with the life of God? You may well ask it sometimes, and yet when the Lord renews His visits, you are filled with wonder that He could, that He should so deal with such a sinner. Grace for this trouble, and when that trouble is over and another comes, you want grace for the new trouble. When trouble treads upon relief, then you want mercy to tread upon mercy as it were; the reaper and the sower following. Such a succession of mercies, such a succession of heavenly touches, of sweet, pitiful looks, of gracious visitations, of powerful assistances, of clearer deliverances, of answers to prayer.

Grace for grace. Sweet grace, sweeter grace; sweet love and sweeter love; a precious Christ and Christ more precious; once great but still greater and yet greater; until you reach a sort of infinitude in your conception of this blessed One.

“And grace for grace.” Grace to live daily, grace to bear trouble, grace to walk in difficult circumstances, grace to walk in the very midst of perplexing providences, grace to handle all matters wisely; and grace upon grace, renewed grace, freshly-given grace. This is as I understand what is here intended. A weary, needy people. Dependence is engraved on our nature; dependence is engraved on the hidden man of the heart. We must receive grace for grace, grace upon grace, or sink into a

deplorable condition. No man can keep alive his own soul; painfully but profitably we prove this.

Ah but then, there is no cause for despair in that painful experience! It is to prevent us glorying in self; it is to lead us to glory in a full Christ. A full Christ, more full than we can conceive. Exhaustless is this store; exhaustless is this Person. May the Lord continue to teach us and bless us and open the riches of His grace and His glory to us, and give us to believe that He will give both grace and glory.

THE MASTER IS COME

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne

“And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee. As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto Him. Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met Him. The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept” (John 11. 28-35).

I. The calling of Mary.

1. Observe, Martha is the messenger. Martha had got a little comfort from that sweet word of Jesus, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Her faith had been revived by the question, “Believest thou this?” The swelling tide of sorrow in her breast was calmed: “And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary.” Those who have been comforted by Christ themselves are the fittest messengers to bring comfort to others. “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Cor. 1. 3, 4). God takes His ministers through divers trials and consolations just that He may make them fitting messengers to comfort others. O it is then we can tell others of the excellence of the apple tree, when we have been sitting under its shadow, and eating its pleasant fruits!

Martha was but a weak believer compared with Mary, and yet she is made the channel of conveying the joyful news to her. It is a great

mistake to think that none but eminent believers are made useful in the church of God. God often feeds eminent believers by a weak ministry. The minister has often less grace than those to whom he ministers. Especially when eminent believers are cast down and perplexed, frequently a very small means is used to lift them up again.

2. She called her secretly. The last time the Saviour was in Judæa, they took up stones to stone Him to death; and probably some of the Jews who were sitting beside Mary were among His bitter enemies. Martha therefore came in and whispered softly into Mary's ear, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." She feared the Jews. Jesus had done much for her, and she was tender of His safety and of His cause. Thus does it become those of you for whom Jesus has done much to be tender of His honour, tender of His name and cause. You will feel as a member of His body, and that you have no interest separate from Him.

3. The message: "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Mary was sitting sad and desolate in the cottage at Bethany. It was now the fourth day from the funeral, and yet no comfort came. The place of Lazarus was empty; the house looked desolate without him, and Jesus had not come. He had sent them a message – that this sickness was not unto death; yet His word was broken [seemingly], and He had not come. Mary knew not what to think. Why does He tarry beyond Jordan? she would say to herself: has He forgotten to be gracious? Suddenly her sister whispers, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." Christ was near the cottage before she knew. So it was that morning at the Lake of Tiberias, when "Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus"; or that evening when the two disciples went to Emmaus and Jesus drew near, but their eyes were holden that they did not know Him. So does death come upon the believer in Jesus. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." So will Jesus come to His weeping, desolate church, and this cry shall awake the dead. "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

II. Mary's going.

1. She arose quickly. It is evident that Mary was the more deeply affected of the two sisters. Martha was able to go about, but Mary sat still in the house. She felt the absence of Christ more than Martha. She believed His word more, and when that word seemed to fail, Mary's heart was nearly broken. Ah, it is a deep sorrow when natural and spiritual grief come together! Affliction is easily borne if we have the smile of Jehovah's countenance. Why does the mourner rise and, hastily drying her tears, with eager step leave the cottage door? Her friends who sat around her she seems quite to forget. "The Master is come." Such is the presence of the Lord Jesus to mourners still. The world's

comforters are all physicians of no value. Miserable comforters are they all. They have no balm for a wounded spirit. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness." But when the Master comes and calls us, the soul revives. There is life in His call – His voice speaketh peace. "In Me ye shall have peace." Mourners should rise up quickly and go to Jesus. The bereaved should spread their sorrows at the feet of Christ.

2. The place: "Now Jesus was not yet come into the town." Jesus had probably come far that day – perhaps all the way from Jericho. He had journeyed onwards on foot till He came to the foot of the Mount of Olives and halted beneath the trees that skirt the village of Bethany. He did not go into the town till He had finished the work for which He came. Perhaps He was hungry and thirsty, as He was that day when He sat beside Jacob's well and said, "Give Me to drink." But He did not mention it now. His mind was intent upon His work – the raising of dead Lazarus, and the glorifying of His Father's great name. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." Christ's delight in saving sinners and doing good to His own overcame His sense of hunger, and thirst, and weariness. O see what a ready High Priest we have to go to! And see what is our true happiness, namely, to do God's holy will, not much minding bodily comforts. They have most of the mind of Christ and most of the joy of Christ who prefer His service to bodily rest and refreshment.

3. The Jews followed Mary. We saw that it was natural kindness that brought them to Bethany, and so natural kindness makes them follow Mary now. They could not comprehend her spiritual grief, and thought she was going to the grave to weep there. Yet this was the means of leading some of them to the spot where they were born again. "Many of the Jews believed on Him." How wonderful are God's ways of leading men to Christ! "And I will bring the blind by a way that they know not: I will lead them in paths that they have not known." One soul is led by curiosity, like Zaccheus, to go and hear a particular minister, and the Word is sent home with power. Another goes in kindness to a friend, and is arrested and sent home with a bleeding heart. The name of Jesus is Wonderful; His ways are wonderful; His grace is wonderful. Learn that it is good to cleave to the godly and to go with them. They may lead you to where Jesus is.

III. The meeting with Jesus.

1. Mary's tender humility. With eager footstep Mary hurried over the rocky footpath. Jesus was standing in the same place where Martha met Him; and as Mary approached, He bent His compassionate eyes upon her. She saw, and fell at His feet. What a crowd of feelings were in her

breast at that moment! She wondered why He had not come sooner. That was a dark mystery to her. She knew He was her Saviour and the Son of God. She knew that He loved her, and yet she fell at His feet. She felt that she was a vile sinner, worthy to be trampled on. She felt that she was a worm and that all her hope was in Jesus. Ah brethren, it is sweet to be able to take Mary's place! The most eminent believers are the lowliest. Paul said, "I am the chief of sinners"; and, "I am less than the least of all saints." The nearer you take anything to the light, the darker its spots appear, and the nearer you live to God, the more you will see your own utter vileness.

2. Mary repeats Martha's complaint: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." From this it is plain that the two sisters had been often conversing upon Christ's absence; and they had agreed upon this, that if Christ had been there, their brother had not died. It was both presumptuous and unbelieving. Perhaps Mary learned it from Martha. We are very apt to learn unbelief from one another. The Bible says, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day." But believers frequently discourage one another.

3. Jesus' compassion.

i. When He saw, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. This is humanity. His eye affected His heart when He saw her weeping – she whom He loved so well, so eminent a believer, one whom He had washed and justified. When He saw the Jews weeping – mere worldly friends – He groaned within Himself. So when He came near, and beheld the city, He wept over it; when He saw the widow of Nain, He had compassion on her; when He saw the multitudes of Galilee, like sheep without a shepherd, He had compassion on them. All this shows His perfect humanity. He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

ii. He asked, Where have ye laid him? This also was human. As God He knew well where they had laid him, but He wanted them to lead Him to the grave.

iii. Jesus wept. When He saw the cave, and the stone, and the weeping friends, "Jesus wept." He wept because His heart was deeply touched. It was not feigned weeping – it was real. He knew that He was to raise him from the dead, and yet He wept because others wept. He wept as our Example, to teach us to weep with one another. He wept to show what was in Him. "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. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4. 15, 16).

JEHOVAH-JIREH

“The Lord will provide” (Gen. 22. 14)

By John Kershaw (1792-1870)

Many years ago, being engaged to supply at Zoar Chapel, Great Alie Street, London, when I arrived at my lodgings I found a letter waiting for me, requesting me to go down to Chatham to preach the Word of life, giving me directions to go by the steamer to Gravesend, and from thence to Rochester by an omnibus, and that when I arrived at the inn where it stopped, I was to enquire for old Mr. Taylor, the barber, in College Yard. From these directions I found the old man's house, it being near at hand. He gave me instructions where I was to make my home during my stay amongst them. From several years' acquaintance with him I found him to be a humble, God-fearing person, well known to the late William Huntington, who would always have him to shave him when he visited Chatham, and each time gave him half-a-crown. The good old man related to me at different times several of the Lord's gracious and providential dealings with him, which greatly interested me, proving that "Jehovah-Jireh will provide." The following is an instance.

That dear and esteemed man of God, the late William Tiptaft, like myself was for several years one of the regular supplies at Zoar Chapel. He also received an invitation to preach the gospel at Chatham, to go by the packet and omnibus, and call at Mr. Taylor's, College Yard. When it was made known at Chatham that he was coming, a friend of Mr. Tiptaft's, who had lived in Berkshire but was then residing at Chatham, wrote to invite him to make his house his home when he came. With this request he complied.

He left London by the steamer. As they went down the river, the question arose in his mind, "Shall I first go to my friend, with whom I am to stay, and after dinner go to Mr. Taylor's, or shall I go to the latter first?" The conflict and exercise of his mind for some time was so great that he felt something of importance would be the result, and he besought the Lord to decide the matter for him. Before he left the steamer he felt his mind settled to call at Mr. Taylor's before proceeding to his friend's.

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

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

Mr. Tiptaft requested him to remove the men, promising, on his return to Abingdon, to remit the ten pounds. The landlord replied, "I cannot remove them on the word of a stranger. You may, or you may not, send me the money." Mr Tiptaft then asked him if he knew Mr. —, mentioning his friend from Berkshire. He replied, he did, and considered him highly respectable. He was requested to go to him, and state to him the circumstances, and Mr. Tiptaft's promise to remit the money. He did so, and shortly returned, telling Mr. Tiptaft he had seen his friend, who said, "If Mr. Tiptaft fails you, you may look to me for the money." "That is enough for me, and I will dismiss the men."

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

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform."

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

Another year rolled round, when I had to pay my annual visit to the metropolis, and received my usual letter to go to Chatham, requesting me to call at old Taylor's, College Yard. At this I was greatly surprised, wondering how it could be that he was again in the old house. When I got there, I enquired the cause from my poor brother. He replied, "You know all about my having to leave." I replied, "I do." "Well," said he,

“the Lord is very good to us. Before we left this place, it had got into a very dilapidated state, and you know we could not pay the rent, much more repair it; and the Lord very kindly moved us out of the way to the house you saw us in last year. When we were gone, the landlord gave it a thorough repair, making it as you now see it, which, had it been done while we were in, would have much inconvenienced us with workmen and other things. Several months after it was completed, my late landlord called upon me quite unexpectedly, and enquired if my present house or the house in College Yard was the better for my business. I replied, ‘The house in College Yard by far is the better.’ He then told me that after I had left his house he had it put into good repair, and put a notice in the window, ‘This house to be let,’ but never had a person to enquire the rent; ‘so I am come to tell you that if you go back you shall have it for the same rent as you pay for this; and if you are never able to pay me any rent, I will never send any more bailiffs to trouble you.’”

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

How true it is,

“The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower”!

BOOK REVIEWS

Kept Safely in the Darkest Night: 1940-1945; hardback; 157 pages; price £6.95 plus 50p postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from 12(b) Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ, and from agents.

This is a most interesting book. Intended specially for children, it is of equal interest for older people.

The sub-title of *Kept Safely in the Darkest Night* aptly summarises the book's contents: “Stories of God's mercies to His praying people during the German occupation of Holland in World War II.” There are eighteen such stories in all.

The Dutch nation suffered dreadful hardship, not least in being deprived of food, during the more than five years' German occupation. Some of God's providences and the wonderful preservation of His people were truly remarkable.

Of special interest are two remarkable experiences in the life of the well-known minister W.C. Lamain (who in later years moved to Grand Rapids, U.S.A.).

Many young men were forced to leave their homes, either to join the Dutch army or to be transported to Germany, seventy-nine from the church where Mr. Lamain was minister. Yet he was so powerfully persuaded by the Lord that

each one would return that he announced it from the pulpit. It can be imagined how he was tried afterwards!

At the end of the war, remarkably *seventy-seven* had returned – but there were still the other two! After a waiting time, one by one they came back – in fulfilment of God’s promise.

The other occasion was when Mr. Lamain was arrested by the Gestapo for preaching against the German invaders. However, he had such a sense of the greatness of God, and the Lord being in control, that he told his German captors they could do nothing without divine permission. And he was released.

Kept Safely in the Darkest Night was written by a number of people and appeared in Dutch under the title *Beveiligd in de duist’re Nacht*. The title comes from the Dutch rhymed version of Psalm 91, verse 1:

“Who to God’s refuge takes his flight
Is by their King unfailing
Kept safely in the darkest night
O’ershadowed in God’s dwelling.”

This recent translation into English is by Marcus Banfield, whose sudden, tragic death in August in Holland has saddened so many hearts.

This interesting, nicely-produced and in places exciting book is most suitable for a present or a prize.

Study Guide for John Owen’s *The Mortification of Sin*, by Rob Edwards; paperback; 40 pages; price £2.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Successive Editors of the *Gospel Standard*, including ourselves, have dearly loved the writings of the Puritan Dr. Owen. We are therefore pleased to encourage anything that will cause an interest in him, and be a help in reading his works. So it is gratifying to read the publisher’s note: “Across the world students and young people are discovering anew the sound, spiritual wisdom that is to be found in the practical writings of the seventeenth-century theologian, John Owen.”

This little book is a companion to the fourteen chapters of *The Mortification of Sin*. There is, first, a very short synopsis of the chapter, followed by questions on what Dr. Owen has to say. For instance, “What are the various ways the Spirit is described in Romans 8 that better helps us understand His role in the mortification of sin?” “What is the result of attempting mortification apart from the Holy Spirit?” “How does Paul describe sin’s activity in the Christian in Romans 7?” “How does the Spirit mortify sin?”

It is pleasing that there should be any demand for such a book as this in our God-dishonouring day.

Our only reserve is that this study guide is based on the recent simplified version of *The Mortification of Sin* published by The Banner of Truth. Is it possible to “abridge and make easy to read” Dr. Owen – though it appears the modern version keeps very close to Dr. Owen’s thought and teaching? It would seem, though, that the study guide can be used with the original as the chapter divisions are the same.

A Handful of Pebbles: Theological Liberalism and the Church, by Peter Barnes; paperback; 88 pages; price £5.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a valuable though frightening book, written by an Australian minister. By “theological liberalism” is meant a denial of the authority of Scripture, miracles, the atonement, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, etc. The title comes from the remark of the liberal-minded American Bishop Pike just before he died: “When I turned from being agnostic, I went to Union Theological Seminary, eager for and expecting bread; but when I graduated, all that it left me was a *handful of pebbles*.”

The contention of this little book is that modernist, liberal theology gives nothing but “a handful of pebbles.” It is completely barren.

This is a frightening book – not because of its revelation of the evils in modernistic theology – we knew all that – but because of the way it crept in

Very, very subtly did these errors creep into the church of God. It was serious men, seemingly sincere men, nice men, men who used godly language who introduced error! It came into the godly Free Church of Scotland through “Rabbi” Duncan’s own assistant. Two writers who wrote books which have been highly esteemed by evangelicals, Henry Drummond and James Denney, apparently were men who did not believe in the infallibility of Scripture. Drummond believed in evolution. It is quite startling to learn that the famous Scottish minister Alexander Whyte defended those who were introducing error into the Free Church, and said he had “no difficulty ... in going out to meet and hail the new theological methods.”

These warnings are needed in our own congregations. When error comes in, it usually enters under the guise of truth.

Habakkuk: A Wrestler with God, by Walter J. Chantry; paperback; 100 pages; price £5.50; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

It has been said that the best books are those which are entirely based on Scripture. This book, by the present Editor of the *Banner of Truth* magazine, is an exposition of the prophecy of Habakkuk.

The author emphasises the solemn similarity of Habakkuk’s day with our own, with sin openly abounding on every hand. The prophet cried to the Lord concerning the sins of His ancient people, in his heart desiring a gracious revival. Instead, the Lord told him they would be bitterly chastised by the power of Babylon.

Later, the prophet cried again concerning the appalling evils of Babylon, and yet the Lord used Babylon. The Lord’s reply was that when ungodly Babylon had fulfilled His purpose, they would be broken in pieces and destroyed.

Amidst it all the glorious truth shines forth: “The just shall live by his faith,” and the prophet finds a resting place in the greatness and sovereignty of God, and that what He does is always right. *He* is in control. “The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

We agree with the publishers: “this absorbing book.” It is both needful and profitable.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
DECEMBER 2008

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

THE COMING OF THE SAVIOUR

“O when wilt Thou come?” (Psa. 101. 2).

There are some who unwisely do not think we should celebrate the Saviour’s birth. “It is not His birth that matters,” they contend. “It is His death and resurrection.”

We agree that the birth of Christ did not save His people. (There were some in the Middle Ages who did over-emphasise the Saviour’s birth: that the incarnation, uniting heaven and earth, was saving.) Cleansing from guilt is through the blood of Christ alone. But had the Saviour not been born, He could not have died. He was born at Bethlehem that He might die at Calvary.

The point that God’s people celebrate in the birth of Jesus is *His coming*. How the anxious mother rejoices when she sees the doctor arrive! His arrival at the door does not help her sick child – but she is glad that he has come. She knows why he has come, the purpose of his coming, and she is glad.

There is such an emphasis in the New Testament on the Saviour’s coming:

“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

“The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

And how solemnly the Lord Jesus spoke: “If I had not come....”!

With what longing did the Old Testament church await Messiah’s coming: “O when wilt Thou come?” Generation after generation passed away, their hope in the promise, “Behold, He shall come” – and yet they never did witness His coming. But He did come, blessed be His name! And when He came He accomplished everything necessary for the everlasting salvation of His people. The work of redemption is complete. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His own Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem them that are under the law.”

“He came from above, the law’s curse to remove;
He loved, He has loved us, because He would love;
And when time is no more we still shall adore
That ocean of love, without bottom or shore.”

But when the psalmist uttered that urgent cry, “O when wilt Thou come?” he added two important words: “*unto me.*” This is the language of every grace-taught soul. We know the Saviour came to Bethlehem. We know what He accomplished. But we want Him to come to us personally and savingly. Our hymnwriter says, “Thou visitest sinners still.”

“O when wilt Thou come unto me?” The seeking sinner, under a sense of unworthiness and need, longs that the Saviour will come just where he is. He wants Him to come, like the good Samaritan, just where he is in his helplessness (Luke 10. 33) and to pour in the oil and wine of His finished work.

“O when wilt Thou come unto me?” This is the desire of the hungry soul as he goes to the house of God. The Lord’s coming is often spoken of as *a visit* – and “a visit” means coming with a special purpose. So his desire is: “Remember me, O Lord, with the favour Thou bearest to Thy people; O *visit me* with Thy salvation.”

“O when wilt Thou come unto me?” In the depth of sorrow, when the waters are deep, nothing will do but the Saviour coming to us – as to Simon Peter, when he was about to sink, to hold us fast and bring us safely through.

“O when wilt Thou come unto me?” – when I feel cold, and dark, and dry, and barren, and Satan assails. We need that coming of the Song of Solomon chapter 2, verses 8-9, where the heavenly Bridegroom comes leaping over all the mountains of sin and unbelief, and skipping over the hills, showing *Himself* through the lattice.” “Less than *Thyself* will not suffice.”

There is another prayer, almost the same, but with one word different: “When wilt Thou *comfort* me?” (Psa. 119. 82). The two go together. When the Lord comes, He brings comfort to the troubled heart, and “breathes comfort where distress abounds.”

So as we think once more of the Saviour’s birth, of His wonderful coming to Bethlehem, may our desire (and blessed experience) be that the Lord in love and mercy might come right where we are to do everything for us that we need.

“O when wilt Thou come unto me?” “When wilt Thou comfort me?”

“Still we wait for Thy appearing,
O Thou mild, pacific Prince!
Give the knowledge of salvation,
Give the pardon of our sins.
Come, and manifest the favour
Thou hast for the ransomed race;
Come, Thou dear exalted Saviour!
Come, and bring Thy gospel grace.”

Surely what was said of John the Baptist is even more true of the Lord Jesus: "Thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at His birth" (Luke 1. 14).

THE LORD'S COMING

By Grey Hazlerigg, December 25th, 1878, at Zion Chapel, Leicester

The Lord's coming. "He will come and save you." Observe first of all, the certainty. Here is no conditional promise. God by His own work prepares a people for the Lord, and then the Lord comes to this prepared people. No doubt these words had a fulfilment when the Lord Jesus came upon earth, when that promise in Malachi was fulfilled: "And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple." But let us consider this coming in a more universal application of it to the entire family of God. Now in what characters, in what points of view, does the Lord Jesus come experimentally to His people? When He comes into the hearts of His people, how do they, as taught and enabled by the Holy Spirit, apprehend Him? What is He unto their souls?

He comes as *God the Lord*. O they do not question whether He is God or not! They feel assured that He is a Person in the glorious Godhead, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He comes with a divine power and evidence into their hearts. They know that He is God.

He comes as *the Son of God*, as *God the Son*. They receive Him into their hearts as He is spoken of in the Word, as the "only begotten of the Father." They know that the Son of God has come, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. They say with Peter, "And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Yes, they receive Him as the One who, lying in His Father's bosom, knows the Father's mind, and can assure them of the Father's good will, His approbation and eternal love.

He comes as *the Christ of God*, *the Lord's Christ*. So old Simeon apprehended Him to be when he took Him up as a Babe in the arms of his faith. He is the Father's Son and the Father's gift to sinners. "Thanks be unto God," says Paul, "for His unspeakable gift." "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me," says Christ; "because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted."

As the Christ of God, He comes as *the Prophet of Israel*, divinely instructing His people in the sweet truths of God. None teacheth like Him. His word is with power. O to sit daily at the feet of Jesus and hear His words! He can make the most ignorant and naturally foolish person

wise unto salvation. He not only gives the lesson, but the capacity for learning it. He is Himself that lesson; He gives the power to understand it. We would sooner sit for five minutes at the feet of Jesus, hearing the truth from His lips, than sit for a year at those of any master in Israel, unless Jesus so accompanied the teaching of the latter that the human teacher should be lost sight of in the glory of the divine. Blessed was it with the spouse when she could say, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth."

O to find Jesus! What is all teaching that does not lead to Jesus? What is all knowledge which does not bring Jesus into the heart? All true wisdom and knowledge centre in Him. All true teaching, then, must lead to Him. Erskine truthfully gives this as a mark of espousals to Jesus:

"All things within earth's spacious womb
Dost count but loss and dung,
For one sweet word in season from
Thy Husband's learned tongue?"

"Skill to discern and know His voice
From words of wit and art,
Will clearly prove thou art His choice;
Thy Husband thine in heart."

Show us the men and women who can answer the above question satisfactorily, and we will show you the souls that really love and are wedded to the Lord Jesus. Christ comes to speak good words and acceptable ones into the hearts of the poor, the needy and the afflicted. Full of grace are His lips, as the Prophet of Israel.

As the Christ of God, He comes as *the Great High Priest* of the spiritual Israel to bless them. When He came into the world at His incarnation, He came as both Priest and Sacrifice in one to atone for His people; now He comes as ever living to intercede for them, to speak a word of peace by virtue of that atonement into their hearts. No peace really but through that precious blood; it is only as atoning for them that He speaks peace to His people. Thus in Isaiah we have the Lord Jesus saying, "I that speak in righteousness"; and yet "mighty to save." On the great day of atonement (Lev. 16) in Israel, after the high priest had gone into the sanctuary with the blood of bulls and goats, and made atonement for the holy place because of the sins of the children of Israel, then, and not till then, he put on his garments for beauty and glory, and came forth and blessed the people. Answerably to this, we read in John 20 that the Lord Jesus came again and again to His apostles saying, "Peace be unto you." Blessing is peculiarly the work of a priest, as we read in Numbers 6. Aaron and his sons were not told to curse the people, but to bless them, saying, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee," etc. This, then,

is the work of the priest; and so Paul says, even to Christ's priestly people, "Bless, and curse not."

But what a sweet view all this gives us of the Lord Jesus Christ! He is, in the spirit of things, that great High Priest taken from among men and ordained for men, His own poor, and needy, and troubled, and tempted people, in things pertaining unto God. He too can have compassion upon the ignorant, and those that are out of the way; for He has been "in all points tempted as we are," says Paul, "yet without sin."

When He comes as a Christ, He comes as a *King*; but it is a King to save. "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness," says the prophet. But does not this seem a terrible view of Christ for sinners? How can they bear righteousness and judgment? But here, through our legal hearts, we make a mistake. The righteousness is His own, that which God imputes to Christ's people. Therefore, He reigns over sinners as their Righteousness, the Lord their eternally-justifying Righteousness, and reigns to save them.

He is a King of grace; full of grace are His lips. Fury is not in Him towards His poor and needy people. Therefore, says Isaiah again, The eyes that see Jesus the King shall not grow dim. God's people are never tired of seeing that King in His true and gracious beauty. He is a King for, not against, them; a King to subdue their sins, overpower by grace their stubborn wills, melt their hearts, mould them to His will, write His laws within them, transform them into His image, subdue all their enemies, manage all their affairs, and at length present them faultless in His glory.

He comes, then, *as a Saviour*. He is His people's salvation. When He comes, salvation comes. He is the Resurrection and the Life. When He comes, their life comes. He is health, He is strength, He is wisdom, He is peace and joy, and all glory and blessedness for His people. Well then, He comes, and comes to save them. Saving is His work. Saving is His glory. How sweet, then, the news to those who need salvation! To the blind, the deaf, the lame, the dumb, the poor, the needy, the destitute and wretched, are the words of the Lord by Isaiah: "He will come and save you."

The Christian, like a net, must have both the lead of a holy fear and the cork of a lively faith if he would catch anything out of the waters of the sanctuary. If the cork of faith was without the lead of fear, the net would lie too high; if the lead of fear were without the cork of faith, the net of the soul would fall too low, and so nothing would be caught; but both together lie in the likeliest place for a good draught.

George Swinnock

PREACHING CHRIST

*Sermon preached by John Raven at Shaw's Corner Chapel,
Redhill, on July, 18th, 1952*

Text: "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1. 28).

To the Corinthians Paul says, "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," and we read again and again in the Acts of the Apostles of the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ going here and there "preaching Christ." At Athens the apostle "preached Jesus and the resurrection." To Cornelius and his company Peter preached Christ; to the jailer at Philippi and his household Paul preached the Lord Jesus Christ. He preached the Word of the Lord.

So here he sums up his whole ministry thus: "Whom we preach." What miserably-poor preaching is that which has not Christ in it! Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, said on reading the writings of a very great and eloquent writer of his day, "They are very eloquent but they are not sweet, because the name of Christ is not in them." It would be well for us if, in our preaching, the Lord Jesus Christ occupied the whole field. A minister in Lincolnshire one day said to an old man who was about to be a hearer, "I want Jesus Christ to have the chief place in the pulpit today." The old man answered: "Let Him have it *all!*"

Sometimes a minister may be faced with the question after preaching: Has there been sufficient of Christ in the preaching? Has Christ been exalted? Has there been a clear testimony concerning the Person and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ? Has Christ been set forth before the people, as "evidently crucified among them"? That preaching that has not Christ in it utterly misses the mark. You remember the Lord said to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, was to be lifted up on the cross, and also He is to be lifted up on the pole of the gospel. Christ is to be preached: "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." In preaching the Lord Jesus Christ, one thing is very essential; that is, for Christ as a *necessity* to be set forth clearly.

"What a precious needful thing
Is the Lord and Saviour!"

In preaching Jesus Christ as the great and good Physician, the sovereign antidote, there must be a faithful setting forth of the malady, a clear testimony as to the state that men are in by nature, "children of

wrath even as others,” transgressors of God’s holy law, rebels against the majesty of heaven, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind (Eph. 2. 1-3). One says,

“This awful state mankind are in,
And such were some of you.”

O the need of the Saviour, the need of a Daysman, a Mediator, One that is able to lay His hand upon us both! And since we are sold under sin, since we are guilty and condemned under the holy law of God, there needs to be a redeemer, one who is able to pay down a sufficient price for the redemption of the sinner, and that redeemer must be a person who is suitable and sufficient for so great a work. This, no mere man could be.

But God calls attention to His own dear Son, whom in the fulness of time He sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by His sacrifice for sin condemned sin in the flesh of His own dear Son, who for that purpose became the Son of Man. “Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth.” The Father poured out the curse and condemnation upon His spotless Son, upon His anointed Christ, and the dear Christ of God paid in terms of precious, invaluable blood. He laid down the ransom price, poured out His soul unto death. He paid the whole of the debt His people owed, magnified the law and made it honourable. Wonderful is redemption’s work! The name of the Redeemer is called Wonderful, and truly He is wonderful in every aspect, in every view of Him; wonderful in His Person, wonderful in His grace and what His grace has done.”

“Whom we preach.” In preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is to be preached and exalted His matchless Person, “Immanuel, God with us.” The eternal Word made flesh, the Ancient of Days become the Infant of Days. “He who never knew beginning, here on earth a life began.” O how suitable and sufficient is Christ in His Person! Uniting Godhead and Manhood, two distinct natures in one Person, never more to be sundered. There is to be testified to poor, guilty, vile sinners a most gracious, willing Saviour who came down from heaven to accomplish this work of redemption. One says,

“There I behold with sweet delight
The blessed Three-in-One;
And strong affections fix my sight
On God’s incarnate Son.”

O do we know what it is to have our eyes and our affections and our faith fixed upon the incarnate Son of God? Can we truly say,

“I love the incarnate mystery,
And there I fix my trust”?

“Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.” To deny this, then, is to be in armed rebellion against God. He who believes not the record that God has given of His Son, by his unbelief makes God a liar, insults Him to His face. O this Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, His most sweet Person! I like the way the hymnwriter puts it: “O teach me to love Thy Person most sweet.” Is there not a sweetness, a loveliness in the Person of Christ to some of our hearts? At least, have we not had just a glimpse of Him, have we not seen Him to be altogether lovely?

“Thou brightest, sweetest, fairest One,
That eyes have seen or angels known.”

Well, there is not only His matchless Person, but there is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle speaks of it: “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.” He “dwelt among us full of grace and truth”; full of it! and grace is poured into His lips. How graciously He condescended to a life of lowliness and continual humiliation here upon earth, as the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief! He stooped to that in order that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, a Brother born for our adversity. O how sweet it is sometimes for a tempted, afflicted child of God to be enabled in a measure to feed by faith upon Christ in His humiliation, Christ in His temptations, Christ in His sorrows and griefs; Christ weeping, groaning and sighing; Christ weary, hungry and thirsty! O how near in all this does Christ come to His people, well called “a Brother born for adversity”! And as they are given to realise His companionship in adversity, His walking as it were step by step with His people in this path of tribulation, O the comfort of it!

“Whom we preach,” especially in His temptation, when He was forty days and forty nights in the wilderness, tempted by the devil. Nor was that the only temptation that assailed Him, for we read “the devil departed from Him for a season.” The devil was still to dog the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, assailing Him one way or the other. He *suffered* being tempted. “He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin.” What a comfort and what strength tempted souls find as they are helped to “consider Him” in this! “Are you tempted?” says Mr. Hart; “He was too.” Sometimes His tempted people are so strengthened by a sight of a tempted Jesus and a triumphant Jesus, that they can sing,

“Our Captain stood the fiery test,
And we shall stand through Him.”

He is able to succour those who are tempted because He Himself hath suffered being tempted.

Christ is to be preached in all the perfection and purity of His life as made under the law for His people. "This is the name whereby He shall be called, Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness." Here is food for a hungry, guilty soul, for a poor sinner who feels destitute of all righteousness. One says, "I am all unrighteousness"; but O what food for such an one is Jesus, His righteousness and sanctification!

"My soul can feast on nothing less
Than Christ's eternal righteousness."

When a poor sinner gets a view of this heavenly robe, this glorious garment woven by the Christ of God, and realises it is put upon him, O how wonderful it is! When Bunyan got a view of Christ thus, his soul was completely swallowed up in it. All he could say was, "O Christ, Christ, Christ! There was nothing but Christ before mine eyes. I know of nothing goodlier than to be before God with Christ in my arms."

It is one thing to believe these things just as a cold form of doctrine; it is another thing to have them applied to the heart as a sacred and divine reality, as a living truth. For this, the power and unction of God the Holy Spirit is essential. There is a vast difference. Men may speculate upon the doctrine, they may talk fluently and frequently about the doctrine, and set it forth perhaps in correct phraseology, and yet nothing is perceived of the grace of it, the beauty and glory of it, the sweet suitability and sufficiency of it; nothing affects the heart in the way that John Bunyan was affected. Well, Christ is to be preached as "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Then again, the Lord Jesus Christ is to be preached in His atoning death. Paul said he was determined not to preach anything else save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Apostle Peter says of Him, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." It is wonderful when faith is given to a poor soul to view the Lord Jesus Christ going that rugged way to the cross; looking upon a suffering, bleeding, agonizing, dying Jesus, and realising as Paul says, "Who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*."

"For love of me the Son of God
Drained every drop of vital blood;
Long time I after idols ran,
But now my God's a martyred Man."

He shed His precious blood for the remission of sins. Without shedding of blood is no remission; that was the clear teaching of the law. For "almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9. 22). That was only a figure, only a shadow of things to come. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the

purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

O Christ and Him crucified is a sweet theme to engage a minister's tongue, to engage his heart and his thoughts. There is a rich beauty in the Lord Jesus Christ, in His atoning death. My mind goes again to a sermon published by the late Mr. Popham; the title has stayed with me all these many years since I saw it: "The glory of Christ in dying." "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the Chiefest among ten thousand"; "altogether lovely."

"White is His soul, from blemish free;
Red with the blood He shed for me."

"Whom we preach" in His love. What love to sinners appears in this, the love of the Father, the love of the Son, the dear Christ of God! What made Him willing to go the way of the cross, to offer Himself thus on the accursed tree? Love to sinners. The apostle, speaking of the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us, summed it up like this: "When we were yet without strength, ... Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5. 6). What an amazing thing it is that He should *so* love such lumps of sin, that He should *so* love them as to be willing to die for them, to die an ignominious death upon the accursed tree, to suffer not only those pains of body, but the bitter, inconceivable pangs of His soul!

The true ministers of Jesus Christ would lift up this sacred Person, the Christ of God, as offering Himself thus without spot to God, a sacrifice for sins, and they would preach in His name the remission of sins. Yes, "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." You think of what those words import! Think how great a forgiveness it is that flows from this crucified Redeemer. Think what sins are forgiven, all manner of sin; whatever is condemned by the law in the believer, the blood of Jesus Christ atones for. You may say, "Well, can such and such a sin be forgiven?" Does the law condemn it? If the law condemns it (and what sin is there that the law does not condemn?), then the blood of Christ avails to remove that sin, avails to atone for that sin. If blessed with a living faith in His name, all that believe are justified, completely justified.

"Whom we preach." Not only Christ crucified, but Jesus and the resurrection. He died for our sins, and He rose again from the dead. Justice declared the debt was paid. His resurrection was a clear testimony of the satisfaction that a just and holy God received at the

hands of the Mediator on behalf of the whole church of God. He rose from the dead; death could not hold Him. It was for sin that He died, and in dying He made an end of sin by that one great sacrifice of Himself. Therefore death and the grave could not hold Him. He stooped to the suffering of death; He stooped to enter the chambers of the tomb, and in thus stooping was victorious. "O death! I will be thy plagues. O grave! I will be thy destruction."

He ascended into heaven, to be exalted on the right hand of the Father. Do you not feel sometimes as you contemplate such statements as these in the gospel, "O how little do I understand of the true and full import of such blessed Scriptures!" You may look at them, and look at them, and then have to say,

"Tis of Thee I little know,
And ah, still less enjoy!"

But after all, it is our great mercy that though these things are far beyond our comprehension, though they stretch right out of our sight and are lost to time in the distance of eternity, yet as one woman said, "Always flowing in streams of mercy towards us." The resurrection of Christ from the dead is wonderful. He is exalted at the right hand of the Father to sit with Him upon His throne. O I wish we could enter more deeply, more fully and more believingly into the true significance of this. "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

"Whom we preach." In the previous verse the apostle had spoken of the "riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." And this is important. Not only Christ preached among the Gentiles, but Christ in the heart, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." If in all our preaching of Christ, we fail to preach the necessity of Christ in the heart, we fall far, far short of preaching the gospel. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" The Holy Ghost must convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. "Of sin because ye believe not on Me," said the Lord Jesus. He must also take of the things of Christ and reveal them; He must glorify Christ in the heart. "Jesus, reveal Thyself to me."

Do you ever pray it? Do you ever feel ignorant and dark? Augustine said, "Because Thou supportest him whom Thou fillest, and because I am not full of Christ, I am a burden to myself." Do you sometimes feel you are a burden to yourself because you are not full of Christ?

"Dwell therefore in our hearts,
Our minds from bondage free."

How we need Christ by His Spirit thus to dwell in our hearts and deliver us from bondage, enabling us to realise that we are His freeborn sons and daughters!

“Whom we preach.” “Christ in you.” O how needful it is that we may be brought to a real, personal acquaintanceship with the Lord Jesus Christ! “That I may know Him,” a revealed and known Christ formed in you, the hope of glory.

“Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom.” Here again is a very important part of the gospel: “Warning every man.” And as the apostle uttered the note of warning, he did it with tears. He ceased not to warn the people night and day with tears (Acts 20. 31). How his heart was affected as he warned the people! “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” He felt the weight of the solemn things he had to speak; the weight of those solemn warnings which he sought to impress upon the people; he felt the truth and reality of them.

“Warning every man.” One said he would preach as if he would never preach again; he would preach as a dying man to dying men, warning sinners of their sinful state, warning them of the “wrath to come,” testifying to them of the awful day that is coming, the day of their appearance before the great white throne. O but little is heard of such things in these days!

“Warning every man and teaching every man.” There needs to be a note of teaching in the ministry, though I confess I feel to come very, very short there myself. When I think what a teacher a minister of Jesus Christ should be, how little there is in my poor ministry of the note of teaching! The apostle says, “Teaching every man in all wisdom.” Well, I hope that as you perceive the infirmities that beset your minister, you may be led to besiege the throne of grace, entreating the Lord that He would furnish him with grace, with wisdom, with a door of utterance, that he may be a true preacher of Jesus Christ, and a true teacher of the things of God among you.

“Teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.” *There* was the secret of the apostle’s ministry and its fruitfulness “according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.” What is it to be perfect in Christ Jesus? We read in the following chapter, “Ye are complete in Him.” To be perfect in Christ Jesus, as I understand it, is to be conformed to that line in one of our hymns:

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

To be brought down to a sense of utter nothingness at the Lord's feet, and for Jesus Christ to be All in all to the soul. Christ is sufficient to meet every want, to fill every earthen vessel. "Christ is All in all, and I am nothing at all."

O if we can be brought to that, to be nothing at His feet, that will be to be made perfect in Christ Jesus, to be flying out of self to Him, to be looking away from self and from all creatures to Christ alone, who is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, everything that we stand in need of.

DECEMBER 25TH, 1842

John Warburton preaching in London

Let us just notice the kindness of God in freely giving His beloved Son for us: "He spared not His own Son, but [freely] delivered Him up for us all." Freely delivered Him up for us all! What grace, what boundless love, what mysteries of immortal glory are wrapped up in this gift!

Can we wonder at the angelic host singing so melodiously in the air that they astonished the shepherds with their grand music? for I feel sure it was grand. I have thought sometimes I should have liked to have been there, to have heard it. But there will be still grander music, my friends, in heaven by and by. We are to sing with golden harps. Perhaps thou sayest thou canst not sing at all. Ah poor soul, if thou canst sing in thy heart of the riches of God's grace, to the riches of His honour, thou wilt sing upon a golden harp to the honour of the riches of His grace!

The angels cry out in their song, "Glory to God in the highest." What is the highest? Why, was it not a great height to sing the glory of God in creation, the glory of God in stretching out the heavens as a curtain, in fixing the sun as the grand bridegroom in it; in planting the stars in their glorious lustre; the ten thousand million worlds which exceed all human knowledge to comprehend? What! Is not this the highest? O no! What? Is not this glory to God in the highest, that God should speak particles of dust into man, that He should join particles of dust into a machine with eyes, nose, ears, hands, fingers, legs and veins, so that it baffles the greatest men to open its deep mysteries? Was not this the highest praise of God? David praised God for this when he said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made ... and that my soul knoweth right well."

But the angels sang glory to God in the *highest*; the top, the grand immortal top of all glories that are worthy of the glory of God, even "on

earth peace, good will toward men.” Why, how can that be? This Babe of Bethlehem who was laid in the manger was the mighty God, equal with the Father. O my friends, what a glory! What an immortal grandeur and glory was wrapped up in this Babe! The infant who was carried by His mother as a Babe, and swaddled and nursed, had the whole creation at His own disposal.

Here is the grand display of glory. In giving up His best beloved Son, every perfection of the divine nature meets and is glorified. We who are included in this word “*us*” are saved with an everlasting salvation. Sin was completely abolished and put an end to; the devil was conquered, death subdued; every particular of God’s grand perfection shining with unsullied glory. It is “glory to God in the highest,” aye, and “on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” What an immortal and blessed song it appears, my friends, when we come to look at the grand work which He who was equal with the Father had to do, and for which He was given!

THE LOVE OF CHRIST

An address delivered by Dr. John Owen on October 29th, 1676

Our business and duty for the present occasion is to set forth the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therein principally to call to mind His love. We may very well think of that passage of the apostle wherein he earnestly prays for them: “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3. 19).

This is a *peculiar* kind of expression. The meaning is, that we may know that *experimentally*, which we cannot know *comprehensively*; that we may know that in its *power* and *effects*, which we cannot comprehend in its *nature* and *depths*. A weary person may receive refreshment from a spring, who cannot fathom the depths of the ocean from whence it doth proceed. And if we would have our hearts, in this ordinance and at other times, affected with the love of Christ, which is the thing we are to aim at (to know His love and to experience the power of it), it is of great advantage to us to consider that it is such a love as passes knowledge, that our faith concerning it must issue in admiration, not comprehension.

I shall name two or three things that may give a little sense of this love as it passes knowledge.

I. *The love of Christ is the fountain and spring of all the glory that is in heaven, or shall be there unto all eternity.* God’s eternal glory is eternally the same: “From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.” But all the created glory that is in heaven, or that ever shall be there, springs

out of the love of Christ. It is true, the angels were not *redeemed* by Him, but they were *confirmed* by Him. They were not recovered out of a lost estate by Him, but they were continued in their first estate by Him.

Hence it is that God gathered all things in heaven and earth unto a head in Him (Eph. 1. 10). And there is a great deal to the same purpose in that expression of the apostle, when he had mentioned "principalities and powers" (Col. 1. 16). "By Him all things consist"; they have their consistence in Him. All would dissolve and fall to nothing if they had not their consistence in Jesus Christ. Certainly this is a love that passes knowledge, that is the fountain and spring of all the glory that is in heaven.

If God help us by faith to look within the veil and to take a view of all those glories wherewith the holy God is encompassed, we shall see that this love is the fountain and spring of them. The interposition of Christ saved the creation and brought in that everlasting glory that shall dwell in heaven. God knows this love; God understands the way of it; but as to us, it passes knowledge. Again:

II. *This love of Christ passes the comprehension and knowledge of angels*, and therefore Peter tells us, speaking of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that followed, "Which things," says he, "the angels desire to" bow down and "look into"* (1 Pet. 1. 12). The angels in heaven live in an admiration of the love of Christ unto sinners; that is, that love He expressed in suffering and in the glory that did ensue. And O what thoughts ought we to have of this love, who have all the benefits of it? The angels had no benefit by the sufferings of Christ, but their benefit and advantage ensued on the assumption of the human nature to bring the creation into a consistence, and in His interposition between God and all His creatures. They admire and adore it. What ought such poor creatures as we are to do? It may well be said to pass our knowledge, for it passes the knowledge of all the angels in heaven.

III. *It passes knowledge in that the effects of it in Christ Himself pass all our knowledge and comprehension.*

To give but two instances:

1. *His condescension to assume our human nature passes all our comprehension.* No man can fully understand the mystery of the assumption of our nature into the personal subsistence of the Son of God. Some dispute whether we shall understand the mystery of the incarnation in heaven; here we believe it. It is love which passes knowledge, that the eternal Son of God should take our nature into personal union with Himself. It is that we may admire, and ought to admire; and God help us,

* Owen seems desirous, by this paraphrase, to express the full meaning of the original word, παρακυψαι. [Editor's note from Gould edition.]

we are such poor, earthly creatures that we cannot admire it as we ought, though it be much in our nature to admire what we cannot comprehend.

2. *We cannot fully understand His passion and sufferings.* God alone knows what is in the curse of the law; we do not know it. God alone knows what is the true desert of sin; it cannot be fully understood by any but Himself. They who undergo it must suffer to eternity; there is no end; they never see, never know, what sin deserved. How do we know, then, what Christ suffered, when the punishment due to our sin, when all our iniquities met upon Him, with the curse of the law? God only knows what is in these things. The fruits and effects of this love in Himself, in His incarnation and passion, are past our knowledge; therefore the love itself surpasses our knowledge.

IV. Give me leave to say, the very fruits of it in ourselves do pass knowledge. No man that lives knows what there is in these three general heads of the fruits of Christ's love – in justification and pardon of sin – in the renovation and sanctification of our natures, and in the inhabitation and consolations of the Holy Spirit. No man living can find out these things to perfection. None of us fully understands and comprehends what it is to be justified in the sight of God, to have sin pardoned, to have our natures renewed and transformed into the likeness of God, and to have the Holy Ghost dwell in us.

The love of Christ, therefore, passes all knowledge; for the very fruits of it in ourselves are beyond what we can comprehend; there is a greatness in them we cannot reach unto. Why, then, my brethren, let us labour to have our hearts affected with this love. If God would be pleased to give unto every one of us some sense and impression of the greatness of this love of Christ, glance it into our hearts, beam it upon us in this ordinance, we should have cause to bless Him all the days of our lives. The faith and light of it issue in admiration; the light of glory will bring us to comprehension. Let us have such a sense as may cause us to admire what we cannot now comprehend.

1. I could speak something, but I will not now, to the actings of faith in admiration, it being the proper nature of faith to issue itself in the admiration of that which is infinite. If we can get our souls up to a holy admiration of this love, we have some gracious sense of it upon our hearts, if we can go no farther.

2. Let us learn to run up all the mercies we are partakers of, whatsoever it be we value, to the proper spring: "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." If we have any relief, or supply, or refreshment of soul, in a sense of pardon of sin, in spiritual light or consolation, pray let us exercise ourselves to run up all these things to the fountain. It is all from the love of Christ, that unspeakable love which passes knowledge.

3. In this let us be ashamed, [that] seeing the love of Christ to us is such as passes our knowledge, our love to Him is so weak that sometimes we know not whether we have any or not. For this let us be greatly humbled. This is not the way to answer that love which passes knowledge, to know not whether we love Christ again or not. Let us be ashamed for our want of love.

And lastly, let us abound in praise and thanksgiving for His love, and all the fruits of it.

For my part, I do not know whether that vision in Revelation 5. 9, 10 does express the rejoicing of the church above, or the duty of the church below; but both, I am sure, are of so near affinity that apply it to which you will, you do not miss it. And what do they there? Why, it is said, "They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests," etc. And it is said again, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing"; and again he repeats it in verse 13. I say, I know not whether this be a representation of the rejoicing of the church above, or a representation of the duty of the church below; but I can conclude from it that the enjoyment of the one and the duty of the other consist greatly in continual giving praise and thanks to Christ for His unspeakable love in our redemption.

THE GOSPEL OF GOD

From Robert Haldane (1764-1842) on the Epistle to the Romans

The gospel of God, to which Paul was separated, signifies the glad tidings of salvation which God has proclaimed. It is the supernatural revelation which He has given, distinguished from the revelation of the works of nature. It denotes that revelation of mercy and salvation, which excels in glory, as distinguished from the law, which was the revelation of condemnation.

It is the gospel of God, inasmuch as God is its Author, its Interpreter, its Subject. Its Author, as He has purposed it in His eternal decrees; its Interpreter, as He Himself hath declared it to men; its Subject, because in the gospel His sovereign perfections and purposes towards men are manifested. For the same reasons it is also called the gospel of the grace of God, the gospel of peace, the gospel of the kingdom, the gospel of salvation, the everlasting gospel, the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

This gospel is the glad tidings from God of the accomplishment of the promise of salvation that had been made to Adam. That promise had been typically represented by the institution of sacrifice, and transmitted by oral tradition. It had been solemnly proclaimed by Enoch and by Noah before the flood; it had been more particularly announced to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; by Moses, it was exhibited in those typical representations contained in the law, which had a shadow of good things to come. Its fulfilment was the spirit and object of the whole prophetic testimony, in the predictions concerning a new covenant, and in all that was foretold respecting the advent of the Messiah.

CHRIST'S SYMPATHY

By Robert Murray M'Cheyne

“Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved him! And some of them said, Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto Him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 11. 35-42).

When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews weeping, He groaned within Himself and said, “Where have ye laid him?” They said, “Come and see.” And as they led Him along the path to the cave in the rock, “Jesus wept.” Amazing sight! “Jesus wept.” He was the Son of God, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God – infinite in happiness – and yet He weeps, so truly does He feel the sorrows of His own.

I. The feelings of the Jews at this sight.

1. Wonder at His love. “Behold how He loved him!” These Jews were as yet only worldly men, and yet they were amazed at such an overflow of love. They saw that heavenly form bowed down at the grave of Lazarus; they heard His groans of agony; they saw the tears that fell like rain from His compassionate eyes. They saw the heaving of His seamless mantle; but ah! they saw not what was within. They saw but a little of His love; they did not see its eternity. They did not see that it was love that made Him die for Lazarus. They did not know the fulness,

freeness, vastness of that love of His. And yet they were astonished at it. "Behold how He loved him!"

There is something in the love of Christ to amaze even worldly men. When Jesus gives peace to His own in the midst of trouble, when the waves of trouble come round the soul, when clouds and darkness, poverty and distress overwhelm his dwelling, when he can yet be glad in the Lord and say, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" – then the world are forced to say, "Behold how He loved him!"

When Jesus is with the believer in death, standing beside him so that he cannot be moved, overshadowing him with His wings, washing him in blood, and filling him with holy peace so that he cries, "To depart, and be with Christ, is far better," then the world cry, "Behold how He loved him!" "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

Another solemn day is coming when all of you who are believers shall be separated, and stand on the right hand of the throne, and Jesus shall welcome you, poor and hell-deserving though you be, to share His throne and to share His glory. Then you who are unbelievers shall cry with bitter wailing, "Behold how He loved them!"

2. Some doubt His love. "Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" It was but a little before that Jesus had given sight to a man that was born blind, and the Jews that now stood around had seen the miracle. Now they reasoned thus with one another. If He really loved Lazarus, could He not have kept him from dying? He that opened the eyes of the blind could also preserve the dying from death. They doubted His tears; they doubted His words. This is unbelief. It turns aside the plainest declarations of the Lord Jesus by its own arguments.

How many of you have turned aside the love of Christ in the same way! Unbelief turns the very exhibition of Christ's love into gall and wormwood. Some men, the more they see of Christ, the harder they grow. These Jews had seen Him give sight to the blind, and weep over Lazarus, and yet they only grew harder. Take heed that it be not so with you. Take heed lest the more you hear of Christ and of His love to His own, the harder you grow.

II. The grave.

1. The command: "Take ye away the stone." Christ's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts like our thoughts. One would have

thought that He would have commanded the stone to fly back by His own word. When He rose from the dead Himself, “the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it”; but He did not do so now. He said to the men, “Take ye away the stone.”

For two reasons:

i. He wanted to bring out Martha’s unbelief, that it might be made manifest. Unbelief in the heart is like evil humour in a wound – it festers, and therefore Jesus wanted to draw it out of Martha’s heart.

ii. To teach us to use the means. The men around the grave could not give life to dead Lazarus, but they could roll back the stone. Now Jesus was about to use His divine power in awaking the dead, but He would not take away the stone.

Have any of you an unconverted friend for whom you pray? You know it is only Christ that can give him life; it is only Christ that can call him forth; yet you can roll away the stone. You can use the means; you can bring your friend under the faithful preaching of the gospel. Speak to him; write to him. “Take ye away the stone.”

2. Martha’s unbelief: “Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.” Mary was silent. She did not know what Jesus was going to do, but she knew that He would do all things well. She knew that He was full of love and wisdom and grace. But Martha cried out. She forgot all the words of Christ. She forgot His message: “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.” She forgot His sweet saying: “Thy brother shall rise again”; and, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” She forgot her own declaration, that Jesus was the Son of God. And see how she would have hindered her own mercy. She loved her brother tenderly, and yet she would have the stone kept on the mouth of the cave. She was standing in her own light.

Learn how easily you may fall into unbelief. A few minutes before, Martha was full of faith, but now she sinks again. O what marvellous blindness and sin there is in the human heart!

Learn how unbelief shuts out your own mercy. “He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.” Martha had nearly hindered the restoration of Lazarus. O do not forget the words of Jesus, nor His wonders of love and power! “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?”

3. Christ’s reproof: “Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?” Christ had sent this message: “This sickness is not unto death.” Now He recalls His word: “Said I not unto thee?” as if He had said: Martha, have you forgotten My

words? Why do you not believe My words? Am I a liar, or like waters that fail? Am I a man that I should lie, or the son of man that I should repent? See how unbelief woundeth Jesus. "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar." You will have a deeper hell than the heathen. They will be cast away because of their sins, but you because of your sin and unbelief. "He that believeth not is condemned already."

III. Christ's prayer and thanksgiving.

1. His prayer was secret. We are not told any words that He prayed, but no doubt during His groans and tears He was praying to His Father in secret. Even in the midst of the crowd, Jesus was alone with His Father, praying for His own, that their faith might not fail. The tears of Christ were not mere tears of feeling; they were the tears also of earnest prayer. His is no empty fellow-feeling, but real intercession.

Christ teaches you to pray in sudden trials. Even when you cannot get any secret place, lift up your heart to Him in the midst of the crowd. Ah, brethren, a sincere soul is never at a loss for a praying place to meet with God! If you are a child of God, you will find some secret place to pray. It will not do to say, you will pray when walking, or at your work, or in the midst of company. It will not do to make that your praying time through the day. No; Satan is at your right hand. Get alone with God. Spend as much time as you can alone with God every day, and then, in sudden temptations and afflictions, you will be able to lift your heart easily even among the crowd to your Father's ear.

2. His thanks: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but, because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

i. See what speed Christ comes in His prayer: "Thou hearest Me always." Every intercession that Christ makes is answered. The moment He asks He is answered. If we know that Christ prays for us, then we know that we have what He desires.

ii. He thanks. So entirely one is Christ with His own, that He gives thanks in our name. This should teach us not only to pray, but also to give thanks.

iii. He does this aloud, that all around might believe on Him. Christ was always seeking the conversion of souls, even here, in praying and giving thanks to His Father. He does it aloud, that those around Him might believe on Him as the sent of God, and the Saviour of the world. Yea, brethren, He records it here that ye may believe on Him. For this end is Christ set before you in the gospel as the sent of God, the compassionate Saviour, the Mediator and Intercessor, that ye may believe on Him.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO A YOUNG BELIEVER

My dear Friend,

You entreat me to write you a long letter. I now am writing, I will not say a long letter, as the value of a sermon or letter is not proved by the length of it.

I begin by saying that as you are no farther off than H—, I hope soon to see you face to face, and converse with you upon those things compared with which all things else are lighter than vanity. But I take it very kind of you writing. Knowing that it revives my heart to find the Lord condescending to bless my poor labours in any way, you thought you would pour me out a cordial at the beginning, by informing me of one to whom the Lord had been pleased to bless my poor scribble, which is not the first proof by very many of the same, nor do I believe it will be the last. I thank you for it; it answered the purpose intended. I am encouraged; I look, I wonder, I love, and I adore.

And now, my dear young friend and sister in the Lord, fellow-heir of that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled and fadeth not away, hesitate not to receive the assurance that you are so. Methinks I hear you say, “Deny it I dare not, I cannot, I would not; but I long for more confirmation in my heart and conscience that this is the case.” To which I reply, in dependence on the Lord, I will help you if I can.

And I would enter upon this by asking you a few plain questions: Where and what were you but the other day? Dead. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” “All have sinned.” This you did not understand once, but now you do. This subject did not occupy your thoughts once, but empty vanity did. You were a sinner by nature and practice, but thought little or nothing about it. Then it follows you were *dead* in sin – that is, in a state of unconcern, practically preferring darkness to light, and death to life; and had you been left to your own choice you would have been there to this day.

Now, my dear sister, who and what stopped you? *Rich, free, sovereign, irresistible grace!* That Lord against whom you had sinned, whose counsels you had set at naught, and practically said, He shall not reign over you, He said, “She is Mine, and I will have her, and that while young.”

“Thus the eternal counsel ran:
‘Almighty love, arrest that man.’”

And He that snatched you as a brand from the burning says, “I know her; I have given unto her eternal life; she shall never perish, neither shall any pluck her out of My hand.”

You complain of sin and weakness, but His answer is, “She is mine, and I am everlasting strength”; for He always answers Abraham’s seed

as he answered Abraham: "Fear not; I am God Almighty." And the believer, as he gathers strength, will make a reply and say, "He is able to keep that which I have committed to His charge against that day."

Now, my dear sister, is not this statement thus glanced at an eternal fact? Can you, or would you wish to deny it? Your heart says, "God forbid!" To which my heart says, "Amen."

Now then, let me try to lead you on a little further. Remember that God, who has called you, will keep you. You are not to keep yourself. It is He in covenant that engaged to keep you by His almighty power, through faith, unto salvation; not to make you strong in your own grace. No; but "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." He never engaged to make you satisfied with your love to Him, but with His love to you. In this sense, while the work is entirely His own, working in you to will and to do, you are called to build up yourself "in your most holy faith," and "keep yourself in the love of God."

"How is this to be understood?" say you. By looking at, believing in, and living on this love of His to you, not yours to Him, for that will not bear looking at. Try to survey the height and depth, the length and breadth of it, and you will find it rise as high above all your sins, miseries and complaints as the heaven is high above the earth. It is against this faith that the enemy of your soul maintains a warfare. But God is the Author, Maintainer and Finisher of your faith; and such a finish shall He make as to constitute us more than conquerors.

Here, then, is the main point. You have been convinced of sin, and that this is the work of God the Spirit. In the next place, have you not been brought as a poor, guilty, helpless, lost creature to look to Christ as the Lamb of God, and to venture your eternal all on His Person and work? And now I summon up your conscience to answer an all-important question: Are you not in possession of a hope that is full of glory and immortality? Then say, is not this a good hope? And why? Because it is through grace.

Now, my dear sister, I am not doing anything for you, but only showing you what is done. I am not enriching you – that I cannot do – but I am putting figures together for you, to show you how rich you are. I am not putting you in possession of a blessing, but showing you that you are blessed, and that none can reverse it. I am trying to put you upon blessing Him that has thus blessed you, according to Ephesians 1. 3; to embolden you to speak out with Paul (for you have as good a right as he had), and to defy sin, Satan, death or hell ever to separate you from the love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

"Ever keeping Christ in view,
He will bring you safely through."

What then remains after this? The apostle tells us: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." Again: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." Hear an old-established saint speak for you in poetry:

"Did ever trouble yet befall,
And He refuse to hear thy call?
And has He not His promise passed,
That thou shalt overcome at last?

"Like David thou mayst comfort draw,
Saved from the bear's and lion's paw.
Goliath's rage I may defy,
For God my Saviour still is nigh.

"He who has helped me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through;
And give me daily cause to raise
New Ebenezers to His praise."

Hear another speak for you:

"Remember one thing, O may it sink deep;
Our Shepherd and King cares much for His sheep;
To trust Him endeavour; the work is His own;
He makes the believer, and gives him his crown.

"Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek;
His Spirit will cherish the life He first gave;
You never shall perish if Jesus can save.

"Blest soul that can say, 'Christ only I seek.'
Wait for Him alway; be constant though weak;
The Lord whom thou seekest will not tarry long;
And to Him the weakest is dear as the strong."

My dear sister, you are already in possession of the earnest of such an inheritance as the heart can never rightly conceive, much less the tongue describe. "All are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." You are not your own, but His who has bought you with His blood. His special charge by covenant engagement, and He is no more able to give up the charge of you than you are able to take charge of yourself.

George Francis

9 Wellington Place, East Street, Walworth, November 30th, 1836.

George Francis, of Snow's Fields Meeting House, Southwark, London. He says of himself, "The Sun of Righteousness began to shine into my soul at the early age of ten years," and he ever after felt a great concern for salvation; but seeking and trusting in his own native strength, made no progress, but rather grew

worse, till about seventeen years of age when, under the ministry of that eminent man of God, William Romaine, the doors of his soul were thrown open, and the Lord was pleased to deepen the work of His grace, and establish him in the way of righteousness. Some years after he began to preach the gospel in a great variety of places, though surrounded with many distressing circumstances, and great straits in his family. About the year 1813 a Baptist church was formed in Snow's Fields – most of the members being the fruits of his labours – and he was invited to take the oversight of them in the Lord, and there for nearly forty years he stood a plain, upright, humble-minded man of truth, and a faithful preacher of the everlasting gospel. He finished his course with joy. While a friend whispered his favourite text in his ears, "Underneath are the everlasting arms," he opened his eyes, smiled and said, "That will do"; and in a few minutes the vital spark fled, on January 5th, 1848, aged 80 years. "Whose faith follow."

Cornelius Slim's "My Contemporaries of the Nineteenth Century"

ALL OF MERCY AND GRACE

*The testimony of W.G. of Whitwell, written in 1855,
and appearing in the Gospel Standard the same year*

No doubt you have been expecting to hear from me before this, but I really felt so wretched that I could not write; but now, blessed be the Lord, I do feel better. I received your very kind letter, and felt a little encouragement from it, for I thought that others had felt as I did, and had been saved. It did give me a little hope, and I inwardly said, "Who can tell?" He has saved guilty, vile, ruined sinners; peradventure He may save me. And now, my friend, I will endeavour to give you a little account of the way in which I have gone on since I left you, as far as I can recollect it, and if you see anything of the hand of the Lord in it, give Him all the praise, for He is worthy to receive all the praise and glory for ever and ever. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be all the praise. If ever Thou hast had mercy upon me, it is all free and undeserved, for surely I deserve nothing but hell. Thou art indeed merciful.

When I look back and think of my ways, I often stand and wonder that the Lord has not cut me down as a cumberer of the ground; but His mercy endureth for ever. Yes, my friend, I can plainly see through my supposed righteousness, and that when I was with you I knew no more about religion than a stone. I used to think that all was right, though I must confess that sometimes I wanted something, but still thought that I could be saved if I liked, that I could be good, and that my works would save me. But O, blessed be the Lord, He has opened my blind eyes to see that it is all of grace, and He shall have all the praise; for what was

it but mercy that He did not cut me down, or leave me as I was until I lifted up my eyes in torment?

Now I will proceed. After I left B—, I went on, as I thought, very well for a time; but soon it seemed to me as if all my supposed religion left me, and I went about on the Lord's day to find my own pleasure, if it can be called pleasure. Sometimes I have gone to chapel in the morning, but another, to my shame, I have gone in company with another young man to the ale-house, and then in the evening gone to the chapel again. O bitter mockery! What a mercy the Lord did not cut me down then. Who can say I did not deserve it? The Lord would have been just in banishing me to the nethermost hell, there to have received my just reward. But O, bless His holy name, His mercy endureth for ever.

Well, I went on like this for some time, and often went in an evening to a public house to play at skittles, etc., and ran in all the ways of Satan, and shame upon me, delighted in it too. And yet the world used to call me a nice, steady young man. I was getting worse and worse, when on one Lord's day, my fellow-servant saw me reading a book not at all suited to the day, nor hardly to any other time. She took it away from me and put Mr. Huntington's *Bank of Faith* into my hand, desiring me to read that. I shall always love her for it, for the other was not fit for me to read. Many were the prayers she put up for me, and the tears she shed to see me going on in this way. I could not leave Mr. Huntington's book till I had read it through, and I felt that I liked the author of it and the book too; and seeing others of his advertised, I got them; but still I seemed as if I could not leave my old way, but went on getting worse and worse, and even consented to become a member of a "free and easy society." This was the time the Lord sent His blessed truth here.

Well, the day before my name was to be put down to go every Monday evening to drink and sing, being Lord's day I went to chapel, and the good minister did expose me to myself. He said, "You who go to the public house, and enjoy your mug and sing songs to the devil, you have no part in this. O you are in an awful state; you know nothing of these things." I do not know what his text was, neither do I recollect anything else he said. This was enough for me; I felt I had done with the public house. I sent word for my name not to be put down till I went, and I never intended to go.

A week after this my poor mother was taken away. This seemed a judgment upon me, but I felt my heart as hard as a stone; and yet I hoped God would soften it and make me feel something, and He gradually led me to see what a guilty sinner I was and how far I had fallen. O how I expected to go to hell, and was often afraid to go to bed, for fear I should wake up there. I knew that was just what I deserved, and could not expect any other; and I often wondered that I was still alive and out of

hell. My language was, "Do not send me to hell. Do spare me a little longer." I seemed afraid to cry for mercy. I was in this dreadful state for some time. At length I felt I might cry for mercy in and through what Jesus had done for guilty man, but I could not think He died for me.

Before my eyes began to be opened to see what a guilty wretch I was, my fellow-servant told me that God had chosen a certain number of persons to be saved. But I replied that I would not believe it, if all the world told me so. I urged all the arguments of a carnal mind, and said God would be unjust in so doing. But when I saw what a state I was in, I could see plainly that it was only by an act of free and sovereign grace that any poor sinner was saved, and that God would be just in damning all the sons and daughters of Adam. I also at that time read Mr. Barry's work on particular redemption before time, and was firmly established in that doctrine. And when I heard, as I sometimes did, ministers in the pulpit speak of knowing their election of God, I thought them the happiest people on earth, and thought what would I give to know my name was written in the book of life. All this time I was in a dreadful state. I saw the uncertainty of life and that I might be taken away in a moment, and knew that if I died in that state I must be sent to hell.

At length I saw, or thought I saw, a little hope, and that hope kept getting stronger, when I heard the ministers say they had felt the same; and I kept longing for every Lord's day that I might hear more of it. My hopes brightened, and I saw that salvation was free to every one that believeth, but I could not believe. And I saw that He would have all the glory, for man could do nothing; and I began to hope that the Lord would have mercy upon me for Jesus' sake; and I was enabled to cry for mercy, not for what I could do, but in Jesus' name. I could see that none were ever sent away who cried after Him for mercy, when He was upon earth, without obtaining it; and I thought that if He was upon earth now, I would not go away without it, but would follow Him wherever He went until He did have mercy upon me and forgive me. But, blessed be His precious name! He is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." "Mighty to save." "Able also to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

Last Lord's day and Monday, I felt I was just the character to be saved, and Jesus was just the Saviour I wanted, and I thought He would save me. On Tuesday I had such a feeling sense of His love and mercy, that I thought I should never doubt any more; but that soon passed off, and 2 Thessalonians 2. 11, 12 was powerfully on my mind, and I thought I should be deceived and damned at last; but again I thought that if I had some passage of Scripture given me I would believe; and bless His dear name, He did satisfy my soul. On Wednesday morning I was at work thinking upon my state, when these words came: "Whosoever cometh

unto Me I will in no wise cast out"; but I thought I was so vile, guilty and filthy. Then came the following words: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." I stood and wondered, I cannot tell what I did, but when I came to look for my sins and terrors, O wonderful to say, they were all gone, all fled. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. And then came these blessed words, "As far as the east is from the west, so far have I removed thy transgressions from thee."

O this was enough. I did not want more; my joy was complete. I felt as if I did not care for all the world. But only those who have felt this can know what it is. I do not think I could have borne it long. You, my friend, can judge of what I felt, for you have felt the same. I could not keep it to myself, but was obliged to go and tell it to a good woman who lives near here, and we rejoiced together. O it is happiness indeed; but not unto us, but unto Thy holy name be all the praise and glory, O Lord, for ever and ever. Amen.

WHY DOES THE LORD PERMIT SUFFERING?

*Extract from a sermon on Matthew 6. 9 preached at Horsham in 1990
by Mr. Ralph Warboys*

We do not know our needs as well as our heavenly Father does. We think we need comfort – instead we may receive reproof and rebuke. We may desire an easy and smooth path, but the Lord sees we need a path of trial. And what we need, He will give. Let us ever remember that God is the Father of His people and "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."

Just perhaps to digress for a moment. The world, or the nominal person of religion, will say often to God's people, "If God is a God of love, why does He permit pain? Why do bereavements come? Why do we have this loss and the other trial? Why does pain come?" And so on.

There are a number of reasons. First of all, of course, sin is the cause of all these things. Adam fell and "the seeds of evil once brought in, increased and filled the world with sin." So sin is the first and prime cause of all these things. But God permits them to come for a number of reasons.

For the most part our trials come as chastening; that is because we have departed in some way – it may only be in thought – from the path of righteousness. God sends trials upon us. We read in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews concerning that: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." When we were children, we did not like to be corrected by our parents, but now we are older we thank God that we were corrected,

that what they did perhaps for punishing us, or perhaps preventing us doing something we wanted to do, was done in love for our good.

But also trials come as they did with Job, not because he had sinned some particular sin, but that the work should be deepened in his heart, that he should know more of himself and more of his God.

But fourthly, there is also another reason, especially as we get older. Trials come to loosen our hold upon things below. I am sure there will be no reluctant saints in heaven, but before each of the Lord's people lose consciousness at death, they will "desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." There are a few lines, if I can remember them, that go something like this:

"Our hearts are bound unto the earth
By strong and various ties;
But every trial breaks a string
And urges us to rise."

To explain the figure for our younger friends: during the war there used to be things that were called barrage balloons that were sent up into the sky that the enemy aircraft should be trapped by the lines that held them down to the earth. And in times of gales and windy weather they were brought down to the earth and covered with a net with many strings which held them firmly to the earth. Well, that is how our hearts are held to the earth, as it were by many ties. But each trial breaks one more string, and when the last trial comes that is needful to us, the soul will then rise to be with God.

So He only permits things to come that are needful.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales, translated by John Aaron; two volumes; hardback; 800 and 816 pages; price £40 for both; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

Volume 1

This is a fascinating book which we found hard to put down. Really it tells the wonderful story of the Evangelical Revival in Wales in the eighteenth century. What amazing gatherings there were and what blessing!

Originally written in Welsh in 1895 by John Morgan Jones, assisted by William Morgan, this is the first time the work has been translated into English. The Welsh author writes in an interesting style, somewhat on the lines of Merle d'Aubigné, dealing with the subject in biographical fashion. He has a good grasp of doctrine and of Scripture, which he brings in in a most suitable way, and his comments are always helpful.

Apart from what must have been a prodigious labour of love, this is a magnificent translation by John Aaron. So often even the best translations seem to be involved and, in places, confused.

We have to say that though the book is most interesting, it is very long, and occasionally details of Association Meetings hold up the story – though this does not detract from its value.

There is more about the amazing Howell Harris (1714-1773) than anyone else. A great preacher, his ministry was wonderfully used by God. But he was the most humble, self-effacing of men, and constantly bemoans his sin. For instance: “O wonderful love that I am not in hell, having tempted God so much!” He felt that he was the “greatest wretch in the world” (page 180). He was also somewhat impulsive like Simon Peter. (He certainly did and said some strange things at times!)

But what Howell Harris suffered for Jesus’ sake! We cannot forbear inserting the following:

September 1740 at Newport. “Harris’s clothes were torn, his wig stolen, and he was forced to stand bareheaded in the rain. ‘How sweet,’ he wrote, ‘to bear the reproach of Christ!’ Stones, rotten apples and mud were thrown at them.... When Harris stood up to speak, much turmoil broke out. The people howled at him. They threw dung, eggs, and cherry stones at them” (page 171). His friend Seward was hit with a stone and died a few days after.

“The windows were smashed and some of the rioters forced their way in, roaring like wild animals.... The malicious mob, both male and female, fell upon him in the cruellest way. The women flung the dung of the street at him and the men beat him with their fists and staves, until his blood flowed freely.... At one point he fell and was for a time trampled underfoot, so that he thought he would surely lose his life” (pages 172-3).

The emphasis of Volume 1 is on Howell Harris. In fact, the Howell Harris chapters, extracted and suitably edited, would make an excellent biography. When the author reaches Harris’s death, he sadly comments, “We find difficulty in bidding him farewell” – and we felt exactly the same.

Apart from one or two ministers who are lesser known (to us in England) and many references to Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon, the two most important figures are Daniel Rowland (1713-1790) and William Williams (1717-1791). The accounts of Daniel Rowland’s preaching and its gracious effect are wonderful. It is very interesting that those who could understand both English and Welsh, in hearing Whitefield and Daniel Rowland concluded that the latter was the greater preacher! William Williams, “the sweet singer of Wales,” is of course the well-known hymnwriter (the author of “Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah”), but he was also an eminent preacher. It is interesting to note that the publication of his hymns was greatly used by God in working in sinners’ hearts.

There are a few surprising things in the history of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists. One is that until the nineteenth century they counted themselves part of the Church of England, and had not much union with the Independents or the Baptists. The other: there was a lot of controversy, at times bitter, among the leaders; they were only men at best.

We could not agree more with the Publishers’ assessment: “stimulating and enjoyable” ... “exciting.” *The Calvinistic Methodist Fathers of Wales* (originally *Y Tadau Merbodistaidd*) is also a spiritual book. The Calvinistic Methodists abhorred both Arminianism and Baxterianism. And lengthy extracts from Howell Harris’s diary ensure the spiritual content of the book.

It would be a good thing if there were more interest in some of the glorious happenings in the church of God in former years. We know that we were delighted to receive these two volumes.

We look forward to reading Volume 2 (which contains Thomas Charles and John Elias).

Anger Management, by Richard Baxter (58 pages); **Heaven – A World of Love**, by Jonathan Edwards (117 pages); **Impure Lust**, by John Flavel (80 pages); **Living Faith**, by Samuel Ward (96 pages); each £3.25; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

This is a new series of “Pocket Puritans,” each book being just over 5 inches by 3½ inches. We are sympathetic to anything by the Puritans and are interested how these little books will be received.

Each book contains a biography of the author – two by J.C. Ryle and two by Iain Murray. The one on Jonathan Edwards is very short, whilst there is quite a lot about the others. We are surprised that Bishop Ryle does not drop a hint about Baxter’s aberrations in doctrine.

The book on anger is quite commonplace: “Don’t be angry!”

The one on lust is good, written in typical Puritan style. We wonder, though, if young persons today will question whether Flavel can understand present-day problems.

Jonathan Edwards bases his discourse on “Heaven” on 1 Corinthians 13. 8-10: “Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away” – the emphasis being that heaven is a world of perfect, holy love.

We liked quaint old Samuel Ward (“Watch” Ward, as he was known) best of all. We felt he was really profitable on the nature of saving faith.

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 glories view,
Feel, and love, and sing them too.

Savèd 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.

William Gadsby (1773-1844)

OBITUARY

Ralph C.T. Warboys, for many years a loved minister, and member of the church at Oakington, died on November 2nd, 2008, aged 81. "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth."

Inward worship is sometimes set forth by loving God (Jas. 2. 5); sometimes by trusting Him (Psa. 37. 3); sometimes by sorrow for offending Him (Psa. 101. 3), because this worship of God (as one piece of gold containeth many pieces of silver) comprehendeth all of them. All the graces are but so many links of this golden chain. As all the members of the natural body are knit together and walk always in company, so all the parts of the new man are joined together, and never go but as the Israelites out of Egypt, with their whole train. If there be one wheel missing in a watch, the end of the whole is spoiled. If once grace should be wanting in a saint, he would be unsainted. There is a concatenation [linking together] of graces as well as of moral virtues. Those that worship God give Him their hottest love, their highest joy, their deepest sorrow, their strongest faith and their greatest fear; as Abraham gave Isaac, they give God all.

George Swinnock