

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JANUARY 2022

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled” (Matt. 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 Tim. 1. 9).

“The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Rom. 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; Matt. 28. 19).

NEW YEAR ADDRESS

To the readers of the *Gospel Standard*

As the Lord has favoured us to look forward into the unknown days of another year, it behoves us to look back and acknowledge His unfailing goodness and mercy which has been repeated each day of the year now closed.

The Lord’s judgments have been seen across the world and increasingly in our own land and others, as one crisis after another has shaken the nations. The general view of society is that we can fight through these things and then resume life, as we wish it to be, satisfying the flesh and continuing to live as if there were no God, or accountability, living a lie. How many have died in that lie this past year, only to be solemnly, eternally awakened by the terrors referred to in Psalm 73. 19 by godly Asaph. “How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.” If anyone in high places were to suggest that this is the hand of God, they would be immediately shouted down by the secular atheists who have the predominant influence in high places and in the media.

The increasing intolerance of the secular world of any who oppose them, poses a serious threat to our freedom of worship and ability to declare the whole counsel of God. Totalitarianism has its roots in such attitudes if not checked. The issues of abortion, marriage, euthanasia and the mis-education of our children in state schools are an increasing anxiety. Our young people and parents are faced with tremendous challenges which only our omnipotent God can manage.

The church of Christ has not been immune from the Lord’s hand, and these testing times have in some cases sadly brought division among the people of God as to how we should respond. At such times may we

remember the word of God in 1 Peter 5. 5-7: “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. 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.”

We mourn with those churches that have lost esteemed members during the pandemic, and especially with our friends at Ossett, Birkenhead and at Choteau who have lost their beloved pastors.

Despite the dark scene around us, we would not lose sight of the Lord’s wondrous faithfulness to His blood-bought people here below. David, in not dissimilar times, said, “Blessed be my Rock.” How precious and securing if we are led as the good hymnwriter was:

“Jesus Christ, the sinner’s Friend,
Loves His people to the end;
And that they may safe abide,
He’s the Rock in which they hide.

“As a rock He guards them well
From the rage of sin and hell.
Such a Rock is Christ to me,
I am safe, though thousands flee!

“Sheltered in His wounded side,
Now no ill can me betide;
From the tempest covered o’er;
One with Him for evermore.” (H. 551)

Another great mercy is, that despite the sadness and badness of the days in which we are living, the Lord’s work goes on undisturbed. Daniel prophesied that the walls would be built in “troubulous times” (see Dan. 9. 25). So it is in our day, the Lord is still adding lively stones to the Living Stone, Christ Jesus, the one and only foundation of the church. Both Psalms 22 and 69 speak so expressly about the sufferings of the Saviour, and the wickedness of the age in which He suffered, “the Just for the unjust,” yet both Psalms end on a glorious note speaking of the prosperity of His church for whom He suffered so much. Truly God had the last word at Calvary, and the tomb, and He does and will in our generation too. Christ must “see of the travail of His soul, and ... be satisfied.” So, we read in Psalm 69. 35, 36: “For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. The seed also of His servants shall inherit it: and they that love His name shall dwell therein.”

We are each travelling on a journey which will sooner or later (perhaps sooner rather than later) end in eternity. The Word of God speaks of only two destinations at the end of a mortal life – heaven or hell. Towards one of these destinations, we have speedily travelled another twelve months.

The believer, like Abraham, is looking “for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb. 11. 10). He, like Bunyan’s Pilgrim, being warned of God, has fled out of the City of Destruction, being made solemnly aware that to remain there would be as perilous as it was to Lot’s sons-in-law who remained in Sodom and perished therein.

If matters are dark nationally and internationally, what can be said of our churches? Although the Lord has graciously added to His church on earth several in our churches during this past year, yet for the most part the decline over many years in numbers, and more importantly in spirituality, seems to continue. That there is a cause is very evident. But what cause? On this point so many differ. We know that the Spirit is grieved and in many ways withholden in comparison with former generations, but why?

Is it a loosening of doctrine?

Is it a loosening of order?

Is it a lack of gospel grace amongst us?

Is there an Achan in the camp?

Is it the divisions among the godly?

Above all we should ask, instead of looking around us, “*Is it I?*”

We are reminded of an excellent address given by our fellow-labourer Mr. James Pack on “The Nature and Need of Repentance” at an Annual Meeting many years ago. His closing remark has remained with some of us ever since. “Lord, let it begin with me.”

It would be a great mercy if the deep divisions among us could be honourably healed. How true it is that when the godly are divided, the enemy has been at work. As at Corinth, it was when they lost sight of all apart from “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” that the divisions were healed and matters set right. So let it be with us as a small branch of Christ’s living church. May the dear Holy Spirit, who is so withdrawn in our day, be pleased to show us wherein we have grieved Him, and return with mercies to Jerusalem.

Above all, as our allotted span of time runs its course to the ocean of eternity, may we be on our watchtower. “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.... Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24. 42, 44).

Finally, we would remember with affection our esteemed former Editor, Mr. Ramsbottom, who at the end of the year laid down his pastorate of fifty-five years at Bethel, Luton. May the Lord graciously uphold him in the remaining days of his pilgrimage.

May grace, mercy and peace be with you all.

G.D. Buss (Interim Editor)

“MASTER, IS IT I?”

(Matt. 26. 25)

A more solemn character than Judas Iscariot cannot be found anywhere else in Scripture. Yet it behoves us each, who have a concern over our never-dying souls, to examine carefully the reef upon which he made shipwreck of faith. The words of David, speaking as a prophet, in Psalm 41. 9, were solemnly fulfilled in Judas. “He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against me” (John 13. 18).

In choosing the twelve apostles, the Saviour was fulfilling the will of His heavenly Father, without whom He did nothing. It was part of His appointed cup of sorrow and suffering that one so close to Him in His earthly ministry should be the means of betraying Him into the hands of His enemies. We should not forget that this must have been a deep wound in the heart of the Man, Christ Jesus.

Let us examine *ourselves* in the light of what the Scriptures tell us of this man.

1. Judas had *a profession without possession*. Though a disciple who had an outward call, was a preacher, pointing sinners to Christ, and one who like the other disciples performed certain miracles in the name of Jesus Christ, yet he was a stranger to the truth he preached and the name he professed. Like the foolish virgins he had no oil with his lamp, and so his religion died just when it was most needed. There is no substitute for the inward work of grace in a heart renewed by the Holy Ghost.

2. Judas had *a close association with Christ but no union*. What a privilege he had! The best of teachers, the most perfect of all examples, the company of true believers, yet no union of heart. No bond of sovereign grace held him. He was like the scaffolding on a building being erected, which has its use, but once the building is completed it is dismantled and has no part of the finished house. As the chaff is separated from the wheat and burned, so was Judas' religion.

3. Judas had *works but no love to Christ*. He could say that he had done many wonderful things in Christ's name. However, these were not done for Christ's sake, but for his own selfish advancement. He was outside of the secret of 1 Corinthians 13.

4. Judas had *indwelling sin, like us all, but he had no godly sorrow and repentance over it*. His besetting sin was covetousness, which the Lord exposed when Mary anointed Christ with the ointment. He piously and hypocritically said that it could have been sold and the proceeds being three hundred pence given to the poor, but our Lord exposed his hidden motive: “This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein” (John 12.

6). Instead of falling under the reproof of our Lord, his heart rose up in secret enmity. This, with the sin of covetousness, grew until Judas sold our Lord for thirty pieces of silver and sealed his own eternal destruction when realising remorsefully (not with godly sorrow) the enormity of his crime, he went out and hanged himself. It has been noted that though Judas was the betrayer, and no doubt stood in the palace of the High Priest in that mockery of a trial, he never uttered a word of accusation. It was after that solemn scene he tried to undo what was done, but to no avail. How careful we should be in watching over the sin that does so easily beset us, lest it should be our eternal ruin as it was with Judas.

5. Judas had *judgment without humility*. How quick he was to condemn Mary, yet how blind he was to “the beam in his own eye.” Like the Pharisee, he could quickly discern the apparent faults of others, but had never been humbled under a sense of his own fallen heart.

No wonder the Lord said that it had been better for Judas if he had never been born. He plunged himself into eternal misery. Had there been no judgment after death, the Lord Jesus would not have spoken thus. It is significant in this day, when men seek to encourage others to end their own life prematurely, that our Lord implied unmistakeably that our last natural breath is not the end, but only the beginning of an eternity – in Judas’ case eternal misery.

Yet should it be any wonder to us, that when the Lord Jesus revealed that one of His disciples should betray Him, they all asked, “Is it I?” They had only to look within and realise that, left to themselves, it could be any one of them. True, like Peter, they were soon to learn even more of their weakness and the need of the Lord’s preserving care.

But in reading John 14. 22 there are two very sweet words, which must have encouraged the other disciple, also named Judas: “Not Iscariot.” As every true believer is rightly exercised not to make shipwreck of faith, how encouraging would those words be, should the Holy Spirit apply them. How urgently we need the fulfilment and answer to our Lord’s prayer in John 17. 11: “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are.” Without this keeping grace, we too will make shipwreck of faith as Judas did. How necessary then is the psalmist’s prayer: “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Thy statutes continually.”

“What anguish has that question stirred:

If I will also go?

Yet, Lord, relying on Thy word,

I humbly answer, No.”

(H. 999)



NOTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD

*Sermon preached by Frank Luther Gosden at Scaynes Hill,
on July 7th, 1970*

Text: “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?” (Jer. 32. 27).

This encouraging word was spoken to Jeremiah when he was in perplexity. Jerusalem was about to be reduced to ashes; Jeremiah was in the court of the prison, and he saw the Chaldeans approaching the city. They had brought up their artillery (“the mounts”) and it caused his faith to be exceedingly tried. It is not a good thing, my friends, to have a faith that never trembles. A nominal belief looks better on the outside than does a real, God-given faith. A natural faith never trembles, it is manipulated by the man himself, it has its seat in his natural mind. But the faith of God’s elect stands in His power, and He will try it, as He tried the faith of Peter upon the sea. When the storm arose, Peter said, “If it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water”; and the Lord said, “Come,” so that Peter had divine authority to go. But when he took his eye off the Lord Jesus and saw the waves, he began to sink. And this is an experience that only a living soul knows anything about. And this word of encouragement is not spoken to everybody. The Lord does not speak to reprobates. He does not cast His mercies about promiscuously to all and sundry, but to His sheep (see John 10. 27).

“Behold, I am the LORD; the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?” He made the same declaration, you remember, to Abraham’s wife. When she was told she would have a man child, she laughed (see Gen. 18. 12-14). But the Lord rebuked her. That laugh was a laugh of unbelief, and the Lord said, “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”

So there are in the main two things in the text. The first is the declaration of the absolute sovereignty of Jehovah; and then, upon the strength of that sovereignty there is this challenge: “Is there any thing too hard for Me?” And if there are those who are in a condition to need this consolation, it will be a good word.

In the first place, “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh.” It is a majestic declaration from the Lord Himself as to who and what He is. And it is this great God who is the Object of faith. It is faith alone that knows Him by His own revelation. Without it we shall never know God. “Canst thou by searching find out God?” And, “The world by wisdom knew not God.” They cannot know Him. Scientists and scholars can find out pretty well everything concerning this lower world; they seem to be able to find out everything *except* God. But what an

exception! I mean, how is it with us, my friends? Life is very short; it is but sinking sand. I wish we could feel it. Whatever a man may possess, whatever he may attain to, at very best it comes to this: earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. That is the end of the best portion in this world; a poor affair if that is all we have! But O this great God says in Jeremiah's prophecy, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" "Can any hide himself so that He cannot see him? (see Jer. 23. 24). O what a blessed thing it is to know the Lord! A similar word to this the Lord Jesus expressed in His prayer in John 17: "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life" – not to all flesh, but "to as many as Thou hast given Him. And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." What a blessed knowledge! It can never be learned in a university. I do not put a premium on ignorance; I do not condemn scholarship. Scholarship joined with the grace of God has been, and could be, of great use to the churches, as in the case of some of those who have gone before. But the highest education and the most advanced science can never know God. The height of reason can never see Him.

"I am the LORD, the God of all flesh." O there is something that seems to gird the very loins up, especially in these days. Look at the condition of the world, the condition of the nations. It is dangerous. There is nothing in itself that is perilous; it is not a thing at all; nothing material is perilous; it is the *spirit* of men. It is not the instruments of murder that are perilous; it is the *hand*, the *spirit* that uses them. O the terrible power of the spirit of men today! The devil is allowed to have a great influence upon men. But, "I am the LORD, the God of all flesh." Nothing can alter that.

We look at things, and they will get worse, my friends; things in the Middle East [the Egyptian and Israeli conflict – "War of Contrition"], things in Ireland [The Northern Ireland Troubles, particularly after 1969], will get worse. What is before us, God only knows. But the mercy is, it cannot alter the text. Nothing can. "I am the LORD." And the sovereignty of Jehovah is absolute. The sovereignty of an earthly monarch is not absolute; it is conditional. But this is the sovereignty of Him who is the Creator of all things, He who possesses in Himself the fulness of creation, He who has the fulness of grace and of salvation, He whose sovereignty orders and controls and penetrates to our life's minutest circumstance. "I am the LORD." It is His voice, and He can silence every other voice when He will. And He will one day. "Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever." And this is the Word of God.

"Behold" – take notice of it! Why should we behold it? You look at that precious second Psalm. To my mind it is very nearly connected with the text. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain

thing?” There is something so sweet about that Psalm in these days of confusion. The earth is convulsed, people are imagining vain things. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” They look pretty big strutting about the earth. What became of Hitler, and some of those great men that made the earth tremble? “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh.” Men are as grasshoppers; they are to Him like the drop of a bucket. All the nations of the earth are as nothing. It would quieten us to know it. “Be still, and know that I am God.” As though He would say to His people, who perhaps have been going on quietly, “Now you have heard that I am the Lord; you have read about it that I am the Lord. Now be still and *know* it in the midst of all this chaos.” For “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore” – that is the reason, that is the ground – “Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake.”

So you see the connection: “I am the LORD, the God of all flesh.” And when you are favoured with the faith that takes hold of the strength of God, that brings you to sing in the height of Zion – it may be sometimes in the sanctuary, for He does lift His people from the dust; He brings you to feel a little of His divine power in your heart – then you can look at the world and things which make you tremble, and you can laugh. It is a very solemn thing when the Lord laughs at a sinner; and it is a very heavenly thing when He gives a smile.

“Behold!” And where will you see it? You will see it in His sovereignty in the earth among the nations. “I am the LORD.” I believe it is six or seven times in the chapter that we read (Isaiah 45) that the Lord makes that beautiful, majestic declaration, “I am the LORD, and there is none else.” The sinner says, “I know it, and do not want anyone else. His sustenance is all I need; His unsearchable riches can pay every debt.” “I am the LORD.” In Malachi He adds this, “I am the LORD, I change not.” Nothing can change Him. And if the Holy Spirit speaks these things into the heart of a sinner, it will strengthen him. You look at things then in God’s light; you see them as He sees them. You will see yourself as a sinner, and you will see Him as He is. You look at the world and all its turmoil, and see the turmoil as God sees it. He is carrying on His undisturbed affairs. And “*His* purposes” – not the devil’s – “are ripening fast, unfolding every hour.”

“I am the LORD, the God of all flesh.” That is the meaning. He has control of the devil, and He has control over all the mighty men of this world. I have felt, and expressed sometimes, that it has a steadying effect

if we see men as they are. You bring the most mighty men there are in this nation; bring them so that you can find none greater. What are they? "Their breath is in their nostrils." What about them now? They know not what a day may bring forth. What about their power? They can neither make one hair white or black, nor add to their stature. That is what they are. Now look at God. "I am the LORD, the God *that controls* all flesh." It does bring to mind the words in Isaiah 51. Speaking to His poor people that tremble at a man: "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die ... and forgettest the LORD thy Maker ... and where is the fury of the oppressor?" Where is it? O, when the Lord steps in! It may be with regard to the nation; it will hold good with you individually in your pathway and experience; it will hold good in the church of God.

"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh." Now this will help us to pray. The first act of faith is to believe that God is. We can never pray until we have some knowledge of Him. You cannot pray to an idea. How many have an idea for a god! But O to know this great God in our heart! And we shall need Him. "Though we tremble when we sing, we would not wish Him less." Can you say that, my friends? "I would not wish Him less," though He knows me, knows my heart, knows my sins, knows my life. I would not attempt to take the wings of the morning and flee away from Him if I could. But I would venture to Him, prostrate in the dust before Him. "I am the LORD, the God of all flesh." *All* of it. Therefore commit your enemies to Him, commit your way unto Him, "trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." Every *it*, my *it*, your *it*, He can bring it to pass.

Well, here then is the sovereignty of Jehovah, laid here for the counsel and comfort of every poor, trembling sinner. This builds up the sovereignty in this challenge: "Is there any thing too hard for Me?" This is a kind challenge to His people, people that are in the midst of impossibilities, people who are confronted with mountains that they cannot surmount: "Is there any thing too hard for Me?" As though He would say, "Prove Me." He does allow His people to prove Him. In Malachi He says, "Prove Me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing." It is kind of the Lord to let His people prove Him. He will prove them, He will try their faith, He will indeed; and in that way He will give us to know His sovereignty, and teach us, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me."

Well now, you say, I shall never do that, understand Him, know Him. How can it be possible? The Lord makes it possible by His

Spirit's dealings. How does a hungry man understand food? By the connection that there is between his hunger and the food. How does a poor, tempest-tossed mariner know the comfort of a harbour? By the storms. How does a poor bankrupt know the relief of a surety that has paid his debts? He knows it by the connection between his bankruptcy and his surety's riches. And that is how you will understand the Lord. O His kindness in His Word!

"Is there any thing too hard for Me?" Let us as enabled take it in one or two points of view. As, for instance, He is *the Creator of all things*. Man cannot contribute one iota to creation. In the first chapter of Ecclesiastes, we have this question: "Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new?" Nothing. Surely aeroplanes are new? Are they? What are they made of? Who produced it? God allows men to find out what is hidden, to discover His own work. There is nothing in existence, nor can be in creation, that is new to God. It is new to us. They are inventions, *not creations*. Therefore this will bring us to this word in creation: "Is there any thing too hard for Me?" The creation is full of miracles.

In the harvest time, you look among the fields of golden, waving corn – we become used to it, but it is a miracle. The seed was cast into the earth, but man did not create the seed, he did not produce it. It puts man in his place, and exalts the great Jehovah. Sometimes faith beholds creation, the fulness of creation, the earth bringing forth sufficient for the millions of human beings, and also the beasts. It is God's work. Wonderful! Only man, who alone is evil, creates a shortage for his own selfish end, where God gives plenty. But it will be a comfort ever to behold this majesty of God in creation. I knew a dear man, now in heaven. I knew something of his experience in his everyday life; I had to do it myself. He wandered about as a poor travelling salesman trying to earn his living by mere commission, and he got very down. He had a family, and felt himself to be worse than a worldling. But, coming over London Bridge, he was tempted to make an end of it. That seemed as if it would be the only relief out of his misery. But the text – not the words, but the substance of it – held him up:

"With heaven and earth at His command,
He waits to answer prayer." (H. 132)

"While Christ is rich, I can't be poor;
What can I want beside?" (H. 247)

"The God of all flesh." The God of creation. Well, "Is there any thing too hard for Me?"

Let us look at *providence*. I do not know your pathway, you do not know mine, but God knows both. And that was a comfort to Job. He

said, "He knoweth the way that I take." The margin says, "He knoweth the way that is with me." As though the poor man was so perplexed, he did not know if he was in a way at all; he could not tell anyone what way he was in. We must be somewhere if we are anywhere; but God knows. "Is there any thing too hard for Me?" Is any position in providence too hard? And how the Lord does try His people. He tries their faith, brings them into darkness and not into light. How sometimes He blasts their gourds and lays them low! How He gives them sometimes to find disappointment where they had hope! How He brings them to see emptiness where they looked for fulness! O how He will take us off from leaning on creatures! Is any thing, any position, any tight corner, any dungeon, any lion's den, any empty cupboard, too hard for Me? For, "I am the LORD, the God of all flesh." Some of you can fill in for yourself with respect to this. Ah, you might say, "I wonder where the scene will end." The Lord can bring a little thing to turn things completely upside down, and give you altogether a different outlook in life. It may be by a letter being put through your letter box. Before you open it things may be placid, comfortable; but O, some wine of astonishment and hard thing is in the letter, and it throws you into complete confusion. The Lord is in it. "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." "I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?" Bring it to Me, test Me, try Me.

But then with respect to the most important things, *the things concerning salvation and the soul*, "Is there any thing too hard for Me?" Is there a heart too hard for Me to break? Is there a sinner that is beyond the cleansing and healing and pardoning power of My sin-atoning blood? O what burdens the sinner will bring when he reacts by faith to this blessed sovereignty! You take the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh. A poor father with an afflicted son brought him to the disciples. They could do nothing with him, and the Lord said, "Bring him unto Me." Whatever it is (it may not be an afflicted son), but "Bring him unto Me." Then again with the loaves and fishes, the disciples said, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" Bring them unto Me. "Is there any thing too hard for Me?" O my friends, it will take in your life's minutest circumstance, and it will take in the whole of your soul's salvation.

You take again the case of the dying thief. Those who knew the man, those who had not seen the end of him, would have said the man was lost; his life declared it. Was it too hard for the Lord? A work of grace from beginning to end was completed in that dying thief's soul, the whole work of grace. Conviction of sin: "We indeed justly ... but this

Man hath done nothing amiss.” It was revealed to him that the sacred Person that was crucified there was a King. It was revealed to him that He would enter in to the kingdom. So there is no sinner too hard for the Lord. Why? “This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood,” *because* He continueth, because He is eternal, because He cannot change, He hath an unchangeable kingdom, and is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” There is no sin too great, no guilt too high. O here is love! His love is a sovereign love, and Paul desired that the Ephesians might know it, “That ye ... may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” The depth of His love is beyond the depth of uttermost sin; the depth of love was when He was made sin for His people that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The height of His love is the answer to His prayer: “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory.” The length and the breadth of His love is “from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him.”

“Is there any thing too hard for Me?” Any enemy that is too great for My omnipotence? Bring *your enemies*, and if you bring your greatest enemy to Him, you will bring yourself. I say it sadly, my friends. I can say, and God knows I lie not, that my biggest enemy is myself, and my biggest trouble is sin. If He deals with those two things, it will be well with us in trying times, testing times.

“I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?” And what *a kind word this is to a praying parent*. Look at their children – this is the fashion of the day; children are allured, they follow the fashions, they go away from God, they forsake all modesty – and you look at them. Are any of them too hard for the Lord? You want to read Ezekiel 37 about the dry bones. Were they too hard for the Lord? Too dry, too dead? “Son of man ... prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear ye the Word of the LORD.” “Where the word of a king is, there is power.” Then there was a shaking and a coming together, bone to his bone. Then He put breath in them, “and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.”

“Is there any thing too hard for Me?” I do think there are some things indefinite in the Word of God, mercifully so. I mean, if we had a list of things in the Bible that are not too hard for the Lord, you might go down the list and say, “Well, my trouble is not there, my difficulties, my impossibilities, my enemy is not there.” But He says, “Is there *any thing*?” Then you join with that this word: “If ye shall ask *any thing* in My name, I will do it.” It is the same *any thing* that is based upon the same sovereignty. Therefore, when He blesses His people, in those

blessings they partake of this great God. Sovereignty cannot be communicated to a creature, but that which is sovereign can. For instance, it is sovereign grace that saves them, it is invincible grace, and when that grace comes to a sinner, then it is not too hard for the Lord. He is the God of all flesh, and when that grace reaches a sinner's heart, then that sinner will be apprehended, like a policeman puts his hand upon a criminal's shoulder and apprehends him. And O what power there is when that divine voice says in the heart of that sinner, "Ye are not your own. You thought you were; you would be if you could, but you cannot; you are Mine. Ye are bought with a price!"

"Is there any thing too hard for Me?" Well, is this your case, my friend? This is applicable to every kind of case and condition, whether it is in your circumstances, or whether it is in your body. O look where it brought the man taken with a palsy; and the Lord said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Actually that was not what they brought him there for, but the Lord purposely did that. They brought him to Him to cure his body. He did not say anything about his body, but, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." That upset the Pharisees. "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Then the Lord reversed it. He can reverse things, and bring His purposes to pass. He is able to say, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," or, "Take up thy bed, and walk." He did both. Therefore a poor sinner can take his poor body to the Lord, and his soul at the same time, and say, "Lord, here is my poor body, and here is my immortal soul; nothing is too hard for Thee." If the Lord is with you, it will help you to "lie submissive in His hands, and know no will but His." It will make you thankful even under much painful affliction to feel, "A Father's hand prepares the cup, and what He wills is best." You can drop into His hands unreservedly, whether for life or for death.

"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?" It may be the greatest trial, the most trembling consideration is *death*. Is that too hard for Him? Well, look at the cry of victory, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Nothing was too hard for Him; He extracted the sting upon Calvary for every one of His people. He took the terror and the victory out of the grave when He rose again. Therefore the secret of the whole is just this: "One with Jesus."

"One in the tomb; one when He rose;
One when He triumphed o'er His foes;
One when in heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all hell's defeat." (H. 405)

Amen.

A TESTIMONY OF THE ADVOCACY OF CHRIST FOR A SINNER

By James Stevens (1900-1980)

When standing in the office of the deaconship, my mind was often led to find hymns referring to the Lord as an able Counsellor. Of all the glorious names attributable to Jesus, this particular one stood out; the only One who could give true counsel of God's most righteous law. In the school of Christ I sincerely hope the Lord taught me by His blessed Spirit of the Eternal Father. I had received that He was faithful and merciful, but a God of justice, for He proclaimed it from Sinai: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

"Thy mercies bid us trust;
Thy judgments strike with awe;
We fear the last, we bless the first,
And love Thy righteous law." (H. 833)

Now in this teaching I received that, whatever I had known and rejoiced in of Jesus, yet the day must come when I should have to stand in God's great court of justice; for my soul was convicted of breaking all His ten commandments, and I often feared He would pour His wrath upon me in one eternal shower, for I had also witnessed by faith that He spared not His only begotten Son who had done no sin; while to me I felt,

"This curse pertains to those who break
One precept, e'er so small;
And where's the man, in thought and deed,
That has not broken all?" (H. 45)

Now a sinner dreads this approaching day; he knows not when it will come, but God has warned him of it, and by His blessed Spirit instructed him. He may receive quite a few manifestations regarding the approaching day, and will prayerfully consider its importance, for God has laid it in his heart. Although he knows he can only approach Him through His dear Son, he also knows, because he is taught of God, that he has not the sealing witness that he has peace with God the Father.

Now, that noble Christ fully understands this poor sinner's feelings. This I had proof of when He invited me into His consulting office, as the Counsellor. I hope I shall never forget this. He invited me to look into the records, and said, "Look, I defended Abraham and the Apostle Paul;

they were men of like passions as you are.” It seemed as if I had to say, for He knew I loved them both: “What! those two just like me, Lord?” Out of the great number of His redeemed people He only mentioned those two. I hope He unfolded something of the lives of them both, but this was the outstanding thing: He said, “They had entirely committed their case for salvation into His hands, and He defended them.” Now, strange as it may appear, I observed that I had not fully entrusted my case as a law-breaker, and guilty of eternal death, into His hands; but here I believe I was sweetly favoured to do so. My hope of salvation was now entirely out of my hands. I felt this: it is all of sovereign grace to be able to say: “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.” O the times I felt after this that this wonderful Counsellor knows all the history, all the fears, all the sinkings of every poor sinner who was given to Him by the Father! From this time I thought that day was imminent, and many a cry I put up to an ascended Saviour, a risen Christ, that He would remember me when that day came. The law demanded justice, for, “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,” and, “because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” This you can only truly prove by being a living witness of it, and Christ only can be your strength in that day.

As that solemn hour came that the Father would glorify the Son, that His Son might also glorify Him, so that solemn hour came when I was arraigned before the bar of justice. Justice is fairness; I am a living witness that my trial was that. The entire record of all my sins was read out before the court in my hearing, and to every charge, every accusation, I pleaded guilty, right to the solemn conclusion, and there I stood in complete silence awaiting now that divine sentence which is in the lips of the King; His mouth transgresseth not in judgment, and there I justified Him in my eternal condemnation. With bowed head and sunken heart I now awaited the irrevocable sentence: “Depart ye cursed, I never knew you.”

O the anguish of my never-dying soul, the awful contemplation of eternal banishment in that never-to-be-forgotten moment! The witness against me was God’s eternal truth – but in that most awful, most solemn moment, a felt stillness pervaded the court and I raised my guilty head. This blessed Jesus stood in the court, and I heard His eloquent plea when He spread forth His wounded hands, informing the court that He stood in my place, room and stead when He hung on Calvary’s tree, and that He paid the debt and bought me with His blood. The face, the

countenance of the court changed immediately into one beautiful smile. Clearly, unmistakably, I heard the verdict of the law: "Loose him, and let him go!" The court cleared and I found myself alone with my Jesus; but when I looked upon Him I saw a martyred Christ. I wept, saying, "Lord, my sins, my sins"; but He so lovingly smiled and said, "No." Then He took me and put me into that blessed fountain opened for sin and all uncleanness, and I bathed in that ocean of love; and the testimony of His sin-atoning blood I felt was witnessed between the eternal God and a sinner like me as I looked up saying: "I am clean, just God, I am clean."

Just from here, after feeling cleansed from all sin and feeling full of wonderment, two shining ones (I cannot more describe them) took me to the robing room and clothed me with a glorious robe of righteousness and put the ring of love on the finger of my heart; but when I came out I had no more converse with Him whom my soul loveth, for He ascended into glory. My soul reached after Him into the temple of holiness where I heard such singing, such a glorious anthem of praise, the like I had never heard before. Words fail me adequately to describe it.

"... Some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the mount! O fix me on it!
Mount of God's unchanging love." (H. 199)

The singing rose higher and higher, not with crescendo as we understand it on earth, but with increasing volume of sweet, harmonious, glorious praise; all to Jesus, crowning Him Lord of all. I stood enraptured; it was harmonious praise to our Head, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." All I could say, when I could find a word, was:

"Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it:
Seal it from Thy courts above!"

My heart pondered upon the melody of that "melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above," for some considerable time; and now I had to prove other surprising truths. Following upon my first hope in Christ Jesus, and being favoured to believe, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous," I believed that should that day come when the promise was fulfilled, which I hope I received by living faith, I did not feel that I should be a sinner all my days, "for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." A sinner who has thus believed can conceive my great distress when by the Spirit of Truth I was once more convinced of sin within me. To my horror I knew that this

was not imagination. I was a sinner base and vile; I grieved within as I walked the earth. I had never experienced the following:

“This fountain from guilt not only makes pure,
And gives soon as felt infallible cure;
But if guilt removed return and remain,
Its power may be proved again and again.” (H. 155)

In this mourning condition, one luncheon time when at my business I strolled again into Hyde Park, when the wonderful words spoken by that same favoured Apostle Paul, of whom Jesus spoke to me in His consulting room, quieted my troubled heart: “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.” Then I confessed with my mouth the Lord Jesus, and believed in my heart that God had raised Him from the dead, and I again believed that I should be saved. Ah! what a solemn thing it is to prove before God that one will be a sinner all their days; that one is sin, that the body is dead because of sin; and what a divine favour to believe by faith in a deeper reality: “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins *for ever*; sat down on the right hand of God.”

THE BLESSEDNESS OF HEARING WISDOM

By Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

“Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD. But he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death” (Prov. 8. 34-36).

This is the *hearing* of faith – the voice of Christ to the inward ear – the impression of His word upon the heart (John 5. 25; Rev. 3 20). The effect is unwearied diligence and patient expectation; like that of the priest’s waiting at the doors of the tabernacle for the assured blessing (Exod. 29. 42); or the people watching at the temple gates for his return from his holy ministrations (Luke 1. 10, 21). This free and habitual attendance upon sacred ordinances forms an healthy appetite for divine nutriment. The slight professor excuses himself from this “weariness” (Mal. 1. 13) by the fear of legality, or the danger of *overvaluing* the means. But is there not at least equal danger of *undervaluing* the means, to which our gracious Lord has annexed a promised blessing?

If in gazing on the heavenly Jerusalem the apostle “saw no temple therein” (Rev 21. 22), what right-hearted Christian will doubt that the life-blood of his soul consists, while on earth, in loving the habitation of God’s house, and the place where His honour dwelleth? (Psa. 26. 8). To be like the servants of the temple, watching daily at the gates – when not involving the neglect of other imperative obligations – would doubtless bring an enriching blessing (Psa. 84. 1, 4, 10). Under all circumstances Wisdom’s child will be familiar with Wisdom’s gates. The weekly as well as the Sabbath assemblies will be his delight. The “way forth by the footsteps of the flock, beside the Shepherds tents” will be his constant resort (Song. 1. 7, 8). All the ordinances of prayer, meditation, Scripture-reading, godly conference, will be his salutary provision. When it is not so – when the common routine satisfies, when the intervals between the Sabbath pass without any appetite for food, or any effort to seek the bread of the sanctuary – Christian, is not thy pulse beating feebly? Hast thou not lost a message, many a precious message, from thy Lord? (John 20. 19, 24). Doth not He speak to thee: “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die” (Rev. 3. 2).

Observe the blessing breathed down upon the Lord’s waiting ones. They find life (Isa. 55. 3; John 5. 24). For He on whom they wait is the Author (John 1. 4; 11. 25), the Dispenser (John 10. 10), the Keeper, of life (Col. 3. 3; 1 John 5. 11; Jude 1). He therefore that hath Him, hath life (1 John 5. 12) with all its present privileges of favour of the Lord. The smiles of God make heaven, and they that obtain favour of the Lord have a heaven upon earth. Set then this expectation before thine eyes in waiting on thy God – I am seeking life for my soul – I will *wait at the posts of His doors*; missing no opportunity of a means of grace. I shall not wait in vain.

Would that *the sinner* – the thoughtless sinner – not the daring and undodly only – would ponder how his heartless neglect of wisdom *wrongeth his own soul*! (Prov. 1. 17-19, 31; 9. 12; Jer. 7. 19; Acts 13. 46). How cruel he is to himself, while he is despising his Saviour! Every bait of sin is the temptation to suicide, to soul-murder. The snatching at it is as if men were in love with damnation. “They that hate Me love death.” They love that which will be their death, and put that from them which would be their life. Sinners die, because they will die; which leaves them inexcusable, makes their condemnation more intolerable, and will for ever justify God when He judges. “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself” (Hos. 13. 9).

When a child of God thinks he can go alone, he is nearest falling.

John Mason

THY BROTHER

*An episode of church discord and its peaceable outcome, as recorded
in the diary of Bernard Gilpin (1803-1871)*

Sunday: I was greatly tried in the morning lest I should be suffered to treat the case of J.S. and others in my own spirit, and being broken off from all subjects which seemed at all applicable to them, I found these words the most suitable: "He must increase, but I must decrease." This was strengthening to my spirit. After service I joined J.S. and told him ... but that I was certain the Lord had hitherto hidden from him the meaning of my letter and the snare in his heart which had been the occasion of it. I found my authority spiritually confirmed in thus speaking, as it says, "Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them" (Jer. 1. 17). His spirit however did not fall. In the afternoon I felt called upon to handle the subject case more closely, reading the latter part of the second of Jeremiah and preaching from these words: "He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" (Psa. 106. 15). I joined J.S. again, but found his spirit bristled up as if he did not mean to fall under the word.

Monday: I went to see him again this evening. At first I thought him better. After a while I feared otherwise. It looked like a dead-set against me and an endeavour to show he was safe in not regarding what I thought; yet there was seriousness and sorrow with it.

Tuesday: My fear increased. It seemed made out that J.S. was as good as gone and rent away. I had an awe of judgment, and neither the word nor prayer comforted me, except perhaps one word: "I am the Almighty God."

Thursday: I was much affected by Mr. Maydwell's reading in 2 Corinthians 10 [Mr. Gilpin was at that time staying at his friend's house]. I thought a testimony came with it that I was acting in the Lord's fear; for I had waked in the morning with a feeling of hope and clearness, as if the Lord for His own word's sake would help me. I sent J.S. a message and he came, but did not seem sensible of any need of that especial coming down which I had been made to feel would prove the test whether I could tell him all my heart or not. So the fear of God made me forbear to tell him of the snare and danger he was in; only I renewed my warning. I found the whole conversation very mortifying, for he was alternately a wasp and a preacher, but neither made honey nor hearkened to counsel. O Lord, be pleased to guide me for Christ's sake!

Friday: All night and until after breakfast my heart sunk and seemed paralysed about him, but I found considerable power in Mr. Maydwell's exposition of Job. 36, especially where he spoke most feelingly from verse 29: "Also can any understand the spreadings of the

clouds,” whereby the Lord conceals His countenance or the mysterious path we are to walk in? Then I glanced at the following verse which he did not touch upon, and found a sweet power and understanding in it: “Behold, He spreadeth His light upon it” – i.e. upon those dark clouds – “and covereth” – by that light – “the bottom of the sea.” This gave a turn to my sinking spirit. After this I began to feel great power and authority in treating the case in my ministry. I thought my text was to be this: “If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” Then it seemed made out how I was to open all in public which he had refused to hear in private. So on it went, till the whole appeared in my imagination complete, and I thought I could almost shake the chapel walls.

I began from several symptoms to suspect there was a great mingling of false fire in all this, and I sat down to sift the matter in prayer. Before long, one little gentle word came in and smote this image on its feet of clay and down it fell, golden head and all, and I had no wish at all to gather it up again. The word was this: “Thy brother,” connected with this passage, “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” O the tender love it brought into my heart for that poor man under temptation! How I knew the voice, and my heart bounded with love to Christ who spoke it! I thought, here is the spreading of His light upon the clouds. I then turned to the chapter, Matthew 18, and the whole of it from verse 1 to 20 seemed as if it had been written on purpose to suit the occasion before me – a mail to his pride; a warning against his contempt of the little ones; a direction to me not to imitate the sin of Moses because he trespassed against me; healing and love in the word “brother” and in Christ’s reclaiming the wandering; the true, spiritual authority of the ministry which the Lord ordains, ending with a beautiful word strong enough to keep us all abiding in that place where we find Jesus (verse 20). So I went out, and did not know how sufficiently to thank and praise the Lord. I found a most merciful power and simplicity in preaching. I concluded by quoting from one of Romaine’s letters: “Some say I must go here, others there; some say I must do this, others that. I answer them all: I have Jesus with me here and what do I want more?”

Poor, dear J.S. sunk and trembled before the whole. He acknowledged he had been walking in deadly pride. “O how I have been despising you all, but yourself most of all! How I trembled as you preached, lest the Lord should leave me to become a heathen man and a publican; but how infinite does this love of Jesus seem, that He should say after all He will rejoice most over the sheep which He brings back!”

THE BELIEVER'S RULE OF LIFE

The question as to whether the law or the gospel is the believer's rule of life has provoked endless controversy in the religious world.

William Gadsby dealt with this matter thoroughly in his book, *The Perfect Law of Liberty*. He also said to a controversialist who opposed him, "This blessed gospel does in its own nature contain all the holiness and beauty of all the laws that ever were promulgated from the throne of God – and yet excels in glory."

A telling illustration is that of a loyal and dedicated employee who seeks diligently to obey all her employer's commands. Later she marries her employer and is asked whether she still obeys the same commands. She replies, "O, yes, but now in an altogether different and better way. I now obey because of love."

This agrees with the hymnwriter, who said:

"To see the law by Christ fulfilled,
And hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice." (H. 188)

It needs to be clearly understood that in stating that the gospel, and not the law, is the believer's rule of conduct, we do *not* intend to countenance the slightest relaxation from the strictest moral uprightness. We are aware that in recent years, some professing Christians have taken the view that because they are not under the law, they are at liberty, for example, to spend the Lord's day as they choose. Although freed from the law as a covenant of works, yet the believer is not lawless, because he is now under the law to Christ. This law is the perfect law of liberty (the gospel) which the Spirit of Christ within a believer brings him under willing and loving obedience to. Such is the nature of the spirit now in the child of God that he desires to do nothing that would grieve the Holy Spirit and thus all the commandments of his Master are his delight. We very simply maintain that the gospel is a higher standard than the law, operating as it does by love. As J.H. Gosden says, "Love is definitely a stricter rule and a mightier motive than fear."

In 2 Corinthians 3. 10, Paul compares and contrasts the law with the gospel and beautifully shows that though the glory of the law was so dazzling that Moses' face shone, it was a forbidding rather than an attractive glory. Comparatively he declares that it had "no glory" by reason of the glory that excellet in the gospel.

To see by faith the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Law-fulfiller is to be freed from the bondage of the law and to walk in "newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."

From A Goodly Heritage

“IN THE END OF THE SABBATH”

By Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

“In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre” (Matt. 28. 1).

Jesus arose upon the first day of the week; on the first day of the week God commanded the light to shine out of darkness; on this day therefore did He, who was to be the Light of the world, shine out of the darkness of the grave; and the seventh-day Sabbath being buried with Christ, it arose again in the first day Sabbath called the Lord’s day (see Rev. 1. 10), and no other day of the week is from henceforth mentioned in all the New Testament than this, and this often, as the day which Christians religiously observed in solemn assemblies to the honour of Christ (see John 20. 19, 26; Acts 20. 7; 1 Cor. 16. 2). If the deliverance of Israel out of the land of the north superseded the remembrance of that out of Egypt (see Jer. 23. 7, 8), much more doth the redemption by Christ eclipse the glory of God’s former works.

The Sabbath was instituted as a remembrance of the perfecting of the work of creation (see Gen. 2. 1). Man by his revolt made a breach upon the perfect work, which was never perfectly repaired till Christ arose from the dead, and the heavens and earth were again finished, and the disordered hosts of them modelled anew, and the day on which this was done was justly blessed and sanctified, and the seventh day from that. He who on that day arose from the dead, is the same by whom, and for whom, all things were at first created, and now anew created.

CHARLES CALDER OF FERINTOSH

By Murdoch Campbell

This holy herald of God was a man of calm assurance and Christ-like bearing. His lucid and wonderful sermons invariably dwelt on two themes – the love of Christ, and the infinite wisdom displayed in God’s way of salvation. But for all his love-bathed qualities, he was no stranger to the terrors of temptations. Sometimes a spirit of atheism would assail his mind. One night, as he gazed on a lovely sky replete with evidences of God’s glory, he remarked, “Who would say that there is no God?”

He was not the first to feel the liberating effect which comes through contemplating a universe which declares the glory of the Lord.

With all his spiritual calmness, Mr. Calder knew how to warn the sinner. During a service once, some of the people on the fringe of the

congregation began to move away before he had finished. He sternly rebuked them by saying, "A wind from hell is rising, and the chaff is being driven away."

The last sermon which he preached at Ferintosh was a remarkable utterance. As he finished his sermon that day, he looked round the congregation and said, "I have an impression either that I am speaking today, or that some of you are hearing me, for the last time; and before we part for ever I shall call five great witnesses to vouch that I have declared to you the whole counsel of God. The first is God the Father, the omniscient and heart-searching God. I call Him to witness that I have set before you life and death. The second is God the Son. I call Him to witness that He has been the burden of my preaching during those thirty-eight years. The third is God the Holy Spirit. I call Him to witness that I have set before you the nature, marks and fruits of His work, and the necessity of the new birth. The fourth great witness is the Bible. And the fifth is the company of elect angels who are now waiting to rejoice over your conversion. With these I call your own consciences. I call also the stones and timbers of this house to witness that I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God."

With these words Charles Calder closed the Bible and came down the pulpit stairs for the last time.

THE BELIEVER'S HEAVEN BETTER THAN ADAM'S WOULD HAVE BEEN

By Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

There are four things that would have been wanting, if we may so speak, in innocent Adam's heaven, that will be found in the believer's heaven. As,

1. The additional sweetness of the enjoyment that arises from the experience of want and misery. Two men are set down at a feast; the one never knew what hunger and want meant; the other never got a full meal all his days, but want and hunger were his daily companions. Which of the two would the feast be sweetest to? The case is plain. Sin is the worst of things, there is no good in it; the effects of sin, sorrow, misery and trouble, are bitter: but God permitted the one, and has brought the other on, in depth of wisdom; for out of these is a sauce drawn that will give an additional sweetness to the supper of the Lamb in the upper house. While the saints walk in their white robes, and remember the filthy, ragged, black garments they went in some time a day, it will raise their praises to a note higher than innocent Adam's, while he should have

looked on his, which there was never a spot upon. When, after many tossings on the sea of this world, and the numerous floods of difficulties and dangers from sin and Satan which have beset them, the saints happily arrive on the shore of the heavenly Canaan, their relish of the pleasures to be enjoyed there will be the greater and the more delightful.

2. The fairest flower in heaven to be seen by bodily eyes, would have been wanting in innocent Adam's heaven, namely, the Man Christ. It is a groundless, anti-scriptural notion, that the Son of God would have been incarnate, though man had never sinned. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3. 16). "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1. 15). It was for sinners the Saviour was sent. The ruin of man's nature in the first Adam, was the occasion sovereign love took to raise it up to the highest possible pitch of glory and dignity, in the Person of the Son of God. There our nature is personally united to the divine nature, even in the Person of the Son; and the Man Christ is in heaven more glorious than a thousand suns. It is true, Adam would have had the sight and enjoyment of God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; but he could not have said, as they, Behold God in our nature, our elder Brother, &c.

3. The charter, written with blood, securing the enjoyment of heaven's happiness. Adam would have had good security indeed for it, by the fulfilled covenant of works; but behold a more glorious charter, the covenant of grace, written with the blood of the Son of God (see Heb. 13. 20). Every draught of the well of the water of life, innocent Adam would have had in his heaven; he might have cried out with wonder concerning it, O the gracious reward of my obedience! But the saints shall say of theirs, The glorious purchase of my Redeemer's blood; this is the purchase of the Son of God. "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; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

Lastly, The manner of living, as members of the mystical body of Christ. Innocent Adam would have lived for ever in heaven as the friend of God, but the saints shall live there as members of Christ. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" (John 6. 57); and, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14. 19). They shall be more nearly allied to the Son of God than Adam would have been. "For we are members of His body, of His

flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5. 30). He will be their Husband in an everlasting marriage-covenant, their elder Brother, the Head, of which they are members, and through whom they will derive their glory, as they do their grace, from the Godhead, as united to Christ, the prime receptacle of grace and glory. "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7. 17). "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it. and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21. 23).

FRAGMENTS FROM FRANCIS COVELL

Heart Prayers

Mr. Covell, in one of his sermons, said, "When I went to church, I am not aware that I ever pleaded for mercy in the whole of my prayers, yet I was good in my own estimation, and other people thought so too. But while upon my knees one day, going through my wonted prayers, God shone into my heart and showed me the evil, sinfulness, devilishness and abominations therein, and feeling that I should sink into hell, I cried out in earnestness, 'God, have mercy upon me.' Mercy has been my plea from that day to this. The night that God blessed my soul, pardoned my sin, and made me as happy as I could hold, I dropped at the foot of my bed, and cried, 'Lord, save me; Lord, have mercy upon me; Lord, do save me.' In His love and pity He heard me. I do not mind saying there was a good man I was made useful to, I trust, before I began to preach. When he came to lodge at the house where I did (as he desired it), we used to kneel together in prayer. I used to say, 'You speak, Ned.' For three months he never went farther than this, morning and night, 'God, have mercy upon me; Lord, do save me; Lord, have mercy upon me.' He lived for some years to prove the goodness of that God whose mercy he sought; he made a blessed end, he went to heaven, and is now singing, I have no doubt, 'to Him that loved him, and washed him from his sins in His own blood.'"

"Love and grief"

"When God was pleased to pardon my sins, and to give me to realise that I was saved with everlasting salvation; when His love flowed into my heart, and I felt Christ was mine, then how I hated my sins. I felt that my sins would never damn me, but of all the filthy wretches under heaven I was the worst. How I loathed and detested myself on account

of my sins, while I felt Christ had put them away by the sacrifice of Himself; I washed His feet with my tears, and grieved because I had put Him to such a shameful death by my sins.”

Trust in the Lord

“I know this to be true: ‘It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.’ Once in my life I put a deal of confidence in a friend of mine, but I was deceived. I have often trusted in my heart, and that has deceived me. Again and again I have been brought to trust in the Lord, and never was disappointed or deceived. Therefore I will speak well for God. I know His name; I have found Him to be a Refuge; I know Him to be a God of power, a God of mercy, a God of wisdom, a God of love. Though I desire to bless God for many kind and good friends I have, yet my trust is in the Lord that made heaven and earth.”

O my sin, my sin!

“Nothing will make a man’s knees bow like this: ‘O, my sin, my sin!’ ‘Enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no flesh living be justified.’ As a father, I have known something of trouble; as a husband, I have known something of trouble in the loss of a wife; as a man of business, I have known what trouble is in losses, crosses and disappointments; as a man, I have known what it is to lose friends; but nothing has brought such tears out of my eyes, nothing has made me droop, or sent me upon my knees, like my sins. I know a little of what dear Hart says:

‘O thou hideous monster, sin,
What a curse hast thou brought in!’”

Godly fear in the heart

“Sometimes I have such a desire to run after the things of the world. Then I bring myself to this: ‘Now, if you were in India, America, or anywhere where you were unknown to any soul, could you do it then? Would you do it?’ ‘Good God, I could not, though none knew it but Thee and me.’ Thus the Lord is seen over us, to preserve us from the world and from the power of sin.”

Gratitude a Gift from God

Mr. Covell, in one of his discourses, said:

“God has made me prove that ‘every good and every perfect gift is from above.’ You can no more work gratitude in your heart than you can faith or love. If it will redound to the glory of God, I am willing to tell you simply how He made me prove it. I was driven hard for £200. As I walked the fields, I said, ‘Good God, if Thou wilt help me, how I will

praise, love and bless Thee!’ I could no more see the way in which I was to have it than I can see my way to the throne of England. I thought if God helped me, if I did not praise Him the very stones would cry out; I felt I must, I could not help it. I said, ‘O Lord, I will believe and trust in Thee as long as I live, and never doubt Thy goodness any more.’ I thought I should make the hedges ring and echo.

“My friends, God gave me the money, and as I had it in my hands there was no more thankfulness in my heart than there is life in this cushion. When I went to pay it, my heart was as cold as the ground I walked on. I thought, ‘What a wretch I am! Did you not say how you would praise God?’ But I could not do it. I did say with my lips, ‘Lord, I thank Thee,’ but there was no heart in it. I thought, ‘Perhaps when I get the receipt that will do it.’ I came home as cold as I went out. I could no more bring my heart to gratitude than the devil.

“I remember, a few days afterwards a little circumstance transpired in which I saw somewhat of the finger of God moving towards me, and my heart broke, and my eyes ran out with tears. That is the way God will teach us the riches of His grace.”

Memorable seasons at Gower Street Chapel

Mr. Covell once gave the following relation of blessings he received at Gower Street:

“Some years after hearing Mr. Gadsby the first time in Gower Street Chapel, I went to preach there, and a good man waited on me after the service and said, ‘Do you remember any particular time here?’ I said, ‘Yes, I have been many times blessed here when hearing different good men.’ ‘But do you remember any time in particular?’ ‘Yes, I do,’ I said; ‘I was very much blessed at one time when hearing Mr. Gadsby.’ ‘That was the time I mean,’ he said; ‘I sat close to you, and you could not sit still, and I thought, “That man has got something; he has got a blessing,” and directly you got into the pulpit today I recognised you.’ I had no idea but that I sat quietly, although I was feeling so much.

“Some time after that I was going to preach there again, and my poor, afflicted son had been very trying, and had caused me some tears and sorrow. As I was going down Gower Street in the evening, very low in mind, I cried out, ‘Have pity on me, O Lord!’ God seemed to bring these things to my mind: ‘Are you not the man that was willing to have any trouble, and pass through anything some years ago, knowing that all things should work together for your good?’ I said, ‘Yes, Lord, I am.’ Then these words dropped in my heart, ‘The LORD taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.’ That turned my sorrow into joy, and made me go singing to preach.”

THE PREACHING THAT I BID THEE

By John Kershaw (1792-1870)

On one occasion I was invited to preach at Keighley during the holidays in Whit week. A friend was to meet me with a horse, on the road between Keighley and Halifax. One of my friends lending me a horse for two days, the man had the pleasure of riding back on the horse he brought for me. Before I left my bedroom in the morning, according to my usual practice, I kneeled down to thank the Lord for His manifold mercies, and beseech Him that His presence and blessing might be with me through the day. I told Him that He knew that I was going to a place I had never been to before, and besought Him to give me a text to speak from, that He would make a blessing to the people whom He in His providence might bring together, when the Lord laid upon my mind Romans 8. 30: "Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." From the power and savour that attended the words, I felt this was to be my text, and thanked the Lord for it, beseeching Him to be with me in preaching, and bless it to the souls of the people.

As the man and I were riding together, he said, "You will have to preach this afternoon at three o'clock in a large Wesleyan chapel, and you will have many people to hear you, Baptists, Independents and Wesleyans. They are coming from miles round." On hearing this, I at once thought of my predestinarian text and the Wesleyan chapel. Flesh and blood, carnal reason and the devil began to work powerfully on my mind. As we rode along I laboured to get another text, that I could preach the truth from, without coming so decidedly against the system of free will. But no text could I get. O how wretched and miserable did I feel, until the Lord brought to my mind what had passed between Him and me in the morning, when I told Him that He knew where I had to preach, and who I should have to hear, and that He gave me the text in answer to prayer. I was ashamed of myself that I should endeavour to give way. Many portions of the Word of God flowed into my mind, such as, "If I seek to please men I should not be the servant of Christ," with more of the same import. Before we entered the town, my mind was delivered from these fleshly feelings and the fear of man, and a valour sprang up in my soul for the truth of God upon the face of the earth (see Jer. 9. 3).

When the time came, there was a great gathering of people. Before reading my text, I addressed them as follows: "It is the practice of some men, when called to preach where they have never been before, to enquire what the sentiments of the people are, and labour to

accommodate their sermon to the palates and views of the people. This is not obeying the command of the Lord in separating between the precious and the vile, the chaff and the wheat, faithfully dispensing the Word of the Lord, fearing no frowns and courting no smiles. When I look around me at this congregation, it strikes my mind that were I disposed to act the above part, I should fail in attempting to please all, for I have no doubt I have persons before me of various opinions; so that while I was seeking to please some, I should offend others. My desire is to seek to please the Lord, and preach the preaching He has bidden me. I therefore call your attention to Romans 8. 30: ‘Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.’” This precious portion of God’s Word the old Puritan divines called the golden chain, speaking of the first link, predestination, the second link, effectual calling, the third, justification, and the fourth, glorification.

When I came to the last link, vindicating the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints unto eternal glory, proving it from many portions of the Word of the Lord which are the joy and rejoicing of my soul, the last two verses of Toplady’s hymn, which begins, “A debtor to mercy alone,” came with power to my mind, and I repeated them with great pleasure:

“The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete;
His promise is *Yea* and *Amen*,
And never was forfeited yet.
Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below nor above,
Can make Him His purpose forego.
Or sever my soul from His love.

“My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase,
Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven.” (H. 340)

While so doing, I observed a gentleman in black, who sat in the gallery, hastily take his hat and go away. The impression of my mind was that he could not endure sound doctrine, and would hear no more of it; but to my surprise he came up the aisle to the foot of the pulpit stairs, and there he stood till I had finished my sermon, and then I gave out that blessed hymn of Dr. Watts: “Firm as the earth Thy gospel stands.” When they began to sing, the gentleman came into the pulpit and sat down,

putting his hand on my knee, and saying, "Sir, I hope you will have no objection against my rising to vindicate our own doctrine?" I replied, "Sir, you are full of wrath and irritation. Be cool, and think what you are about." He said, "How can I forebear being irritated, hearing a man in our chapel labouring to pull down what we are continually establishing? I must, and will, when they have done singing, rise and defend our principles, in opposition to the doctrine you have been advancing."

As he was thus speaking, I was listening to the precious hymn they were singing, which was a confirmation of the doctrine I had been preaching. As soon as I heard them begin the following words:

"In the dear bosom of His love
They must for ever rest," (H. 354)

I took my standing in the pulpit to be ready to conclude with prayer. After which, I addressed the people as follows: "A gentleman, who is now in the pulpit with me, from what he has been saying to me whilst you have been singing, is determined to rise and oppose the doctrines of free and sovereign grace which you have been hearing, and vindicate the doctrine of man's free will; but as I have already more of that in my fleshly carnal nature than I like, I shall not stop to hear him, and I would advise all you who are sick of self, and love a free-grace salvation, to go home with what you have got, and let the free-will man and his friends have it to themselves."

As soon as I left the pulpit, he rose in a rage to pour contempt upon what I had said, and vindicate his own principles. I have seen many congregations disperse, but never saw such confusion as I did on this occasion. As I had several miles to ride over a large common, I got some refreshment and left. As I rode past the chapel, there were crowds engaged in disputation, and the events of that day are not yet forgotten, as will appear from the following:

More than twenty years after, I met with three men from Keighley, who had come to hear me at Bradford. One of them asked me if I had forgotten preaching at Keighley, when the Wesleyan minister stood up to oppose me. I told him I had not. He said, "I well remember both your sermon and the remarks you made," and to my surprise he repeated, almost verbatim, what I have recorded, saying it was so impressed upon his mind, and so appropriate to the circumstances, that he had often related it to his friends.

Jesus Christ is the sum and quintessence of the gospel; the wonder of angels; the joy and triumph of saints. The name of Christ is sweet; it is as music in the ear, honey in the mouth, and a cordial at the heart.

Thomas Watson

BOOK REVIEWS

Servants of the Living God, by Graham Chewter; hardback; 180 pages; price £11 plus postage; published by and obtainable from Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 12b Roundwood Lane, Harpenden, Herts., AL5 3BZ, or the website: www.gospelstandard.org.uk/Publications, and from agents.

In recommending this excellent book, one can do no better than quote the words of our former and esteemed Editor, Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom, in his foreword.

“So here we have the well-known John Warburton and Eli Ashdown; also the lesser-known William Cowper (a remarkable man indeed, but not to be confused with the poet of the same name). Lord Wharton will be new to many, while the 400th Anniversary of the Pilgrim Fathers has already aroused much interest. To close the book, George Rose is well-loved and remembered by many, although some will not know of his stand in “the God-honouring movement” controversy (though there were many godly ministers who took a different view).

“This is the type of book which is needed at present, suitable for young and old, and we feel, very suitable for older teenagers.

“May God’s blessing rest on *Servants of the Living God*. There could not be a more appropriate title.”

We happily endorse this warm recommendation.

The following books, recently published by and obtainable from Reformation Press, 11 Churchill Drive, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2NP, are recommended to our readers:

Do Thyself No Harm, by Dr. John Macdonald of Ferintosh, the “Apostle of the North”; price £14.90 paperback, £23.85 hardback; the first volume of his collected works, including material never previously published. The book is named for the text of a powerful sermon he preached during a cholera epidemic in the 19th century.

Haggai: A Time to Build, by George Hutcheson; paperback; price £5.70. This is a devotional commentary by a famous 17th century Scottish divine.

None Other Name; paperback; price £14.70; daily devotional readings from twelve famous Scottish ministers of the 19th century.

Harriet, by Donald A. Macfarlane (Free Presbyterian minister of Dingwall); paperback; price £6.30; the biography and letters of a notable Highland Christian. This includes material which will be of particular interest to readers of the *Gospel Standard* as she was close friends with the Wakeley family of Rainham.

Conflicts Between Doubt and Assurance, by William Livingstone; paperback; price £5.70; an account of a faithful minister dealing with a woman beset by doubts about her salvation.

Spiritual Rest During Trials, by Hugh MacKail; paperback; price £6.20; a powerful exposition of Song of Solomon 1. 7 by a noted Covenanter minister.

The Sum of Saving Knowledge, by David Dickson and James Durham; paperback; price £6.10. This treatise by two famous Scottish divines deals with the vital matter of defining authentic personal faith and the essence of the Christian life.

O FOR A PERFECT TRUST

(Isa. 26. 3, Phil. 4. 6, 7)

O for the peace of a perfect trust
My loving God in Thee,
Unwavering faith, that never doubts
Thou choosest best for me.

Best though my plans be all upset;
Best though the way be rough;
Best though my earthly store be scant,
In Thee I have enough.

Best though my health and strength be gone,
Though weary days be mine,
Shut out from much that others have.
Not my will, Lord, but Thine.

And even though disappointments come,
They too are best for me,
To wean me from this changing world,
And lead me nearer Thee.

O for the peace of a perfect trust,
That looks away from all,
That sees Thy hand in everything,
In great events and small.

That hears Thy voice, a Father's voice,
Directing for the best.
O for the peace of a perfect trust,
A heart with Thee at rest.

Author Unknown

We must not ask a reason of God's will; it is dangerous to pry into God's ark; we are not to dispute but adore. The wise God saw it to be the best way for our redemption, that Christ should be incarnate. It was not fit for any to satisfy God's justice but man; none could do it but God. Therefore, Christ being both God and Man, is the fittest to undertake this work of redemption.

Thomas Watson

All God's children have received God's Spirit, whereby they are made humble, believing, and holy; humble in regard of their sins, believing in regard of Christ and holy in regard of their conscience and care to keep all God's commandments.

John Mason

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
FEBRUARY 2022

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

NOT OFFENDED

In Matthew 11 we have an account of an incident in the life of that “burning and shining light,” John the Baptist. John was in prison for the truth’s sake, having fearlessly denounced Herod for marrying his brother Philip’s wife, which denunciation was soon to cost him his life. From his prison cell he sends two of his disciples to the Saviour with the question: “Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?” (verse 3).

Commentators are divided as to the reason for this question. Some believe that it was finally to point John’s disciples to the Lord Jesus Christ, in the expectation that he would soon be taken from them as we read in Matthew 14. Others take the view that John was severely tempted by Satan and cast down because of his imprisonment and inability to preach freely.

On balance one would take the latter view to be the reason, especially as in answering the question the Lord said, “Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see” (verse 4). It was perhaps similar to the depression that overtook Elijah, after the threats of Jezebel, which he expressed under the juniper tree (see 1 Kings 19. 4).

It is not, by any means, unusual for the Lord’s people to be tempted. If their Master was, they should expect to be so too. If Satan dared to question the Godhead of the Saviour to His face, then it is not to be wondered at if he assails the truth, concerning that sacred fact, in the heart of believers. But He who was tempted but sinned not, “is able to succour them that are tempted,” as He did in this reply to His servant, and forerunner, John.

In Luke 7, he also tells us how that in that hour Christ healed the blind, the lame, the lepers and the deaf. Christ reminded John that the dead had been raised, and most significantly, the poor had the gospel preached to them. These were all evidence of His power as the Son of God. He then sends a personal message to John: “And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me” (verse 6).

This personal message was intended to be as the balm of Gilead to the Lord’s suffering child. How would it have encouraged John?

It would have assured him that the Lord Jesus Christ had not forgotten him. Like Joseph languishing in the prison those two full years, John also might have been tempted to think that he was likewise

abandoned. He no doubt knew that Christ's disciples were preaching and teaching with success, while he was deprived of the privilege. This message assured him that he was still in the thoughts of His Saviour.

It would also have assured John that the Lord Jesus was well aware of the loneliness and low estate of His servant. He who was to "tread the winepress alone" (see Isa. 63. 3) was blessedly qualified to comfort His dejected servant. The dolorous cry on Calvary's cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27. 46) was an infinitely-deeper loneliness that He the Lamb of God was soon to endure.

It would also have assured John that this period in prison was part of the Lord's will for him, and that it was for the honour and glory of the Lamb of God whom it had been John's delight to exalt.

It was as if the Lord said to John, "Don't be offended at the loss of liberty, the privations of a prison cell, if it is for My sake." Did not the Apostle Paul say when he was arrested, "For the hope of Israel am I bound with this chain"? (Acts 28. 20). The chains that held John were also for the truth's sake. Later Paul said, writing from a prison cell, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4. 11). After His own mysterious, holy conflict in the Garden of Gethsemane the Saviour would say, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done" (Matt. 26. 42).

It is a privilege to be led in a path of tribulation for Christ's sake. The sickness and death of Lazarus, we are distinctly told, was "that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11. 4). How many of God's children have been brought to thank God for the valley of Baca when it has been made a well of blessing to them.

Finally, I believe that in this message the Saviour intimated to John that he would soon suffer a martyr's death and sudden glory succeed his present dejection. Like Paul he would be able to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge" – not Herod – "shall give me at that day." (2 Tim. 4. 7, 8).

Like the psalmist in Psalm 119. 165, in the end John could say, "Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them."

It is a great mercy when we are taught not to be offended at Christ's Person, gospel, doctrine and will for us, when we can honestly say before God, "My Jesus has done all things well" (H. 410).

"Amidst temptations sharp and long,
My soul to this dear Refuge flies;
Hope is my anchor, firm and strong,
While tempests blow and billows rise.

“The gospel bears my spirit up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation of my hope
In oaths, and promises, and blood.” (H. 83)

THE ONE STONE

Sermon preached by John E. Hazelton (1853-1924)

Text: “For behold the Stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one Stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day” (Zech. 3. 9).

God’s servant and prophet Zechariah has been well called the prophet of glory. In his prophecy, in common with the unfulfilled prophecies of all the host of Old Testament prophets, there is much which to us is still dark and mysterious, but which will become plainer as the time draws nigh for the fulfilment of the events predicted herein. But in this prophecy, in an especial manner, we have a beautiful and glorious truth displayed concerning the kingdom and the glory, the Person and the office, and the high-priestly work of the Son of God. Here in this prophecy we have the price given for which our blessed Lord was to be betrayed. Here we have the prediction of the effusion of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the calling of the Gentiles, the spiritual privileges of the church of God, and the final victory which our most blessed Redeemer will have over all the foes of Himself and of His people.

Zechariah’s name takes us at once to covenant realities and covenant truth: “The Lord remembers.” We have a very blessed instance of this in the first chapter, where the Lord is described as speaking to the angel concerning His people, “good words and comfortable words.” There was inwrought in the soul of God’s servant Zechariah, amidst much that was distressing to him, the blessed and glorious truth that *Jehovah remembers*, that He “hateth putting away,” that, whilst a woman may forget her child, our God will not forget one poor sinner whose hope is a precious Christ, and who is looking to the Lord alone for mercy and salvation.

The whole prophecy is full of grace. I dislike more than I can tell you what I sometimes read in works upon the prophets, that “the style of this book is very noble,” and that the style of the other is “broken and disconnected.” It is nothing of the kind. That is simply the utterance of carnal men. *Every* book in God’s Word is in *perfect order*, and whilst to

the untutored eye the heavens may appear without plan, each orb has its own place.

And so we have in the prophecy of Zechariah, from beginning to end, our precious, glorious Christ as the substance and the light of the book. We have set forth here those truths which, applied by the Spirit, confirm the soul, satisfy the hunger and longing of the human heart, and give to us meat to eat which the world knoweth not of.

The older I grow, the more I feel that the Bible is practically the only Book worth the attention of men and women. Not that I wish you to suppose that I neglect the reading of other books, but I trust I can say this Book appears to grow more wonderful and precious. Dear John Newton in one of his letters says, "I have many books that I cannot sit down to read; books that are sound, but books that are like halfpence, and there go a great many halfpence to represent a small amount. Then there are silver books, and a few golden books, but I have one that outweighs them all, and that is the *Bible*, the charter of my hopes and the declaration of my God to me."

Now we see here in Zechariah, Haggai, Joshua and Zerubbabel, four men who the Lord says are "men wondered at." Those around could not understand them; they listened to them urging the people to go on in the erection of the second temple, and they could not understand it. And so down all the ages, the church of the living God, the children of God scattered here and there, have been, and are, men and women that are wondered at. A friend of mine was talking to me the other day. He is a gracious man, but at home he has no sympathy whatever; his wife and children look upon him as an eccentric person, and only that day they had said, "We wonder that a man of your education and ability can go to such insignificant places, and believe in such strange things." "Men wondered at," but how great the mercy to be taught and blessed of our Lord.

In this prophecy we have everything pointing for its great and glorious fulfilment to the manifestation of Christ the Branch; from beginning to end we have here the manifestation of a precious Christ. I love that word that Stephen Marshall, the author of *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, spoke when he was upon a bed of sickness which proved to be the bed of death. Someone came to see him and began to speak about a well-spent life, and that therefore it would be all right with him in Jordan. And Stephen Marshall replied, "I cannot say as you do, that I have so lived that I should not be afraid to die, but this I can say, that I have so learned Christ that I am not afraid to die." There is the secret of it all, dear friends – not a well-spent life, not usefulness, and so on; but O what a mercy so to know Christ under the teaching of the blessed Spirit, and through the manifestation of His grace and glory to the heart, as not to be afraid to die!

“My hope is built on nothing less
 Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.
 I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
 But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.
 On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
 All other ground is sinking sand.” (see H. 1106)

Now let us, in looking at our text this morning, speak first of the STONE; secondly, of the EYES; and thirdly, of the GRAVING. The Stone, the eyes, and the graving.

It is the Head Stone, the Chief Stone, *the* Stone – the word “one” means the particular and special Stone, to which all other stones in type and prophecy pointed – *the* Stone, the “one Stone.”

Jacob is dying, and he says to his son Joseph in the blessing which he pronounces upon him, “The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, has been my blessing!” The stability of Jacob’s faith amidst deepest trial rested upon Him who is the Stone of Israel. We see the Stone again that Samuel set up – Ebenezer – “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us,” the Stone of Israel and the Stone of help. We see the Stone again in the prophecy of Daniel. The Stone cut out of the mountain without hands completely overthrows the fourth empire, and after that it fills the whole world with peace and blessing. We see the Stone again in Matthew 16. Turning to poor, inconstant Peter, the Lord said, “Thou art Petros, but upon this Stone (Petra) – thy confession of Me as the Christ, the Son of the living God – I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

We see the Stone in Isaiah 28, where God says He will lay in Zion a precious Corner Stone, a tried Stone for the help and succour of His people. We find the Stone mentioned again in 1 Peter 2, where Peter, moved by the Holy Ghost, speaks of this blessed and precious Corner Stone. Again we have it in Ephesians 2, where we see the living Stone and the lively stones being built up upon Him, growing into a holy temple in the Lord. The Stone, a precious and glorious Christ, who alone can sustain the weight of my soul, the weight of myself with all my troubles, the Stone that is laid in Zion, the Stone that is precious in God’s sight, the Stone of a precious, living, glorious Christ, to whom the Stone of Bethel, the Stone of Israel, and all the other stones to which I have referred very blessedly point.

Now we must remember in connection with this Stone the peculiar position in which Joshua stood. He was the high priest of the Jewish people at the time of the rebuilding of the temple (the second). The Stone which in this figure was laid before Joshua partakes of a twofold character. Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the temple. The foundation stone is then here referred to. The hands of Zerubbabel laid

the foundation, and he was also to complete it. But as Joshua stood before the Lord, his mind must have been filled with visions of those wonderful stones which glittered in the breastplate of the high priests of old, and of the onyx stones upon the shoulders.

Now we cannot rightly understand the reference here without first looking at Joshua as the ecclesiastical head, the high priest of Israel; and then as representing all poor sinners, stripped of self-righteousness and brought to trust in a great and glorious and blessed Redeemer.

Joshua is there, but where are the garments of glory and beauty that Aaron and his successors were clothed with? The second temple has been completed, and when the old men who had seen the glory of the first temple beheld the second, they wept and mourned because it was such a mean building in comparison with that which was “exceeding magnifical.” There stood Joshua, a dejected high priest, called to minister in a temple which was, as it were, but a shadow in greatness and glory to that which Solomon built and opened. Then when Joshua looked at his raiment, it is described as “filthy”; the garments of glory and beauty were missing, and Satan stood at his right hand to resist him. He said in effect, “You are a fine high priest; this is a poor, wretched place that you call your temple, and where are the garments of glory and of beauty, and the anointing oil? You are deficient.” And so Joshua felt a dejected and broken man, and Satan was in this respect furnished with a pretext to resist the exercise of his high-priestly office by Joshua.

There were five things missing in the second temple which had a place in the first. In the second temple there was no ark, no holy fire, no Shekinah cloud, no Spirit of prophecy on the priests, no Urim and Thummim by which oracles of God, the mind and will of God, were made known. There was a priest without an ephod, without a breastplate, without the shoulder pieces which upheld the breastplate. Well might Joshua be dejected! The word might be read: “Behold the Stone which I have *set* before Joshua.” Joshua, be not discouraged as to thy garments! The word went forth, “Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him He said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” Joshua, mourn not that the garments of glory and of beauty, which thy predecessors before the captivity wore, have vanished; mourn not that the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat have disappeared. Here is the *reality*. The Lord had set before Joshua a Stone, and upon that Stone there were seven eyes.

Now for the gospel of all this. We stand before the Lord in our filthiness. A thousand things there are within and without to deject us. We ask ourselves, Where is the glory of the past days? We feel ourselves to be mean and weak and worn indeed. We can understand some of the exercises of the heart of Joshua, but there was “set,” to be

removed no more for ever, there was “set,” not as a shadow but as a reality, the Stone that was laid before Joshua. What did the Lord say to Joshua? What in effect our beautiful hymn expresses, for it contains the very marrow and fatness of the gospel:

“O! my soul, what means this sadness?
Wherefore art thou thus cast down?
Let thy grief be turned to gladness,
Bid thy restless fears begone.
Look to Jesus,
And rejoice in His dear name.” (H. 333)

He is the Stone, the Foundation Stone, on which there are the seven eyes; that sure, that precious Corner Stone upon which no poor sinner has ever trusted and has perished, or been cast out at the last. “Set” before Joshua, “set” before the dejected and tried of His servants, “set” before the poor sinner feeling that his own righteousness is but as filthy rags. The Stone set there to be removed no more for ever.

“Now I have found the ground wherein,
My anchor, hope, shall firm remain;
The wounds of Jesus for my sin,
Before the world’s foundation slain.” (H. 96)

Here, then, is the reality. In the first place, the person of Joshua is accepted; in the second place, his person being accepted, his sacrifice and service are well pleasing unto God.

“A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing,
Nor fear, with Thy righteousness on,
My person and offerings to bring.
The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour’s obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view.” (H. 340)

Here is the Stone, the precious Stone, the tried Stone. Here is the Foundation upon which a poor sinner is brought to rest. Here is the “fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.” Here is the “righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe.” Joshua here does not say a word. He stands before the Lord a dumb man, but he has an Advocate. There is One who stands before Joshua; the Lord rebukes Satan. And we have “an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” – one Stone with a glory that excelleth; one Stone laid before Joshua – one Stone, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in His mediatorial character and work. This one Stone is ever there, for “if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” But the

Foundation can never, never be destroyed. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid” – the Stone laid before Joshua, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the third chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians the apostle says, “I have laid the Foundation, and another buildeth thereon.” What does that mean? Ministerially and declaratively he had laid the Foundation. All the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New alike testified to the Stone, the one Stone, the precious Corner Stone. O what a mercy it is to be shut up to Christ, to be cut off and cut out of all hope of everybody and everything but the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

We are to understand in Zechariah the head Stone to be not chiefly the top Stone, but the chief, the principal Stone. We are told the word rendered “head” in the Hebrew means the “indispensable” Stone, the Stone without which all would fall into confusion. And Christ our Lord is the first Stone; first in the dignity of His Person; first in choice, for He is God’s Elect in whom His soul delighteth. He is first in suffering, first in resurrection and in power. “Behold,” says the Lord to Joshua, “behold the Stone that I have laid before Joshua.”

The “law made nothing perfect,” and Joshua had found that out. The “law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did.” The poor sinner in filthy garments stands before the Lord, and he looks up and sees nothing but the justice of a holy God. He looks at the law, and sees nothing but wrath and bondage and misery and condemnation. He looks into his own heart and sees a mass of unbelief, a sink of corruption of one kind or another, and he is dumb. “Behold, Joshua, I have laid the Stone that exactly meets thy case; I have set the one Stone that exactly meets and satisfies thy necessities. Justice and the law condemn thee; thine one heart can yield no spring of peace or satisfaction, but the Stone that I have laid before thee is the Stone that has satisfied justice, fulfilled the law, and yields that wondrous medicine and balm and supply which entering into the heart, like the branch that was cut down and cast into Marah’s waters, turns their bitterness into sweetness.”

A precious Stone, a glorious Lord, was laid before Joshua, and as Joshua heard those words and was favoured with a sight of a precious and glorious Christ, his faith was drawn forth, his doubts and fears vanished, and he stood before the Lord a reconciled child, cleansed from his filthiness, and clothed with the robe of a Saviour’s imputed righteousness.

Secondly, the *eyes*. “Behold the Stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one Stone shall be seven eyes.” Now you will remember that the Urim and Thummim was something in the breastplate of the high

priest of Israel which no one exactly understands. By means of them the high priest, under the blessing of God, was enabled to know God's mind and will. The words mean "light" and "perfection" respectively. Seven eyes are upon this Stone. No figure in and of itself can completely set forth the glories and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Think for a moment or two of the human eye. What is the human eye? It is the expression of the soul. The human eye is the window out of which the soul looks, so that when a soul is in sorrow, the eye bears witness to it; when glad, the eye sparkles; when you have had bad news, your eyes tell the story, and when you have had that news which gladdens your heart, your eyes show it, so that we know a little of the language of the beaming eye. Intelligence looks out of the eye. Love looks out of the eye. Watchfulness looks out of the eye, and power looks out of the eye. Those who have noticed some of the world's great men have noticed the wonderful power in their eyes. I have not seen many of them, but one or two especially I remember; there was no mistaking the power of the man with that penetrating eye. It is, as it were, the oracle of life.

Now on this Stone there is the perfection of vision represented by the seven eyes. This is a Stone which in its fulness and glory says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." A Saviour who is the Foundation Stone bears my spirit up; a living Saviour, a Saviour whose eyes of love, grace and compassion rest upon every Joshua of His; upon every tried, seeking sinner, upon all His tried and exercised people.

"Upon one Stone shall be seven eyes." Does not this speak to you about the vision in the Apocalypse – the Lamb with the seven eyes? What does that mean? It means that Christ our Saviour, as the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world in God's purpose, rising to die no more, in the heavens of eternal bliss is the Lamb with the seven eyes, the perfection of vision, and that His eyes rest upon every poor, trembling child of God here below. His eyes look upon the unnumbered myriads in the glory. His eyes rest upon every poor sinner who is saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner"; upon you who say, "Can ever God or good dwell here?" His eyes rest upon *you*, dejected in service, and cast down by this and that around and within you; upon *you* who are exercised in your family or in your business. In other words, the Saviour upon whom your soul has sunk, the Saviour whose everlasting arms are underneath you, is the Saviour with the sevenfold vision, and the Saviour of perfection of intelligence, compassion and watchfulness, and of power.

Our blessed Saviour, Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, manifest in human nature as the Mediator, as the incarnate Son, has the fulness of

the Spirit. O what a mercy that everything pertaining to our salvation has the fulness of the Godhead in it! In Christ Jesus there is the fulness of the Father. In Christ Jesus there is His own fulness as the eternal Son of the Father. In Christ Jesus there is the fulness of the Spirit. We have this sevenfold anointing of the Spirit, the sevenfold vision of the Mediator through the power of the Spirit resting upon Him, set forth in Isaiah 11. There we have it in connection with the Branch, and there is a remarkable parallelism between this eleventh chapter of Isaiah and that which we have before us: "I will bring forth My Servant the Branch."

Now what are the seven eyes but the sevenfold anointing of the Spirit? I will just enumerate the seven described in Isaiah 11: "And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; and shall make Him of quick understanding." The Man Christ Jesus in His divine nature, the Son Eternal, the Man Christ Jesus, bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh, anointed by the Holy Spirit, filled by the Holy Spirit with wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, the fear of the Lord and of quick understanding. The very Saviour I want, the Saviour of *quick understanding*. We say concerning one another, "I did not quite understand what you meant," and there we often make sad blunders, and wound where we mean to heal, because we are so stupid and slow, because we cannot put ourselves in the place of someone else. But here our blessed One is of *quick understanding* in the fear of the Lord, knowing the desire of my heart before it is expressed, *knowing me altogether*. Joshua beheld the Stone, the one Stone upon which are seven eyes. He thus contains every qualification as Redeemer. One word from Him makes darkness light. The eye of His love and sympathy is a blessing indeed to us.

"One look from that dear Lord,
Whose brow compassion wears,
Will much of heavenly bliss afford,
E'en in this vale of tears."

Lastly, "Behold, I will engrave the *graving* thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day" – the affirmation of Jehovah of hosts. That is very beautiful – the affirmation of Him who cannot lie, the affirmation of Jehovah of hosts! Poor Joshua must have felt awfully lonely as he stood there. The enemies were all about him jeering, sneering; there he was with his companions, "men wondered at," but Jehovah of hosts, who does as He pleases "in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth," has affirmed that the Stone shall never be removed, that He has graven upon that living Stone with the graving thereof that which shall cheer and bless and draw and direct poor sinners. The graving, an inscription on a foundation stone.

Yes, the graving of an inscription upon a precious stone. Take the two together. You see right through the whole of this chapter the stones in the breastplate of the high priest, considered here as the one Stone, representing the heart of love of our dear Lord. Behold, I will engrave the graving thereof in the Lamb's book of life and upon the heart of love. Look at the lapidary. All his attention is given to his work. The work as it proceeds appears marred, but when it is finished there is complete beauty and value. Now look at the Stone, the tried Stone, the Stone that has been graven with the graving thereof. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." "I will engrave the graving thereof." "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow." "I will engrave the graving thereof." Graven in Gethsemane's garden; graven at Calvary's cross; graven with those deep lines – all tell us of a law honoured and fulfilled. Graven with the inscription that declares that God's justice has been satisfied, sinners have been pardoned and righteously saved. "Behold, I have set, I have laid, this Stone which My own hands have graven," says Jehovah of hosts, Jehovah the Father. Before the whole church of God, before every seeking sinner, before every one here today who has a hope or a desire in his soul for the mercy of God in Christ. "In *all* their affliction He was afflicted." "I have graven the graving thereof."

Apply this to Scripture. Think of our dear Lord who said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "I have engraven the graving thereof." "All the promises are yea and amen in Him." Jehovah of hosts hath affirmed this, and as dear George Doudney somewhere sings

"Come, troubled child, with fears oppressed,
By sin defiled, by guilt distressed:
The fountain open stands for thee,
Of priceless power both full and free."

And as the poor sinner draws near, and is favoured with a sight of a precious Christ, he is enabled from time to time to say, "He loved me, and gave *Himself* for me." The apostle to the Galatians says, "When it pleased God to reveal His Son in me." Then he goes on to speak of the blessedness that sprang up in his heart: "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Here is the tried believer's strength and power. Here is our peace. Christ our Lord removed the iniquity of His church in one day. Whatever reference this has to the future of the Jews, it will be gloriously fulfilled; but I have sought to set before you the glory and the grace and the beauty of the everlasting gospel, which sometimes fills our souls with music now, and which shall "bear our spirits up" in the hour and the article of death.

A REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

From the Life of Robert Moxon (1840-1906)

I now come to the time of my deliverance and the way in which it was brought about. I had prayed until I could pray no longer; I had cried until I could cry no longer; my face was foul with weeping but, as the prophet puts it, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them"; and so it was, and so it ever will be. He brings down with hard labour, they fall to the ground and no man can help, neither can they help themselves; at least it was so with me. Tell me not that it is for believing; I did not know what believing was. I can describe it fully and clearly in one word: REVELATION! Christ said, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." And where that revelation takes place, the soul is at once encouraged. Hence Christ immediately adds, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; and I am sure He will. Peter speaks of the grace brought "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." I do like that scripture. What sort of grace is it that is brought at this blessed revelation? I say it is believing grace, it is receiving grace, it is liberating grace, it is justifying grace, it is praising grace, it is God-glorifying grace and it is enduring grace, sufficient for every time of need. Paul says, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me." And it is said concerning Simeon that "it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." And I think it is the same now; not one of the Lord's people is suffered to see death until he has seen the Lord Jesus Christ as his only hope of eternal glory.

It was this divine revelation that was made known to my soul. I could then both see and feel what I had never seen or felt before, namely, that God loved me and had saved me. I was on my bended knees with my head bowed to the ground, when suddenly there appeared an assemblage of bright and glorious persons such as I have since thought would be the case when Christ was transfigured before His disciples on the mount. They saw literally, but I saw only spiritually; and a voice – not an audible voice, but "a still small voice," an inward whisper, an unmistakable persuasion seemed to say to me, "Notwithstanding all that thou hast done, I have loved thee." I felt that such was the case: my burden of sin was gone, and all the feelings of guilt and condemnation were removed as clean from me as if I had never sinned. I was perfectly justified in my soul and before the Lord. I was like Joshua the high

priest, a brand plucked out of the fire, my filthy garments all taken from me, and all my iniquity made to pass from me. I stood clothed with a change of raiment and a fair mitre on my head. I felt such a pleasing sensation of liberty and love as I cannot well describe. Bunyan says concerning Christian after he had lost his burden:

“Then was Christian glad and lightsome and said, with a merry heart, ‘He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death.’ Then he stood still a while, to look and wonder.... He looked and looked again even till the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. Now, as he stood looking and weeping, behold, three Shining Ones came to him and saluted him with, ‘Peace be to thee; thy sins be forgiven thee.’ ... Then Christian gave three leaps for joy and went on singing,

‘Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?
Blest cross! blest sepulchre! blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me.’”

I knew a little of this experience of Christian. My days had been “consumed like smoke” and my bones “burned as an hearth,” my heart “smitten, and withered like grass.” I had “eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.” But now my language and feelings were, “Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” “He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.” I felt that I was delivered out of the mire and the clay, and that the Lord had put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto my God.

For several months I went on mostly in a comfortable frame of mind, though not entirely so. I remember one sudden flash of temptation which, for a moment or two, staggered me. It seemed as if someone stood before me and whispered, “Thy joys and thy deliverance may, after all, be only a deception and a cheat.” I felt horrified for a moment or two, but I was soon delivered out of the temptation.

My time was now spent in reading the Bible and any religious book that I could lay my hands upon. I used to put the open Bible in front of me at my work, read a few lines, and then try to commit them to memory. O what precious things did I see in God’s holy law! It was the joy and

rejoicing of my heart, and I verily believe that the Holy Ghost directed my mind to portions of sacred truth suitable to my state and case and encouraged me to a further perusal as much as ever Boaz encouraged Ruth when gleaning in the field. He “said unto her, At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves and reproach her not: and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her.” I was now a living witness to the fulfilment of that promise, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” It now seemed as if there was an armful of corn in every promise. I wondered at God’s grace to such a sinner; I wondered at His love and I wondered at His wisdom. The glorious Person of Christ was my constant admiration. I could never read a chapter without seeing something which endeared Him to my heart. Right away from the manger in Bethlehem to Calvary’s cross I could follow Him and, amidst all His poverty and persecution, His sufferings and shame, I could still say, “This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

GOD’S SEASONABLE HELP

By Thomas Charles (1755-1814)

Relying upon God’s power and faithfulness to keep us in the midst of temptations is the only way to obtain strength against them. All *my* best resolutions and determinations as to watchfulness have often proved ineffectual, weak and feeble in the hour of trial. But relying upon God’s faithfulness, that “as thy days, so shall thy strength be,” and that “My grace is,” and shall be, “sufficient for thee” – this has never disappointed me. In one way or other I have always found a way of escape, but often in a way unexpected and unthought of.

There is no peace, until we can see ourselves safe from the workings of inward corruption, and outward temptations, in the hands of God, exclusive of everything we are or can do. The Lord thinks on those who are poor and needy, and is their Help and Deliverer (see Psa. 40. 17). And though His “enemies may be lively and strong,” yet the Lord will make more haste to help them, is stronger, and must prevail (see Psa. 38. 19-22). Faith in the living God opposes lively enemies; and to “the LORD strong and mighty” it looks for help against strong enemies.

As God is faithful and true, this faith must always prevail, for the Lord is *a very present help in times of trouble* to those who trust in Him – not help at a distance, which we may have cause to fear will come too late, but a present help against present evil (see Psa. 46. 1). This is the life of faith, and the Christian's warfare; he has *present help* every day – against present, daily evil. Help will never come too late to those who by faith look and wait for it.

David, speaking of the church's safety, says, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." Help may seem to us to be delayed, but it will surely come, "right early" – in sufficient time to bring us effectual deliverance. It will be when it comes, a *morning* help also. The Lord will act vigorously, as a man goes to his work in the morning with alacrity, with fresh spirits and renewed strength; and having the day before him, we may well expect something from him before night. So the Lord works for His people – He appears for their relief in good time, and carries on His work with effectual vigour, until the whole is finished.

With *future* evils we have nothing to do; we have no more to do with the evils of tomorrow, than with the evils that will be a thousand years hence. Our danger always is from present evil. Against this the Lord is a present help, bringing us deliverance "right early." May my trust be in Him alone!

It will be a help manifest and evident to all, "right early," or in the face of the morning – clear and evident to all, that God may be glorified thereby. *Our safety* and *His glory* always go together, and He will bring help and deliverance in due time to secure our safety, and in that moment also which will show forth His glory most conspicuously, in the face of the morning – or of the sun.

So was the deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea; timely help was administered to deliver them from their pursuing enemies, and at that moment of time, which served mostly to show forth the glory of God's power, faithfulness and goodness towards His people. In the face of the morning, He caused the sea to return to his strength.

Let us have a regard to God's glory as well as our own safety, and be contented to wait patiently for deliverance, until "His hour is come, when the Father shall be glorified."

Christ's mother was in haste to have a speedy supply of wine; but she fixed the time too soon. "Mine hour is not yet come," says Christ. He meant to grant her request, and give them a supply; but much depended upon the time when this supply was granted, and the miracle was wrought, to carry full conviction into the hearts of all present of His divine mission, authority and power. For their good therefore He would reprove His mother, and wait until the hour was come, which would at

the same time bring them timely supply, and show forth His glory more illustriously.

Thus the Lord often deals with His people. They must wait patiently and quietly for His salvation, until His hour is come to glorify Himself; but He will never forget their safety, though He principally respects His own glory. *His hour will never come too late, but always in due time.*

Four thousand years passed before the long-expected hour came, when the seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head; but *in the fulness of time* God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, in full time to save His people, to bruise the serpent's head, and to glorify Himself. He came right early, in the face of the morning; His salvation was prepared or effected before the face of all people; He came forth in the morning, strong and vigorous for work; He travelled in the greatness of His strength, until the work, great and arduous, was all finished. Let us wait for Him; He will come and will not tarry.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD

By Thomas Watson (c.1620-1686)

Concerning God's justice, I shall lay down these six positions:

1. God cannot but be just. His holiness is the cause of His justice. Holiness will not suffer Him to do anything but what is righteous. He can no more be unjust than He can be unholy.

2. God's will is the supreme rule of justice; it is the standard of equity. His will is wise and good. God wills nothing but what is just, and therefore it is just because He wills it.

3. God does justice voluntarily. Justice flows from His nature. Men may act unjustly, because they are bribed or forced. God will not be bribed, because of His justice; He cannot be forced, because of His power. He does justice out of love to justice. "Thou lovest righteousness" (Psa. 45. 7).

4. Justice is the perfection of the divine nature. Aristotle says, "Justice comprehends in it all virtues." To say God is just, is to say He is all that is excellent. Perfections meet in Him, as lines in a centre. He is not only just, but justice itself.

5. God never did nor can do the least wrong to His creatures. God's justice has been wronged, but never did any wrong. God does not go according to the *summum jus*, or rigour of the law; He abates something of His severity. He might inflict heavier penalties than He does. "Thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve"

(Ezra 9. 13). Our mercies are more than we deserve, and our punishments less.

6. God's justice is such that it is not fit for any man or angel to expostulate with Him, or demand a reason for His actions. God has not only authority on His side, but equity. He lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet (see Isa. 28. 17). It is below Him to give an account to us of His proceedings. Which of these two is more fit to take place, God's justice or man's reason? "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9. 20). The plummet of our reason is too short to fathom the depth of God's justice. "How unsearchable are His judgments" (Rom. 11. 33). We are to adore God's justice, where we cannot see a reason for it.

THE FISHERMAN AND THE GOSPEL NET

By Henry Fowler (1779-1838)

"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4. 19).

The sea is an emblem of the world. As the sea has in it various living creatures and some monsters, so has the world. In the sea is "that leviathan" (Psa. 104. 26), and in the world is Satan, "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2. 2). In the sea there are fish to be taken by net or by hook, and some that are taken are cast away as useless and destroyed. In this world sinners are gathered by the gospel net and testimony, but all that are gathered by the preaching of the Word are not saved; for to some the gospel is a savour of life unto life, and to others of death unto death. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world" (Matt. 13. 47-49).

Fishermen may fitly represent preachers of the gospel. The calling of a fisherman is mean and contemptible in the eyes of many; so is the ministerial office to many the most contemptible. I well remember when in my state of ignorance I viewed the servants of God as the worst beings in the world. Surely I do not deserve the honour the Lord has conferred upon me! To be a preacher of Christ's gospel truly, a man must make up his mind to bear and suffer reproach; and the more successful in the Lord's work he really is, the more reproach he is likely to meet with. It was an observation of Luther somewhere: "That preaching that raises no persecution is not the gospel."

The fisherman is exposed to many hardships and meets with many disappointments. One of them complained to his Master one morning thus: "We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing." So it often is with God's real servants. They toil hard in prayer, in searching out the mind of God in His Word, and often labour in preaching beyond their natural strength, and see but little good done by their labours. If they are a little encouraged by the weight of their net, alas, alas! the produce turns out a dog-fish, or a tongue-fish, or a fish all head! These disappointments have not a little puzzled and tried me, and but for the strong hand of God I certainly should have taken up an easier trade than a fisherman's calling long since. But such words as these are a spur to fresh exertions: "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters"; "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season"; "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not"; "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." These words and such like encourage me sometimes, till with fresh courage I exclaim: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace" (Isa. 62. 1).

Also fishermen endure great hardships by storms at sea that come on sudden and unexpected, as well as by poverty at home. So do most of the servants of God "endure hardness," and many of them suffer much by poverty. Preaching the gospel faithfully and maintaining an honest conscience and deportment, is not the road to popularity and wealth. Fishermen, however they may be despised and neglected, are absolutely necessary; no fishermen, no fish. So the preachers of the gospel are necessary, and God has promised to furnish Zion with them: "I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3. 15). Paul says, "How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" As fishermen are ordained by providence to take the fish out of the sea, so the servants of God are ordained by the "Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls," set apart by the Holy Ghost, as truly so now as they were when He said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." God's servants are instruments in His hand to gather out His elect from the world and from lifeless professors who have a name to live but are dead to God, and so destitute of real religion.

Once more, there are times when fishermen cannot fish by reason of the stormy weather. So there are times in the life of most of God's servants when they are obliged to be silent. Penal laws and severe persecutions have silenced many of the Lord's most highly favoured servants, as the history of the church proves. But if nothing of that nature should be against them, there are other things which may hinder them; as the dreadful temptations of Satan suddenly and unexpectedly

seizing them, so that their courage fails and is dried up like a potsherd. The strongest man in real confidence is like a bruised reed if God leave him to the power of the enemy. But Jesus holds the stars in His right hand and out of His hand they cannot fall, though they may not shine for a time by reason of the clouds of darkness that cover them.

Or bodily infirmities may prevent God's servants from attending to their public work, as was the case with that blessed man of God, James Barry, the last thirty years of his life. This must be a singular trial to a minister of Christ; but the ways of God are in the deep, and doubtless He does all things right, however He may exercise the faith and patience of His children. But when fishermen cannot fish, they appear to have plenty to do, such as mending their nets, repairing their tackle, gathering bait for their lines, &c. So when the Lord's servants cannot preach, they have plenty of labour. O what meditation, what heart-searching, what self-examinations, what diligence, what earnest prayer to God are really necessary for a preacher of the gospel! The preacher of Christ may work hard in the pulpit, but I believe most of God's real sent servants find harder work out of the pulpit than they do in it. It will often happen too that when the preacher is best pleased with his labours, his hearers are not so well pleased as he may imagine. Perhaps they will cavil most when he thinks they have the least reason. These things may lead some sober-minded people to think that the situation of a preacher, like that of a fisherman, is not the most enviable in the world. But if the preacher should grow sulky with his Master or sluggish in his work because of the disagreeable things attending it, he should call to mind his former engagement and prayer, which was something like this: "Lord, I do not mind what I suffer or where I am sent, so that Thou condescend to use me as an instrument for Thy glory and Thy people's good."

Again, if a fisherman makes no use or a bad use of his leisure time, how badly is he prepared for the next opportunity that offers to put to sea! But his is only a temporal loss that he may sustain thereby. Ye spiritual fishermen, well repair your nets and listen to your Master's word: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." If sin has defiled your conscience and weakened your confidence, if you are brought into reproach through your unguarded and heedless conduct before the church or the world, double your diligence and hasten to God's pardon office; the doors are open day and night, and over each door is written in golden letters, large and fair, "Yea, for the rebellious also." Go with a blushing face and with an upright heart. "Repent, and do the first works," or God may turn you out of His service and leave your name and reproach as a lasting warning to wanton and slothful labourers.

The fisherman cannot be sure of success, though all things necessary be done in order thereto; but he lets go his net and his lines, patiently waiting and hoping that the result will pay him for his toils. This may teach God's servants the necessity there is to exercise patience and hope in the midst of their many disappointments. For as the fisherman is entirely dependent upon the providence of God for success, so are the Lord's servants in their ministerial work entirely dependent upon the Lord both for themselves and their hearers. Who can command himself and govern himself and his passions? And who or what human being can command the will of others? Who can bring the mind of man into sweet subjection to the laws of Christ? Paul laboured more abundantly than all the apostles, "yet not I" (see what humility), "but the grace of God which was with me."

Lastly, it has been sometimes noticed that if one fisherman has been a little more successful than another, the disappointed fisherman has been moved to jealousy and envy and has put out some hasty speeches, far enough from good nature, to insult the successful fisherman. But this infirmity is not more common among fishermen than it is among other callings. Nay, some have thought that many blessed ministers of Christ have something of the same in their constitution. *But if the fish be caught, never mind who caught it.* Lord, keep Thy servants from envy. The successful party indeed may not be blameless. Their success may have led them to think and speak contemptuously of their brethren. Such should study this text: "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." However, the deep study of this and many other texts is reserved for a bed of affliction, where generally the Lord teaches His servants many humbling lessons.

Am I a servant of the Lord?
A fisherman of Jesus' sending?
Then let me preach His faithful Word,
Or if not so, my nets be mending.

O Lord, the seas are rough and high,
And I can badly stand the billows!
Cast on me Thy propitious eye,
For now my harp is on the willows.

Direct me where, and when, and how,
To preach Thy Word with true affection;
And lowly at Thy footstool bow,
To prove I'm Thine by free election.

Lord, give Thy servants more to feel
Their helpless state, their want of all things;
Our breaches Thou alone canst heal,
And are we not too much for small things?

REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST'S BLOOD

By William Dell (1607-1669), chaplain to Oliver Cromwell

“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3. 5). “For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1 Cor. 4. 20).

The form of godliness is very common in these days of ours, but the power of it is very rare. How few persons shall we find ... who live and act in the strength of God. Generally, men do whatever they do in their own strength; and that not only in human things, but in divine. How seldom do we see in [professing] Christians, in the discharge of their several duties, more than the power of men; the greatest part by far ... being ignorant of what it is to be “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.”

How little is there, among all our plenty, of that preaching which is not in the plausible “words of man’s wisdom” but is “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” How few congregations ... are gathered together in the Spirit and power of our Lord Jesus Christ. How few of those [professing] Christians are there in whom is “the exceeding greatness of His power” together with the effectual working of it....

And when men and families and congregations are gotten into this form [of godliness], they think themselves both safe and happy, as being near the suburbs of the kingdom of God, and close neighbours to the saints. And this form of godliness, as it is of very easy compliance with flesh and blood, so it is also of great credit and esteem with carnal gossellers.

“But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.” And he being made partaker of the power of God Himself can in some measure discern both the presence and the want of it in others – both which he knows in his own experience.

Now this form of godliness is when men are godly without God ... without Christ ... not having the Spirit.... In the religion of these men there is the outward duty done, and it may be [done] very speciously and plausibly; but there is none of Christ nor the Spirit in the duty.... And the religious acts they do are only their own operations, and not the operations of God in them. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3. 6). “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8. 8).

This form of godliness, how pleasing soever it be to a man’s self, and of what reckoning soever with others who are like himself, yet is indeed of very evil and woeful consequence ... and his bare and empty form casts a black veil upon religion and utterly obscures its beauty and glory.

THE CHRISTIAN'S EXPECTATION

Extract from a sermon preached by James Kidwell Popham in 1932

“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him” (Psa. 62. 5).

I should think there is not a Christian living today who has as much grace as David had. He had probably clearer views of Christ than some of us have, more intimacy with God in Christ than we have, sweeter communion, clearer, sweeter, more powerful intimations of God's mind and will than we have, and realising what his enemies aimed at, even his destruction, he charges his soul to wait only on God. King though he was, having at his command resources, defences, yet to none of them would he look; on none of them would he depend; but solemnly looks to his soul and says, “Soul, thou hast weakness, and thou wilt have great weakness, if thou lookest to anyone, to any defence, if thou leanest on any arm, other than God and His arm; thou wilt have destruction; therefore wait thou only upon God.”

It is no little matter whether we are right or wrong, whether our eyes are on God or on self and on the world. It is no trifling thing to be looking to the creature, to be running to this resource, to be leaning on that support, and neglecting the only support and the only resource that can avail a sinner, even God. This, if we have faith, will lead us to some searching of heart. Do not turn away from it, friends. Look narrowly into it. Ask thyself, sinner, what it is to be a Christian, what it is to be depending on God or to be depending on self or something else, whose arm you would lean on, whose wisdom you would follow.

You will never, if you are rightly led, under-rate the strength of an enemy. It is a great weakness to do it, great ignorance to do it; and if you do it, you will be sure to fall in some way. If you say, “Well, he is not over strong, and I will fight him in battle” – in this you will fall. “My soul, wait thou *only* upon God.” Let no other trust intrude, let no other arm beguile you when it is offered for your support, let no other wisdom guide you when it proposes this or that path for you, but wait only, exclusively, entirely, on God.

And the psalmist gives a reason. His reason was this: “My expectation is from Him.” This expectation was looking for victory, victory over many things. First, over indwelling sin. So Paul found it: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” and, says he, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Yes, God gives the victory. A crucified Saviour, a risen and exalted Saviour, gives the victory.

“My soul, wait thou only upon God.” It is certainly a wise thing and a good thing to be led to wait upon God for manifestations of the Lord

Jesus, that we may clearly see His Person, that we may be receiving "of His fulness ... and grace for grace," that we "may know Him, and the power of His resurrection," that by such communications we may be spiritually minded.

A LIVING HOPE

By John W. Sperling-Tyler (1912-1989)

"Who against hope believed in hope" (Rom. 4. 18).

I want to speak to you concerning a living hope which is the good hope of the gospel and is instrumental to salvation. "For we are saved by hope" (Rom. 8. 24), not meritoriously. We shall never lay hold on Christ without a living hope, never go through tribulation, never endure without a living hope. Blessed is a vital, living hope! A relationship of hope is love. Hope is a gift of the Spirit, and if it is given it is received. Hope is a fruit of faith. There are three blessed gifts and graces that are inseparable: faith, hope, love. The Lord gives the first grain of living hope in Christ, and immediately you cast your anchor in Him within the veil and you know you have a living hope that will triumph and prevail over all. It will never fail; it will hold you as an anchor in storm and tempest. O blessed hope! Faith is a root grace: here is a tree with a stem or stock, the branches, and the fruit of which is love. Job said, "The root of the matter is found in me" (Job 19. 28). He had a living hope.

"Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine,
My life and death attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey's end." (H. 1010)

O this sweet hope! Hope may be spoken of as a blessed expectation and desire. Everything the Lord sets before you in Christ forms your desire and expectation, and trust and confidence in the Lord. You have confidence in Him that He will be as good as His word. Your hope is outside the turmoil: it is within the veil, in heaven, in Him. It is a life line: Christ in your soul, your soul in Christ. The lesson is, when you have a living hope you will have all the world, the devil and temptation against you; it will be so hard. The Lord help you to give Him the glory, believing that what He has promised He is able to perform.

Whom God chooses, the world refuses.

John Mason

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

My dear Friend and Sister in the great covenant Head of all grace and mercy,

I have felt much tried, exercised, and cast down, in coming [into Sussex] to stand up before [so many] people. And while I have felt myself to be indeed a poor preacher to whom the Lord has not given gifts or abilities, I have felt one thing to give me boldness before the Lord and before His people, which is this: that what I preach I never borrowed or stole, neither was I taught it by man, but by God, in my own soul's experience. My affliction, in which my soul has very solemn seasons, has not lengthened my arms to grasp more [religious] professors, nor given me a more favourable judgment of religion in general, but it has given me to see and feel, in an increased degree, the unutterable value of a soul-saving religion.

I cannot say, "I have finished my course," but I feel it will not be very long, and it may be very soon. I have fought a good fight. It is indeed a good fight, but I have fought in it very badly. Few, if any, have been such bad fighters in this good fight; but in it I am and shall be a victor through the great Captain in whom all the blood-bought are "more than conquerors." "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." John heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." Here, and there for ever and for ever, with immortal tongues in immortal songs shall we unweariedly and unceasingly sing the holy praises of Him who loved us, lived and died for us, and redeemed us by His most precious blood from the wrath to come, the inflexible and terrible justice of God, the curse and condemnation of a broken law, the guilt of sin, and the power of sin, and from the love and practice and dominion of sin. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

Joseph Tanner

Framfield, Sussex
August 14th, 1861

Mr. James Pack has kindly pointed out that the subject of the prayer meeting address, in which he made the remark referred to in the *January Gospel Standard*, was Habbakuk 3 verse 2 and not as was stated. (See *G.S.* 2001 page 201.)

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST 55TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at Oakington Chapel,
on Saturday afternoon, September 11th, 2021*

The meeting commenced with hymn 372. The Chairman, Mr. D.J. Christian, read Psalm 48 and Mr. C.P. Warboys engaged in prayer. The Secretary then introduced the 2020 Annual Report and Accounts. He briefly summarised the Trust's work as divided into two parts, General and Publications. On the general side, the Trust can act as a trustee (or sole trustee if required), provide advice on chapel trust deeds, the appointment and responsibilities of trustees, provide information and checklists on those responsibilities, and also sadly have involvement in the sale of chapels and consequent distribution of proceeds and maintenance of retained graveyards. On the Publications side, books are published which are loyal to what we believe.

He highlighted several matters on the General side. The deadline for registration of church working funds with the Charity Commission had been deferred again, and the new date was now March 31st, 2031. He reminded the meeting that chapel trustees and occupying churches were responsible for keeping buildings safe and in good condition. A single page checklist was available on our website to assist with this responsibility. That led on to the importance of not under-insuring. Access Insurance Services now provided the means to obtain a rebuild valuation at reasonable cost. Under-insurance in the event of a claim could result in reimbursement of only part of the loss, so he recommended churches who insured through Access to avail themselves of this service. He highlighted the importance of knowing your trust deed, as this details the responsibilities of the trustees. Administrative changes can be made where necessary.

The sale of Zoar Chapel, Romford, completed in April 2021 for £252,000. The proceeds were for the benefit of the Gospel Standard Society. The Trust was helping with the administration of the Providence Chapel, Croydon Charity. So far, about fifty grants had been agreed to help in various ways, including the maintenance, improvement and renovation of chapel buildings and facilities, as well as the publication and distribution of Bibles, books, magazines, DVDs and sermons. Grants agreed totalled over £750,000 with funds uncommitted of about £315,000.

The review of the Articles of Association had commenced some years ago, but became imperative when the accountants warned of tax implications. In order to help pastors who are also Trust members with loans, it was necessary to adopt the new Articles.

Turning to Publications, he reported that there were books for younger children, biographies and letters of pastors in the pipeline plus a work on the Person of Christ. Sales were considerably down in 2020 by about 50%, but thankfully had recovered well so far in 2021. New publications in 2021 included *Exposition of the Last Words of David*, by Martin Luther. In this book, Luther shows David's faith in his covenant God, and how God is revealed as a Trinity of Persons, even in the Old Testament. That is the third volume in a very instructive series of Martin Luther's expositions published by the Trust. He recommended *Servants of the Living God*, written by Graham Chewter, containing brief accounts of some who have served our Lord and Master – not all ministers. The foreword in that book expressed the hope that the accounts would serve as "tasters" and awaken a desire to read more.

On the Committee, Mr. R. Saunders had resigned from May 2021 owing to his added responsibilities on Bethesda. The Secretary expressed thanks for his help during his two years as a Committee member. The Committee did appreciate the continuing support of the churches and members of the Trust and would welcome new members who feel an interest and concern for the welfare of the churches. He mentioned that the minimum subscription was now £5 rather than the £1 as it had been since 1966.

The Report and Financial Statements were received by the Trust subscribers present. The three members of the Executive Committee retiring in rotation, Messrs. D.J. Christian, M.J. Hyde and P.J. Pocock were re-elected. The new draft articles were adopted with immediate effect as the Articles of Association of the Company.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for all his work over many years, especially on legal matters. He expressed gratitude to the Publications Manager for all he does on behalf of the Trust and to Mr. John Kingham for all his help. The Chairman expressed appreciation to the friends at Oakington for their hospitality. The Trust had decided to employ Dr. M.J. Hyde as a writer and editor. As he is a trustee, application had been made to the Charity Commission for permission to pay him. Further he referred to the severe health problems of three committee members and prayer for the Lord's continuing help and healing.

After hymn 141 was sung, Mr. E.R.C. Buss gave his address entitled, "Spiritual Lessons from the Recent Restoration of Oakington Chapel," accompanied by slides.

Mr. Buss commenced by explaining how the complete restoration of the chapel told the story of a *complete change* which he likened to *the work of grace in a child of God*. His great concern was that the focal

point of his talk should be, not the building, but the Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done for those that are His.

First, he provided photos that illustrated 1 Samuel 16. 7: "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." Two showed the outward appearance of the old chapel which, despite slight traces of problems, looked acceptable and fit for purpose. The next slide was taken not long afterwards and showed the "heart," the result of dry rot underneath the floor. This was a telling illustration of how we can be. We may go to chapel regularly, perhaps feel we keep ourselves from open sins or sins we see amongst others, dress suitably, behave courteously, listen attentively and be quite comfortable, and think that is enough. But underneath, that is what our heart is like. "The LORD looketh on the heart." May the Lord open our eyes to that.

He then spoke about sin. One morning he noticed brown dust on the floor in one corner. It was hoovered up, and from time to time it came back, but it looked harmless. However, it was actually the spores of a dry rot fungus. Dry rot has four stages, and in the final stage the fruiting spores expand and burst, producing the dust he had seen that morning. It is very contagious, and eventually, to eradicate it, all the infected soil had to be dug out and the chapel chemically treated. This is so like sin in us. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jas. 1. 15). So often when the temptation to sin comes to do or omit something, it might seem to be so small, it does not really matter just this once. But like the spore of the dry rot fungus, what awful things it leads to.

A survey was obtained which identified many faults, but there were other problems not known about or where access issues prevented examination. As the renovation progressed, however, these hidden dangers were revealed. On closer inspection, it was evident the roof timbers were riddled with woodworm and they all had to be removed. When the plaster was removed, it was discovered that the original builders had mysteriously used wooden beams instead of a course of bricks. These had rotted, causing the inner skin of bricks to crumble, and the builders had to spend considerable time rectifying that. "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. 10. 26). An asbestos survey had been carried out and asbestos removed at the beginning of the building work, but more was found hidden later and had to be disposed of very carefully. Like at the beginning, all looked fine on the outside, but there were so many rotten or dangerous things they knew nothing about. If the Lord is working in us, we will want Him to deal with all of our sins. "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (Psa. 139. 23).

The next stage was a complete removal of all decay and rot. Everything had to go except the bricks, railings, lights and microphone stand. How this mirrored the work of grace in the Lord's people. When the Lord works, it is not just the load of our sins that needs removing, but our righteousness and dead works as well as our own ideas about our own salvation. Everything has to go that is not the work of the Holy Spirit. Some of the texts that came to his mind on freedom from the power and guilt of sin were: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.... Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psa. 51. 2, 7). Even to realise there is nothing good in ourselves has to be the work of the Lord. "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7.18). And Paul, writing to the Corinthians about a sin that had crept in, said, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven" (1 Cor. 5. 6, 7). It made him think again of the dry rot that had to be so thoroughly purged.

Their experience of rot causing the floor to collapse demonstrated a false or untrustworthy foundation. The old floor with its rotten timbers and soil underneath had to be removed, and a solid floor laid of compacted earth, ballast and then concrete. The text which came to his mind was, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isa. 28. 16), and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. We can rest on the false foundation of thinking, "It's not me," leading on to, "It won't be me," when reading about funerals, accidents or illnesses. And that is making a covenant with death (see Isa. 28. 15). In contrast, how wonderful is that foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the accepted sacrifice. May each of us be building our foundation by faith on the Lord Jesus.

He then recapped that the first thing they did after the stripping out was to dig the new baptistry. Baptism is a beginning. It is in obedience to the Lord's command. Matthew's testimony: "And he left all, rose up, and followed Him" (Luke 5. 28) is very brief. He was sure Matthew had many unanswered questions. But, without comment, he left all and followed Jesus. And then there are those who have excuses or things to do before that, but may the Lord give us that faith and obedience to follow Him.

A final thought was that this was not to be looking at other people, but at ourselves, particularly about finding fault with others without realising that we have the same fault within us. Jesus said, "Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye" (Luke 6. 42). He compared a salvaged part of a timber beam from the chapel with the motes (specks of dust) floating in the sunlight.

Mr. Buss closed with the thought that what had been done in this chapel had been done far above all that they could ask or think. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3. 20, 21).

The Chairman thanked Mr. Buss for his very informative and searching address. How many of these things we needed to reflect on. The meeting concluded with hymn 215 and the benediction.

D.J. Playfoot

BOOK REVIEWS

The Christian Sabbath, by Terry L. Johnson; 60 pages; price £3; published by and obtainable from The Banner of Truth Trust and available from Christian bookshops.

This is an excellent appraisal of the Scriptural view of the Christian Sabbath or the Lord's day as we call it. The writer is senior minister of the Independent Church, Savannah, Georgia, U.S.A. In four concise chapters, the Sabbath is considered: as Made for Man, Lord of the Sabbath, Practical Recommendations and a biblical conclusion. A quotation from the excellent George Swinnock on the Sabbath is followed by an extensive bibliography. The author draws from his own experience of a godly home where the Sabbath was a delight. The only adverse comment is the use of the New King James Version of the Holy Scriptures for references which is to be regretted.

A Clarification

In the review in the January *Gospel Standard* of the book *Servants of the Living God*, by Graham Chewter, mention was made of J.K. Popham and the God-honouring Movement. The author wishes to observe that he inadvertently misquoted Mr. Popham which implied he regretted his involvement in the God-honouring Movement. It is known that he regretted the bad spirit which some displayed in defending the position that he took; nevertheless he never wavered, and affirmed his position in his resignation statement of June 1935, believing the God-honouring Movement was necessary.

NOTICE OF DEATH

William De Vriend, faithful member and deacon at Hope Chapel, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, U.S.A., passed to his eternal rest on Thursday, December 23rd, 2021, aged 94. He will be sadly missed by many. "Tis with the righteous well."

OBITUARY

Norman Henry Roe, minister of the gospel and pastor at Ossett and Birkenhead for many years, passed to his eternal rest on Friday, September 10th, 2021, aged 82 years.

The following is his own testimony:

“Though I was brought up from my earliest days to attend chapel [Fenstanton Particular Baptist Chapel], I had no interest, and was only waiting for an opportunity to get away from it. All this I thought would come when I was called up for National Service. But to the Lord’s praise I found that God’s thoughts were not my thoughts. I was very much into the world and was the willing slave of Satan and addicted to using bad language. I went with mates to the public house, but did not thankfully get a liking for strong drink. Though at the chapel at Fenstanton I sat under the ministry of Mr. E. Roe [Ernest Roe, his great uncle], I remained without any thoughts with respect to my never-dying soul and the demands of God’s holy law. I was very taken up with football and would travel many miles in the pursuit of it.

“But in the infinite mercy and grace of God, though I knew it not nor desired it, the time had come when He would put forth his hand to pluck a brand from the burning. In February 1958, I attended a football match in London which was the last match Manchester United played in England. The next Thursday many of them died in the Munich plane crash. This was the means the Lord used to stop me in my mad career. When I heard the news of the disaster, the word came very powerfully to me: ‘Where would I have been, if I had been with them?’ I had to say, ‘In hell,’ for I could at that time see no way of escape. This brought great distress and soul trouble, and it brought me away from my worldly companions. The Lord brought my sins home to me and to cry unto Him for mercy, but could there be hope of pardon for such a sinner as I was? How differently I attended chapel and the ministry of the Word, with the exercise, ‘Tell, can there be hope of pardon even for me.’

“I read diligently the Word of God, but all seemed to condemn. I believe I entered into the words of the psalmist where he speaks of the horrible pit and the miry clay. I was brought to see that there was no hope in self, and I was brought feelingly to cry out with the leper of old, ‘Unclean, unclean.’ It was at this time of great distress that the Lord was pleased to bless my soul with His pardoning love and mercy under a sermon preached by Mr. E. Roe from Luke 17. 17. He blessedly opened up the case of one covered with the leprosy of sin, and how that only a precious Jesus can cleanse the soul through His atoning blood and righteousness. How I was brought to see the suitability of Christ as the sinner’s only hope, and that not all the strivings to keep the holy law of God could be of any avail, only to sink me deeper than ever into the pit

of guilt and misery. But this was not all. One Lord's day afternoon, Mr. E. Roe in preaching spoke of another leper in Matthew 8. This man came to the Lord Jesus with the cry, 'If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' That was just where I felt to be and the Lord's words to him were spoken to my heart with power: 'I will; be thou clean.' O what light, what sense of pardon, what peace in the knowledge that the Lord had a purpose of mercy for me! There I saw my sins, defiled as I was like that leprous man, washed away by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. I could say, 'I'm clean, just God I'm clean,' not because of what I had done, but through what Jesus is and has done, as made known to such a sinner by the Holy Spirit in the gospel of the grace of God. To the Lord's name be eternal praises.

After this, I became exercised with regard to the ordinance of believer's baptism, as I was brought to see that it was one of the divine appointments of the Lord for His people, He having walked that way Himself. But I was also brought to see that it was not to be walked in in a light manner, as also following upon it there was the responsibility of church membership. This became a continual exercise until the Lord was pleased to remove all difficulties under a sermon preached by Mr. E. Roe on the occasion of the baptism of my sister. How I then felt the constraining of the Lord to this ordinance and the felt sense of the promise, 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.' I applied to the church at Fenstanton for baptism, and after being accepted by them, was baptized and received into the church by Mr. E. Roe, in October 1958."

Continued by the family:

Just five years later, having been exercised about the work of the ministry from not long after his baptism, Mr. Roe preached his first sermon "in much fear and trembling" at Uppingham in Rutland, on October 20th, 1963. This began a long and faithful gospel ministry, which from 1966, when he took the pastorate at Mount Olivet Strict Baptist Chapel, Sheffield, was exercised mainly in the north of England. He later became pastor of Ebenezer Particular Baptist Chapel, Ossett, and also of the chapel at Liverpool (later Providence Particular Baptist Chapel, Birkenhead), and travelled many thousands of miles over the years, backwards and forwards over the Pennines in all weathers, to minister to them. His last sermon at Ossett was on Tuesday, August 24th, 2021, when he preached from Psalm 46. 10. In his closing remarks, he said: "'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear.' May the Lord grant us grace to know the outworking of it in our own lives, both at this time and in whatever may be found in our path in future days, subject to the Lord's will." He could not have known just how soon, or acutely, he would be tried personally regarding those words he spoke then. The next day he began to display

symptoms of Covid, and just two weeks later he was taken from us. His last few days in hospital were very distressing and filled with great suffering, but he was granted a submissive spirit which was even remarked on by the nursing staff. He could not say much, as his breathing was so laboured, but on one occasion, when we were able to visit him near the end, being reminded of his text, he responded faintly, yet with emphasis: "Be still. All is in the Lord's hands." So the Lord's faithfulness was proved, in fulfilling His promise that "as thy days, so shall thy strength be," and he was carried through "death's cold sea," and "all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

"THOU ART MINE"

Hark! hark! the soft whisper, the sweet, solemn voice!
 'Tis the word of Jehovah that bids thee rejoice.
 How blest the assurance, the promise divine,
 "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; behold, thou art Mine!"

"Eternity saw thee enshrined in My love,
 And the favour I bore thee no time can remove;
 Thy sins shall not frustrate My gracious design;
 Fear not, thou worm Jacob; behold, thou art Mine!"

"Though fiery the trials that wait for thee here,
 Yet bright through them all thou at last shall appear;
 When dark the storm gathers, this word shall be thine,
 In all thy afflictions, fear not; thou art Mine."

"When thy foes shall beset thee, and dangers assail,
 Although they distress thee, they shall not prevail;
 His claim to thy person shall Satan resign;
 As a brand plucked from burning, behold, thou art Mine!"

"When faint thy heart beats, and slow draws thy breath,
 And thy soul is engaged in its struggle with death;
 When thy friends gather round thee to catch the last sign;
 In death's gloomy valley, fear not, thou art Mine!"

"When the grave closes o'er thee, in darkness and gloom,
 And all that thou claimest on earth is the tomb,
 Though thy dust should be scattered on mountain or main,
 Yet still thou art Mine! and I'll raise thee again."

"When the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise,
 And fruition of glory shall beam on thy eyes,
 The song of salvation, the chorus divine,
 Shall burst from thy lips, and proclaim, 'Thou art Mine!'"

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MARCH 2022

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

“AND THE HAND OF THE LORD WAS WITH HIM”

What a remarkable character was John the Baptist! We might enquire what was the secret of his greatness. It was that *the hand of the Lord was with him* (Luke 1. 66).

Others in the Old Testament benefited from this privilege. We might mention Nehemiah who acknowledged “the good hand of his God” (see Neh. 2) in moving the king to grant his request regarding the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. We could mention Elijah who ran ahead of Ahab’s chariot from Carmel to Jezreel, 17 miles, the hand of the LORD being upon him (see 1 Kings 18. 46). It is very significant that it was prophesied that John would come “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1. 17; see Mal. 4. 5-6).

In what ways was the hand of the Lord with John?

It was firstly *a quickening hand*. When Mary, the mother of our Lord, visited Elisabeth we are told that John leaped in his mother’s womb (see Luke 1. 41-44). It would seem from this remarkable event that John was given divine life whilst yet in the womb. This was prophesied to the doubting Zacharias, by the angel of the Lord, when the glad tidings of the circumstances of the birth of the forerunner of Christ were announced (see Luke 1. 15).

It was secondly *a strengthening hand*. We read that he “grew, and waxed strong in spirit” (Luke 1. 80). For the work that lay before him he needed the powerful hand of the Lord to be upon him, especially when he was to rebuke Herod for his unlawful marriage, a reproof which was to cost him his life.

It was *a preserving hand* as he lived in the inhospitable desert until his work was to begin (see Luke 1. 80). It also proved to be *a providing hand* in the provision of locusts and wild honey to satisfy his hunger. (Mark 1. 6).

It was thirdly *an applying hand*. The ministry of John was abundantly blessed in calling sinners to repentance. Under the hand of God, John turned many of the children of Israel to the Lord through his ministry, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (see Luke 1. 16, 17).

It was fourthly *a sanctifying hand*. John’s own testimony concerning Christ was: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3. 30).

It was fifthly *a comforting hand*. Whilst in prison, John apparently was assailed by the tempter, concerning the Person of Christ as the Messiah. He who dared to assail the Son of God on this very point, did not waste an opportunity to attack John on the same ground. But the Lord Jesus, in loving sympathy, sends a message back to His servant, John: “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me” (see Matt. 11. 1-6).

Sixthly, it was *a glorifying hand*. It was ordained of God, that the way in which John’s death would glorify God, was to be under the executioner’s sword in prison (see Matt. 14. 1-12). For John it was to be “sudden death and sudden glory.” It is said by historians that Herod ended his days in disgrace being exiled from Judaea by the Emperor Caligula for treasonable behaviour. God always has the last word.

Finally, it was *a continuing hand*. When John was suddenly taken from this earthly scene, we read his disciples “went and told Jesus.” They found in the Saviour the continuing hand of God even though their master was taken from them (see Matt. 14. 12).

Our ordained path may be very different from that of John the Baptist, but all of the Lord’s people need the hand of the Lord to be upon them and with them in the journey of faith, right down to the end. Our Lord’s words concerning His disciples in John 13. 1 are very confirming: “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” This He demonstrated by washing the disciples’ feet with His hands. And then, the reassuring words in verse 3: “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God.”

How appropriate is Jabez’s prayer. “Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested” (1 Chron. 4. 10). May his prayer and its answer be ours.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

*Sermon preached by John Warburton at Trinity Chapel, Leicester,
on Lord’s day evening, July 6th [no year given]*

Text: “For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen” (Matt. 6. 13).

We read these words as a text in the morning, and promised, by the help of God, to make a few remarks. First, to show that the kingdom is His, the power is His, and the glory is His. We attempted, first, to notice, by the kingdom of God, we sometimes understand the kingdoms of the

world, which are all under His suffrage, His rule and His power. We took notice, in a literal way, that the Lord rules over all; the kings and emperors govern by Him. Secondly, we notice by the kingdom of God sometimes we understand the gospel, the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. Thirdly, notice that we understand by the kingdom of God, the kingdom of grace set up in the heart. By the kingdom of grace we considered that blessed entrance of God the Holy Ghost into the hearts of His people, where He reigns, rules, and where He keeps His court, His palace. In this kingdom of grace are all the stores and supplies for God's people through time: faith, love, patience, hope, watchfulness, thankfulness, prayer, praise and adoration: all blessings stored up in the kingdom of grace. This kingdom is the Lord's. It is not of men to cultivate it, as some people tell us. It is not of man to get any of it, by any good works he can perform. All these blessings in this kingdom of grace are the gift of God; they are of a sovereign nature; none know this but those who have this kingdom of grace in the heart; and the Lord teaches His children it is His own kingdom.

So it is from these blessed stores of grace that He teaches them of their need. They are brought into situations and places in which they can no more get faith, and believe God, than they can create a world. They are sometimes brought into such situations, that they have no patience at their command, no thankfulness, no watchfulness, no prayers, no adoration, nor one single grace can they cultivate, raise up, quicken, and bring into their souls; so that they are brought to prove it is God's kingdom; it is not theirs. Therefore the poor soul is brought to beg of the Lord that He would give it him. The Lord communicates it to him. The Lord never leaves them to themselves. The Lord blesses them with the sweet graces of His Spirit in their heart.

My dear friends, the family of God, the older they grow, the more experience they have of works, the more they are brought to wander in this vale of tears, the more they prove and know this kingdom is God's, and is His gift. "Thine is the kingdom": the kingdom of grace. Thus they are brought to prove that grace which the Lord communicates. They are brought to cry, "Lord, quicken Thou me," for my soul cleaveth to the earth. Why, man, art thou not a quickening voice? Say some, canst not thou set about it, feel determined to raise up thy affections to God, determined to keep thy soul alive by the quickening power of man's diligence, by prayer and watchfulness? Ah, my friends, you might as well attempt to put your finger up and take the sun, or empty the ocean with a bucket; it is God's kingdom, God's blessing, God's communicating.

Now no doubt some of you here, though in a profession, yet despise such things as these, and look upon it as encouraging nothing but

licentiousness; it is not, as you say in your language, encouraging people to do the best, to lift up their hearts to God, to strive to obtain the kingdom. To such we say, How can you be judges of the kingdom of God's grace when you have it not in your hearts? Poor souls, I feel for you. The Lord says, "Without Me ye can do nothing," but you think you can [sic] have got the kingdom of God's grace within you, but you have not; you have not life. You bolster yourself up with resolutions, and this is all you have. Why, say you, I believe the truth of God. The devil does that; he believes that. Well but, say you I believe God is good. The devil believes it, yet he is a devil: you may believe it and be a child of the devil: the kingdom of God is not in natural knowledge or understanding, nor in believing natural things as revealed in the Scriptures; no, faith in Christ, in the power of God, is God's gift.

Now you know nothing at all about unbelief. No, says one, and I do not want to. Nor I, says another. I should be very glad not to be tormented with the devil and unbelief, a tormenting devil; trying with all my might to believe, to take up a little comfort, come to the promise, in believing have a little refreshment; but, alas, I find unbelief too powerful for an arm of flesh even to attempt to raise up the soul to have faith, love, patience, humility, meekness, watchfulness. It is the kingdom of God's grace; He communicates when He will and how He will. Hear what the apostle says: "Every good gift, and every perfect gift." Do you read it so, that it is of man's resolution, of man's power to cultivate or raise up? Nothing at all of the kind: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."

So you see the kingdom is not at man's disposal, man's working, man's faith, man's prayers to fetch it, carry it, or drive it back when it comes; it is the blessed gift of God. The kingdom of God is His own work, it comes from above, "and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness." The Lord be blessed for this: "no variableness," no, not even the "shadow of turning." So that the blessed truths of God's kingdom of grace, all its glory, all its preciousness, all comes from God, and is communicated to His people, when He will, how He will, and where He will, with whom there is not the shadow of a turn. It shall accomplish His own purpose, to His eternal glory.

Dear me, say you, you leave nothing for man to do; nothing but the people of God to sit still and receive it, when God communicates it with power to their heart. Nothing at all. I tell you what, my friends, the older I get, the more I am brought to see the sovereign, discriminating grace of God's kingdom above all the sovereigns of the universe: without Him they would perish; He directs the course of all.

"For Thine is the kingdom." Oh, says the poor soul, If I did but know this kingdom was in my heart! Why, I tell you what, my dear

friends, God has left it on record; it is so plain, so simple, so pointed out where this kingdom of God is; the fruits and effects of this kingdom are manifest, what it produces, that there is no possibility of deception. Dear me, says one, I think it is all over with me; I am deceived, I know nothing at all of the kind. Where this kingdom of grace is in the soul it is opposed to everything that is against God: it works, leads, and influences everything in the soul that is God-honouring, raising up the soul after God.

Well, says the soul, I am not a whit nearer now, I must have it opened up plainer than that. The Lord's children are such a comical set of folks, they must have it brought right opened and backed by the Word of God, until their very feelings are opened up, their very experience pointed out and declared, so that they cannot squeeze out; they will get out if they can. This is the difference between those who have the kingdom in their heart and those who are in an empty profession. Professors take encouragement from reading, being zealous, their uprightness, their purity, their zeal and godliness. But God's children, my friends, cannot take encouragement here. They must have God's truth brought home to their heart, to break down every obstacle. Art thou there, poor soul? Then the kingdom of God is in thy heart.

What is the reason thou are not satisfied like other professors of religion? You have come to chapel, done your duty, been at prayer meetings, read your Bible, had family prayer; take comfort, be satisfied thou art in the right path, God is thine, thou shalt land safe in glory. Ah, says the soul, I want the internal witness of God to my spirit that He is mine, and I am His. Dost thou pant for this? Hast thou longed for this? Is it thy heart's desire? Is thy soul breathing after the Lord for Him to make it known, give thee the testimony in thy heart? Yes, says the soul, it is my very heart's desire. Then as sure as ever the Bible is true, the kingdom of God is set up in thy heart. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Whatever is spirit will breathe after God, and nothing else will satisfy it.

But, says the poor soul, I so often have not these breathings, sometimes so careless, so earthly, so worldly, so carnal, that I seem as if I had not the least spark of life, love, or any feeling after God. Art thou comfortable under it? Comfortable! No, bless you; why, sometimes I am the most miserable creature on the earth; no life, no love, not any love for God, so miserable and wretched in my feelings, that I cannot go panting after the presence of God, for Him to lift up the light of His countenance; no spiritual life; there never was such a creature known as I. Hear what the apostle says: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." So where the kingdom of God is,

the devil is working, and all the corruptions of the heart boiling up against the good work; all the wretched tempers, ungodly nature boiling up like a pot, the blessed fruits of the Spirit opposing it, the soul groaning under it, confessing the wickedness that it feels, panting to God for deliverance.

So you see, where the kingdom of God dwells in the heart, there is the opposite. You that have a religion to which there is no opposition in your heart, can come and go to church or chapel, do your duty, pray, read, all comfortable within, pleased that you have done your duty, and are going very comfortably, happy in taking that text, Wisdom's "ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace"; you know no more about wisdom's ways than a horse. You may talk about it, yet know nothing about wisdom's ways. Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, but the people of God are so often in foolish ways, backsliding ways, so seldom brought up into wisdom's ways, to come and have a blessed sight of Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily, come by faith and have a blessed sight of their being interested in Him; there by faith again they look upon Him whom they have pierced. Oh, what pleasant paths, what paths of righteousness the Lord leads them into, what joy, and rejoicing. But, my dear friends, come to feel the opposition within of which the apostle speaks, the two natures opposing each other, what calamities does this bring into the soul. It brought the apostle to cry out: "The things that I love, I do not: the things that I hate, those I do."

Oh, what a difference between Paul and professors in the present day! They tell us the things they love they do, and the things they hate they avoid. But Paul says, "The things I hate I do, and the things I love I do not." Know then, poor child of God, thou art treading in the apostle's steps, feeling the depravity of thy heart boiling up, groaning against it, the spirit opposing, the soul hating it, but no power to overcome this, therefore groaning out to God, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" So where this kingdom of God's blessed grace is in the heart, sin opposes it, and it will oppose sin. Therefore the apostle says, "Even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." And blessed be God, dear soul, thou wilt in the end, for God says, "The elder shall submit to the younger." Sin shall never have dominion over thee. It may plague, pester thee, and lead thee captive at times, but blessed be God, the kingdom of His grace set up in thy heart is imperishable; the Lord will maintain it until the end, and bring thee off more than conqueror through Him that loved thee.

By the kingdom of God, we sometimes understand everlasting, eternal, ultimate glory; that immortal place of rest, where the Lord says,

“The wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.” All God’s children that have this kingdom set up in their heart, are at all times panting for their home; for here they find no rest, nothing but briars, thorns, difficulties, crosses, temptations, weakness, sinkings, despairing; sometimes afraid they never shall land on that happy shore, the kingdom of glory, to dwell with the Lord for ever and ever. Thou wilt, poor soul. Bless the Lord for ever He has secured it. The Lord has secured it, my dear friends; He has revealed it, He has told us so, He has passed His word, pledged His honour, pledged His justice, pledged His power, pledged His glory; and therefore it is impossible that even unbelief, or the workings of the devil, shall ever rob the people of God of eternal glory: for this kingdom is theirs. The Lord has given it you, poor, dear soul, from everlasting, before ever you were born, ever did good or evil; yea, it is His own eternal purpose from everlasting to everlasting. He has secured the thing for good.

Hear what the Lord says, and God’s word is far before the word of man, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” What a blessed declaration. “Fear not.” Now this little flock often are fearing they shall never have the kingdom. So ignorant, so unbelieving, so foolish, so hard-hearted, so carried away, so wretched, so unworthy, they cannot sometimes think ever it can be possible, that ever such souls as theirs can enter into eternal rest. They at times seem completely sunk with fears. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

And again, by way of encouragement, He will say to them on His right hand, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” Is there a soul here, a poor grasshopper, who believes there is a God, and can really think that ever the Lord purposed a thing and was disappointed in the preparation of it? Can you have such a mean, contemptible view of God, who spake the world into existence? He has prepared a kingdom, and can the devil, sin or unbelief, rob God’s children of what the Lord has prepared for them? Not all the obstacles laid in the way, all the fears, the ups and downs, the sinking and despairing, shall prevent the accomplishment of His purpose. Were they not all present in His own eternal purpose when He prepared the kingdom? Yes, my friends.

And again the Lord says, “I go away, and come again unto you.” He says, “I go to prepare a place for you ... that where I am, there ye may be also.” Is there any possibility of getting out of that? He does not say, I will give them an opportunity to believe; that they shall have it offered to them that believe; but, “I go to prepare a place for you ... that where I am, there ye may be also.”

And by the mouth of the apostle He seems to wind it up. The kingdom of eternal glory is theirs; they shall inherit it. Wherever the kingdom of grace is implanted, the kingdom of glory shall be entered upon. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again." Now you mind, my friends, God is so particular in His Word, so discriminating, so separating, not blending all together. The Lord's people are thus brought discriminating in to it. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again." "Us," His family. The "us," are God's holy nation; the "us," His peculiar people; the "us," His blessed family: heirs of God, and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. Poor, dear child of God, has He not begotten thee and me again and again to a lively hope, when so sunk at times that we have said all hope was taken away? Hath not the Lord revived our hope again, sealed it upon our heart? "Begotten again."

Now the psalm says, "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." The "us," says the apostle: "Begotten ... again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." He goes on, "To an inheritance." So you see, God has begotten us again, quickens and brings them up with hope to an inheritance. They are longing for this inheritance, panting for this inheritance, crying out, "This is not my rest, it is polluted." Their heart pants after Jesus to be with Him for ever. "To an inheritance." He tells us what it is, "incorruptible, and undefiled." This is just what these poor souls want, to be in a place where they will never be defiled, never see sin, never feel sin, never know what sin is; to be in a place where the presence of God, the glory of God, the beauty of God, and the grandeur of His blessed love, mercy and grace, shines for ever and ever: to be with Him, to be like Him, where there is no defilement to be met with, "an inheritance ... undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

The Lord knew what man would be guilty of, in speaking of such a glorious inheritance, such a blessed and happy place, that he would put it down to a man doing his duty, getting faith, being zealous, doing the best he could to enter into this inheritance, and after all he might lose it. The Lord knows what the carnality of man is, therefore He brings in this glorious truth, that neither death, hell nor sin should ever spoil it. "Reserved in heaven for you." What God appoints for you, "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

Ah, my dear friends, it does my soul good when God brings His truth into my heart. The truth of God is more precious than rubies; they are nothing but dung compared with the glorious truth of the ever blessed

God. "Buy the truth, and sell it not," and when tried in the furnace of affliction, that truth is as dear to me then as life. But, says one, such kind of preaching as this, preaches people into idleness and neglect. I do not know what it does with a parcel of empty professors, who have not the kingdom of God in their souls. Such preaching as this, with the mighty power of God coming with it, comes with life to the heart, enlivens them, animates and revives them. The poor soul that hath a little drop of this in the heart, is enabled under the sweet, enlivening teaching of the blessed Spirit to give body and soul up to God – to honour Him with body, soul and spirit. The more he drinks of this blessed river, the more fruitful in good works, the more he glorifies God in conversation, and the more he loves the law of God.

Secondly, we find the Lord says "Thine is the power." Then if the power be of God, it is not of man, I am sure of this; we need not take up half an hour in coming to this conclusion. "Thine is the power." So it is not a mixture of God and man together to make up the power. My dear friends, this sometimes so humbles my soul, that I can hardly walk; it shakes my very strength of body. What was it brought this mass into existence out of a dark chaos, to be made out of nothing and balanced in the empty air? That stretched out the heavens as a curtain? That placed millions of stars, the blazing sun, the moon reflecting from it to rule the night, and the sun to rule the day: what was this? Was it the joint concern of God and man? No, there was no man in existence. No man could help Him. It was His power that made the earth, when He said, "Let the earth come forth," and divided the earth from the waters, and said, "Let the dry land appear," and it was so. In a moment power went with the word; the thing was done in the twinkling of an eye.

Here, then, is the power of God displayed. "Thine is the power." What a power was that, which gathered the boundless waters into one spot, that compassed the seas, that furnished the earth with every plant, with all its verdure, all its glory! The power of God said, The earth shall have seed in itself, the earth shall produce it, that it shall grow up to maturity. What was it that could divide the seasons – the summer, winter, spring and autumn; the sun, wind, cold, heat, day and night? The power of God. What could bring particles of dust, form and shape them into man, so that he should have every member in its place, the eyes, ears and all the channels necessary for the body; whoever could form this from the dust but the power of God? He made man out of the dust of the earth – these earthly bodies to be living bodies, moving, rational bodies, and breathing into it the breath of life, man became a living soul. Here then is power. What could deliver the Israelites from the Red Sea, and from Pharaoh's bondage, but the power of God? He commanded the waters to divide, called them up like a wall, and made a way for the

ransomed of the Lord to pass over. What could bring the walls of Jericho down with a blast of the rams' horns? The power of God. They might have blown the rams' horns until now, if the power of God had not gone forth.

My dear friends, it is the power of God also that stops a sinner in his mad career, and prevents him going to hell. All men are born in sin and shapen in iniquity; his will, desires, and very nature are all set upon and delight in sin, and there is nothing that will ever put him out of conceit of sin, ever bring him to hate sin, ever bring him to turn his back finally from sin to God, but the mighty power of God entering into his heart; nothing else. What power was it that the Lord carried home to the heart of Saul of Tarsus? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" The power of God. My friends, the voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. The voice of the Lord stilleth the mighty waters. It is the voice of His mighty power entering into the sinner's heart that stops the sinner in his mad career, causes him to turn his back on the devil's kingdom, and brings him to God, and the kingdom of His blessed Son.

It is the power of God that strips a poor sinner of his self-righteousness. The children of God are Arminians born, would live Arminians, and die Arminians if the Lord would let them. They are born Arminians when the Lord opens their eyes, stops them by His mighty power, so that they cannot go on in sin; they cannot think the Lord will have mercy on them till they get better; they begin to work as hard as they can to keep down sin, do their duty, and strive to get holy again; so if they get better, they think the Lord would have mercy upon them; they think He never will till they get better. The Lord, my dear friends, in order to cure them of this, shows them the only way of reception is in His beloved Son; not in their own goodness; not in their works; that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness' sake to every one that believeth.

These poor souls want to get a righteousness of their own; and always when they come to wind up matters at night, going to bed, in searching the books over, to see what sort of day they have had, they generally find it is the worst day they have had, so that the poor sinner is obliged to confess what a sinner he is; he begins afresh to double his diligence; in the morning he will set to, downright; he will not be such a fool as to be led away from God, and if He will but spare him, he hopes he shall have a better day on the morrow. Perhaps, in the morning, he sleeps too long; he begins to work to keep down sin, anger, and everything contrary to God's blessed Word. Well, instead of this, sometimes his temper breaks out; something occurs that makes his temper rise up; he comes out with a hasty word, which turns his religion all topsy-turvy, down he comes, tumbling into the ditch, and his own clothes

abhor him. At it he goes again; he is a right down Arminian, and an Arminian he would remain if the Lord would let him; but in order to cure him, God brings the debt book up, opens it at the holy law, seals it home with His mighty power. He begins to see what this law is; what God, the Maker of that law is; that He is a righteous God. He comes to see and know he is entirely lost. That this law requires a holy, perfect life from beginning to end, without a single flaw, without a single thought contrary to it, else it damns the soul; when it came to pass thus with the poor soul, down goes his Arminianism. All he has is burnt up. By the righteousness of the law, all his good works are cursed; he cries out, "I have seen an end of all perfection: but Thy commandment is exceeding broad." Here he comes, stripped of all his works, a poor, condemned sinner to Christ. "Lord save, or I perish" is the language of his heart.

Here, my friends, the power of God brings the law home to his heart. What is the reason so many thousands who read the law, think they are doing God service, that they are obeying the law? Because the power of God never brought the law home to their conscience; never opened it up by the debt book being opened to their soul; they never had it brought home as a killing letter; never brought home so as to condemn them. The power of God is as much required, to reveal salvation to a poor sinner's heart, as to raise the dead. Under the work and power of God the poor soul has the power of salvation; blood and love are blessedly applied to his heart with power.

It is the power also of God that keeps His people from everything disgraceful, no thanks to themselves; kept by the power of God to the present moment; there is the power to preserve us on our way; the power of God enables us to stretch out our hands, and often our eyes; the power of God must move our heart, will and affections out towards His. There was one king of Israel for his mis-rule, one of the prophets, telling him the judgment of God should come upon him, stretched out his hand to smite him; while his hand was stretched out, it was all withered up in a moment, so that he had no power to bring it in again. My friends, whether we know it or not, it is the power of God that sustains us; have you never seen a poor creature in a moment, with all the use of his limbs taken away; another in a moment, restored again when God speaks [sic]: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," so the power of God; the Lord's children know and feel it is all by the power of God, every communication is made to their soul, and when they have it, they know it is the power of God. "Thine is the glory," and bless Him, "for ever, and ever."

For the glory is His. What could we do with the glory, how could we manage the glory? We, who are poor dust and ashes, we could not manage it, all the glory, that is the source of immortal joy, the bright

magnificence, the grandeur in its fullest sense; we could never do any thing. “Thine is the glory.” My dear friends, is it not heart-breaking, soul-ravishing, devil-conquering, world-vanquishing, sin-subduing, spirit-cheering, when but a little sparkling of God’s glory shines on our faculties? We never can see the glory of God, but as God’s glory shines into our hearts. But, my dear friends, the soul to have the heart filled, so as to give God the glory, it must be by the glory shining into the heart: “thy God thy glory.” The prophet says, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.” This soul could not arise, could not shine, could not give God the glory, till this glory comes, shines, and arises in his heart.

May God bless you and me, enabling us to say, Amen. The Lord’s people, under the teaching of the Spirit, can add their hearty Amen. The Lord grant it may be carried home to your souls, and He shall have all the glory. Amen.

A BELIEVING VIEW OF THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY DESIRABLE

Extract from a sermon preached by James Kidwell Popham in 1928

“Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty” (Isa. 33. 17).

If we get a sight of Christ we shall worship. To see the King in His beauty is to see a full Christ as to His Person. “For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” May the Lord help us to be very particular with respect to the Person of Christ and whether we know Him. A natural religiosity may be in a person, turning him to his Bible and to external religion, with all that kind of thing that pleases the religious disposition, and yet there be no saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus; and if anything is dreadful, this is it: to be ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

O what a fulness of power there is in Christ. He rules heaven and earth; He upholds all things which He has created by the word of His power. The Lion of the tribe of Judah prevailed in heaven to take “the book out of the right hand” of His Father and “to loose the seven seals thereof” and to look therein. He rules. May the Lord help us to believe it. He rules in the church, and the glory of God is in the church by Him world without end; and if we saw this more clearly, then we should be more concerned about the church of the living God.

THE SANCTIFYING EFFECT OF GRACE

by Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

“Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me Thy law graciously” (Psa. 119. 29).

Every deviation in principle and conduct from the strait and narrow path, is a “way of lying.” Every traveller in the way is the victim of his own delusion. “He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” (Isa. 44. 20). How needful then is the prayer, “Remove from me the way of lying.” If at any time we “should be removed from him that called us into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (see Gal. 1. 6); if erroneous views of doctrine should find a place in our system of faith; if our dependence upon Christ should be mixed with a secret leaning to our own strength or wisdom, then indeed, this prayer will apply most fitly to our case. And if, as the natural consequence of doctrinal errors, any looseness or inconsistency should be marked in our practice; if there should be any undue concessions to the world, any allowed sinful indulgence in the heart, any shrinking from the daily cross, then indeed will there be fresh occasion for this prayer: “Remove from me the way of lying.”

Most justly are ways such as these called “ways of lying.” They promise what it is impossible, in the nature of things, that they can ever perform; and prove to their deluded followers, that “they that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy” (Jon. 2. 8). We can be at no loss to trace these “ways of lying” to their proper source – to him, who, “when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8. 44). As, in the first instance of transgression, he “beguiled Eve through his subtilty” (see Gen. 3. 1-6; 2 Cor. 11. 3), so it is his constant employment throughout a world lying under his sway, to beguile the blinded children of disobedience (see Rev. 12. 9; 2 Cor. 4. 4) into the awful deception of mistaking their God, and into the blind choice of preferring “broken cisterns” to “the fountain of living waters” (Jer. 2. 13).

The means of the removal of the way of lying from us will be found in this prayer: “Grant me Thy law *graciously*” – not in the mere notional apprehension, but the law, according to the covenant promise, put into our minds, and written in our hearts (see Heb. 8. 10), producing delightful freedom – conformity. This application of the law under divine teaching introduces the light, and infuses the savour of the knowledge of Christ into the heart. And thus truth will gradually extirpate “lying”; Christ will reign instead of Belial.

As a safeguard from this evil, and a means of practical good, we may here remark the importance of keeping our hearts with all diligence; for out of them are the issues of life (see Prov. 4. 23). They are the leading wanderers that mislead the rest. Wherever we see wandering eyes, wandering feet and a wandering tongue, all flow from a heart that has taken its own liberty in wandering from God. Let then the “law” be our rule, and the Spirit – even “the Spirit of Truth” – our Guide; and we shall be directed and kept in the way, so clearly set out for us in the Word of God. And well will it be for us carefully to mark the gracious answers to this prayer, in a clearer perception of the truth of the law of God, a more sensitive shrinking from forbidden objects, and a more devoted attachment to the way of truth.

“A TRUE WITNESS DELIVERETH SOULS”

(Prov. 14. 25)

By John Warburton (1776-1857)

John Warburton had begun to preach the gospel, but was exercised by the fact that, as far as he knew, no one had been brought into gospel liberty under his preaching. He rightly felt this to be a vital mark of a God-sent minister.

But the devil started another thing which tried me sore – that I had never had any real proof that any one soul had been brought out of bondage into happy liberty through me; and how could I ever prove that God had sent me into the vineyard! “For,” said he, “whomsoever God sends with a message of salvation, He blesses that message to the deliverance of poor captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound, and the declaring of the acceptable year of the Lord.” Well, thought I, this is truth; for, if God has truly sent me, He will bless me, as His mouth, in the deliverance of poor souls from the bondage and curse of the law. But the devil could not sink me down so low as he had done before, for these precious words came again, “Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion,” and they so encouraged me that I was enabled to look to and hope in the Lord for the fulfilling of them in God’s own time; and I firmly believed that the Lord would make it manifest in His own season. And here I was kept, praying, watching and hoping for a long time.

By and by I was invited to supply at a little chapel in Liverpool, in Matthew Street, if I recollect right. Upon one particular time when I was there, I was led out in a very sweet manner in meditation upon these words: “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor

principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8. 38, 39). O, thinks I, what a time I shall have! I hope there will be the chapel full. But when the time came, and I read my text, I was so shut up, and such darkness and confusion overwhelmed me, that I could not tell what to do. All the sweet things that had so pleased me were fled away. I had hard stammering to keep on speaking that God had always loved His own, and that neither sin nor the devil could ever separate them from His love. I kept repeating it for about twenty-five minutes, and then gave it up all at once, and said, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

As soon as ever I could get down out of the pulpit, I took my hat, and through the chapel I went as hard as ever I was able, and was determined to take the first coach in the morning and go home, for I verily believed that if ever I were to show my face again there, the people would cry open shame upon me. As soon as I got out of the chapel I went with all the haste I could to my lodging, afraid to look at anybody, or that anybody should look at me; calling myself a thousand fools for ever coming to the place, and wishing that I had never opened my mouth, for I thought it was now plain and evident that the Lord had left me.

Thus I went on, out of one street into another; but I observed that a woman kept close after me for some time, which I could not make out. I tried to evade her, but could not. At last she stepped up to me and said, “Pray, sir, are not you the minister that has been preaching in Matthew Street Chapel tonight?” I verily thought the woman had followed me when she spoke of my preaching, to reprove me for my presumption in attempting to preach. I told her, but so crossly that I could hardly bear myself, that I was the man who had been in the pulpit, and attempted it, but that there had been no *preaching*. On this, the poor woman fell into a flood of tears, and hoped that I would pardon her for taking the liberty to speak to me, for she was not worthy; but she could not help following me to tell me that she had reason to bless God that she had been there, for it had been *preaching* to her, and such preaching, too, as she had never heard before.

At this my soul was melted within me, and I asked her what it was she had heard that was so sweet to her. She spoke with such sweetness, humility and confidence, that she had received the pardon of all her sins. “For,” continued she, “I have been for months nearly in black despair, and was going this very night to the water to drown myself, being determined to try the worst of it, for I believed I could never be in a worse hell. As I was going by the chapel they were singing, and it struck my mind to turn in. When the service was concluded, I thought it would be dark, and then I could go to the water unperceived. So I went in and,

blessed be the Lord, the text and all that you said came into my heart, and God told me He had loved me with an everlasting love, and that my sins, though many, were all forgiven; and many more precious things which quite overcame me with wonder and adoration to the God of all my mercies."

My heart was too full to talk much with the poor woman, for I felt my very soul so melted down at the dear feet of a precious Jesus for giving testimony to the Word of His grace through such a worthless pipe, that I was not for going home now, but was willing to be anything or nothing that God might be glorified. And O how sweetly the old text came, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion." What a sweet night I had in meditating upon the Word of God. Promise upon promise flowed in so fast that it appeared to me the whole Bible was full of them. O how sweet and precious were these words of Paul: "It *pleased* God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1. 21). "Well," cried I, "and why should it *displease* me?"

Then O what blessed confidence I had that God had sent me to the work; and now I had a full testimony, and I really believed it was out of the power of the devil ever to shake my confidence again. My soul was for a time kept in sweet confidence that God was with me, and would ever go before me, though in such trials in temporal things that I did not know how to get bread from day to day. But when God gives peace, who or what can give trouble? The Lord went on to give testimony to the Word of His grace from my poor mouth, and made it manifest that He was with me by signs following. This was establishing and comforting to my soul, for I verily believe that if God had not owned my poor labours in delivering souls from bondage into liberty, I must have given it all up. But the Lord saith, "A true witness delivereth souls" (Prov. 14. 25).

UNSEEN LOVE

by Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

"(For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which He sware unto them" (Deut. 4. 31).

When God hides His face from His child, His heart may be towards Him, as Joseph, when he spoke roughly to his brethren, and made them believe he would take them for spies; still his heart was towards them, and he was as full of love as ever he could hold. He was fain to go aside and weep. So God is full of love to His children, even when He seems to look strange at them. And as Moses' mother, when she put her child

into the ark of bulrushes, and went away from it, yet still her eye was towards it; the babe wept, and the mother wept too. So God when He goes aside, as if He had forsaken His children, yet He is full of sympathy and love towards them; God may change His countenance, but not His heart. It is one thing for God to desert, another to disinherit: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" (Hos. 11. 8). This is a metaphor taken from a father going to disinherit his son, and while he is going to set his hand to the deed, his bowels begin to melt, and to yearn over him. Though he is a prodigal child, yet he is a child. So God says in effect, "How shall I give thee up? Though Ephraim hath been a rebellious son, yet he is a son, I will not disinherit him." God's heart may be full of love, when there is a veil upon His face. The Lord may change His dispensation towards His children, but not His disposition. So that the believer may say, I am adopted, and let God do what He will with me, let Him take the rod, or the staff, it is all one, for He loves me.

THE LORD TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY

*Prayer meeting address given at Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham,
on Wednesday, August 1st, 2018*

Reading: Luke 11. 1-13

The great burden upon the Saviour's heart here was to encourage His people in prayer. And, as always, He set the pre-eminent example. "He was praying in a certain place." It seems to imply that He was praying audibly, publicly. His little band of disciples gathered around Him and heard Him in prayer. How distinctive the prayers of the dear Saviour are! Ours are mingled with sin and unbelief. There are many tares among the wheat. But His were pure, undefiled, wholly-sincere desires before His heavenly Father. And, when He prayed, He prayed not just for Himself in that onerous work that was laid upon Him by His heavenly Father to undertake. Friends, He also prayed for His people. How dear they were to Him! He says in John 17, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world." What a wonderful thing to have an interest in the prayers of the dear Saviour! Peter would never have come out of Satan's sieve had that not been the case. "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." In the Book of Job we read of a man going down into the pit. Had that one not had an Advocate with the Father, then no ransom would have been found. But, blessed be God, a ransom is found for the coming sinner who comes feeling his guilt, his unworthiness, his wretchedness and his debt to the law. Everything may be against him. But, "I have found a ransom." What a wonderful ransom has been found in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ!

When the Lord ended His prayer, His disciples turned to Him and asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” We are not told how John the Baptist taught his disciples, with what words he exhorted them. The one thing we can say is that John, good, godly man that he was – he was an eminent saint and a burning and a shining light – yet he could not impart to his disciples the spirit and the grace of prayer. But the Lord Jesus can. And that is how He teaches His people to pray, because real prayer is the fruit of the Spirit in the heart; that is what real prayer is. It is the Holy Ghost moving in that sinner’s heart, teaching him to confess, teaching him to mourn, teaching him to ask, teaching him to wrestle, teaching him to come, and teaching him to give God no rest until he gets the answer for which he has been taught to pray. And, remember, there is that blessed aid of the Spirit: He “maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” The Lord knows our weakness in prayer and how weak we are in it.

But there were two words that stood out in meditation. Firstly, the Lord, both in Matthew’s and Luke’s gospels, gave the pattern of prayer for His dear disciples. It is not that we have to take the exact words on our lips every time we pray. But the things which our Lord commends here to pray for, and the manner in which He sets it before them, is the perfect pattern for us in prayer. In particular, those two words stand right out: “*Our Father*.” This is a tremendously-deep subject, and a very blessed one. Blessed are those here tonight who have had the answer to Anne Steele’s prayer:

“My God, my Father, blissful name!
O may I call Thee mine?”

(H. 1083)

“*Our Father*.” In what way are God’s people able to say this? Of course, in one sense, in the creative sense, He is the Father of all creation. Creation is His handiwork, and He provides for His creatures. So, in that sense we can say He is the creative Father of the whole of Adam’s fallen race, reminding us we are accountable to Him as His creatures. We are answerable to Him, even as a child is answerable to his parent in that creative sense. The whole of Adam’s race is answerable to our God. But that relationship, friends, is not the one spoken of here by the dear Saviour. That relationship will not save a sinner, neither you nor me. We may be wonderfully blessed in providence. We may have great success in our lives and we may go to the pinnacle of our career. We may be surrounded by every providential good God could give. But, if your soul is never wrought on by the Holy Ghost, if your soul is never indwelt by the Holy Ghost, then, dear friends, all that you may have attained this side of the grave, the grave will

swallow up and leave you naked and bare before the great God to whom you owe everything in that great day of judgement and justice.

But God's children have a nearer relationship. They are *adopted*. The Lord Jesus Christ, as the dear Son of God, is not an adopted Son. He is the Son by nature. He is equal with His heavenly Father and equal with the Holy Ghost. And I would just say this: when we pray to one of the Persons of the Trinity, we are praying to all Three. When we pray to the dear Spirit, we are praying to the other Persons of the Trinity. When we pray to the dear Saviour, the other two dear Persons are engaged in that prayer, like as when we pray to the Father. He is one God, and yet here we are pointed particularly to the first Person of the glorious Trinity. The Lord Jesus Christ, of course, is the Son of God by nature. He is verily God, very God as much as the Father and the Spirit.

So the Lord Jesus Christ has, as it were, a divine right in His divinity to say of God the Father, "My Father." Yet, He assumed that human nature, body and soul, and became a Man. In that holy humanity there dwelt "the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The Spirit was given "without measure" to Him. In that sense, as we read in Hebrews 2: "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." The One who sanctifies is the Saviour; those who are sanctified are His children, "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He is the elder Brother of the family. The sons and the daughters are brothers and sisters to Him in that deep, spiritual sense. Oh, how wonderful to think we may join with the dear Son of God in our nature and say, "*Our* Father!" "*Our* Father," because He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! When He ascended on high He said, "I ascend unto *My* Father, and *your* Father; and to *My* God, and *your* God." Oh, to say, "*Our* Father," in its deepest sense, is to come to the Father through His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. "*Our* Father." God's dear children are adopted. They are taken from the family of the children of wrath in which they are born by nature, and they are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And thus they become part of the family of God. Those words, "Abba, Father" are suitable for them then, and, as they approach their God, "Our Father."

Now, dear friends, when a child is adopted, it is a wonderful thing. It is a wonderful thing when parents are constrained to give a child a good home. We have seen the evidence of it. But the second point I want to make is this: when God adopts His children He gives them a nature, too: a new nature. Oh, how wonderful! Adopted, yes. We are not God's children by nature. We are not only put among the children, but we are given the nature of the children! This is a great grace. Every one of God's dear people is an adopted person, and every one of them is given that new nature.

What is this nature? Again, it was quoted in prayer: “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” And, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” “*Our Father.*” What access we have here! The best of all fathers, who knows best what to give us and what to withhold from us, how to lead us, how to guide us, how to provide for us and how to undertake for us! “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.” Oh, friends, He is a wise Father, He is a kind Father and He is a just Father! Those of us who have been parents, we hope we have done our best for our children. But we look back on many mistakes because we are poor sinners. But this is the *perfect* Father. He will never cause His child a needless tear. He will cause them some tears, and if He does, they are needful. He never causes needless tears. Blessed be God for that.

And, even when His children do wander, and we do; even when the prodigal son was deep, deep down in that far off country wasting his time, he was still a son. Nothing could alter that. He was not behaving like a son and he was not enjoying the privileges of a son until he came to be in want, and then he wanted the privileges that belonged to the family. And he had them, didn't he? The best robe, the ring on the finger, the shoes on the feet, the fatted calf and, above all, the kiss from his father; that kiss that covered all the foolishness and folly of that wandering, prodigal son. “*Our Father.*” Has He ever kissed you? Has He ever kissed me? Friends, if He ever has, you have been loved with an everlasting love. It is a love that cannot change; a love that will last beyond your last breath; an ocean you will swim in, in a spiritual sense, in eternity to come. Bless God for a kiss. “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine.” Some people are very concerned about their genealogy, and it may be a very interesting subject. But, dear friends, when all is said and done, Adam is our father. We are fallen in Adam. But what a mercy if we now have a relationship, by grace, with the second Adam. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

The third thing I want to bring before you is that little expression: “Which of you shall have a friend?” Here the Lord is speaking of a particular need that had arisen. He uses the illustration of a man who has a friend who comes to visit him and he has nothing to set before him. What is he to do? At midnight he goes to one of his other friends and asks him to lend him three loaves. At first the friend was not very willing. “Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.” But the very pressing need of his friend overcame all his objections and all his prejudices. In the end he got up and gave him what he needed. But friends, as we read that, I thought of something very precious. “Which of you shall have a friend?”

The Father I have just spoken of is also a Friend as is His dear Son: a Friend who “loveth at all times.” He is that Friend who “sticketh closer than a brother.” “Which of you shall have a friend?” If you have this Friend, you have all you need. Think of it! He went “unto him at midnight.”

“Which of you shall have a friend?” I could not help but think of that little verse, and the dear, dying thief. It was midnight with the dear Saviour. It was His darkest hour. The wrath of God poured out upon the dear Redeemer, enduring in His holy soul agonies we cannot begin to describe! Midnight! Perhaps the most inconsiderate time for any sinner to approach, in one sense, if you understand me aright. So taken up with the awesome load He was bearing! Did He turn the dying thief away? No, he welcomed him! “Which of you shall have a Friend, and shall go unto Him at midnight?” Do you have “midnight” in your path? A dark path, with no light? Go to this dear Friend. He will not gainsay you. He will not turn you away. He loves a coming sinner. And, though He is now sat upon His throne in glory above, He is as willing to attend to His dear people’s needs at midnight, as He was to the dying thief on the brink of eternity. He was the one for whom the Lord found a ransom. “Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.” The Lord Jesus is the ransom through His precious, sin-atoning blood.

So, dear friends, though this friend in our parable here was somewhat reluctant, the Friend with a capital “F” is not. He is able to save, able to deliver, able to succour, able to do and able to keep. What is He not able to do? Oh, if only you had a larger view of Him, all your unbelief would flee away. With such a Father to go to and such a friend to approach, all those questionings should flee away. Remember, the dying thief did not approach feeling he was an elect vessel of mercy. He did not feel like that, did he? He was an elect vessel of mercy, but he did not feel to be. He was a guilty sinner on the brink of eternity, needing a Saviour, and on that ground he came. And you may come on the same ground, on just the same ground.

Now the last thing I want to bring before you is this. Our Lord here sets before us how wide we should open our mouth in prayer. “If ye then, being evil” – there is no doubt about that, is there? – “know how to give good gifts unto your children” – yes, and you give what you can with the means you have for their best – “how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?” I know that there are ever so many things for which to ask. You need doors to be opened, mountains to be laid low and crooked things to be made straight. You need grace, strength and patience; I know all of that. But, my dear friends, when all is said and done, the Holy Spirit is your greatest of all needs. And, if He gives you that gift, everything else will fall into place. Everything, because it is the gift He gives to His dear children. In giving

that gift to His dear children, you can be sure that having given His dear Son for them, and giving His Holy Spirit to them, what else will He withhold? The unspeakable gift of His dear Son has been given for His children, and the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost has made them His children. If these two unspeakable gifts flow from the heart of this loving, heavenly Father, then, dear friends, what else will He withhold? He knows your need. Paul summed it all up in Philippians 4: "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Yes, a Father, and a Friend. An unlimited resource! We give to our children, and as we give, our resources are reduced. We do not complain about that, but when God gives His resources, they are never reduced. Never! They are no less when He has given than before He gave, because He is infinite. Thus, dear friends, your need tonight, whatever it may be, is within the blessed remit and within the blessed resource; the compass of this great God whom our Lord commends to His disciples. Tell Him; tell Him what you need. Lay it before Him, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."

May God add His blessing. Amen.

A SABBATH DAY ON ANIWA

By John G. Paton (1824-1862)

The following extract from the autobiography of John Paton, missionary to the New Hebrides, is a remarkable testament to the power of the gospel among the natives in Aniwa. Although the order of worship differs from our own in some respects, the evident blessing of God in that remote island and the dedication of the worshippers is in sad contrast to the indifference that characterises religion for the most part in our day.

Our life and work will reveal itself to the reader, if I briefly outline a Sabbath day on Aniwa. Breakfast is partaken of immediately after daylight. The church bell then rings, and ere it stops every worshipper is seated. The natives are guided in starting by the sunrise, and are forward from farthest corners at this early hour. The first service is over in about an hour; there is an interval of twenty minutes; the bell is again rung, and the second service begins. We follow the ordinary Presbyterian ritual, but in every service I call upon an elder or a church member to lead in one of the prayers, which they do with great alacrity and with much benefit to all concerned.

As the last worshipper leaves, at close of second service, the bell is sounded twice very deliberately, and that is the signal for the opening of

my communicants' class. I carefully expound the church's Shorter Catechism and show how its teachings are built upon holy Scripture, applying each truth to the conscience and the life. This class is conducted all the year round, and from it, step by step, our church members are drawn as the Lord opens up their way, the most of them attending two full years at least before being admitted to the Lord's table. This discipline accounts for the fact that so very few of our baptized converts have ever fallen away – as few in proportion, I verily believe, as in churches at home. Meantime, many of the church members have been holding a prayer meeting amongst themselves in the adjoining school – a thing started of their own free accord – in which they invoke God's blessing on all the work and worship of the day.

Having snatched a brief meal of tea, or a cold dinner cooked on Saturday, the bell rings within an hour, and our Sabbath school assembles – in which the whole inhabitants, young and old, take part, myself superintending and giving the address, as well as questioning on the lesson, Mrs. Paton teaching a large class of adult women, and the elders and best readers instructing the ordinary classes for about half an hour or so.

About one o'clock the school is closed, and we then start off on our village tours. An experienced elder, with several teachers, takes one side of the island this Sabbath, I with another company taking the other side, and next Sabbath we reverse the order. A short service is conducted in the open air, or in schoolrooms, at every village that can be reached; and on their return they report to me cases of sickness, or any signs of progress in the work of the Lord. The whole island is thus steadily and methodically evangelised.

As the sun, is setting I am creeping home from my village tour; and when darkness begins to approach, the canoe drum is beat at every village, and the people assemble under the banyan tree for evening village prayers. The elder or teacher presides. Five or six hymns are joyously sung, and five or six short prayers offered between, and thus the evening hour passes happily in the fellowship of God. On a calm evening, after Christianity had fairly taken hold of the people, and they loved to sing over and over again their favourite hymns, these village prayer meetings formed a most blessed close to every day, and set the far-distant bush echoing with the praises of God.

At the mission house, before retiring to rest, we assembled all the young people and any of our villagers who chose to join them. They sat round the dining room floor in rows, sang hymns, read verses of the Bible, and asked and answered questions about the teaching of the day. About nine o'clock we dismissed them, but they pleaded to remain and hear our family worship in English:

“Missi, we like the singing! We understand a little. And we like to be where prayer is rising!”

Thus Sabbath after Sabbath flowed on in incessant service and fellowship. I was often wearied enough, but it was not a “weary” day to me, nor what some would call Puritanical and dull. Our hearts were in it, and the people made it a weekly festival. They had few other distractions; and amongst them “The worship” was an unfailing sensation and delight. As long as you gave them an opportunity to sing, they knew not what weariness was. When I returned to so-called civilisation, and saw how the Lord’s day was abused in *white* Christendom, my soul longed after the holy Sabbaths of Aniwa!

PAUL’S READINESS TO SUFFER

By John Flavel (1628-1691)

“Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21. 13).

Wherein the text is opened, and the doctrine propounded

The divine providence is not more signally discovered in governing the motions of the clouds, than it is in disposing and ordering the spirits and motions of the ministers of the gospel, who, in a mystical sense, are fruitful clouds, to dispense the showers of gospel blessings to the world. The motion of the clouds is not spontaneous, but they move as they are moved by the winds; neither can gospel ministers choose their own stations, and govern their own motions, but must go when and where the Spirit and providence of God directs and guides them, as will evidently appear in that dangerous voyage to Jerusalem in which the apostle was at this time engaged: “And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem” (Acts 20. 22) [bound in the spirit, alluding to the watery vapours which are bound up in clouds, and conveyed according to the motions of the wind]. This journey was full of danger; Paul foresaw his business was not only to plant the gospel at Jerusalem with his doctrine, but to water it also with his blood; but so effectually was his will determined by the will of God, that he cheerfully complies with his duty therein, whatsoever difficulties and dangers did attend it.

And indeed it was his great advantage that the will of God was so plainly and convincingly revealed to him touching this matter; for no sooner did he employ himself to obey this call of God, but he is presently assaulted by many strong temptations to decline it.

The first rub he met in his way was from the disciples of Tyre, who pretending to speak by the Spirit, said unto Paul, “that he should not go

up to Jerusalem" (Acts 21. 4). The Lord by this trying the spirit of His apostle much, as He did the young prophet coming from Judea to Bethel, (see 1 Kings 13. 18), but not with like success.

His next discouragement was at Caesarea, where Agabus (whom Dorotheus affirms to be of the seventy-two disciples, and had before prophesied of the famine in the reign of Claudius, which accordingly came to pass) takes Paul's girdle, and binding his own hands and feet with it, said, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts 21. 11). And surely he was not ignorant what he must expect whenever he should fall into their hands; yet neither could this affright him from his duty.

But then, last of all, he meeteth with the sorest trial from his dearest friends, who fell upon him with passionate entreaties and many tears, beseeching him to decline that journey: O they could not give up such a minister as Paul was! This even melted him down, and almost broke his heart, which yet was easier to do, than to turn him out of the path of obedience. Where, by the way, we may note two things:

Firstly, That divine precept, not providence, is to rule out our way of duty.

Secondly, That no hindrances or discouragements whatsoever will justify our neglect of a known duty.

All these rubs he passes over; all these discouragements he overcame, with this heroic and truly Christian resolution in the text: "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

In which words we have,

1. A loving and gentle rebuke.
2. A quieting and calming argument

Firstly, he lovingly and gently rebukes their fond and inordinate sorrow for his departure, in these words: "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart?" As if he should say, What mean these passionate entreaties and tempting tears? To what purpose is all this ado? They are but so many snares of Satan, to turn my heart out of the way of obedience. You do as much as in you lies to break my heart; let there be no more of this, I beseech you.

Secondly, he labours to charm their unruly passions with a very quieting and calming argument: "For I am ready," &c. I am prepared and fitted for the greatest sufferings which shall befall me in the pursuit of my duty; be it a prison, or be it death, I am provided for either. Liberty is dear, and life much dearer, but Christ is dearer than either.

But what was there in all this, to satisfy them whose trouble it was to see him so forward? Let the words be considered, and we shall find

divers things in them to satisfy and quiet their hearts, and make them willing to give him up.

First, “I am ready.” That is, God hath fitted and prepared my heart for the greatest sufferings; this is the work of God. Flesh and blood would never be brought to this, were not all its interests and inclinations subdued, and overruled by the Spirit of God. What do ye therefore in all this, but work against the design of God, who hath fitted and prepared my heart for this service?

Secondly, “I am ready.” That is, my will and resolution stands in a full bent, my heart is fixed, you cannot therefore study to do me a greater injury, than to discompose and disorder my heart again, by casting such temptations as these in my way, to cause the flesh to rebel, and the enemy that is within to renew his opposition.

Thirdly, “I am ready.” That is, my heart is so fixed to follow the call of God, whatever shall befall me, that all your tears and entreaties to the contrary are but cast away; they cannot alter my fixed purpose; you had as good be quiet, and cheerfully resign me to the will of God.

Thus you see the equipage and preparation of Paul’s spirit to receive both bonds and death for Christ at Jerusalem; this made him victorious over the temptations of friends, and the malice and cruelty of his enemies. By this readiness and preparation of his mind, he was carried through all, and enabled to finish his course with joy. From hence the observation is,

Doctrine: That it is a blessed and excellent thing for the people of God to be prepared, and ready for the hardest services, and worst of sufferings, to which the Lord may call them.

This is that which every gracious heart is reaching after, praying, and striving to obtain; but, ah! how few will attain it! Certainly there are not many among the multitudes of the professors of this generation that can say as Paul here did, “I am ready to be bound, or to die for Christ.”

ACQUIESCING WITH GOD’S RIGHTEOUS WILL

By James Smith (1802-1862)

“Thou hast done right” (Nehemiah 9. 33)

The Lord cannot but do right, that is generally acknowledged; but to be persuaded of this, to realise it and be influenced by it, under severe and heavy trials, is exceedingly difficult. But the Lord never acts but according to the plan which He has drawn, which plan is the perfection of wisdom, and proceeds from His infinite love. What He does, He purposed to do; and He purposed to do it because it was the very best thing that could be done. We are poor, hasty, selfish, dissatisfied

creatures, ready to sit in judgment upon what God does, and to complain of His dealings without the least cause. But there are times when looking back upon our losses, crosses, sufferings and trials we can say, and say it heartily, "Thou hast done right." Doubtless Jacob felt this, when he embraced his son Joseph in Egypt; and Job also, when God had blessed his latter end more than the beginning; and Daniel also, when he was taken up out of the den and no manner of hurt was found on him, because he believed in his God. But it is to feel it in the trial, to confess it *under* the affliction, that is most desirable. Let us then, when the Lord tries our graces, or buffets us for our faults, endeavour to say, "*Thou hast done right.*"

With peaceful steps thy race of duty run,
 God nothing does, nor suffers to be done,
 But thou wouldst do thyself, couldst thou but see,
 The end of all events as well as He.

A SINNER SAVED BY GRACE

By William Tingley

Caroline Stephens, of Lindfield, Sussex, passed away on June 4th, 1878, aged 39. She was like the rest of Adam's children, and followed the course of this world for about twenty-six years. What dear Kent said was true of her:

"Judgments nor mercies ne'er can sway
 Their roving feet to wisdom's way." (H. 76)

When at the above age, her husband was removed from time into an eternal world, leaving her a widow, with two children. We have reason to believe that his death was, so to speak, her life; for then the fountains of the great deep began to be broken up, and her heart to see and feel sin in the light of truth. She was very much taken from grieving over her loss through mourning over herself and sin, and the miserable condition she was in by sinning against the Lord. Not being willing as yet to know the worst of her condition, she strove with all her might to stifle these convictions, gadding about and going into carnal amusement to drown her miseries. She would therefore say in after days, that what Mr. Hart said of himself was true of her:

"I strove to fling my life away,
 And damn my soul; but strove in vain."

In this condition she went on for some time, sinning and repenting; so much so, that her poor life was a burden; and many awful temptations

she had to put an end to her miserable existence. But the dear Lord did not leave her here. To deepen His own work, she was laid upon a bed of affliction with smallpox, which brought her near to death's door. She has many times told me that the pains of her body were nothing in comparison with the pangs of a guilty conscience. So great was her misery, with the sense of an angry God as revealed against sin in a broken law, that she felt to be on the very borders of despair, with all the sins of her life rising like pointed mountains before her eyes, and not a glimpse of hope.

But, honours crown the name of the Lord, having thus brought down her heart with labour, He then began to show her something of His blessed salvation. The first words that gave her any hope were: "Trust in Christ." Then new glories opened on her eyes. There was revealed a blessed Mediator between God and man. There was revealed a willing and able Saviour, One who could save to the uttermost. Then the scales of ignorance dropped from her eyes, that she knew something of that scripture: "A just God and a Saviour." Two or three days after this, she felt the blood of sprinkling by faith applied to her conscience with a real power, and thus she seemed to be brought into a new world; old things were passed away, and behold, all things were become new, and she felt that neither sin, death, nor hell had any dominion over her.

In this blessed frame she continued for some time, and this season of sweet and blessed intercourse with her Lord was one never to be forgotten by her. But she soon had to learn another lesson, for the days of darkness began to come on. As she sat under a legal ministry, there was nothing to meet her case, or take the stumbling blocks out of her way, as they could not describe the deep travail of her soul. Thus she found that they were physicians of no value. However, the Lord did not leave her; for at this time that portion was applied with power to her soul: "Now the just shall live by faith." Here again new mysteries opened upon her mind, so that she saw and felt that her standing was safe upon the Rock of eternal ages, Christ Jesus, even though she was not enjoying the same comfort which she had so recently possessed.

She now went from place to place in search of truth, and was well-nigh wearied in the pursuit. The enemy of souls, on account of this, set in upon her with the temptation that all she had experienced was a delusion, as she could not find a fellow-traveller. She almost came to the conclusion to give all up, when this scripture came with some power to her mind: "Will ye also go away?" She exclaimed, "No, my blessed Lord; I cannot leave Thee. But O do show me the way wherein I should go."

About this time she heard of some friends meeting at Scaynes Hill; but as they were Baptists, and held such high doctrine, she was afraid to

go and hear them. At length, being starved out, she ventured to go. I think the first minister she heard there was the late Mr. Blanchard, and this was the first gospel sermon she had ever listened to. "Now," she said, "I have found the man who has walked the same road as myself." Here arose a new trial, as her parents were members of the Congregational chapel. She was dependent in a great measure upon them for a livelihood, having an affliction which often rendered her unable to labour for the bread which perisheth, so that she found it very hard to flesh and blood to come out and leave them.

In the midst of this perplexity, she came to Scaynes Hill one Sabbath afternoon, when Mr. S. Kevill, of Deptford, was supplying there. He had spoken from a portion in the morning which he intended to resume in the afternoon, but in the interval between the times of worship his mind was altogether taken away from that text, and fixed upon another portion of the Word. He therefore said when he began in the afternoon that he was persuaded there was a blessing for someone present, which was true in the case of our departed friend. She has said that he so traced out her path that the Lord had brought her from the very commencement that she fell down before the Word, and reported that God was in the minister of a truth. This altogether settled the point about leaving her friends, and nailed her ear to the doorpost.

After this, the subject of believers' baptism began to press heavily upon her mind, and she longed to lay herself out to the glory of God. In the course of time, she was baptized, with three others by Mr. K., and lived a consistent life till her death.

Our departed friend was a dear lover of what is often called "only a prayer-meeting," as well as of the preached Word. It was a rare thing to find her seat empty, either week night or Sabbath, although she had a distance of about two miles to walk. We might just state that, although our friend was so singularly blessed with the light of the Lord's countenance, she had afterwards to travel much by night, which was a great affliction to her soul. She would often cry out with the prophet, "My leanness, my leanness; woe is me." Once, in hearing Mr. Sharp, the Lord was pleased to bless the word to her soul; and she had a solemn conviction that she should have a season of great darkness to pass through, but that when she came into the swellings of Jordan, she would be blessed as at the beginning, when first the Lord was pleased to speak peace to her soul. This conviction was fulfilled to the very letter.

We must pass over a great deal of our friend's history, and come to her last days. Her death was rather sudden, and to us unlooked for, as she was in tolerably good health up to last May, when she was called upon to attend an afflicted friend. There she fell sick, and came home. Just as she reached home, she had a remarkable spirit of prayer poured

out upon her, to a degree she had seldom experienced in her life. This made her feel certain there was something very heavy before her. A few days after, a portion of the hymn beginning, "Hark, my soul; it is the Lord," came with power to her mind, especially the last two verses:

"Thou shalt see My glory soon,
When the work of grace is done;
Partner of My throne shalt be;
Say, poor sinner, lovest thou Me?" (H. 968)

Her heart responded:

"Lord, it is my chief complaint,
That my love is cold and faint;
Yet I love Thee, and adore;
O for grace to love Thee more."

She continued to get worse, and her bodily sufferings were very great, but she was never heard to murmur or complain. She accepted it as the punishment of her iniquity, for she knew she had departed from the Lord in her affections, though not outwardly. She was naturally of a very cheerful disposition, and was sometimes carried beyond the bounds of prudence. This made bitter work for her in her last days. When asked how she was by a friend, she replied that she needed every breath to be prayer. It was quite heart-rending to hear her pleading with the Lord to appear again, to strengthen and support her soul under this heavy affliction, and to make her faithful to the end, as He knew her soul's desire was to serve Him in spirit and in truth. She besought Him to be with her in the valley of the shadow of death, and to bless her dear children, that they might be born again of the Spirit. Her dear mother saying hers had been a path of affliction, she replied that it had been all in mercy. Her breathing was very difficult, and made it trying for her to converse much. She seemed to revive a little, and we were in hopes of her recovery.

On Sunday night she was taken worse, and her pains were excruciating, and all through the week she scarcely closed her eyes. When she did not pray aloud, she seemed in inward prayer. She cried out, "Lord, do come, I pray Thee, and bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thee. Do not leave the work of Thine own hands. In wrath remember mercy. Bring me out from all spiritual pride. If I am in any wrong, show me. Don't let me be deceived, or others be deceived by me." It was remarked to her, "You are a witness for God's truth." "Yes," she said, "what God has burnt into my heart can never be erased, but God would be just if He sent me to hell, but for everlasting love." She said to one of the friends, "Don't I groan, and make a noise?" "Yes," was the reply, "you do; but Jesus groaned on the cross." She repeated,

“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
 Wandering from the fold at God;
 He, to save my soul from danger,
 Interposed His precious blood,” (H. 199)

and I do want the bread of life. Do, Lord, forgive me, and give me an abundant entrance into Thy everlasting kingdom.”

On another occasion, when I was taking leave of her, she said, “Give my love to brother W. and his wife; and tell them the things I have professed, and the ministry of Mr. S. Kevill will do to live and die upon.”

On Monday her breathing was so distressing, and her bodily weakness so great, that she was obliged to be supported by the arms of kind friends. She was getting almost too weak to speak. A friend who was with her heard her say, “He has weakened my strength in the way. Nothing in my hands I bring.” Shortly afterwards, the dear Lord manifested Himself in a very blessed manner. She sat up without our help, and broke out singing for quite half an hour, her friends looking at her with astonishment. Her eyes were sparkling, and her countenance shone with such glory that we thought every moment she would sing herself away to everlasting bliss. Almost the last words she said were, “Jesus is All in all to me.”

“Let all the ransomed of the Lord
 Exalt His name with one accord,
 And Hallelujah sing;
 Adore the dying Friend of man,
 And bless Him highly as you can;
 He is your God and King.”

Her last words were: “Hallelujah! Amen.”

THE SUN'S BEHIND THE CLOUD

In that lone night, dear child of God,
 When all around is drear
 When the smiling sun's behind the cloud,
 And pain and grief are near,

O never think, dear child of God,
 In that dark trying hour,
 That thou art left a lonely one
 In Satan's grasping power.

No, no! 'Tis true the sun's withdrawn,
 And thy complaints are loud.

But recollect, dear child of God
The sun's behind the cloud.

The bright and heart-reviving sun
Is an unchanging sphere.
It undergoes no varied form,
Nor change from atmosphere.

And so thy Jesus is the same,
Though sorrow may enshroud;
He loves thee with undying love,
Although behind the cloud.

Thy pathway, thorny as it seems
Is yet so wisely planned,
That every point is ordered by
A loving Father's hand.

Then recollect, dear child of God,
That though so sadly bowed,
All's well, all's well, e'en though it be
Thy Sun's behind the cloud.

Soon there will be no shading clouds
In that bright land of peace,
Where briny tears are wiped away,
And sorrows ever cease.

Ah, there thou'lt see Him face to face,
Amidst that happy crowd,
And never have to sadly say,
My sun's behind the cloud.

Then come, dear, trembling child of God,
In that dark hour of night,
Think not thy Lord is not the same
Because He's out of sight.

No, no! He sees thy low estate,
He knows thy head is bowed,
And He is Jesus, Jesus still,
Although behind the cloud.

Sidney Pepler (1886-1961)

Words are but the body, the garment, the outside of prayer; sighs are nearer the heart work. A dumb beggar getteth an alms at Christ's gates, even by making signs, when his tongue cannot plead for him; and the rather, because he is dumb.... Tears have a tongue, and grammar, and language, that our Father knoweth. Babes have no prayer for the breast, but weeping: the mother can read hunger in weeping.

Samuel Rutherford

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
APRIL 2022

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

THE WAR IN UKRAINE

As we write, the bombs are falling in Ukraine, military jets are flying over the country, while Russia seeks to exert its iron fist once again over the countries of Eastern Europe. While these things alarm and deeply concern us, we should not be surprised, as the days are exactly as our Lord said they would be. "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24. 7, 8).

How should we view these sad and solemn scenes?

First, our heart goes out to the people of Ukraine who are suffering this terror, especially as we believe there are many God-fearing people in the land. May their and our prayers be heard that the Lord would "still the enemy and the avenger" (Psa. 8. 2).

Second, we see the depth of wickedness in men's hearts, when covetousness, pride and arrogance, not to mention cruelty, govern their actions. Surely Satan, who knows his time is short, has plenty of fertile ground in man's sinful heart to work on.

Third, we are to view these signs of the times, as the Lord preparing His way for the consummation of time, when the dear Saviour returns. "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand" (Luke 21. 31).

Fourth, it is a call to repentance among the nations, especially the western nations (so called). How God has been slighted, His laws rejected, His day neglected, and His name dishonoured. Surely, we are ripe for judgment in our land. If such calamities should come to our islands, it would be a just vengeance on an ungrateful land. But how should we stand personally unless the Lord stand by us and with us?

Fifth, these will be sifting times. "The fire will try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Cor. 3. 13). Would we withstand such a fiery trial as the believers in Ukraine are suffering? No fair-weather religion will do for such times as these. Only that which is written and engraved in the heart by the Holy Ghost will endure the fires.

Finally, it is a mercy if we have a God to go to, One who is our refuge and strength in trouble. Psalms 46, 91 and 121 have down the ages been of great comfort to the Lord's people in distress.

“Zion enjoys her Monarch’s love,
Secure against a threatening hour;
Nor can her firm foundations move
Built on His truth and armed with power.” (H. 1141)

THE SON OF MAN LIFTED UP

*Sermon preached by John S. Green at Swindon,
on Thursday, July 7th, 1960*

Text: “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 eternal life” (John 3. 14, 15).

The Lord Jesus in His ministry when here on earth was pleased from time to time to refer to various things in the Old Testament, and He showed that they had in them a spiritual meaning. Thus with the children of Israel who murmured against God, who loathed the provision God had made for them in the wilderness, God sent those fiery serpents to bite them, and we can see that their bite was, as good Hart has put it, a “lively type of deadly guilt.” So God gave Moses commandment, after the children of Israel had gone to him, to make the brazen serpent and to raise it on a pole; and God made that wonderful promise that whosoever should look unto the brazen serpent should live. Have we not set forth there very sweetly the gospel, the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ? Thus Jesus refers to this which took place many years before, and He says, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” There was no other cure for the serpent’s bite than obedience to God’s command and a looking unto the brazen serpent. Vain were all other remedies. The poor things who were bitten must die unless they obeyed and looked to the brazen serpent.

How this sets forth the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus Christ! There is no other remedy for sin but through His precious blood, and you and I can never look to Him and believe in Him, or feel the efficacy of that precious blood, apart from God-given faith. We know that true faith is the gift of God. We were not born with it; we cannot do anything ourselves to obtain it. It comes to God’s people as free as the air they breathe. One thing God will make us know if He has called us by His grace is our helplessness, our utter inability to believe. Perhaps some of you here tonight have heard the gospel preached sweetly, and it has come to you in such a way as it never came before; but you felt, “I cannot believe; I cannot believe in those precious truths I hear preached.” You may feel like the hymnwriter where he said,

“O could I but believe,
Then all would easy be.” (H. 278)

Some people would make out that it is an easy thing for a sinner to believe, but those who have been made acquainted with their own sad state by nature and who know something of the power and working of unbelief, those sinners know it is an impossibility for them to believe. They are dependent upon the blessed Holy Spirit to give them grace that they may believe. One thing they feel – the solemnity of living and dying without believing, without a gracious knowledge of the Person and work of Jesus. They sometimes tremble inwardly lest there should never be communicated to them a saving knowledge of that glorious Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a great mercy to be really concerned as to where you will spend eternity. It is a sad thing to be taken up with the things of time and sense, and to remain unconcerned, to make the perishing things of time your idols and more or less worship them, to give your time to them, and have your heart set upon them. O sinner, what wilt thou do in the end, when all these things will appear to you in their true light, as they did to Solomon when he said, “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity”? You will never be able to go into things as Solomon did, but you see, he was brought to that conclusion.

How blest, O how rich, is that sinner who is enabled to believe in the Person and work of God’s dear Son! Our text says of Him – yea, He said Himself, “Even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” I do like this name He has given to Himself, the Son of man. How wonderful that He should have become the Son of man! From all eternity He was the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, and yet that wonderful Person who “thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” condescended to become the Son of man. He remained what He ever was, the Son of God; but He became what He never was before, the Son of man, and His name was called Emmanuel, God with us.

Now the Holy Spirit does not expect us to understand these deep mysteries, but He can, and He does, give to poor sinners grace to believe. That is the secret. This, my dear friends, is the foundation which God has laid in Zion for His dear people to build upon. I believe God has revealed to me that the all-important thing in religion is to be brought to a gracious, saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; and if you and I have been brought to a saving knowledge of Him, we are blest indeed, we have a religion that will never wear out, we have a foundation which will never give way. It will support us through life, and it will support us in the swellings of Jordan,

He calls Himself the Son of man; and that was the sweet truth, for such He was, a real Man; and He became that real Man for the express purpose of suffering. He took that humanity that He might have that

precious blood to shed for the remission of the sins of His people, knowing that His Father would not, could not, pass by sin in any other way. There was no other remedy, there was no other way of saving the church, but through the Son of God becoming the Son of man, laying His glory by purposely that He might save His dear people from their sins.

The text has a “must” in it. The Lord Jesus said, “Even so must ...” This word struck me very forcibly. Why must the Son of man be lifted up? First, because it was the Father’s eternal will that a certain number of man’s lost race should be saved and taken safely to heaven. It was God’s will that the church should be saved in this way. What wonderful love the Father had to poor, lost sinners, that He should give His dear Son to be their Saviour! Wondrous love! My friends, you will love God the Father when you feel in your heart that He willed that His dear Son should become the Son of man that He might save your never-dying soul. You may look at this deep, sweet well, this well which is without bottom, so deep, wonderfully deep. “So must the Son of man be lifted up.”

Secondly, because of His covenant engagements. I love that covenant “ordered in all things, and sure,” a wonderful agreement entered into by Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and in that wonderful agreement, that covenant, the Son of God undertook to carry out an active part of that covenant, and that was to suffer, bleed and die. He undertook in covenant to take the dying traitor’s place and suffer in his stead. That is why He said, “Even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” Otherwise, the church would be lost, Satan would have triumphed; but He must be lifted up. He must be lifted up upon that cross. How wonderful that He who never committed one sin, who was innocent and pure and holy, should be made sin for poor sinners; that He should permit ungodly men to take His holy body and nail it to a cross of wood. They could never have done it, friends, had He not permitted it, had He not subjected Himself to this. But out of love to His people He did permit it, and ungodly men took Him and nailed His sacred body to that cross; and there He hung, the Lord of life and glory, and we read that before they crucified Him they crowned His head with thorns, and His dear hands and feet were transfigured and torn. It appeared that the enemies of God, the enemies of the Lord Jesus, had gained the day; but no, He conquered when He fell, He triumphed in His death. “Even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”

Was there no other way the church could be saved but this way? Must the innocent and harmless Son of God, as the Son of man, be thus lifted up? There was no other way. There was no other Person who could save the church. You may be ready to ask, Why? Why should God do this? Out of love to poor sinners, is the answer. O how He loved them, that He should not spare His dear Son! And we believe the

Son of man was lifted up upon that cross, and upon that cross He finished the great work of salvation, of redemption, for His church's sake. Upon that cross He paid the mighty sum His people owed; upon that cross He vanquished death for them, took the sting out of death for all the election of grace. What can we say of this people for whom the Lord Jesus suffered, bled and died? Blessed people! Wonderful people! Favoured people!

Some of you tonight may inwardly feel, O that I knew He was lifted up for me! O that I knew that He paid the price for my sins, that He, the Shepherd, was smitten that I, a poor, unworthy sheep, might go free. "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

But there is one more thing that strikes me in this clause. Whilst I believe that what I have said is true, it may be nothing to some of you. How sad to think it is nothing to you! And, poor sinner, you cannot make it something to yourself. I believe many have heard the Lord Jesus preached, the gospel set forth sweetly and simply, and even unctuously, by God's servants, but it has never reached their hearts, it has never come home to them, and they have lived and died unbelievers. They have never received in their hearts that gracious knowledge of the Lord Jesus. How vital is the work of the Holy Spirit! It is His work to lift up this blessed Jesus before the eye of faith of His dear people. That would be nothing to you, nothing to me, unless first He had convinced us of our sins and our need of a Saviour; and if we have come here tonight feelingly lost and ruined and undone, fearing we shall drop into hell when we die, and the dear Holy Spirit were to lift up before your eye of faith this precious Jesus, this blessed Saviour, and you were enabled to believe in Him, O what joy would be yours! What relief, what a blessed hope, would spring up in your heart! If only He would do this once more for some of us, how we should be confirmed in our hope, how we should rejoice, and how we should triumph over Satan who has seemed to triumph over some of us of late. It would be a time of real rejoicing. But we are sure of this, that the Holy Spirit must lift Him up, the Holy Spirit must make Him known. I believe it is the joy of God's servants to lift Him up. They love to speak well of Him, but it needs more than this; it needs more than a good sermon to do you good, friends, doesn't it? You need the dear Holy Spirit to be in the sermon and to preach the truth to your heart, and then it does you good.

But we may ask, What is the effect of this, when the Holy Spirit performs this wondrous work in a sinner's heart, when He lifts up Jesus? All other things lose their attraction. Why, you can see there is nothing in this poor world. It drops into oblivion, and your poor heart is taken up with the Lord Jesus, your affections are set upon Him. Ask the church in Solomon's Song what her Beloved was to her when lifted up and made

known. She said, "He is the Chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." Other things were eclipsed. Have they ever been eclipsed in your life, friends? Can you look back tonight and remember a season when you had sweet communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, when you could say,

"I could from all things parted be,
But never, never, Lord, from Thee"? (H. 1105)

He was precious then! He did make Himself the Pearl of great price to you. "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

Now this is real worship, sacred worship. Some of us have not enjoyed much of it on earth, not so much as some who have gone before, for I feel the Holy Spirit is so withdrawn from us in the days in which we live; consequently we know but little of the power of real religion. Sad days! Days of darkness and declension! But the Holy Spirit will perform this wonderful work in the experiences of every elect vessel of mercy, and He will lift up the Son of man before their eyes of faith before they die; and they will find there is everything in Him their soul can need. They will say, "Having Thee, O Lord Jesus, I possess all things. What can I need beside?" O a sight of Christ by faith gives a sweet satisfaction with it. It brings real joy, and it produces in the heart the peace of God which passeth all understanding. My friend, can you say tonight, "I would creep beside Him as a worm, I would see Him bleed for me, I would have that precious look by faith and see that dear body of His bathed with blood and feel that precious blood was shed for the remission of my sins"? There is nothing on earth so attractive to me as this. There is nothing on earth concerns me more than this. O, I would not ask the Lord for a long life, I would not ask Him for riches or earthly honours, but if He would draw nigh to me and say, "Poor sinner, what wilt thou?" I should say, "Give me, O God, a real felt interest in Thy Son and in His precious blood." Are we agreed? Can we walk together in these things? If so, what a mercy.

"Even so must the Son of man be lifted up." And the Holy Spirit is pleased to lift Him up, and the sinner finds his all in this Person; immediately all carnal prejudice and enmity and pride is subdued, and that sinner is clothed in that sweet garment of humility. Said one good hymnwriter,

"Had I a glimpse of Thee, my God,
Kingdoms and men would vanish soon." (H. 480)

They would! All these things would do, and one would feel in his heart safety and blessed security. In the fifteenth verse, the dear Lord said, "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish." In His ministry the Lord Jesus had very much to say about believing. It must be a very,

very important matter, or He would not have emphasised it as He did. In the last verse it is recorded by John the Baptist (and it is in sweet keeping with Christ's own words), "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." A solemn matter, sinner! A solemn matter whether you and I believe or not! I hope many of us can say we do feel the solemnity of it; and if we are tried and distressed by unbelief, we shall inwardly long that the Lord would give us that wondrous grace that we may believe in Him; believe in His name as Jesus, believe in His precious Person as the Prophet, Priest and King of His people, believe in His sacred merits, His wonderful atonement.

Now the Lord Jesus says of that sinner who by precious faith is enabled to believe in Him, that he shall never perish. That sinner is in possession of eternal life. What a great mercy, what a wonderful favour, to feel you will never perish, to feel that the great God will watch over you throughout your life, be with you when you come to die, and take you safe to heaven! That is the Christian's hope. This is a good hope, and such a hope can never fail.

The text speaks very encouragingly to the poor and needy, the tried and tempted of God's family; it speaks to the young, it speaks to the old, it speaks to those who have been most wicked, those who have wandered far away: "Whosoever believeth." I like this word, "Whosoever." It encourages me. I hope it encourages you still to put up your poor prayers to God and say, "Lord, give me to feel that I am one of those of whom Thou didst speak, saying, Whosoever." The ungodly would not believe in Christ if they might; the mere professor would never bow to the sovereignty of the Man Christ Jesus; the Pharisees and Sadducees would never bow to Him when on earth; they were too proud; they were so full of pride, and too independent to submit to Christ.

Human nature is no better now than it was then, and you and I by nature are too proud to submit to the merits of the Lord Jesus. Yet many people take this word, "Whosoever," in a universal, general way, and call upon poor, dead sinners to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, they neither can, nor wish so to do, until they are graciously taught by the Holy Spirit. If God has given you that gracious will and that spiritual longing, and you tell Him sometimes that you do long to believe in Him, you do long to know more of Him, you long to worship Him in prayer and in His courts and in His Word – well, friend, I believe you are amongst the "whosoever"; you are included in this which is really a precious promise: "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life"; "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." How safe, how secure is the church, then!

I trust such a text as this makes us feel what a blessed thing it is to believe, to be able to look back and remember when God mercifully took away from us that veil of ignorance, when He broke down the enmity that was in our heart, and so lifted up His dear Son before us that it was a sacred joy to believe in Him, a sacred joy to follow Him, a joy to sit down to that ordinance instituted by Him to show forth His death till He come. A right knowledge of the Lord Jesus makes obedience sweet. O, it relieves the sinner of legality. That sinner does not need any to force him in any way, because that love he has to Christ draws him.

“Even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” He has sometimes been lifted up in gracious conversation, when a child of God has come across some poor thing in real soul distress, cast down, upon the brink of despair, and one has been enabled to speak quietly, graciously to that one, the Holy Spirit accompanying the word, and Christ has been lifted up before the eye of faith, and one has been enabled to say, “I believe.” Wonderful words to say: “I believe!”

Now this gracious knowledge of the Person and work of Jesus never fills the heart with pride. The more we know of Jesus, the more we enter into a knowledge of His sufferings, the more it will humble us; it will lay us in the dust. But it will make us very happy. It will enable us to worship Him aright. You may say, “I feel I cannot look; but I would look.” Says good Hart in his hymn, “Look, my soul, though stung to death” – though feeling so very, very sinful, so very far off. He goes on to say,

“Jesus, thus for sinners smitten,
Wounded, bruised, serpent- bitten,
To His cross directs their faith.
Why should I, then, poison cherish?
Why despair of cure, and perish?
Look, my soul, though stung to death.” (H. 876)

It is a blessed gospel, isn’t it? It is a wonderful, sacred truth, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Amen.

Words are but the body, the garment, the outside of prayer; sighs are nearer the heart work. A dumb beggar getteth an alms at Christ’s gates, even by making signs, when his tongue cannot plead for him; and the rather, because he is dumb.... Tears have a tongue, and grammar, and language, that our Father knoweth. Babes have no prayer for the breast, but weeping: the mother can read hunger in weeping.

Samuel Rutherford

A REAL CHRISTIAN

by John Berridge (1716-1793)

A real Christian, in the Apostle Paul's account, is a new creation (see 2 Cor. 5. 17). He is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2. 10). And Jesus tells you how dead souls are quickened: mark His words; they come with double seal, to show their weight and certainty. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live" (John 5. 25). Jesus is not speaking of the body's resurrection, at the judgment day, but of a resurrection which *now is*, and is coming every day; a resurrection of dead souls to life, not a merely moral, but a spiritual life; and a resurrection caused not by us, but by Himself, even by His voice. He has many voices to call dead sinners by: the voice of His Word, of His servants, and His providences; but all these avail nothing, without the voice of His Spirit. His Word is but a dead letter, without the quickening Spirit; His servants are but barking dogs, who growl, yet cannot bite, unless He set them on; and His providences are but claps of thunder, alarming for a time, yet quickly over, except He rides Himself upon the storm. When He takes the work into His own hand, and the voice of His Spirit accompanies the voice of His Word, or His servants, or His providences, then a sinner hears, and starts from his grave, like Lazarus, and lives. And having thus received life, he feels his condemnation and his ruined nature, and crieth after Jesus.

When the world was brought into this ruined state by sin, man could do nothing more to help himself than the fallen angel could, and must perish everlastingly, unless the Lord prevent it. He does, and provides another covenant, the stores of which are not laid up in Adam, as before, nor in His ruined children. God does not choose to trust a bankrupt. If man could not stand upright, when set upon his legs, how shall he stand, when he has none? Therefore help is now laid upon One who is mighty and able to save to the uttermost. And the Saviour thus bespeaks the ruined sinner: "Thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help" (Hos. 13. 9).

However, though man fell, God was not disappointed by his fall; it was foreseen; for, "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning" (Acts 15. 18), and being foreseen, it was provided against in such a manner as might exalt the riches of His grace in man's recovery. The first covenant was made with Adam, a mere man, who was the surety of it; but the surety failed, and ruined all. The second covenant was not made with the ruined sinner, a broken merchant, but with Jesus Christ, the Lord from heaven. Jehovah says, "I ... give thee for a covenant" (Isa. 43. 6; 49. 8), and of course, Jesus is the Surety of this better covenant (see Heb. 7. 22).

Now the business of a surety is to pay the legal debts of another. Our legal debts are, first, perfect obedience, which alone can bring a title unto heaven; secondly, the curse of death, for not performing that obedience.

Jesus Christ first pays the debt of perfect obedience, and thereby, as Surety, redeems the heavenly title; then He takes the law curse on Himself, to free believers from it. And both these blessings are imputed, or charged to the account of every true believer. By the death of his Surety, he is freed from condemnation; and by His alone obedience he is made righteous (see Rom. 5. 19), justified in the eye of the law, and obtains a legal title unto heaven.

THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE CHURCH

By Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

“Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last” (Gen. 49. 19).

Is there nothing, my soul, in this sweet promise, that suits thy case and circumstances? Was not Gad one of the children of Israel? And are not all the seed of Israel interested in the promises? Was the tribe of Gad for a time brought down, and brought under, by a troop of foes? And are not all the seed of Israel oppressed and brought into subjection? Was not that glorious Israelite, the great Captain of our salvation, made perfect through suffering? Think, my soul, what troops of hell assaulted Him. But was the issue of the battle with Him doubtful? Neither is it now. In His blood and righteousness all the seed of Israel shall be justified and overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

What then, though there be troops of lusts within, and legions of foes without? Troops from earth and troops from hell may, and will, assault thee; but look unto Jesus. It is said of His people of old, that they had an eye unto Him, and were enlightened, and their faces were not ashamed. So now, Jesus undertakes for thee, and for thy faith. He saith, I will be an Enemy to thy enemies, and an Adversary to thine adversaries. God the Father is looking on; angels are beholding; all heaven is interested. Nay, hadst thou but eyes to see, thou wouldest behold, like the prophet’s servant, mountains around thee, full of horses and chariots of fire, all engaged for thy defence. Shout, then, for the battle is already obtained by Jesus for all His people. Though a troop may overcome the Gadites of the Lord, yet shall they overcome at the last. “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

NOTHING TO DISCOURAGE THE COMING SINNER IN CHRIST

Dear Mrs. Stark,

I intended, some considerable time past, to have addressed you with a few lines; but many concerns, which required my particular and immediate attention, prevented. As a few moments are now granted, I am willing to employ them to testify my remembrance of you, and regard for you. Years and age must now be greatly felt, and all your weakness and feelings must remind you of your own approaching dissolution. I hope Jesus Christ is the one and only foundation of your hope, that you are looking simply to Him, and resting wholly on His righteousness and blood, cleaving with full purpose of heart to Him.

My good friend, there is nothing in Christ to discourage you; nor is there anything in you, which you see, feel and experience, should keep you a moment from Christ. Jesus is all love, all mercy; He is full of compassion; He is salvation itself; His blood is all-healing, all-purifying; it cleanseth from all sin; it hath eternal, perpetual and everlasting virtue and efficacy. His righteousness is infinitely, it is everlastingly perfect; and Christ's salvation is for such as we are: His finished work is the whole of our salvation.

Methinks I can read your heart, and am in some measure acquainted with the thoughts you conceive and entertain concerning yourself and Jesus Christ. You feel yourself a sinner, and see nothing good in yourself; therefore, you think you are, and must be altogether unfit for Christ. You would fain be better, and are looking too much at what you are in yourself, and make a very ill use of it.

It is our very great misery to think too much of ourselves, and too little of Jesus, and to entertain false thoughts and ideas of Him in our minds. When we begin to be concerned about our souls, and have solemn thoughts concerning death, judgment and eternity, we are prone to overlook Christ, as though we could be saved without Him, or at least must be fitted for Him, and His acceptance of us, by being made able to do something, which will recommend us to Him. If we look within ourselves, and see our sin and guilt, we think we must be better, or Christ will not save us. We pray for grace, and expect to feel a great change in ourselves, and think without it we cannot be saved; which shows what dark thoughts we have of Jesus as a Saviour. We are only fit for Him as we are sinful, guilty, lost and ruined in ourselves. Jesus is most exactly suited to us; a Saviour, whose very crown of crowns it is, to pardon the guilty, to heal the wounded, to purify the unclean, to clothe the naked, and to save from sin, Satan, death and hell, to the glory and praise of His own grace. Jesus Christ hath taken away sin; He hath brought in

everlasting righteousness; He hath conquered every enemy, and is almighty to save; and you should apply to Him, and present yourself at His throne of grace, with all that you are in yourself, with all your complaints, that He may shine on you, bless you, and give you such views of Himself and salvation as may encourage your faith and warm your heart.

My dear friend, Jesus makes no objection against you; He is every way suited to your case; there is no sin in you, but His blood is all-sufficient to cleanse from. There is not a want you have, but His grace is sufficient to satisfy.

Samuel Eyles Pierce

Boskenna

March 20th, 1797

MAN MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

By Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

1. The image of God after which man was created, consisted in knowledge: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1. 10). He was created wise: not that he knew all things, for that is proper to the Omniscient Being alone, but he was ignorant of nothing that he was obliged to know; he had all the knowledge that was necessary for life and godliness. He had clear and distinct apprehensions of God, His nature and perfections, far superior to any knowledge of that kind that can now be acquired by the most diligent and the most laboured researches of human industry. And we can hardly suppose that he was ignorant of the great mystery of the Trinity, considered abstractly; as it was most certainly the second Person who appeared to and conversed with him.

This knowledge or wisdom of man appeared in his knowledge of the miraculous formation of Eve, whose nature and duty, as well as his own towards her, he declares, which he could not know but by a prophetic spirit. The primitive pair had God's law written on their hearts (see Rom. 2. 15), even that same law which was afterwards written on tables of stone, and promulgated from Mount Sinai. It was concreated with them; so that no sooner were they man and woman, than they were knowing and intelligent creatures, endowed with all the knowledge necessary for their upright state. Adam's giving names to the beasts, and those such as were expressive of their natures (see Gen. 2. 19), was a great evidence of his knowledge of nature. Thus his knowledge reached from the sun,

that glorious fountain of light, to the meanest glow-worm that shines in the hedge. And that God gave them dominion over the earth and all the inferior creatures, is an evidence that they were endued with the knowledge of managing civil affairs, which a wise man will manage with discretion.

2. The image of God consisted in righteousness: “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4. 24.). There was a perfect conformity in his will to the will of God. He was endued with a disposition to every good thing. “God hath made man upright” (Eccles. 7. 29). His will was straight with God’s will, not bending to the right or left hand, without any irregular bias or inclination. And he had full power and ability to fulfil the whole law of God. As in respect of knowledge, he perfectly knew the whole extent of his duty, so he was created with sufficient powers for the due performance thereof.

3. It consisted in holiness. “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4. 24). Man’s affections were pure and holy, without being tainted with any vicious appetite. They were regular and orderly, free from all disorder and distemper. They were set on lawful objects, and that in a right manner, loving what God loved, and hating what He hated; loving and delighting in God with all his heart, strength, soul and mind. Yet all his happy disposition was mutable, he was not confirmed therein, nor set beyond the reach of falling therefrom, as the event has mournfully showed.

This is that image of God wherein man was created, consisting in original righteousness, where his reason was naturally subject to God, his will to His reason, and his affections to His will, and consequently all duly subordinated to God, and directed to Him, without any propensity or inclination to evil. A signal of this was that both our first parents were naked, and yet were not ashamed, nor susceptible of shame.

That man was created in this condition, wise, altogether righteous and holy, is not only clear from the above-cited scriptures, but is also agreeable to reason; which suggests that nothing impure or imperfect, nothing having any vicious tendency or inclination, could proceed out of the hands of an holy God, who cannot be the author of evil. Man was created after the image of God; and in knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, the Scripture shows us, the image of God consists. Moreover, God made all “very good” (Gen. 1. 31). Man’s goodness consists in these excellent qualities, and without these he would not have been fit for the end of his creation. How is it possible for him to have exercised the dominion he was invested with over the creatures, or served his Creator in the manner that became him, without such endowments?

CHRIST, THE SECOND ADAM

By Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

How Christ the Son of God became the second Adam, and how the covenant of grace was made with Him as the second Adam.

First, How Christ, the Son of God, became the second Adam? This we may take up in two things.

1. The Father willed and designed that His own Son, the eternal Word, should, for the purpose of mercy towards mankind lost, take on their nature and become Man. He saw that sacrifice and offering would not answer the case; the debt was greater than to be paid at that rate; the redemption of souls could not be managed but by a person of infinite dignity. Wherefore having purposed that the darling attribute of mercy should be illustrated in the case of lost mankind, He willed the human nature to be united in time to the divine nature, in the Person of the Son.

And hereunto the Son, as the eternal Word, the second Person of the glorious Trinity, having no nearer relation to man than as his sovereign Lord Creator, readily agreed: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me" (Heb. 10. 5); "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God" (verse 7). The eternal Word consented to be made flesh, that all flesh might not perish. He consented to become Man, to take into a personal union with Himself a human nature, to wit [that is to say], a true body and a reasonable soul, according to the eternal destination of His Father. This was an instance of amazing condescension. The highest monarch's consent to lay aside his robes of majesty, to clothe himself with rags and become a beggar, is not to be compared with it. Nay, the highest angel's consent to become a worm, is not to be named in one day, with the eternal *Son of God the Father's equal*, His consenting to become Man; for the distance between the divine nature and the human is infinite, whereas the distance between the angelic nature and the nature of worms of the earth is but finite.

Now the *effect* of this was, that hereby the Son of God was constituted substantial *Mediator*, or Mediator in respect of nature, between God and man. Being from eternity God equal with the Father, He so stood related to heaven; and having from eternity consented to become Man, He so stood related to earth: for though He did not actually take on Him the nature of man until the fulness of time appointed by the Father, yet forasmuch as He had from eternity consented to take it on, and it was impossible that His consent should miss to take effect, He was reckoned in law, to all intents and purposes thereof, as if He had actually been incarnate. A type of this His substantial mediation was Jacob's ladder, which was set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven (see

Gen. 28. 12). A clear emblem of the divine and human nature in Christ, through whom, as substantial Mediator, there was a way opened, towards a communication for peace, between heaven and earth. Accordingly our Lord Jesus applies it to Himself: "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1. 51). to wit, as on Jacob's ladder.

2. The Father chose Him to be Head of the election; to be the last Adam, federal Head and representative of such as sovereign pleasure should pitch upon, to be vessels of mercy, and enrolled in the book of life; a Head and Representative, with whom He might make the new covenant, for life and salvation to them.

And to this also He readily agreed, consenting to be the last or second Adam, Head and Representative of the election, to sustain their persons and transact in their name. "Behold ... Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. 42. 1). "I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Psa. 89. 19). "The second Man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15. 47). The breach between God and man was greater than to be done away by a mere intermessenger who, travelling between parties at variance, reconciles them with bare words. There could be no covenant of peace betwixt God and sinners without reparation of damages done to the honour of God through sin, and without honouring of the holy law by an exact obedience. But these things being quite beyond their reach, Christ the Son of God saith, "Lo, I come; I am content to take their place, and put Myself in their room, as a second Adam."

Now, the *effect* of this was, that hereby he was constituted last Adam, or the second Man (see 1 Cor. 15. 47), and official Mediator, or Mediator in respect of office, between God and man: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2. 5, 6). Being called of His Father unto that office, and having embraced the call thereto, He was invested with the office, and treated with [dealt with] as such, before the world began (see Tit. 1. 2). And indeed He, and He only, was fit for it. The two families of heaven and earth being at war, there could be no peace between them, but through a mediator. But where could a mediator be found to interpose between such parties, who would not either have been too high, or else too low, in respect of one of the parties at variance? Man or angel would have been too low, in respect of God; and an unveiled God would have been too high, in respect of sinful men, unable to bear intercourse with such heavenly majesty. Wherefore, the Son of God, that He might be fit to mediate, as He being God equal with the Father, was high enough, in respect of the party offended, so He consented to become low enough, in respect of the party offending, by His becoming Man.

Secondly, It is to be enquired, How the covenant was made with Christ, as second Adam? And this also may be taken up in two things.

1. The Father designed a certain number of ruined mankind, as it were by name, to be the constituent members of that body chosen to life, of which body Christ was the designed Head; and He gave them to Him for that end: "My fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. 4. 3). "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (John 17. 6). These were a chosen company, whom sovereign free grace picked out from among the rest of mankind, on a purpose of love, and gave to the second Adam for a seed; on which account they are said to have been chosen in Him (see Eph. 1. 4), being in the decree of election laid upon Him as the foundation stone, to be built upon Him, and obtain salvation by Him (see 1 Thess. 5. 9); which decree, as it relates to the members elect, is therefore called the book of life, being, as it were, the roll which the Father gave to the second Adam, the Head-elect, containing the names of those designed to be His seed, to receive life by Him.

Now, our Lord standing as second Adam, Head of the election, to wit, such as sovereign pleasure should pitch upon to be vessels of mercy, did accept of the gift of the particular persons elected or chosen by His Father: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (John 17. 6). "And Thine are Mine" (verse 10). Like as the first Adam, in the making of the first covenant, stood alone without actual issue, yet had destined for Him a numerous issue, to be comprehended with Him in that covenant, to wit, all mankind, the which Adam did at least virtually accept; so, a certain number of ruined mankind being elected to life, God, as their original Proprietor, gave them to Christ, the appointed Head, to be His members, and comprehended with Him in the second covenant, though as yet none of them were in being; and He accepted of the gift of them, being well pleased to take them in particular, for His body mystical, for which He should covenant with His Father. And in token thereof He, as it were, received and kept as His own the book of life containing their names, which is therefore called "the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21. 27).

2. The Father proposed to Him as second Adam, the new covenant for life and salvation to them, in the full tenor, promises and condition thereof; treating in Him, with all these particular persons of lost mankind, elected unto life, and given to Him, even as He treated with all mankind, in Adam, in the first covenant. The promises therein proposed were indeed great and glorious; but withal the condition or terms on which they were proposed were exceeding high.

Howbeit as the first Adam, standing as head and representative of all his natural seed, entered into the first covenant with God, accepting the promise thereof, upon the terms and condition therein proposed, which he engaged to fulfil, so our Lord Jesus, standing as second Adam,

Head and Representative of the particular persons of lost mankind by name elected to life, and given to Him as His spiritual seed, entered into the second covenant with His Father, accepting the promises thereof, upon the terms and condition therein proposed, consenting and engaging to fulfil the same for them. And thus the covenant of grace was made, and concluded, betwixt the Father and Christ the second Adam, from all eternity; being the second covenant, in respect of order and manifestation to the world, though it was first in being: "The second man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15. 47). "When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed" (Isa. 53. 10). "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit. 1. 2). "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; Mine ears hast Thou opened.... Then said I, Lo, I come ... I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psa. 40. 6-8).*

ENCOURAGEMENT TO THOSE OF LITTLE FAITH

My dear Mr. D.,

I wish for you what I cannot give you for the new year: "grace and peace from Jesus Christ." Eventful indeed is the present time; mighty purposes of God are beginning to unfold, and things are shortly coming to pass which will make men's hearts to fear. I pity those who have entered upon 1901 with no faith in God. With such political and ecclesiastical storms and tempests, tumults and commotions, as are threatening our nation, there will be no solid peace and quietness for any but such as have faith in God. Weak as our faith may be, yet if it be real, then we are as secure as the strongest in faith. As only one line separates between the spiritually dead and the living, viz., faith – "he that believeth shall be saved"; "is passed from death unto life"; "cannot come into condemnation" – therefore weak or "little faith" has as much crossed the line, and as effectually got away from death and condemnation, as the strongest faith.

* "The covenant of grace has no parallel, or any other transaction that may be properly brought into a comparison with it, but the covenant of works which was made with the first man. This parallel is proper, as it is expressly stated in several passages of Scripture. The first man was a covenant head, or representative of all his natural seed, who were to stand or fall in and with him, as he should fulfil or break the condition of that covenant which was made with him for them, and with them in him. Accordingly Jesus Christ is a covenant Head or Representative of all His spiritual seed, who have a standing in a state of acceptance with God, and a title to eternal life, wholly upon His fulfilled condition of that covenant which is made with Him for them, and with them in Him" (Gibbs *Sacred Contemplations*).

This has often been a help and comfort to me to believe, because my faith must so often come under the denomination of “little faith.” But sometimes I cannot take much comfort even from this. But why not? Just because I see in Holy Scripture that little faith is both greatly honoured and reprovèd, the honour or the reproof being according to the spiritual condition of the subject of such faith. When there is earnest seeking after God, much pressing through the crowd to get at Him, little faith is honoured. But when the flesh predominates over us, has most sway, and governs our walk and ways more than the Spirit, little faith is reprovèd with, “Wherefore dost thou doubt?” And I have to say, “Lord, it is because my little faith is maimed and can’t walk, through my cruel treatment of it. I have wounded it by careless acts and ways.” Hence the little comfort I am able sometimes to take from knowing that the smallest possible real faith saves the soul.

Yours affectionately,

C. Hemington

Devizes

January 1st, 1901

THE CALLING OF MOSES

When Moses set out with his sheep as we read in Exodus chapter 3, he little expected the irreversible change that would take place in his life. How true it is that we know not what an hour may bring forth. As he led his flock in the desert, he noticed a bush on fire. Normally this would not have attracted more than a momentary glance, as in the intense desert heat, spontaneous fires were not uncommon. However, this was different. The green leaves of the bush remained verdant and unsinged, or unconsumed, yet the flames of fire rose high out of the bush. So, no doubt under the secret prompting of the Spirit, Moses turned aside to see “this great sight.”

It was then that the Lord God spoke to him, warning him: “Draw not nigh hither: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (verse 5).

Moses was then shown *four great things* to which he referred many years later as “the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush” (Deut. 33. 16).

A great sight; a great command; a great promise; a great constraint.

A Great Sight

In revealing Himself to Moses in this way, the Lord gave to Moses’ faith two revelations.

He was given a precious foresight of the coming Saviour, who would dwell in the "bush" of His holy humanity, yet within that "bush," would dwell "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." As Isaiah prophesied in chapter 53. 2: "For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground."

He was assured also that because of the presence of the Lord God, neither he nor the people he would lead would be consumed, as a nation, though they were to pass through many fiery trials. "It is of the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lam. 3. 22). "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3. 6).

A Great Command

The command to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt was so great that Moses felt totally unequal to it. Forty years before it seems that he felt quite able (see Exod. 2). After all, he had the best education, the finest opportunities and prospects of any other in Egypt. But he was not ready to lead, neither the Lord's people to be led. As John the Baptist said concerning Christ: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3. 30). So, for forty years Moses dwelt in the backside of the desert *decreasing*, until he felt unequal for the burden he was now to take up. How precious are the words of the hymn 826 in a different context: "Jesus makes the weakest able." The words of encouragement to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12. 9) are the same sacred principle. "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1. 27). Moses had to become, in his own eyes, foolish, weak and base before he was fit for God's service. Nevertheless, it was a command that he could not turn from. God had laid it on him, and God would sustain him under it.

A Great Promise

"Certainly I will be with thee." This unconditional and unqualified promise was even more precious to Moses than the rod of God which he held in his hand. It contained all that he would need in the unknown way ahead. It proved good, on the night of the Passover, at the Red Sea, at Marah, at Rephidim, at Sinai and right through his journey of forty years until he stood on Mount Pisgah and viewed the promised land from Dan to Beersheba before being taken to his eternal rest. The Lord graciously confirmed the promise in the well-known words: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exod. 33. 14). We might ask with the poet: "What more can He say than to you He hath said?" (H. 329)

A Great Constraint

Moses felt many impediments, not least a lack of eloquence. The Lord foreknew this excuse Moses would make, for no doubt under the promptings of the Spirit, Aaron was on his way to meet Moses. He was to be Moses' mouth to the people, while Moses was to be the mouth of God to Aaron. The constraint of love to the God of Israel, and the cause of God concerning the Lord's people, removed each objection Moses had, so as in Psalm 110, he was made willing in the day of God's power. There is no more precious constraint than this, especially as Paul reminds us. He said, "The love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5. 14). The same love of Christ provides for, as well as constrains His people in His appointed ways.

It is the mercy of the Lord to us that just as at the burning bush the Lord spoke to Moses as the God of his father, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so we may humbly believe that the God of Moses is to His people: "The same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13. 8).

"God of our fathers, be the God
Of their succeeding race."

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

By John Kershaw (1792-1870)

There are four things that attend everyone that God sends to labour in His vineyard. First, they have an inward call from God, which is the Spirit's mighty operation leading them into the work (see Gal. 2. 8). Secondly, they are fitted and qualified for the work by the great Head of the church, who has ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received (ministerial) gifts for men (see Eph. 4. 12). Thirdly, the Lord in His providence opens doors for them without their having to push themselves forward in the work, for He never sends a man but He has a work for him to do, and strengthens and supports him in it (see Mark 16. 20; Matt. 28. 20). Fourthly, when the Lord sends a man to preach, His power so attends the word spoken by him that he is made manifest in the souls of God's people as the Lord's messenger (see 1 Thess. 1. 5). Yes, brethren, whenever God in His providence sends him to stand up in His name, if the people have never seen his face before, the Lord by His Spirit makes him so manifest in the souls of His own people that they cry out, "This is one of the Lord's sent servants," and they make manifest their attachment to him by communicating to him what Paul calls "their carnal things," so that he finds that his Master has not sent him a warfare

at his own charges. I may also add, the Lord both does and will bless such with seals to their ministry; for it is by them, as instruments in His hand, that He has ordained the ingathering of His people to Himself as their spiritual Shiloh (see Gen. 49. 10).

CHRIST'S EXALTATION

By Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name” (Phil. 2. 9).

In Christ’s humiliation we see the Sun of Righteousness in His eclipse; now, you shall see it coming out of the eclipse, and shining in its full splendour and glory: “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him” – “above all exaltation.”

Question: Wherein consists Christ’s exaltation?

Answer: In His rising from the dead, His ascending into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God the Father, &c.

Question: In what sense hath God exalted Christ?

Answer: Not in respect of Christ’s Godhead, for that cannot be exalted higher than it is; as in Christ’s humiliation the Godhead was not lower, so in His exaltation the Godhead is not higher; but Christ is exalted as Mediator; His human nature is exalted.

Question: How many ways is Christ exalted?

Answer: Five ways: God hath exalted Christ,

1. In His titles.
2. In His office.
3. In His ascension.
4. In His session at God’s right hand.
5. In constituting Him Judge of the world.

I. *First title.* God hath exalted Christ in His titles. He is exalted to be a Lord: “The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified” (Acts 19. 17). He is a Lord in respect of His sovereignty; He is Lord over angels and men. “All power is given unto Me” (Matt. 28. 18). Christ hath three keys in His hand – the key of the grave, to open the graves of men at the resurrection; the key of heaven, to open the kingdom of heaven to whom He will; the key of hell (see Rev. 1. 18), to lock up the damned in that fiery prison. To this Lord all knees must bow. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (Phil. 2. 10). *Name*, is put here for *Person* – to that holy Thing Jesus, to the sceptre of that divine Person every knee shall bow. *Bowing* is put for *subjection* – all must be subdued to Him as

sons or captives, submit to Him as to the Lord or Judge. “Kiss the Son” (Psa. 2. 12), with a kiss of love and loyalty. We must not only cast ourselves into Christ’s arms to be saved by Him, but we must cast ourselves at His feet, to serve Him.

Second title. Christ is exalted to be a Prince: “At that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince” (Dan. 12. 1). Some think it was a created angel, but it was *Angelus fæderis*, Christ the Angel of the covenant. He is a great Prince: “The Prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1. 5). They hold their crowns by immediate tenure from Him; His throne is above the stars; He hath angels and archangels for His attendants. Thus He is exalted in His titles of honour.

II. God hath exalted Christ in His office; He hath honoured Him to be *Salvator mundi* – the Saviour of the world. “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour” (Acts 5. 31). It was a great honour for Moses to be a temporal saviour; but what is it to be the Saviour of souls! Christ is called “an horn of salvation” (Luke 1. 69). He saves from sin (see Matt. 1. 21); from wrath (see 1 Thess. 1. 10). To save is a flower which belongs only to His crown. “Neither is there salvation in any other” (Acts 4. 12). What an honour is this to Christ! How did this make heaven ring of saints’ praises! They sing hallelujahs to Christ their Saviour. “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” (Rev. 5. 9).

III. God hath exalted Christ in His ascension. If He be ascended, then He is exalted. Austin saith, “Some were of opinion that Christ’s body ascended into the orb and circle of the sun”; so the Hermians. But the Scripture is plain: He ascended into heaven (see Luke 24. 51), “Far above all heavens” (Eph. 4. 10) – therefore above the firmament. He is ascended into the highest part of the empyrean heaven which Paul calls the third heaven. Concerning Christ’s ascension, two things:

1. The manner of Christ’s ascension:

i. Christ being to ascend, blessed His disciples: “He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And ... while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24. 50, 51). Christ did not leave His disciples houses and lands, but He left them His blessing.

ii. Christ ascended as a Conqueror, in a way of triumph. “Thou hast led captivity captive” &c. (Psa. 68. 18). He triumphed over sin, hell and death; and Christ’s triumph is a believer’s triumph. Christ hath conquered sin and hell for every believer.

ii. The fruit of Christ’s ascension: Christ’s ascension to heaven causeth the descension of the Holy Spirit into our hearts. “When He ascended up on high, He ... gave gifts unto men” (Eph. 4. 8). Christ having ascended up in the clouds, as His triumphant chariot, gives the

gift of His Spirit to us, as a king at his coronation bestows gifts liberally to his favourites.

IV. God hath exalted Christ in His session at God's right hand. "After the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God" (Mark 16. 19). "He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand ... far above all principality, and power ... and every name that is named" (Eph. 1. 20, 21).

RICHARD SIBBES' PRAYER BEFORE HIS LAST SERMON

(John 14. 1)

Gracious and holy Father! which hast sanctified this day for Thy own service and worship, and for the furthering of us in the way of salvation; and hast made a most gracious promise that when two or three be gathered together in Thy name, Thou wilt be there in the midst of them (see Matt. 18. 20), vouchsafe then, we beseech Thee, the performance of this Thy promise unto us, now gathered together in Thy name, to pray unto Thee, to hear and speak Thy holy and blessed Word, and so sanctify our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit at this time that we may perform these holy services as shall be most to Thy glory and our own comfort.

Unworthy we are in ourselves to appear in Thy most holy presence, both by reason of the sins of our nature, and the sins of our lives, even since that time that we have had some knowledge of Thy blessed truth; which holy truth we have not entertained nor professed as we should have done, but oftentimes against the light that Thou hast kindled in our hearts by Thy Word and Spirit, we have committed many sins; and amongst the rest, we confess our sins against Thy holy ordinance; our not preparing our hearts unto it, nor profiting by it as we should and might have done; giving Thy Majesty hereby just cause to curse Thy own holy ordinance unto us. But Thou art a gracious and merciful Father unto us in Jesus Christ, in the abundance of Thy love and mercy. In Him we come unto Thee, beseeching Thee, for His sake, not to give us up to these inward and spiritual judgments; but vouchsafe us a true insight into our own estates, without deceiving of our own souls, and from thence, true humiliation.

And then we beseech Thee to speak peace unto us in Thy Christ, and say to our souls by Thy Holy Spirit, that Thou art our salvation. And for clearer evidence that we are in Thy favour, let us find the blessed work of Thy Holy Spirit opening our understandings, clearing our judgments, kindling our affections, discovering our corruptions, framing

us every way to be such as Thou mayest take pleasure and delight in. And because Thou hast ordained Thy holy Word to be a light unto our feet, and a guide and direction to all our ways and paths (see Psa. 119. 105), and to be a powerful means to bring us more and more out of the thralldom of sin and Satan, to the blessed liberty of Thy children, we beseech Thee, therefore, to bless Thy Word to these and all other good ends and purposes for which Thou hast ordained it. And grant, we beseech Thee, that now at this time out of it we may learn Thy holy will, and then labour to frame our lives thereafter, as may be most to Thy glory and our own comfort, and that for Jesus Christ His sake, Thine only Son, and our blessed Saviour. Amen.

THE LOVELINESS OF CHRIST TO THE BELIEVER

From the diary of Ruth Bryan (1805-1860)

May 23rd, 1850: Psa. 45. 11. What words are these! and how sweetly did they smile upon me, above all the rest in the Psalm: "So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." How? In thy forgetfulness of all but Himself; for when we are experimentally, with single eye, beholding Him, then is His glory visibly reflected in us; we are beautiful in His beauty; but it is like an eclipse, when we get taken up with self and creatures. O for this happy forgetfulness! My glorious Well-Beloved, my soul desires Thy beauty with intense longing. Thou hast ravished my heart: none of the sons of men can fill the place Thou hast occupied. O come and bless me again with Thy overwhelming love and loveliness! The Spirit in me says, "Come"; Thy poor gleaner says, "Come"; yes, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Thou still dost closely hedge me up in outward circumstances; and this, with other pressures, has entangled and turned my heart from Thee. But I come, I return by Thine own sweet drawings in my soul. I desire Thee; I invite Thee. I would forget all I inherit in the first Adam; I would resign myself and my circumstances to Thy will, and by faith embrace Thyself, and in Thy glorious Person find everlasting bliss!

Alas! those wondrous wounds. Have they left immortal scars? Wilt Thou, through all eternity, wear those marks of Thy matchless love? And wilt Thou, in those blissful realms, dissolve our souls in holy rapture and adoring love, by saying, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself"? Surely, if aught could add beauty to that glorious form, it would be, in the eyes of love, those deep engravings, "I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands." And surely Thou, O Beloved, art engraven on the table of this longing heart. Set, O "set me as a seal upon

Thine heart, as a seal upon Thine arm” too. O grant another glimpse of Thy surpassing charms! Let me –

“Behold the God who died for man;
And praise Thee more than angels can.”

Thou didst not take their nature into union with Thyself, but mine, for ever more: amazing mystery! O give me deeper entrance into, sweeter experience of, my oneness with Thee, Thou lovely Immanuel! Give me to abide in my perfection and completeness in Thee; so wilt Thou greatly desire Thine own beauty in me! While I would sink into the arms, and recline on the bosom of love. “He is thy Lord,” O my soul; “worship thou Him.”

GRACIOUS ADVICE ON CHOOSING A DEACON

Dear Friends,

Being much interested in your welfare, and having in God’s providence to do with your things, I desire to address a few words to you with reference to the important matter which you partly finished, and left partly unfinished, at your last meeting.

The choice of a deacon is a solemn function committed to the church under Christ (Acts 6. 1-7; 1 Cor. 12. 28), and as it is needful that a church should act in this solemn matter with care, deliberation and prayer for guidance, notice was given you at one church meeting of what you would be required to do at your next meeting. And doubtless you endeavoured to seek the Lord’s guidance and counsel as to whom He would have your choice to fall on. At the appointed time you met; the meeting was solemn; you acted as you hoped and felt the Lord had directed your hearts and minds. Your choice fell on one only, instead of two, as your then two deacons had requested. You were asked to vote again; and again your first and only choice was ratified by no other person receiving the required number of votes.

Now, brethren, I want you seriously to consider one or two points. First: is not your choice to be taken as an answer to your prayers – an answer to be thankful for and content with? Second: after failing to obtain a second deacon by a second voting, do you not think it would be tempting the Lord to endeavour a third time to secure what, after prayers and waiting on Him, He did not guide you to – did not give you? This observation is no reflection on any brother, but is intended to direct your minds to Him from whom all good gifts come. It appears that He sees that for the time being the three deacons you now possess are sufficient for all the office calls for; therefore as many as He will give you. And

we must remember that each church is His; therefore its officers – who they shall be, and their number – He must decide.

My advice then is, do not attempt to choose another deacon at this time. Own His goodness, who has given you an answer to your prayers in giving you one more to assist the two who have served you so long, and giving him a ready mind to bear the responsibility, and do the work of the office, according to the measure of grace which the Lord Jesus shall bestow on him. In thus acting, you will, I judge, be following the will of the Lord, which He showed in your first decision, and ratified by your second.

J.K. Popham

1906

THE CERTAINTY OF THE LORD'S HELP

By Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

“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” (Heb. 13. 5, 6).

Sweet thought! Blessed promise of a covenant Promiser, whose name is I AM! Indeed, the whole covenant of grace is made up of God's *wills*, and His engaging for our *shalls*, and the whole is founded in the purposes of God's love, and faithfulness, and immutability; secured in the blood and righteousness of Christ; and stamped with the broad seal of heaven, by God the Holy Ghost. Hence, therefore, the covenant runs, “I *will* be their God, and they *shall* be My people.” Hence, also, Jesus with all His fulness is in the covenant. And hence, also, the Holy Ghost is engaged to abide with them for ever, to lead them into all truth, and to glorify the Lord Christ in their hearts.

How is it possible for them to do otherwise than rejoice, and boldly to say, “The Lord is my Helper!” for the fear of man is driven out by the fear of God? My soul, what saith thine experience to this? Surely thou wilt take up the same confident language, and from the same cause, as the church. If the Lord hath said it, He will confirm it; He will never leave, neither forsake the redeemed of Jesus. So that I never shall be left hopeless, helpless, comfortless! Precious Jesus! in Thee I set up the Ebenezer afresh this evening. Thou, Lord, art my Helper: “I will not fear what man shall do unto me”!

“MUCKLE KATE” or SOVEREIGN GRACE “MUCH MORE ABOUNDING”

Among the Highlanders of Ross the name of Mr. Lachlan Mackenzie, the godly minister of Lochcarron, was very fragrant, and even now there may be some to whom “the great Mr. Lachlan” is a pleasant name.

The following story will illustrate the sovereignty and power of grace, and is given on the authority of a late, eminent, godly minister in Ross, who was an eye-witness of the principal scenes herein stated.

Not far from the manse of Lochcarron a wicked old sinner lived, who was supposed to have been guilty of every forbidden crime in the law of God except murder. As she had very masculine dimensions she was known as “Muckle Kate.” “An ill-looking woman without any beauty in the sight of God and man,” Mr. Lachlan used to say of her. The efforts of her minister could not succeed to get from her even occasional attendance at the house of God; entreaties, visits, appeals to her conscience many and strong were made by him, but all in vain; nothing could reach the heart which seemed certainly to have reached the point “past feeling.”

Her minister adopted a plan to reach her conscience, which certainly was very strange; some would, perhaps, say it was unwarrantable, but God owned it, and as He is a Sovereign, doing just as He will, we shall not say it was unwarrantable. It was customary among the Highlanders, during the last century, to meet at nightfall in each other’s houses, and spend the long evenings in singing Gaelic melodies. The women brought with them their distaffs and spindles, while the men mended their brogues or weaved baskets and creels. This was called “going on kailie.”*

Kate devoted herself to this practice with eagerness. Her minister knowing this, and having a turn for rhyming, composed a Gaelic song in which all Kate’s known sins were enumerated and lashed with all the severity of which the composer was capable. This song Mr. Lachlan set to music, and sending for some persons who were known to “go on kailie” with Kate, he taught them the song and instructed them to sing it in her hearing on the first opportunity. Strange! It was so, but the suddenness of the blow, from such an unexpected quarter, gave point to the stroke, while God drove the truth right home to her heart.

Her agony of mind was fearful. The bleak scenery of Lochcarron was in strange unison with her feelings. Among the dreary mountains of that lonesome western wilderness runs up the small estuary from which the parish derives its name. In these wilds Kate now spent most of her

* I give the word as an English reader would pronounce it. The true spelling, however, is “ceilidh.”

time. For what purpose? Joseph-like, she sought where to weep. The solitudes of Lochcarron were heard to resound with the voice of wailing, and the inmates of the bothies amid the hills knew from whose lips those cries of agony were wrung. They came from the once-hardened Muckle Kate. Deep as her conviction was, it never seemed to subside: weeks, months, even years passed, yet the sorrows of the convicted sinner were as fresh as ever. "Never breathed a wretch like her; there might be hope for others, but oh, there was none for Muckle Kate!"

She was a "wonder to many," as well she might be, for at her age, between 80 and 90, it is rare to see a person called by grace. However, age has nothing to do with the matter as in God's sight. The set time had come for her to be brought to know herself a sinner, and now she was a wonder to her neighbours, to unbelievers, to the church, to her astonished minister, but most of all, a wonder to herself. Into the depths of conviction under the law she, poor soul, went, inasmuch as to understand that part of it which says: "I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes" (Lev. 26. 16), and Muckle Kate wept herself stone blind! Yes, without exaggerating by a hair's breadth, she wept away her eyesight! Poor Kate! Rich Kate! What deep, penetrating eyes she had into her own soul's state before God! Would that God would give many of us in this hard-hearted day a few tears for sin.

One cannot help saying that in this point Muckle Kate was conformed to her Lord: "I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." Another saintly Scotsman has said, "Faith will come out of the eye, in lieu of another door." Stephen looked up to heaven, a pitiful and hungry look up to Christ out at the window, to tell that a poor friend was coming up to Him. "I would wish no more if I were in hell, but to send a look up to heaven. The twinkling of thine eyes in prayer are not lost to Christ" (Samuel Rutherford). If "the twinkling of the eyes are not lost to Christ," we may be sure the complete destruction of the sight of the eyes are not, and so Muckle Kate found.

During one of her visits to the manse, and while waiting to converse with her minister, she heard the noise of a flock of ducklings and, not aware of the presence of any other person, she said, "O my poor things, ye're happy, happy creatures. Ye ha'e na' crucified a Saviour like me; it would be well for Muckle Kate to be a duck like you, for then she would have no sin to answer for – no sin, no sin!" Others have entered a little into this feeling of the poor, blind woman.

In the third year of her sorrow for sin, her minister was anxious for her to sit down at the Lord's table, but nothing could prevail upon her to comply with his requests. "*I go forward to that holy table! I, who have had my arms up to the shoulders in a Saviour's blood! My presence*

would profane that blessed ordinance, and would be enough to pollute the whole congregation! Never will *I* sit down at that table; the communion is not for me!”

However, it was for her. The communion day arrived, the hour of meeting drew nigh, but Kate’s determination still remained unchanged. The tables had all been served, the elements removed, the minister had returned to “the tent,” and all were listening for the words of the concluding address, when a cry of despair was heard in a distant part of the audience – a shriek of female agony – that rose loud and clear, and was returned, as if in sympathy, by the echoes of the surrounding hills. It was the voice of Muckle Kate, who now thought all was over. Hundreds started to their feet and looked anxiously toward the spot whence the scream had proceeded. Mr. Lachlan knew the voice, and as each true pastor has a pastor’s heart, he understood the cause of the cry, stepped over among the people till he had reached the spot, took Kate kindly by the hand, led her through the crowd to the communion table, and seated her at the head. He next ordered the elements to be brought forward and replaced upon the table; and there sat that one solitary, blind being, alone in the midst of thousands – every eye of the vast multitude turned in wonder upon her – partaking of the emblems of the Saviour’s body and blood, she herself unconscious of their gaze.

Muckle Kate lived about three years after this, manifesting the marks of a close and humble walk with God. Not having seen any account as to the manner of her gospel deliverance from the terrors of the law under which she so long suffered, we cannot state the means used, but of the reality of her deliverance, her life henceforth, and her triumphant death testify.

The wicked may “have no bands in his death” and friends say concerning him “he died like a lamb,” and like “sheep they are laid in the grave, but the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning” of the resurrection. As Muckle Kate was led deep into the knowledge of sin and sorrow for sin, so she was led deep into the knowledge of Christ; and so clear as to her interest in His work, that assurance became so sure that she ceased to think of self: she was absorbed in the glory of her Redeemer; Christ was All in all to her. “For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ,” was her happy experience.

As she stood on the threshold of eternal glory, her sanctified tongue was heard to exclaim, as its farewell effort to honour Christ: “Tell, tell to others that I have found Him.” Lay the emphasis upon the “I,” and what depth of sin, shame, and pollution are comprised in that “I.” If we could compress into that “I” those ninety years of sin – as she had been taught sin – as she had felt sin – as she had wept her sight away for sin

– we should better catch what she meant when she said, “I have found Him.”

“Tell them that the worst of sinners – the drunkard, the profligate, the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the blasphemer, the liar, the scoffer, the infidel – tell them that I, a living embodiment of every sin, even I, have found a Saviour’s Person, even I have known a Saviour’s love.” “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

Reader, if you fear God, you will bless Him for such mercy as is here evident. But if one reads this who is still without God, I would say: you may not have sinned openly as poor Muckle Kate, but God looks on your heart, and unless you partake of saving mercy before you die, you must be eternally lost. Hell is solemnly true, notwithstanding many declaring against it. The wages of sin is death – eternal death – after the death of the body. Should a true seeker read this, one who feels he is too bad for salvation, surely here is something to encourage such to hope for mercy. If He has given you the felt want, the anxious yearning after His blood to be applied to your soul; if He, in mercy, has granted you sorrow for sin, then it is hoped, by His blessing, that this record of saving mercy may encourage you to press your case before Him who is “plenteous in mercy.”

BOOK REVIEWS

The Glorious Feast of the Gospel, by Richard Sibbes; 166 pages; paperback; price £5.50; published by and obtainable from the Banner of Truth Trust and available from Christian bookshops.

This is a selection of sermons preached by Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) on Isaiah 26. 6-9. It has a supplementary title: “Christ’s gracious invitation and royal entertainment of believers.” Sibbes’ style of preaching is simple, orderly and doctrinal, with which he balances gracious experience, all of which make this a commendable treatise for believers.

A long but instructive preface introduces Sibbes and the purpose of the publication of the sermons. This preface is attributed to three contemporaries of Sibbes: Arthur Jackson, James Nalton and Will Taylor.

Fighting the Good Fight: prayer meeting addresses by Hugh M. Cartwright; 278 pages; hardback; price £15 plus postage and packing; published by Ettrick Press, 98 The Brow, Brighton, BN2 6LN; www.ettrickpress.co.uk, from whom it is obtainable, and from bookshops.

Those who had the privilege of hearing the gracious ministry of Hugh Cartwright (1943-2011) while he was yet with us, and others will enjoy this further publication of extensive notes of prayer meeting addresses delivered while he was minister in Edinburgh. These are divided into five sections: The Whole Armour of God, Union with Christ, The Beatitudes, Our Reasonable Service, and Various Subjects. The concise, pithy and at times challenging addresses make

compelling reading. They are also brief enough to be considered for a profitable daily devotional.

The Adoption of Sons: Its Nature, Spirit, Privileges and Effects; a practical and Experimental Treatise by Thomas Houston (1803-1882); 212 pages; hardback; price £8.50 plus postage and packing; published by Ettrick Press (as above).

To the living family of God, the subject of adoption must ever be a precious theme, flowing as it does from the everlasting love of God through Christ Jesus to the many sons ordained to eternal life. This subject is extensively taken up in many ways in this treatise. However, the author's view that Adam was a son of God in his first creation, in the same sense that God's children are by grace, is a position which has divided the theologians, especially in the 18th century. William Gadsby and William Huntington did not agree on a very similar point; namely whether Adam was a spiritual man or not. That said, there is much commendable and heart-warming exposition in these chapters on a subject of vital importance to those who fear God as His children.

The Mystery of Providence, by John J. Murray; paperback; 140 pages; £4.95 plus postage and packing; published by Ettrick Press (as above).

This book should not be confused with either the well-known book with a similar title by the Puritan, John Flavel, or a booklet published by the Banner of Truth Trust, entitled *Behind a Frowning Providence*, also written by the same author, J.J. Murray. Although looking at the same subject, this book is a more detailed treatment of the subject of God's providence under the titles of "The Wonder of Providence," "The Working of Providence," "The Beauties of Providence," and "The Design of Providence."

God's providence – His perfect foreknowledge of all events, His control of them in working all things for His own glory and the good of His people – is a mystery which human reason cannot understand, but for which faith is enabled to bless the Lord abundantly on occasions, and on others meekly to submit to it. This book gives a faithful exposition of the doctrine and its practical implications – the way in which God's leadings sometime seem so contradictory, but are found in the end to work for our good and for the greater display of His glory.

This book is recommended and we trust will be profitable.

John A. Ingham, Luton

COMPLETE IN HIM

Amazing mercy! can it be
That grace can visit one like me?
Adopt me, guilty as I am
With my first father Adam's shame.
And place me at Jehovah's feet,
All righteous, holy and complete?

But whence shall holiness arise
To fit me for His holy skies?

And whence shall righteousness be found
 Worthy to be with glory crowned?
 Or whence from imperfection spring
 Aught but a vile, imperfect thing?

Not science, not the mystic's dream,
 Not reason's pen can trace the scheme;
 And say how God, so pure and just,
 Can welcome home created dust,
 Can re-instate me in His love,
 And let me share His bliss above!

The prophets testify of One
 Jesus, the Father's only Son,
 Who took our nature – in it paid
 Each requisition Justice made;
 And as a Substitute laid down
 His precious life to save my own.

His righteousness, although divine,
 By imputation now is mine;
 His merits, infinitely high,
 Can law and justice satisfy;
 Nor condemnation can remain,
 Nor cancelled debts appear again.

But I am debtor still to Him
 Who lived and suffered to redeem;
 Yes, debtor both to love and grace;
 Yes, debtor to devote my days
 To His sweet service and His cause,
 And honour all His righteous laws.

Ann Hennah

NOTICES OF DEATH

Reginald John Bradstock, esteemed and faithful pastor at Zoar Chapel, Handcross (and formerly of Brockham Green), passed to his eternal rest on Monday, February 28th, 2022, aged 96 years. “He was a faithful man, and feared God above many” (Neh. 7. 2).

William Thomas Wheeler, beloved and esteemed deacon of the church at Moden Hill, Sedgley, passed to his eternal rest on Monday, February 28th, 2022, aged 98 years. “Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa. 12. 1).

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MAY 2022

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

LIFE MORE ABUNDANTLY

Of all the ways in which the Lord Jesus Christ has chosen to set forth His work in saving sinners, the type of the Shepherd is probably the most well-known and the one most referred to in Holy Scripture. In Old Testament times, Jacob, as he blesses his sons on his deathbed, breaks off in meditation while speaking of Joseph with the words: "From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel" (Gen. 49. 24). Joseph was a type of Christ in that he was ordained of God to be the preserver of his family, as a shepherd does his flock, but Jacob was speaking as the Spirit of Christ moved him in anticipation of the coming Saviour. Likewise, Isaiah in chapter 40. 11 speaks of Christ as the One who "shall feed His flock like a shepherd." Of course, Psalm 23 is pre-eminently speaking of the Good Shepherd, Christ.

In John 10 the Lord Jesus Christ expounds this type and in the verse to which we are referring, compares Himself with the thieves and the robbers who had gone before whom the sheep did not hear. These thieves and robbers only come to harm the flock, even to take away their life, but Christ comes for the very opposite intention: "That they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10. 10).

In what way does Christ give His sheep more abundant life?

Firstly, He gives a higher life than the world seeks to enjoy. To the unbeliever, living is wealth, pleasure, sin and idolatry. The man who wanted to pull down his barns and build greater was only seeking what the world call "a good life." "Rabbi" Duncan, a godly Scottish minister, used to say to his students when a new year dawned, "I wish you a happy eternity." Did he not wish them to have a happy new year? Yes, he did, but he knew that true happiness lay in putting the things of God first. Our Lord said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6. 33). The other things which our Lord mentioned are those which are necessary for our daily living and to walk consistently in His fear in every aspect of our daily life. In Romans 8, Paul says: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Notice the term, "with Him." Even lawful "things" without Him are not a blessing to God's people. How vital is the

presence of Christ in every step we take, if we are to understand this term “more abundantly.” So, a child of God perhaps when needing to move home, or seeking a godly husband or wife, wants to know the will of the Lord in the matter. They know that “the way they take cannot be wrong if Jesus be but there” (H. 812).

“Lord, it is not life to live,
If Thy presence Thou deny;
Lord, if Thou Thy presence give,
’Tis no longer death to die.” (H. 988)

Secondly, Christ gives a longer-lasting life. It is eternal life that Christ gives, a life decreed in the everlasting covenant, purchased on Calvary, and imparted by His Holy Spirit. The beginning of its enjoyment is here below, but its fulness will be realised in heaven above.

As Samuel Rutherford’s well-known and loved words say:

“The streams on earth I’ve tasted,
More deep I’ll drink above.”

The godly Puritans used to say: “He builds too low, who builds below the sky.” How prone man is, yea even a child of God when left to himself, to become earthbound! But the cure for an earthbound spirit is the love of Christ. Like the woman of Samaria, you then leave your waterpot, because you have seen a Man who told you all things that ever you did, and with joy you testify, “Is not this the Christ?” Even as Zacchaeus was raised above the ground of covetousness to esteem a precious Christ.

Thirdly, the life that Christ gives is satisfying – just as it was to the woman of Samaria, a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The possession of this life spoils you for this world’s pleasures. True, you are thankful for its lawful benefits, but you have to say: “These are not my God.” And this lesson is sometimes painfully learned when we become too engrossed in this time state and our soul loses the vigour it has enjoyed before. How we then need the dear, patient and Holy Spirit to revive us again and to wean us from this world.

Fourthly, the abundance of this life is such that it cannot be hidden. When we are in the enjoyment of it we are like the Queen of Sheba who when she saw all that was to be seen of Solomon’s grandeur, said: “The half was not told me.” So in an overwhelming sense of God’s love in Christ Jesus towards us, the sheep of His fold cannot help but “bleat” of the preciousness of the Saviour. Man will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.

THE GOVERNMENT ON CHRIST'S SHOULDER

Address given by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom at the Annual Meeting of the Gospel Standard Societies, at Gower Street Memorial Chapel, London, on Friday, April 10th, 1970

Text: "The government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isa. 9. 6).

There are some most blessed things spoken in this chapter concerning the Lord Jesus. Especially the prophet sweetly speaks of His coming into this world in the fulness of time: "A Child is born ... a Son is given." And then there is such a blessed description of His gracious name, of His character: "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." I love these precious names of the Lord Jesus; there is such an attraction in them, such a suitability. It would be a blessed thing if this afternoon this chapel should be filled with a sweet savour of the name of Christ. When the Lord Jesus is exalted, it is a sweet savour to God in them that believe, and in them that perish. What a mercy when to our hearts it is the savour of life unto life! But here, friends, as the prophet opens up these sweet truths concerning the Lord Jesus, His coming, His gracious Person, His name, this little clause is interposed: "The government shall be upon His shoulder."

This word has been for a long time on my mind. There seems such a suitability in it for such a time as this. There is a little glimpse here of the divine authority and almighty power of the Son of God. I would that our eyes might be turned away from everything else, that there might be a few upward glances to see the Lord Jesus exalted, glorified, possessing all power and divine authority: "The government shall be upon His shoulder." It touches everything, friends. The great matters of the nations; our life's minutest circumstance. In a special sense it concerns the people of God.

My mind has gone to Israel's high priest in the old dispensation. You will recall that in Exodus chapter 28, there is a description of all the garments that Aaron and his sons had to wear. Particular mention is made of the breastplate which he used to wear, and on that breastplate were the names of the tribes of Israel engraven on precious stones. The high priest had to bear Israel's names there upon his heart. But then, a little later you find that on each shoulder he had an onyx stone. There were six names of the tribes engraven on one shoulder, and six names engraven on the other shoulder. Israel's high priest bore the weight, the responsibility, the concerns of Israel, not only on his heart, but also on his shoulder. And all these types are sweetly fulfilled in Christ as the great High Priest over the house of God. So the church has this in mind when she breathes out that desire: "Set me as a seal upon Thy heart, as a seal upon Thine arm."

The concerns of the people of God were on the shoulders of the Lord Jesus from everlasting, and when He came into this world, He came with His people's concerns upon His heart and upon His shoulder. That awful load of sin and guilt was laid on Him, and He made an end of sin for His dear people, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness.

Well, friends, this is the blessed subject here – *the divine power and authority of the Lord Jesus*. And there seems such a suitability for such a time as this. I just want to touch on one or two aspects of it. One thing is this: we have been reminded so much today of the wickedness of this world in which we live. Men's hearts fail them for fear; iniquity abounds on every hand. We do not know what another day will bring, and perhaps at times as you consider this, you fear. There *is* a resting place, and that resting place is here: "The government shall be upon His shoulder." It is a blessed thing at times to be able to look away from everything here below, and to realise that it is not Satan that reigns, not wicked men who reign, but "He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15. 25, 26). The government is upon the Lord's shoulders. He still lives. He sits on no precarious throne. "The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever" (Psa. 29. 10).

"The government shall be upon His shoulder." Now there are many of you with exercises, with things that concern you and which weigh upon you. I know that some of you are burdened. There are godly ministers who have their burdens. There are godly deacons with their burdens. Wherever you are closely associated with the welfare of the cause of God and truth, there is a burden. This is a divine appointment; but at times do you not feel the burden to be too heavy for you? Do you not have to say with the hymnwriter: "My shoulders cannot bear this load?" My mind has been today in Numbers chapter 7. We read there of the removing of the sanctuary when Israel wandered in the wilderness. Some were given wagons to help them in the removing, but not the sons of Kohath; for by divine appointment they had to bear all the weight upon their shoulders (see verse 9). There are many who feel the burden of the sons of Kohath today, those things that weigh so heavily on their shoulders. O may there be a little view of this by faith, that "The government shall be upon *His* shoulder," and that all things are the Lord's concern!

There are so many times when you and I do not know what to do, and that word still stands in the 6th of John: "But He Himself knew what He would do." And there is that sweet exhortation – O for grace to heed it! – "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee." The people of God have many burdens. The great burden is their sin, their

soul's concern, but there are these burdens in the churches, in your business, your family, your circumstances. And our own unbelieving hearts will try to manage the burdens ourselves. O for grace to cast our burden on the Lord! You know, unbelief is a solemn thing. We profess to believe in the divine authority, the omnipotence of the Lord, and yet how unbelief holds back from trusting the Lord with our own concerns.

"The government shall be upon His shoulder." Another point is this: there are so many who fear the unknown way. With many it is the end, the solemn article of death. With some it is a fear of the unknown. But with others there are things which lie before them, solemn trials, and their heart shrinks from them. O that we might by faith feel this, that all our concerns are upon His shoulder, all our concerns, our circumstances, our crosses and losses! O may we be led a little into that sweet truth: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you"! But there is a shrinking from the unknown way at times. Those lines are sweet:

"Peace, perfect peace, the future all unknown;
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne."

"The government shall be upon His shoulder."

The case of Moses' mother has been on my mind. O the trial she had when she went out to the river, and had to leave her infant son there! But the government was on the Lord's shoulder. And as she placed that little child there by the waters of the Nile, by God-given faith she placed him in the hands of an almighty God, and he was safe. No harm could come to him. The case was in the hands of God, and His loving, tender, watchful care was round about that little boy.

Now there are many of God's people in affliction. We think of the Lord's afflicted family in the churches (and the Lord has appointed afflictions). But there is a word which says this: "In all their afflictions He was afflicted ... in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. 63. 9). This is what the Lord has graciously promised to do for His people in their afflictions, to bear them and to carry them. Then the weight of their concerns rests upon His gracious, almighty shoulders. O the weight of affliction is too great for the people of God, but it is not too great for their Lord! There is something sacred in His tenderness and His loving compassion as He bears His children and as He carries them. Does not the hymnwriter say it is "pity joined with power"? "The government shall be upon His shoulder," *and* all His people's concerns and afflictions; and they will not sink beneath them.

We read in Revelation chapter 7: "These are they which *came out* of great tribulation." They had tribulation, and you will have tribulation. Their tribulation was great, but their concerns were on the shoulders of

their Lord and they did not sink in the tribulation, they came out of it. This word will be spoken of all the redeemed at last: "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne."

"The government shall be upon His shoulder." One very precious thing here is this – it speaks of the Lord fulfilling all His purposes. The following verse says, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." Let us be very clear on this. There are times when God's people are so cast down, looking at what is in the churches, looking at what is in the world, looking at their own hearts. But O to be enabled to look up! "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." What does it mean? That the Lord is fulfilling His purposes of love and mercy, and that one by one He is gathering in His people and building them on the one Foundation, and that spiritual building is higher now than ever before, and the day hastens on when "He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." The Lord Jesus is not a disappointed Saviour. As you consider this, perhaps you find that little desire springing up:

"May I be found a living stone
In Salem's streets above." (H. 215)

"Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end.... The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this."

Ever remember, friends, it does not just concern the church of God generally. It concerns every believer where the Lord has begun that good work of grace. Everything seems to be against it, but the government is upon His shoulder, and where the Lord begins, He graciously carries on and completes. May it be a word in season to some cast-down, tempted soul. The government of your soul's concerns, that which He began, is upon His shoulder. If it were left to us it would end in ruin, but,

"His grace shall to the end,
Stronger and brighter shine;
Nor present things, nor things to come,
Shall quench the spark divine." (H. 330)

In closing, there is a searching aspect of this word. It speaks of divine authority, both in the churches and in our own souls. That church is a truly-blessed church where there is this one standard – that the name of Christ is to be honoured, that the authority is His, and a desire to submit in everything to His gracious authority. And that soul is in a healthy condition when the great thing is the authority of the Lord. "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" It is not what pleases the flesh, what brings comfort, what is the easiest way. It is the desire that in our

life's minutest circumstances the government should be on His shoulder, and that the Lord Jesus might be honoured.

Friends, may we be favoured with a little precious faith to look up, to see the Lord Jesus risen, exalted, glorified, and to see that our times are in His hand. Sometimes we cannot look up, but do not we read of one man in the gospels, and "Jesus made him look up"? If the Lord enables us to look up, to have a view of His exaltation, all things beneath His feet, reigning for ever, then there will be a resting place. The Lord add His blessing.

ONE DAY AS A THOUSAND YEARS

By Henry M. Morris (1918-2006)

"Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3. 8).

It is sad that many Christians today are so eager to appear intellectual they are willing to compromise God's clear revelation to do so. God has made it as clear as plain words could make it that "in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is" (Exod. 20. 11). Yet because evolutionary "science" has alleged that the earth is billions of years old, multitudes of evangelicals have fallen in line, rejecting God's plain statement of fact and then trying to find some interpretive loophole to hide behind.

Our text verse is perhaps the key verse of the so-called "progressive creationists" who try to correlate the days of creation in Genesis with the supposed 4.6 billion-year system of evolutionary geological ages by citing Peter as agreeing that "one day is a thousand years."

No, Peter is saying that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years"! That is, God can do in one day what might, by natural processes, take a thousand years. In context, the apostle is condemning the last-day uniformitarians (those who teach that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation") as "willingly ignorant" of the tremendous significance of the historical facts of creation and the flood (2 Pet. 3. 3-6). Real, written records only go back a few thousand years, and to attempt to calculate any date before that requires use of a premise that, in context, the Scriptures have just condemned! God says the uniformitarians are willingly ignorant and then urges those who believe His Word to "be not ignorant." The only way we can know the date and duration of creation is for God to tell us, and He says He made all of heaven and earth in six days, and not so long ago!

THE BUDDED ROD

By Henry Law (1797-1884)

“Behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds” (Numb. 17. 8).

A new miracle now meets us. It is God’s work. It is the Spirit’s record. Therefore it stands here for our souls’ profit. A withered rod, long severed from the parent stem, in which all vital juice was dried, sprouts in fresh verdure. Buds show their infant forms, and clustering blossoms open, while fruit in bright luxuriance hangs.

This fact claims special thought, from its position in the sacred page. It raises a conspicuous head high in a vast field of miracle. Israel’s whole journey is a chain of marvels. The falling manna, the guiding cloud, the flowing stream, prove heavenly care. Each day evidences that omnipotence is active for them. But here a fresh prodigy starts to life. God super-adds another sign to win confiding trust.

To us this story of the budded rod now comes. May He, who wrought the wonder, work wonders through it for our growth in grace!

But ere we view it with a nearer eye, we must not disregard the preluding notes. The faithless spies draw an appalling picture of the searched land. The fortresses defy assault. The men are giants. Israel’s hosts are less than insects at their feet. Such is their evil record. And it is received. Hearts quake. Blaspheming tongues reproach their guiding God.

Thus nature shows its proneness to doubt, to tremble, and to distrust. But such unbelief brings misery in its train. It is a seed, from which ill ever springs. It changes blessings into curse. It arms the hand of love with an avenging scourge.

So now wrath instantly goes forth. The murmuring hosts are doomed to turn their back upon the home just reached. The wilderness must be re-entered. They now must wander up and down for forty years. Thus their bright prospects end in darkest night. Their hopes of rest – almost attained – are gone. They must wear out in woe their dismal days.

Distrust! truly thou art the parent of all woe! My soul, never distrust – cleave fast to God, cast deep your anchor in His Word, bear all things, suffer all pains, but never let one rebel doubt arise.

Pause now, and pray, O Spirit of the living God, never withdraw: leave me not to the fears, which sense and folly would excite. “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”

Surely the downcast host will now tread tremblingly their retrogressing path. Their lips will now be sad with penitence and shame. They who so reason are yet blind to the deep roots of sin. As there is no mercy which man’s heart will not abuse, so there is no judgment which

it will not proudly scorn. Open rebellion soon follows these murmurs and this punishment. Korah and his company dispute the rule of Moses. They challenge it, as usurpation and self-arrogance. Thus God's authority is dethroned. But these leaders are leading at His call. Therefore, to revile them is to revile His will.

Instantly terrific vengeance vindicates God's ways. Moses proclaims the near approach of signal wrath; and when he ends, "the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men, that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation" (Numb. 16. 31-33).

Again we are disposed to cry, surely now rebellion must be buried in that grave! Surely obedience now will meekly walk with God! But we soon find that sin has seeds so deep, and fibres so far-spreading, that while most withering judgments are descending, it still will germinate and bring forth its weeds.

The morrow dawns, but not to see contrition in each face. Nay, rather, it finds one flood of universal rage. The camp is mad against the servants of the Lord. The whole assembly raises the cry, "Ye have killed the people of the Lord." But sin cannot thus sin, and wrath not multiply to punish. A slaying plague speeds forth. It rapidly mows down the God-defying host. Moses beseeches Aaron to rush forth. He grasps his censer, fills it with incense, adds the altar-fire, and takes his station between the living and the dead. God sees the mediating high-priest – type of His dear Son. The sight checks wrath. But still a plague-struck pile stands, as a mighty pyramid – a monument of sin's deserts.

Now, at this moment, God gives the miracle of the budded rod. Another sign now shames unbelieving doubts, and pictures gospel truth. The people had scorned Aaron's priestly rights. God's overflowing love selects this very time to add confirmation of His choice. Twelve rods are taken. Each bears the name of a chief ruler of a tribe. They are deposited before the ark. Thus the night passes. When the morrow comes, Moses re-enters. Eleven lie as they were placed, withered, lifeless, dry. The twelfth, engraved with Aaron's name, is changed – most marvellously changed! Verdure adorns it, but not verdure only. No branch was ever so enriched. Blossoms are joined to buds. And amid blossoms ripe fruits swell. Man's hand has no share here. The proof of God's immediate power appears in every part. The rod, thus vivified, is to be kept a constant sign. God's voice commands, "Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels" (Numb. 17. 10).

Let us now advance from the ancient record to the still-living gospel of the fact. The rod in many graphic tints shows Jesus. The very name is caught by raptured prophets. Hark, how they announce Him: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isa. 11. 1). "Behold the Man, whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the LORD ... and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a Priest upon His throne" (Zech. 6. 12, 13). Thus faith gleans lessons from the very title – Rod.

But the grand purport of the type is to reject all rivals. It sets Aaron alone upon the priestly seat. The parallel proclaims that similarly Jesus is our only Priest. God calls, anoints, appoints, accepts, and ever hears Him, but Him alone. In His hands only do these functions live. He sprinkles the true mercy seat with ever-pleading blood. He bears His people's name upon His breast. He perfumes all their petitions, praises, service, with meritorious fragrance. He intercedes, and they are pardoned. He blesses, and all blessings crown them. But He shares not the glory with a colleague. They who seek God with censers of their own, like Korah scorn the only avenue, like Korah rush to ruin. My soul, be satisfied with Jesus. Shout – None but the consecrated God-Man – He is my total Priest – I need no more.

Next, the constant luxuriance has a clear voice. In nature's field, buds, blossoms, fruit soon wither. The grove, the garden – lovely in spring, laden in autumn – soon droop. Not so this rod. Its rich abundance was for ever rich. Its verdure was for ever green. Its fruit was ever ripe. Beside the ark it was reserved in never-fading beauty. Here is the ever-blooming priesthood of our Lord. "Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psa. 110. 4). "This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Heb. 7. 24). What joy, what rapture fills the heart of faith, when with adoring eye it looks aloft and sees its ever-living High Priest on the throne! At every moment Jesus stands in all the freshness of salvation's vigour. Our prayers are oftentimes cold and languid. Our lips are dull to speak. Our thoughts stray far away. Petitions are as an intermitting stream. The channel sometimes is quite dry. It is not so in heaven. There ever is full tide of priestly mediation. Here is the cause why saints prevail, and grace survives. Hence Satan with all his legioned host is beaten back. Hence faith's tiny bark rides on the crest of mountain-waves, and safely reaches the blest haven. Hence plans for gospel progress triumph. Because Christ ever lives, and ever loves, and ever prays, and ever works, therefore His kingdom swells.

And so it shall be, while the need remains. But when the last of the redeemed is safely gathered in, then heaven shall no more hear the

interceding Priest. Then the one sound from the vast throng shall be, Hallelujah. Thus the rod, ever fresh, shows Jesus ever mighty in His priestly power.

Mark, moreover, that types of Jesus often comprehend the church. It is so with these rods. The twelve at first seem all alike. They are all sapless twigs. The same grove saw their birth. Man's eye sees but one likeness in their dry forms. But suddenly one puts forth loveliness, while the others still remain worthless and withered. Here is a picture of God's dealings with a sin-slain race. Since Adam's fall, all are born lifeless branches of a withered stock. Many abide so, and thus pass as fuel to the quenchless fire. But in a chosen remnant a new birth occurs. The grave sprouts into life. The sapless puts forth buds. Blossoms appear. Fruit ripens. Whence is the difference? It is not nature's work. No dry stick can restore itself. No withered helplessness can deck itself with verdure. This cannot be. When any child of man arises from the death of sin, and blooms in grace, God has arisen with divine almightiness. Free love decrees renewal. Boundless power achieves it.

Believer, the budded rod gives another warning. It is a picture of luxuriance. Turn from it and look inward. Is your soul thus richly fertile? Is life in you abundant life? Where are the almonds? They are rare. Instead of fruit, you often yield the thorn. Should it be so? "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (John 15. 8). Whence is the fault? Why is the stem thus bare? The fertilising means abound. Perhaps they are little heeded. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me" (John 15. 4). Perhaps your neglectful soul departs from Christ. Thus fructifying sap is checked. Thus bloom is nipped. Thus early buds fall off. You leave the sunny slopes of Zion's hill. You stray into the chilly marshes of the world. Then blight and mildew mar the expected fruit. The Word is not the daily food. Hence the roots drink not renovating moisture, and the sere leaf drops off. Meditate in God's law day and night, and you "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Psa. 1. 3).

But if the budded rod rebukes the scanty fruit in the newborn soul, what is its voice to unregenerate worldlings? Alas! these are a forest of sticks, wholly dry. The curse, which fell on Eden's garden, blasted their nature to the core. Thus withered they were born. Thus withered they continue. What will their end be? That end draws near. What then awaits them? Can they be beams and rafters in the palace of heaven's King? Oh, no! The decree is sure. Faithfulness has warned. Almighty power will execute. "That which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Heb. 6. 8).

THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

By Ambrose Serle (1742-1812)

“Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts” – in Thy human nature – “for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them, or that they might become “an habitation of God through the Spirit.” This was prophesied of Jesus long before His advent in the flesh. It was so prophesied as though it were a fact already past, because the things to come are, as it were, present with God, being foreknown by His omniscient mind, and ordained in His holy will, which must be accomplished in all its decree.

He ascended to the throne of the Highest with the full merits of His blood and righteousness, which were a sweet-smelling savour, or a savour of rest, to the everlasting Three. By this gracious ascension Jehovah is become propitious to the redeemed, receives them in Christ, loves them for Christ’s sake, favours them with His peace in their hearts, carries them on by His providence and grace, makes all things work together for their good, bears them through life and death, and finally receives them to glory.

The ascension of Christ brought down gifts from above, and, as the greatest of all, the presence of the Holy Spirit, for His people. It was thus expedient for them that He went away from the earth; for if He had not carried up His merits before the throne, the Comforter could not have come down to have led them into all the truth of God and of Christ, and to have made that truth effectual in their salvation. By His holy power they are brought to believe, and are kept in believing to the end.

Jesus ascended likewise to prepare a place for His chosen. In a short time they are to be dismissed from wretched houses of clay, standing in the waste wilderness of the world; and then they are to have in heaven everlasting mansions of beauty and glory, fitted and furnished by Christ Himself. They are soon to leave their bodies, now thoroughly defiled by sin, and to put on some spiritual fabric, appointed for them, in which they are to remain with Christ and the blessed, till the final consummation of all things.

O what gifts, my blessed Redeemer, hast Thou procured and purchased for my unworthy soul! What hast Thou not brought down of grace for time, and of promise for eternity, to me, and to helpless sinners like me! Yea, Thou hast given Thine own self to Thy brethren, that in Thee they might be given up to God, and like Thee be a sweet smelling savour, ascending by Thy merits to the highest heaven. O what shall I, what can I, render for mercies like these! I can give, poor as the gift is, only my heart and soul to Thy dear glory; and I would not, surely I would

not, restrain these. Yet I cannot offer these, so weak and so corrupt am I without the assistance of Thy strength. Favour me then, more and more, with Thy gracious power, that my affections may be constantly mounting upward, longing for the place of my everlasting residence, and counting all things worse than dung, that would stop my progress thither. Where Thou art, dear Lord, soon do I hope to be. I am tired of this earth, and of all its shifting, miserable scenes; I am weary of this body, full of disorder and sin; I loathe the husks, which the swine of this world quarrel for and devour; and I can be satisfied with nothing less than Thee and Thy presence for ever. O my Beloved, when shall I ascend up after Thee! All below is Mesech and Kedar, but, with Thee there is the fulness, not the mere shadow of joy; and at Thy right hand there are pleasures, not for a moment only, but for evermore. Thou hast said, Surely, I come quickly. Amen (reply the hearts of Thy people, and my poor heart among them), yea, come Lord Jesus!

THE IMPUTED BEAUTY OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

By Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

“The King’s daughter is all glorious within” (Psa. 45. 13).

As the Redeemer is known to His church under a great variety of names and characters, and is blessed to the church in every one, whether of Brother, or Husband, or Friend, so Jesus condescends to call His church by a variety of names also, all descriptive of the unbounded love He bears towards her. She is His fair one, His spouse, His chosen, His sister; and in this song of loves, she is called “the King’s daughter.” But it is most blessed to observe that by whatever name she is known, it is all in allusion to Jesus, for from Him, and in Him, she derives the whole of her beauty and excellency. Her glory is in her Lord, and she is wholly spiritual, all derived, like the shining of the moon, from the sun. If the church be comely, it is from the comeliness the Lord Jesus hath put upon her. For as the whole perfection of beauty is in Christ, as a rich and complete constellation, so every perfection in His people is from their union with Him. It is Jesus who gives a loveliness to every object that is lovely.

My soul, what saith thy experience to this statement? Thou art indeed “all glorious within,” if Christ be formed there “the hope of glory.” And if thy God be thy glory, then wilt thou feel what the church felt, and, taking up her language, thou wilt say, I am black as the tents of Kedar, but comely as the curtains of Solomon (see Song 1. 5). O the felicity of knowing the total unworthiness of the human heart, which, like

the spots and swarthiness of the Ethiopian, makes the church truly black and deformed; and O the felicity also of knowing our comeliness, from the beauty Christ hath put upon us, and the sanctifying and regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit! Precious Lord Jesus, be it my portion always to appear in the spotless robe of Thy righteousness, and then shall I be indeed “all glorious within”!

SPIRITUAL LESSONS FOR THE LORD’S PEOPLE FROM THE BOOK OF RUTH

By Jabez R. Rutt

The Book of Ruth is a divinely-inspired part of the Word of God and therefore is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3. 16). We are given an insight into the times of the judges, a period of some three hundred years, from Joshua to Samuel. The prominent feature seems to have been a measure of anarchy: “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judg. 21. 25). We find this among the churches in the day in which we live. An issue arises and one says, I think this, or I feel that. My beloved friends, our enquiry should be, “What saith the Scripture?”

We have a sacred record here of a family in Israel which illustrates the point we make above. Elimilech took his family from Bethlehem down to the land of Moab (a Gentile people of the offspring of Lot, Gen. 19. 37). They went there because there was a famine in the land. They left the people of God, the house of God and the ways of God, all for a crust of bread. While there, their two sons married Moabitish damsels. The Jews were forbidden to marry a Gentile, so we see, as elsewhere in Holy Scripture, that one downward step leads to another.

The Lord chastised Naomi: her husband died; subsequently her sons died; she exhorted her daughters-in-law to return to their homes and their gods, Orpah returned, but Ruth clave unto her. I firmly believe that Ruth saw in Naomi the grace of God, and she desired that grace herself, so she clave unto her. The Holy Spirit had quickened her soul and given her a spiritual appetite, spiritual desires, so when Naomi pressed her to return, she replied in those beautiful words: “And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her” (Ruth 1. 16-18).

Naomi is a type of the church; Ruth is a type of a coming sinner. In Ruth's beautiful words we see the sacred, spiritual language of an awakened sinner. As the prophet declares, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble" (Jer. 31. 9). Ruth was following Naomi, Naomi was following Christ. Ruth was in the footsteps of the flock through the unerring guiding of the Holy Spirit. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents" (Song 1. 7, 8). This is Ruth's pathway; she is in the footsteps of the flock. The footsteps of the flock are the footsteps of Christ. "And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from Him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10. 4, 5). Also, the church and the Spirit speak with one voice as they direct and encourage a poor sinner to Christ. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22. 17).

In the Book of Ruth, when we look at the spiritual lessons in it, the central and most important character is Boaz. Boaz is a most beautiful type of our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the eternal Father full of grace and truth. We first read of him in the beginning of chapter two. "And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz" (Ruth 2. 1).

I came across the following excellent comments, Herbert Lockyer, *Men of the Bible*:

BOAZ, BOOZ – Strength or Fleetness. The wealthy and honourable Bethlehemite or Judahite, who became the second husband of Ruth the Moabitess, and ancestor of David and of Christ (see Matt. 1. 5). The name of the left-hand pillar of Solomon's temple was Boaz, "for in it is strength" (1 Kings 7. 21, margin). Boaz was true to his name and comes before us strong in grace, integrity and purpose. As the lord of the harvest, master of servants, redeemer, bridegroom and life giver, he is a fitting type of Christ.

Boaz as a type of Christ

He is a kinsman. A kinsman is a close relative, a brother, a cousin. Under Levitical law, a kinsman had the right to redeem all that pertained to their relative if they were bankrupt. The closer the relative, the more right he had to redeem. Another meaning of kinsman is redeemer. We

read of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God manifest in the flesh: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2. 14-17). The Son of God when He was made like unto His brethren became our Brother, our Kinsman our Redeemer.

Human nature is clearly defined in Holy Scripture. "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2. 7). A body alone is not human nature, a soul alone is not human nature, but a body and soul united together at conception in the womb is human nature.

It is the spiritual soul of man that animates his physical body, commonly called a reasonable soul, because it is the seat of man's reason which separates him from the animal creation and gives him the power of reason. He is made in the image of God. The Word of God is very clear: "For as the body without the spirit is dead" (Jas. 2. 26). This defines what death is, the separation of body and soul.

This clearly defines what the Son of God assumed in the womb of the virgin Mary: "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." This sacred truth is fundamental to Christian doctrine. This is the eternal Rock upon which the church is built. When our beloved Saviour redeemed us, He suffered, bled and died in our nature. Our eternal Father laid upon His only-begotten Son, manifest in the flesh, our sin (see Isa. 53. 6). Being the eternal Son of God, He is a mighty Man of wealth, with the means and ability to redeem us from the curse of the law and the power and dominion of sin. "But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7. 24-26). This, my beloved friends, is our heavenly Boaz of whom David speaks: "I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people. I have found David My servant; with My holy oil have I anointed Him: with whom my hand shall be established: Mine arm also shall strengthen Him" (Psa. 89. 19-21).

Ruth was married first to the law as an eternal covenant; she was under its curse; so were we, but our heavenly Boaz, a mighty Man of

wealth, has lived for us as a Man under the law, fulfilling all its righteous commands and demands for His people. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4. 4, 5). This precious doctrine is spelt out by the dear apostle. "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Rom. 7. 1-4). So the Lord speaking through the prophet declares, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you" (Jer. 3. 14).

Continuing with the theme of our heavenly Boaz, let us look at Christ as a mighty Man of wealth. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11. 33-36). These riches and this wisdom are all treasured in Christ for His bride. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight" (Col. 1. 19-22).

The eternal Son of God offered on Calvary's cross a sacred, holy sacrifice to redeem His beloved bride. Only He could do this. All the fulness and efficacy of that holy sacrifice rest in this precious truth: He is Jesus the Son of God. Therefore, the sacrifice, the blood is of infinite worth. His grace and love are of infinite value, sufficient eternally to redeem His beloved bride. My beloved friends, what a mighty Man of wealth is our Lord Jesus Christ. We have a revelation of Him in Revelation 11. 15-17: "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever

and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned." How has He reigned? By His Son Jesus Christ living under the law as a Man, fulfilling all its holy commands and then offering His holy, pure and spotless human nature as a sin-atonement sacrifice on the cross. By so doing He satisfied all the demands of divine justice and died for the sins of His bride, His church.

The Apostle Paul beautifully portrays this glorious sacrifice in his Epistle to the Hebrews. The Hebrews were well acquainted with sacrifices and offerings, so the apostle, under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, uses an illustration from the Levitical law to lead us more fully into the sacrifice of the cross. All the sacrifices under the law were typical of this one glorious sacrifice of Christ. "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?" (Heb. 9. 13, 14). In this portion of Holy Scripture the term *eternal Spirit* does not refer to the Holy Ghost, but to the divine nature of the Son of God. Under the Levitical dispensation there is an altar, and on the altar a sacrifice; they are distinct one from another. So in the Person of Christ there are two natures, a divine nature and a human nature; an indissoluble union was made between the divine and the human in the Person of Christ. The divine does not become human and the human does not become divine, but there is one Person, the Son of God manifest in the flesh. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1. 14). The divine nature is typified in the altar, the human nature is typified in the sacrifice on the altar. Our heavenly Boaz offered His holy, human nature on the altar of His divinity as a sin-atonement sacrifice of infinite worth and merit unto His eternal Father. He offered Himself. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10. 10-12).

Let us now look at the love, kindness and compassion of our heavenly Boaz as He deals with Ruth the Moabitess damsel, a beautiful type of a coming sinner.

1. She was totally bankrupt.
2. She had no means to deliver or redeem herself.

Just like a poor helpless sinner. She was led and encouraged by the good offices of Naomi, her godly mother-in-law. The Lord uses godly people to guide and direct His people in the right way. They were penniless and Ruth desired to help, so she went to glean after the reapers. She was unerringly guided by the Holy Spirit to the field of Boaz. The heavenly Boaz is the Lord of the harvest. The field is the gospel field, the means of grace, where the gospel is preached by the servants of the Lord of the harvest inviting poor, helpless sinners to come to the Lord of the harvest. Listen to the Lord of the harvest: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt. 11. 28-30).

Boaz said to Ruth on meeting her, "Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens: let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn" (Ruth 2. 8, 9). What gracious love and kindness. This is how our heavenly Boaz deals with a poor, bankrupt sinner. We see the response of Ruth, so humble so sincere, genuinely amazed that he took notice of her. "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" (Ruth 2. 10). This is the reaction of a poor sinner when Christ is first revealed.

When she returned home, "her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen" (Ruth 2. 19, 20). Naomi later gave good advice to Ruth directing her again to Boaz and the precious words he spake. May we lift our minds to the heavenly Boaz as we look at these lovely words he spoke to her: "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest" (Ruth 3. 11). What precious words. Lord, I am a sinner; "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Lord, I am naked; He will cover them with the everlasting robe of His righteousness, just as she was under the robe of Boaz, a place of safety.

Think of the following scripture in relation to "I will do to thee all that thou requirest." "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me,

What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. 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. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: 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. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 7. 13-17). There is only one reason they are before the throne of God in glory, the blood of the Lamb.

Then we see the fruition of this. “And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech’s, and all that was Chilion’s and Mahlon’s, of the hand of Naomi. Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day” (Ruth 4. 9, 10). The church is Christ’s purchased possession and He says concerning her, “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee” (Song 4. 7). Also, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. 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” (John 14. 1-3). What a glorious, heavenly Boaz.

SAYINGS OF HENRY HAMMOND

*Pastor of The Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham, Wiltshire,
from 1874-1883*

August 10th, 1883: “I have been preaching Christ for some years with the ability which He has been pleased to give; but now I am hoping to praise Him, and that to all eternity.”

“In time past I could sing the Lord’s praises with my lips; but now I am deprived of that privilege. Yet I sometimes feel I can sing with my heart, and after all, this is the best.”

“My ear has sometimes been sorely grated by the discordant noises of persons professing to sing the Lord’s praise; but O! what will it be to join the ransomed host in the new, lasting song, “Unto Him that loved us,

and washed us from our sins in His own blood," in which not one jarring note shall ever be heard!"

"I wish to live and die in the exercise of two things; namely, repentance and faith. Repentance toward God on account of sin which dwelleth in me (see Rom. 7. 17), and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, as the only Redeemer and Saviour of lost and helpless sinners."

"I have been a professor and a preacher these many years, and yet stand as much in need of Christ, and am as dependent upon Him, as at the first."

August 24th: "I have seen so much of the fickleness, instability and uncertainty of the creature that I have learnt with the psalmist, in great measure, that "it is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes." This endears to us the faithfulness of Him who is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever," "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Blessed be His name, "though we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself."

"A faithful and unchanging God,
Lays the foundation of my hope
In oaths and promises, and blood." (H. 83)

"A spiritual mind is an unspeakable blessing. It is a solemn declaration of the apostle's, "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." I could never boast of too much spirituality of mind myself, neither can I now, though probably on a bed of death; yet often I have been pained to see the manifest carnality and worldliness of professors, and that too of some of whom we hope well. It is no uncommon thing to see them on the Lord's day on their way to God's house, and even in coming to the Lord's table, indulging in all the common-place chit-chat of the times, and they follow this up right to the doors of God's house, and are obliged to end with little, rather loud whispering inside the door. They come to the Lord's table with their poor body burdened with the emblems of a vain and worldly mind, and while the minister tries to set forth the solemn things represented in the ordinance they nap and nod, and as soon as the solemn service of God is ended, are wakeful enough to renew their former light and vain conversation, painfully evidencing how little they have profited by the solemn service of God."

If the children of God did but know what was best for them, they would perceive that God did that which is best for them.

John Mason

GOD'S WISDOM DISPLAYED THROUGH LITTLE THINGS

By Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

“There be four things, which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise” (made wise, margin). “The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king’s palaces” (Prov. 30. 24-28).

God teaches us by His works as well as by His Word – by His works, small as well as great. He instructed Job by Leviathan and Behemoth. Here He instructs us by the ants and the conies. And yet in the minute creation His splendour shines as gloriously as in the more majestic. Agur had before mentioned four things that seemed great, but were really despicable. Here he produces *four things little upon the earth, but exceeding wise*. Therefore despise them not for their *littleness*, but admire the wonder-working hand which hath furnished these little creatures with such sufficient means of provision, defence and safety. As has been beautifully remarked, “God reigns in a community of ants and ichneumons as visibly as among living men or mighty seraphim.” Truly nothing was made for nought. The world of insects shows that which will put to blush our higher world of reason. Yes, these four remarkable instances of almighty skill – the natures and habits of these four little animals – teach many useful and important lessons; and he that hath ears to hear may hear words of suitable wisdom, rebuke, direction and encouragement for himself.

“Industry is commended to us by all sorts of examples, deserving our regard and imitation. All nature is a copy thereof, and the whole world a glass, wherein we may behold this duty represented to us. Every creature about us is incessantly working toward the ends for which it was designed; indefatigably exercising the powers with which it is endued; diligently observing the laws of its creation.” The ants have already been our teachers (see Prov. 6. 6-8), a people not strong, indeed so weak, that thousands are crushed by one tread of the foot; yet wise in preparing their meat in the summer. A quickening sermon do these little insects preach to us! They make preparation for the coming winter. What must be the thoughtlessness of making no provision for the coming eternity! whiling away life in inactivity, as if there was no need for an exercise toward God for the soul, for eternity! Shall not we learn to be wise betimes; to improve the present moment of salvation; not to wait for the winter – the verge of life, when that grace – preached now – shall be preached no more? Sinner, if all be lost by thy indolence, wilt not thou be the great loser? What else hast thou to do, but to prepare for eternity? What hope

canst thou have of heaven at the last, if thou hast never seriously thought of heaven before? Oh, ere it be too late, throw thyself at His feet, whose heart overflows with love. If thou art made ready, "all things are ready."

"The ants are a people not strong." Yet what people, beside their wisdom, more diligent, more persevering, more effective? Indeed, "the union of so many noble qualities in so small a corpuscle is one of the most remarkable phenomena in the works of nature." Weakness, then, is no excuse for indolence, no occasion of despondency. Is it not rather the cheering exercise of faith? The worm shall thresh the mountains. To the diligent labourer shall be given the meat that endureth to everlasting life. In helpless dependence "working out his salvation," his "labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

As the ants prepare their meat, so the conies their refuge. Feeble folk as they are, they secure themselves from impending danger, by making their houses in the holes of inaccessible rocks. Thus what they want in strength they make up in wisdom. Not less feeble are we – not less exposed to assault. And is not our refuge, like theirs, "the munition of rocks"? Are we then, like them, making our house, our home, there? abiding in our shelter in conscious security?

Observe again the instinct of the locusts. Some insects, like the bee, are under monarchical government. But the locusts have no king. Yet how wonderful is their order, going forth all of them by bands, like an army with unbroken ranks, and under the strictest discipline! Jerome mentions what he had lately seen: "When the swarms of locusts came, and filled the lower region of the air, they flew in such order, by the divine appointment, and kept their places as exactly, as when several tiles or partly-coloured stones are skilfully placed in a pavement, so as not to be an hair's breadth out of their several ranks." Do not these little insects read to us a lesson on the importance of unity and unanimous movement? Here is not an ungoverned, disorderly multitude flying in different directions. But all go forth by bands. All keep their ranks. Many professors, instead of going by bands, prefer an individual course. They belong to no cohort. They are under no discipline. This unsettled principle can never issue in a Christian steadfastness. Unity, not diversity, brings "the good thing of the heart established with God." The strength of the church is – not as an army of irregular soldiers, regiments in loose disorder, unconnected with each other; but when she goeth forth by bands, united, concentrated, well disciplined, every officer at his post, every soldier in his ranks, each under rule, helpful to each other and to their great cause! "When shall it once be?" Lord, heal our unhappy divisions. Unite our energies "in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity."

And what lessons does the spider teach of ingenuity, patience, and untiring labour and perseverance! Its claws or spinning organs serve both as hands and eyes to the animal. She forms her web against the walls, as if she took hold of them with her hands. She frames her fine-spun house with such exactness of proportion, as if conversant with mathematical rule. She steals her way alike into the cottage of the poor, and the king's palaces, as if God would instruct even the great ones of the earth by this pattern of diligence. Such assiduity, such "diligence" in the work of our high calling, if it shall not bring us into the king's palaces, will ensure the full reward of the man, whom the great King delighteth to honour.

How many of us stand condemned by the sermons of these little insects! Are we too proud to learn, or too careless to attend to, the humbling but most valuable lessons taught in the school of instruction? "A wise man will hear, and will increase learning."

Slightly adapted

THE BLESSING OF REUBEN

From a sermon on Revelation 21. 12 by John E. Hazelton (1853-1924)

Jacob is about to pronounce his dying blessings, and what does he say concerning Reuben? Reuben, "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." What has Moses to say concerning this son? "Let Reuben live, and not die." How many of you here this morning are temperamentally, constitutionally, inclined to waver and to be unstable? Some are more easily moved than others. God's grace alone can sustain and keep. But here is Reuben; what is the message concerning him? "Let Reuben live, and not die." Is that sinner, unstable as water, concerning whom it is said, "he shall not excel," is that sinner, an object of God's love and mercy, to be shut out because of his sins and faults? There is a gate over which is the name of Reuben (Rev. 21. 12), and he shall enter through that gate into the city. The gate of Reuben in the golden city, Reuben in the Israel of God.

O poor sinner, feeling your sin, mourning over it, looking alone to Jesus Christ for salvation, God enable you to cease from looking within. You say, "I am so fickle, I am so changeable." So was Reuben. "I am this, that, and the other; yea, a great deal worse than Reuben"; but we are on the ground of free grace, and over a precious Christ is written the name of Reuben. O you, whose experience, temperament and peculiar pathway as sinners is here described, take heart through grace.

What does the Lord say by Joel? He says, "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten; the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm." "O my lost years," says one who has been unstable. "O, my lost years! gone, gone for ever!" The Lord says, "I will restore to you the years that the locust" – of instability – "have eaten, and the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and palmerworm." We are to go to heaven on the sole basis of God's free and sovereign grace. We are to go to heaven, not because of what we are striving or longing to make ourselves, but because over the gate of the city is written the name of Reuben.

A LETTER TO A YOUNG BELIEVER

My very dear Brother,

I rejoice to hear that Christ hath run away with your young love, and that ye are so early in the morning matched with such a Lord; for a young man is often a dressed lodging for the devil to dwell in. Be humble and thankful for grace; and weigh it not so much by weight, as if it be true. Christ will not cast water on your smoking coal; He never yet put out a dim candle that was lighted at the Sun of Righteousness. I recommend to you prayer and watching over the sins of your youth, for I know that missive letters go between the devil and young blood. Satan hath a friend at court in the heart of youth; and there pride, luxury, lust, revenge, forgetfulness of God, are hired as his agents. Happy is your soul if Christ man the house, and take the keys Himself, and command all, as it suiteth Him full well to rule all wherever He is. Keep Christ, and entertain Him well. Cherish His grace; blow upon your own coal; and let Him tutor you.

Now for myself: know that I am fully agreed with my Lord. Christ hath put the Father and me into each other's arms. Many a sweet bargain He made before, and He hath made this among the rest. I reign as king over my crosses. I will not flatter a temptation, nor give the devil a good word: I defy hell's iron gates. God hath passed over my quarrelling of Him at my entry here, and now He feedeth and feasteth with me. Praise, praise with me; and let us exalt His name together.

Your brother in Christ,

Samuel Rutherford

Aberdeen

March 13th, 1637

THE HAPPY MAN

By Lachlan Mackenzie (1754-1819)

The happy man was born in the city of Regeneration in the parish of Repentance unto life. He was educated at the school of Obedience. He has a large estate in the county of Christian Contentment, and many times does jobs of self-denial, wears the garment of humility, and has another suit to put on when he goes to court, called the robe of Christ's righteousness. He often walks in the valley of self-abasement, and sometimes climbs the mountains of heavenly-mindedness. He breakfasts every morning on spiritual prayer, and sups every evening on the same. He has meat to eat that the world knows not of, and his drink is the sincere milk of the Word of God. Thus happy he lives, and happy he dies.

Happy is he who has gospel submission in his will, due order in his affections, sound peace in his conscience, real divinity in his breast, the Redeemer's yoke on his neck, a vain world under his feet, and a crown of glory over his head. Happy is the life of that man who believes firmly, prays fervently, walks patiently, works abundantly, lives holy, dies daily, watches his heart, guides his senses, redeems his time, loves Christ, and longs for glory. He is necessitated to take the world on his way to heaven, but he walks through it as fast as he can, and all his business by the way is to make himself and others happy. Take him all in all, in two words, he is a man and a Christian.

A PARABLE: GETTING READY TO MOVE

The owner of the tenement which I have occupied for many years has given notice that he will furnish but little or nothing more for repairs. I am advised to be ready to move.

At first this was not a very welcome notice. The surroundings here are in many respects very pleasant, and were it not for the evidence of decay, I should consider the old house good enough; but even a light wind causes it to tremble and totter, and all the braces are insufficient to make it secure. So I am getting ready to move.

It is strange how quickly one's interest is transferred to the prospective home. I have been consulting maps of the new country, and reading descriptions of its inhabitants. One who has visited it has returned (Paul), and from him I learn that it is beautiful beyond description.

Language breaks down in attempting to tell of what he heard while there. He says that in order to make an investment there he has suffered

the loss of all things that he owned here, and even rejoices in what others call making a sacrifice. Another, whose love to me has been proven by the greatest possible test, is now there. He has sent me several clusters of the most delicious fruits; after tasting them, all food here seems insipid.

Two or three times I have been down to the border of the river that forms the boundary, and have wished myself among the company of those who sing praises to the King on the other side. Many of my friends have moved there. Before leaving, they spoke of my coming later. I have seen the smile upon their faces as they passed out of sight. Often, I am asked to make some new investment here, but my answer in every case is, "I am getting ready to move."

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5. 1).

Anon.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER IS ALL GLORIOUS WITHIN

Dear Friends in the Lord,

Having thought of you both this evening, it came into my mind to drop you a few lines; and, while I was thinking what I should write about, Psalm 45. 13 crossed my mind: "The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold." But how often the poor child of God cries out, "I feel to be within one mass of sin and filth. Oh, I cannot be glorious within!" Yet such are, though at all times they cannot believe it. But let us look at what makes them all glorious within.

First, the *life of God* in the soul, and the graces of the Spirit; and this new life, the hidden man of the heart, cannot be concealed. There must, and will be a forsaking of the path he once delighted in; but what a thought, that the Spirit of God should dwell in fallen man, and there maintain His throne in the face of so much opposition, and hostile resistance from the world, the flesh and the devil, which often makes the child of God cry out, "Can ever the life of God be in my soul!"

Again, *faith*. What a precious gift! For by faith we are enabled to believe that, though black as jet in our feelings, yet we are white as snow. By faith, we believe that Christ became a poor Man to rescue us from hell and damnation. By faith, we believe that as He came off more than conqueror, so we shall, through Him. But sometimes the world gets us down, so that we are drawn aside; at another time, the flesh, and sometimes it is a combination – the world, flesh, unbelief and the devil.

And when such is the case, and faith is not strengthened, we begin to sink in our souls, and question if we are all glorious within.

But again, *hope*, and this is within; and it is a good hope through grace, for it is the anchor of the soul; and though often we are tossed in our minds, and do not get that comfort which we desire, still hope supports us. Who can tell but that the dark cloud will disperse?

Again, the *fear of God*: this dwells within us. How often it checks us when wrong. Oh, what a blessed monitor! That man is blessed in the highest sense who has the fear of God, for it “is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.” And, “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant.”

But again, *love*; this dwells within. And what can be compared with the love of God? For, “We love Him, because He first loved us.” Therefore it is all of free grace; but if we love Him that has begotten us to a lively hope, we also love them that are begotten by the same Spirit. And here is an evidence that we are “passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren”; and love will be sure to make itself manifest in various ways. It is like the rest of the graces of the Spirit when brought into exercise; but we are so poor, we have no hand in this matter. I feel that I must contend for the power of God, put forth in every step I take towards Zion.

But I must conclude.

Yours truly,

T.S.S.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

By J. Mijnders

The following amazing deliverance was experienced by Mr. J. Mijnders (who later became an esteemed minister in the Netherlands and who passed away in September 2021 at the age of 100). He was held in a punishment camp and was forcibly made to serve the Nazis in World War 2 because he had told his captors that God, and not they, was in control, and that they were answerable to Him for their actions. He had received from the Lord the words of Hebrews 13. 5 before he was taken from home, and believed that he would return in the Lord's time: “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

We can so thoughtlessly read and sing what it says in Psalm 23: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” However, if this becomes experience, two things become true. Then you

see what a terror death is, but also how much power God has. If there is one place where I experienced this, it was in the S.S. penitentiary camp north of Berlin.

There I also clearly saw that receiving a promise can be very encouraging, but it ultimately concerns the fulfilment of that promise.

Very soon after my arrival in the camp, I heard that here was a death chamber in which prisoners were locked up. Most of the time, a stay in that cell meant the end. In my presumptuousness, I was totally convinced I would never end up in there. After all, the Lord had promised me I would come home again. However, I did end up in it. I had to stay in that cell a day and a night. God's promise was no longer sufficient for me in that place, but there it became my overriding concern that the Lord would make true His Word. I prayed and supplicated for this. Who will ever be able to express the wonderment when the door opened in the morning? Death was expected; instead, life was received. You may indeed be sitting behind barbed wire, but then such a deliverance is an indescribable, great good. No, it was not self-evident to me just because I had received the promise; it was a special grace the Lord granted to me. Then a person can sing God's praises in prison, just as Paul and Silas did.

The fact that the Lord continually watched over me was also clearly demonstrated when a fellow prisoner accused me of stealing a day's ration of bread from him. This was not the case. Actually, just that day my own bread was stolen. The complaint regarding this false accusation was taken seriously by the authorities. During roll call, which sometimes lasted for several hours, I was to receive thirty lashes. Very often, this beating ended in death.

Kneeling down behind an old cupboard, I cried out to heaven, "Lord, didst Thou not promise that Thou wouldst never leave me nor forsake me?" There I saw that pleading upon God's promises is not just a natural response. Often this is spoken of so lightly. Also in this, we need the Lord; also in this, we are so deeply dependent.

The roll call began. I was placed in the front row. When my number was called, the executioner stepped forward. At that moment, it was in my heart:

"Keep my soul, O gracious Saviour;
Come, I pray, deliver me,
Lest my head with shame be covered,
For my refuge is in Thee."

That prayer did not remain hanging below the clouds. I was privileged to believe and also to feel that it arose directly to God's throne. Yes, I sincerely believed it was heard and answered because of the perfect

prayer of Him who endured all suffering Himself in order to deliver His people from all evil.

The executioner remained standing in front of me for a moment and looked penetratingly at me. I looked back at him without casting down my eyes. Then the executioner turned around and walked on. Oh, what went through me at that moment! Once again, the Lord had shown that He does not forsake those who prayerfully wait upon Him; with all my heart I was given to confess this behind that same cupboard.

My health suffered considerably under the harsh regime in this camp. I walked in heavy boots, and consequently got large ulcers on my feet. You could have put a silver dollar in them. Furthermore, I became very thin because of the poor diet. My resistance was quickly broken down.

After a stay of a few months in the penitentiary camp, I again had to appear in court. For that, I had to return to the prison in Berlin. The judge finally decided I could be released.

This, of course, did not mean that I could return to the Netherlands, but that I had to go back to work at AEG. Even though one will readily understand that I would have preferred to go to my own country, I was still happy to be able to return to the factory. Wim Verloop did not think he would ever see me again. After all, people who had been picked up by the S.S. were never heard of again. Therefore, my return was something very special to him. For me, however, it was even more so. Twice over I had faced death, but the Lord had graciously spared my life.

On the day of my release, I could not imagine that the third occasion was so imminent. I was ravenously hungry. With the best intentions, my colleagues brought me as much food as possible. I kept right on eating. Naturally, it was way too much. My stomach, which had been used to meagre portions for so long, could not take it. For that reason, I contracted severe dysentery.

After eating, I sat down to write a letter to my fiancée. I wanted to tell her I had been released. She knew I had been imprisoned because Wim Verloop had asked in a letter to his own family if one of them would tell my parents and fiancée. Mr. Verloop, who later became a minister, took it upon himself to do this. As I wrote that letter, I got a massive haemorrhage. A doctor had to come as quickly as possible. Later, I heard he was actually an old skipper. He said, "Let them take him away as soon as possible because he's going to die anyway."

At that point, Wim Verloop came to me. I asked him to read a portion from the Bible. I do not know what he chose to read, but when he was done, I said, "Wim, if you ever get back to Holland, you must tell everyone that the Lord is righteous when He takes my life away here; I have deserved it." There I could unconditionally bow before the justice

of God so that it became true: "Let Him do with me that which is good in His sight." There all circumstances fell away, and it became experience what the Heidelberg Catechism says in Question and Answer 11 of Lord's day 4, "Is not God then also merciful?" upon which the instructor answers, "God is indeed merciful, but also just; therefore His justice requires that sin which is committed against the most high majesty of God be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of body and soul." Reverently speaking, I may say that the Lord could do no harm any more. Oh, that place where we are made a willing tool in the hands of a righteous God! I would gladly give the whole world for it.

Upon the advice of the doctor, they brought me away. I was admitted to a hospital. There, for three weeks, I was cared for like a king. Here it was truly experienced, "What dost thou mean by the providence of God?" (Lord's day 10). I immediately received medication for dysentery. I was not allowed to drink. The care was exceptional. An Austrian nurse was working there. Just about every evening, she would come to my bed and then ask, "Is there anything more you need? Can I still do something for you?" Almost every night, when there were heavy bombings, the nurses transported me and a few other patients, bed and all, to the basement. They could easily have said, "Just leave those foreigners." But no, we counted as much as anyone else.

THE BLESSED END OF THE RIGHTEOUS

"The righteous is taken away from the evil to come" (Isa. 57. 1).

Let not your heart be sad, my friend.
But to the Word of God attend –
The righteous is but taken home
From evil which is yet to come.

Fragrant his name, his memory blest,
He enters in eternal rest;
His bliss, his joy, no tongue can tell,
With him for ever it is well.

His flesh – low in the grave well laid,
Until the call to wake the dead –
In hope awaits the Lord's return,
Nor dreads the resurrection morn.

Vain pleasures *here* and passing dreams –
Shadow is found where substance seems;
No rose so sweet but has its thorn,
For unto trouble man is born.

Tumult and war, and strife and din,
 The world is upside down through sin;
 Confusion everywhere we find –
All this the righteous leaves behind.

No tongue can tell, or fancy paint
 The pleasures that await the saint;
 But joys substantial, full and free,
 The righteous have eternally.

Then who shall murmur or complain,
 Or wish the righteous back again?
 To heaven he goes – his longed-for home –
 And 'scapes the evil yet to come.

Famine, or war, or pestilence,
 Mar not this bright inheritance;
 No tears are shed; no night is there –
 O happy clime! O region fair!

O may this prospect cheer my heart,
 And help me with time things to part;
 My chief concern through life – that I
 A righteous man may live and die.

For like the righteous I would be ;
 His life I'd live, his joys I'd see;
 And while I live a pilgrim roam.
 Till Jesus bids me, "Welcome home!"

H. Dawson (1890-1969)

A BROTHER BELOVED

It is with deep regret that we record the passing to his eternal rest of our friend John Kingham, a long-standing member of the church at Bethel Chapel, Luton, on April 1st, 2022. For many years our friend loyally, willingly and lovingly attended to the practical aspects of producing the *Gospel Standard* and *Friendly Companion*, to an exceptionally high standard. He did it as unto the Lord whom he loved, and we thank the Lord for this remarkable provision for the magazines over so many years. Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife Alison who has likewise served the Lord with him so willingly.

We believe it can truly be said of John by grace alone: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JUNE 2022

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

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee

At the time of writing, it is expected that, if the Lord will, this month the nation and Commonwealth will celebrate the Platinum (70th) Jubilee of the reign of Her Majesty the Queen. It was on February 6th, 1952, upon the sudden and unexpected death of her father, King George VI, that Elizabeth became Queen. She was crowned in June 1953, so her official birthday as monarch is observed that month.

In many ways Elizabeth II has been a remarkable lady and monarch. She has devoted her whole life to the service of the nation and Commonwealth, showing incredible stamina and consistency of purpose in so doing, even to her present great age. In that sense she has led by excellent example. It is said that she reads her Bible daily.

Tremendous and often unforeseen social changes have taken place over this long period, sadly most of them illustrating the decline of Christian values and the onward march of secularism and humanism, both of which leave our Creator out of their thoughts. It is not easy to ascertain how much the Queen is in sympathy with these changes, as she is, perhaps understandably, a very private person with her thoughts, though in such a public position. She has constitutionally had to put her signature to many acts of parliament which are directly contrary to the teachings of Scripture.

Without being unduly critical, it would nonetheless have gladdened our hearts if she had declined to do so, even as the King of Belgium abdicated on at least one occasion over a law on abortion he could not agree with, although he was speedily reinstated. Her coronation oath, to maintain the Protestant religion in these islands, has also sadly been compromised over these years, as Catholicism and multiculturalism have been promoted by the media and successive governments.

Sadly also, although she and the late Prince Philip set an excellent example of a stable marriage of many years, her own family's difficulties in this respect have no doubt at times been a heavy burden. We would also say respectfully that although the Queen without fail, when able, attends to public worship every Lord's day morning, the lack of observance of the Sabbath as a true day of rest by the royal family has troubled some of her most loyal subjects.

Having said this, we extend to Her Majesty the Queen our sincere best wishes at this memorable time, and desire that in her remaining days she may seek and find a refuge in the merits of the King of kings and Lord of lords, before whom, like all her subjects, she must shortly appear.

“THEN COMETH THE END”

(1 Cor. 15. 24)

Both Old and New Testaments speak clearly that the present earth is of limited duration.

When Noah came out of the ark, among the promises God gave to him was that “*while the earth remaineth*, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Gen. 8. 22). The italicised words give the time limit to the promises that follow: “*While the earth remaineth*.”

In the New Testament the Apostle Paul, declaring what had been revealed to him by Christ concerning the ordinance of the Lord’s supper, states that it is to be observed as the Saviour Himself said, “*till He come*” (1 Cor 11. 26). Again, the clear inference is that the remembrance has a time limit to it.

Again, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself stated, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away” (Mark 13. 31).

The Apostle Paul writing concerning the general resurrection of the saints at the return of the Saviour states: “Then cometh the end” (1 Cor. 15. 24).

Peter devotes a whole chapter to this solemn and certain event in 2 Peter 3. Rebuking the carelessness, unbelief and willing ignorance of fallen man, he exhorts the Lord’s people: “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3. 11-13).

The Lord Jesus Christ in His valedictory sermon promised: “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” (John 14. 2, 3).

But also, the Lord Jesus gave a direct prophecy concerning the days on earth that will precede His return.

1. It will be unexpected by most of mankind. “In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24. 44).

2. It will be universal. “Every eye shall see Him” (Rev. 1. 7).
3. It will come at a time of great distress on earth. “For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be. And except the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect’s sake, whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened the days” (Mark 13. 19, 20).
4. It will be instantaneous. “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Cor. 15. 52).
5. It will be final. “If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be” (Eccles. 11. 3).
6. It will be discriminatory. “And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left” (Matt. 25. 33).
7. It is a day known only to God. “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 25. 13).

GOD FAITHFUL TO HIS WORD

Substance of a sermon preached by J.W. Sperling-Tyler at Zoar Chapel, The Dicker, on Thursday, December 30th, 1982

Text: “For He is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10. 23).

Our beloved, spiritually-exercised, observant friends will see at once the connection between the lesson (Gen. 12. 1-9 and 15), and the text and give thanks to Almighty God that they are here to “tell of His wondrous faithfulness,” to declare their realisation, especially in their life, path and spirit, of the divine faithfulness of Almighty God to them generally, unitedly, specifically, and the church of God. There are those here for whom the word is a robust encouragement concerning the divine attribute of Jehovah, His faithfulness to perform. He must and will to His glory and for His great name fulfil every promise He has made to His beloved people.

I want to go back and tabulate some of the things that relate to the sacred subject and the first is: I shall think of the people of God alone and concentrate on all gracious, loving, praying souls. It may find some of our younger friends who meet with us.

The late deacon, Jethro West, left home and went to work at Ringmer. He would drive the ministers. He was a lonely figure, often with the eminent ministers of Jesus Christ, and they seldom said anything to him. One day, one of them in departing from Lewes station said to him, “You pray, West, don’t you?” and it found him. He was a praying

young man, driving the horse to Lewes from Ripe and Dicker, and I will name it as it spontaneously came to me; we could say it of a number of our younger friends. This is one of the initial, most powerful, potent signs of divine life in the soul: you pray. Never mind how ordered your prayer is; you look to God for mercy for a miserable sinner. You pray concerning your friendships, work, problems, dilemmas, your immortal soul, and your sin. You pray concerning a partner in life, your future, and all the things that concern you so deeply. You are not far from God. So I shall, according to divine warrant, include you in the body of the discourse.

I want you to ponder the word named in your hearing. Are you a praying soul? If so, I can say several things to you. If you really feel the Holy Spirit is teaching you to pray, you will never pray in vain. You may have to wait, and this is often a distressing period, and things you pray for seem impossible to you. And you will pray for your soul that you may receive a blessed token of His love. You will never pray in vain. There is an intense sweetness in my spirit as I name this to you, because who knows what you pray for? You pray and no one knows, generally speaking. It goes out of your soul to the Lord. You pray at the bench, in the workshop, the hospital, in the kitchen, on your bed, as you drive your car, at school. O the praying souls! I want to take the whole gamut of the subject to show you where the promises occur in the economy of God.

“For He is faithful that promised.” In any case, what do you really judge a promise is for the Lord’s dear people? It is the Lord communicating with you from heaven, by a verse of scripture or the hymnbook, or giving you a firm persuasion. It is hearing the Lord’s voice, and usually portions of His blessed Word spoken to the soul are spoken with heavenly light. The light shines into your spirit, dispelling the darkness. It is with heavenly authority. (I know there are degrees of it.) A promise is spoken with heavenly authority and you say to yourself, I cannot doubt it. I believe it. I am persuaded of it. Whether I live or die I am certain God will do it.

You receive it by faith, and in the hands of faith take hold of it and never let it go. It is yours. God has given it to you and not all the powers of darkness can take it away; not all your sins can take it away. You may in your darkest times start to bury promises because they seem so impossible. The remarkable thing is they are as precious as the body of Christ. They are fadeless, they never die, and resulting from the resurrection of Christ, they have properties of resurgence. They come up. Let the Lord touch your poor soul with His love, and precious things come up. They are part of the treasure in your breast. You firmly believe it and rejoice in it. This is a wondrous thing and well do I know it. Such

is the heavenly anointing power, divine authority and love, you know it is God's decree, will, purpose, and it will be brought to pass.

A few observations on "promise." A promise may be given by the Lord to you prior to entering affliction or trial and you do not know of it; it is hidden from you. A word is sweet to you and you wonder what it means. I have mentioned before the case of dear Olive Hooker. It was at the communion service one Lord's day, and in the address we brought forth the cup of the Lord Jesus and how He said, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me," and, "O My Father, if this cup may not pass from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done." The Lord spoke to Olive's heart. She felt sure it meant she had a cup to drink. She little knew she was full of leukaemia and had only a few months to live. The Lord, by that, prepared her for her end. She was made perfectly willing to take the cup the Lord prepared for her and she drank it, and the Lord was with her in it. The Lord speaks to prepare us for what is immediately before us. You cannot foresee what your future path will be, but there is a word the Lord has given you for the path.

I will go back and take the whole gamut of the subject. First, how do we view the foundation of the promise? Take the people of God on the earth at any given time and what do they know? Only what God has spoken to them, or discovered to them. The Lord has His divine will, heavenly purpose, divine decree. Wonderful it is when He speaks a promise. He reveals His secrets to His people, those divine, covenant secrets of Deity, of the triune God. He reveals by a promise and lays it in your heart. It is a wonderful promise and who knows? No one else, although generally the Lord will discover it to others.

"Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." It is a revelation of God's secrets to His dear people, and you treasure it in your breast. You come to the sanctuary, you meet friends, relations, dear ones and you do not open your mouth.

"He is faithful that promised." So I will refer to points raised in the lesson. The Lord said to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I shall show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation and I will bless thee" – and I do like this – "and thou shalt be a blessing." O to be a blessing! For the Lord to say to a young man, or a young lady, or one older, "Thou shalt be a blessing," in life, in the church, in the family. "Thou shalt be made a blessing." What a favour to be a blessing! So we may judge wherever the Lord sends you, you will be a blessing. "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (Christ is the promised Seed.) The Lord gave him a directive and a promise. The Lord appeared to him

again and said, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." "And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless?" There is the promise and the trial of it. What a trial! The Lord used a remarkable method, precious and sweet, calculated by His spirit to cheer, invigorate, revive His people when tried. He said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars" – look up to the star-spangled firmament, if thou be able to number them; and he said unto him, "So shall thy seed be." Wonderful to have a confirmation.

I listened and followed the divine service and the text was, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?" I came out with two spiritual feelings. First, I felt sure the Lord would accomplish His promise. I felt certain that what was in my heart the Lord would grant me. Second, I thought I was going into a sea of trouble, to the trial of faith of His dear people. He knows how to do it.

Dear Mr. Sam Stevens at Shaw's Corner was in what he called black despair. Black despair is akin to hopelessness. Do you know what the Lord did to revive him? Mr. J.H. Gosden was in the pulpit and it was not the sermon or the hymn; it was not the lesson. It was the benediction, and in it, Mr. Gosden said this: "Lord, we thank Thee we are not in black despair." That broke the snare and he came out a new man. He could see he was not in black despair. There is a terminus.

See how the Lord is pleased to confirm a promise when you are in the deep trial of faith concerning your matters. At the outset dear Gideon, feeling he was so insufficient, prayed to the Lord that he might have the fleece wet and the fleece dry, and the Lord did it. So there is the promise, the trial of faith and a confirmation from heaven. When Sarah – and many women would have felt the same at her age – when she heard that she would have a son, she laughed. It was not a laugh of foolishness, not frivolous; it was a laugh of incredulity. She looked on her body as dead and she laughed. The Lord said, "Is there any thing too hard for the Lord?" I put it to you in deep exercise concerning matters, and I do not know what they are. One feature concerning the things of God is, they do appear in respect of flesh and blood as a sheer impossibility. The more you look at a thing, the more impossible it becomes. "Is there any thing too hard for the Lord?" That did it. Sarah is named in Hebrews. Her faith is, not her incredulity.

When the Lord so blessed her the thing was done in an incipient way. She was full of faith. Some confirmations are so powerful, overwhelming, full of divine authority. Some would question you on the point if they heard you say you could not doubt it. I will say the same. When the Lord did it in reference to the Dicker Church, at Polegate – I have never doubted it because He had done it. This dear church was in my heart and hands. How could I doubt it? It does not mean you will

not pass through torrents of temptation. You do, but the promise is with heavenly authority. I anticipated seeing the departing of William Hickman and I wished to remain to see it. In the early hours I saw his ransomed spirit leave his body. I knew what God had done. "He is faithful that promised." O the divine faithfulness of God! He is faithful to His Son, to His blessed Word, to His promises to His saints. A bedrock is the divine faithfulness of God and you will rejoice in it.

At the end of 1982 the Lord has crowned the year with His goodness and this we have seen. The Lord is faithful that promised.

Blessed be God.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT AS A REFUGE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

By John Owen (1616-1683)

We may take this observation: that the best of the saints of God do oftentimes meet with great surprisals and disappointments in the best of their earthly comforts: their houses are not so with God.

I will give you one or two places for this: Ephraim "went in to his wife, and she conceived, and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house" (1 Chron. 7. 23). Ephraim had received a special blessing from God by Jacob, for the multiplying of his house: "He also shall be great ... and his seed shall become a multitude of nations" (Gen. 48. 19). Now, in Ephraim's old age, some of the chief of his sons are killed. There were Zabad, and Shuthelah, and Ezer, and Elead, "whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days" (1 Chron. 7. 21, 22), and he called his other child Beriah, "because it went evil with his house." It was a great surprise unto him, because he had a promise for his house; though God afterwards retrieved it.

You know how great a surprisal befell Job. See what his thoughts were. After, in all the foregoing part of the chapter, he had related the manifold blessings of God upon him in his prosperity, the uprightness of his own heart, his righteousness in his way, as he declares them to the utmost in the beginning of that chapter, he tells you his thoughts: "Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand" (Job 29. 18). He expected, from the blessing of God, long life and peace. You know what surprisal befell him, and disappointment to all his comforts in this world, that never man fell into greater; and he gives you an account how great his surprisal was throughout the next chapter.

The reasons hereof, why it may be thus, are:

First. Because there is no promise of the covenant to the contrary; there is no promise of God secures absolutely unto us our outward comforts. Be they of what nature they will – be they in our relations, in our enjoyments, in our persons – of what kind they will, why, yet we may have a surprisal befall us in reference to them all; because there is no promise of God to secure the contrary, therefore it may be so.

Secondly. Sometimes it is needful it should be so, though we are apt to think the contrary, and that for these three reasons:

1. To keep continually upon our hearts a due awe of the judgments of God – of the actings of God’s providence in a way of judgment, which otherwise we should be apt to think ourselves freed from. David testified that this frame was in himself: “My flesh,” saith he, “trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of Thy judgments” (Psa. 119. 120). There ought to be in our hearts an awe of the judgments of God; “for our God is a consuming fire”; and if we were secured from surprisals in our own concerns, so fleshly are we, so selfish and carnal, it would be impossible we should keep up a due awe and reverence of the judgments of God. But when these judgments of God may reach our nearest concerns – our lives, and all we enjoy – then doth our flesh tremble in a due manner for fear of Him, and we may be afraid of His judgments. A due fear of the judgments of God is a necessary balance upon the minds of the best of the saints.

2. It is needful, to keep us off from security in ourselves. There is such a treachery in our hearts, that we are able to build carnal security upon the spiritual dispensations of God’s kindness and love. “I said, I shall never be moved,” saith David – an expression of carnal security. What was the ground? “Thou, Lord, hast made my rock so strong.” He built up carnal security upon God’s dispensations. It is needful, therefore, God should sometimes break in upon our concerns, that we may not turn a constant course of His kindness into a sinful security of our own.

3. They are sometimes actually needful, to awaken the soul out of such deep sleep of present satisfaction, or love of this world, which nothing else will do. Sometimes we so fall asleep in our own ways, either in our satisfaction or projects and desires, and are so earnest in the pursuit of them, that no ordinary jog will awaken us; it is necessary God should break in upon us in the best of our concerns, and make us put in an “although” in our course. “Although my children live not, and my house be not so with God”; “Although my house be destroyed,” etc.

That which we should learn from hence, by way of use, is:

1. Not to put too great a value upon any contentment, whatever we have in this world, lest God make us write an “although” upon it. David seems to have put too great a valuation upon his house, the carnal

flourishing of his house; but in his last words he is forced to come to that: "Although my house be not so with God," as if he had said, "What I placed all my hope and expectation upon, that I find is not so with God."

2. Let us be in an expectation of such changes of providence, that they may not be great surprisals unto us. When we are in peace, let us look for trouble; when we are at liberty, let us look for restraint; and when our children are about us, let us look for the removal of them; and be content to see all our comforts in their winding-sheet [sheet in which a corpse is wrapped for burial; shroud] every day. It is impossible but our hearts will be too much upon them, unless we keep them in this frame.

The second general observation is this:

That the great reserve and relief for believers, under their surprisals and distresses, lies in betaking themselves to the covenant of God, or to God in His covenant. "'Although my house be not so with God' – what shall I then do? what will become of me? 'Yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow.'" I say, the great relief and only reserve of believers in their distresses and surprisals, such as may befall them in a very few days, is to betake themselves to God in His covenant.

I will give you some instances of it. There God leads us to this I now mentioned. Abraham was in a perplexed condition; God comes to him in the first verse, and renews His covenant with him: "The word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15. 1). He reminds him of the covenant, and bids him not fear. What is the matter, that God comes to Abraham with this, "Fear not, Abram"? The next verse discovers it: "And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" He was afraid that all the travail he had taken, in reference to the promise, would come to nothing; and he must leave it to Eliezer of Damascus. Now God comes to give him relief, in minding him of His covenant.

Jacob also relieved his dying spirit with this, upon the foresight of great troubles in his blessing of Dan: "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel" (Gen. 49. 16). He alludes to the name Dan, which signifies in Hebrew "to judge." When did Dan judge his people? Why, in Samson. This is matter of joy to Jacob. But what shall follow? "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward" (verse 17). "He shall be a serpent and an adder," saith he; that is, idolatry shall be set up in the tribe

of Dan, and continue. The first idolatry that was set up in Israel (the work of the serpent), was in the tribe of Dan (see Judg. 18. 30), when the Danites took away the graven image, etc., from Micah, and set it up, and made priests, until the day of the captivity of the land – not the captivity by the Assyrians, but the captivity by the Philistines, when they overcame them and took away the ark; for then were all those things destroyed at Dan. And afterwards Jeroboam comes and sets up the calf in the same place, and that continued to the last captivity. With what, now, doth Jacob relieve himself? “I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD.” He betakes himself to the covenant, and therewith relieves himself against all the trouble which he foresaw was coming upon his posterity in that tribe; which, upon that account, when the other tribes were sealed in the Revelation, was left out, because idolatry first began and ended in Dan.

David expresseth the same course to the height. He describes a very sad condition upon all hands: “My life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance,” etc. (Psa. 31. 10-15). Here is sin, and reproach, and contempt, and persecution, and danger of his life, all at once fallen upon him. What doth the man do? Why, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses he tells you, “But I trusted in Thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God. My times are in Thy hand.” He betakes himself to the covenant against all these troubles within doors and without doors, from sin, the world, wicked men, in reproach, contempt, persecution, that had almost slain him. He hath but this relief: he goes to God and saith, “‘Thou art my God’; Thou shalt undertake for me against all these. I am not in the hand of sin, nor in the hand of my enemies; but my times of suffering, my time of life and death, are in Thy hands.” He betakes himself unto God’s covenant, and there he finds rest. I might multiply instances.

Take one more, wherein the doctrine is plainly held out. “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” (Hab. 3. 17, 18). “‘Although my house be not so with God’; there is my family gone, the fruits of the earth gone, all is gone – it is no matter,” saith the believer, “‘I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.’” Every word expresses the covenant of God. By these instances it doth appear that, in the most surprising trouble and disappointments, believers do, as David here doth, betake themselves unto God in covenant.

OUR TIMES IN GOD'S HAND

By Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Eccles. 3. 1)

Solomon is still pursuing his argument. Everything around us is in a perpetual change. What vanity, therefore, is it to seek solid happiness in so shifting a scene! As well might we find rest on the tossing ocean, as in a fluctuating world. There is no stable centre. It is the wheel of nature (see Jas. 3. 6). Sometimes one spoke is uppermost, sometimes the opposite. But all is constant motion.

And yet all these fluctuations are under absolute control. It is not a world of chance, or of fate. All events – even the most apparently casual – all those voluntary actions that seem to be in our own power, with all their remotest contingences, are overruled. “To every thing there is a season” – a fixed time, a pre-determined purpose, on which – and not on man’s care, thought or effort – everything depends. Of this purpose we know nothing. But, “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15. 18). His eye has been upon everything, great and small, from all eternity. All is His unchangeable will. “If God,” as Charnock writes, “could change His purpose, He would change His nature.”

The perversity of sin has indeed disturbed the order of God’s providence. But the work progresses. The wheel in the middle of the wheel (see Ezek. 1. 15-21) moves forward, and performs the appointed work. Caprice, short-sighted ignorance and fickleness of purpose, distinguish the works of man. But here everything is worthy of God. “He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence” (Eph. 1. 8.). It is “the wise, and regular, and orderly administration of One who sees the end from the beginning, and to whom there is no unanticipated contingency; and whose omniscient eye, in the midst of what appears to us inextricable confusion, has a thorough and intuitive perception of the endlessly-diversified relations and tendencies of all events, and all their circumstances, discerning throughout the whole the perfection of harmony.”

There is, then, *a season* for every work of God, and it comes in its *season*. Every work has its part to fulfil, and it does fulfil it. There was *a season* for Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and for the return from Babylon. Nothing could either force on, or keep back, the time. On “the self-same day,” the deliverance was at once developed and consummated (see Exod. 12. 41, Ezra 1. 1). To have looked for it at any other time – whether sooner or later – would only have brought disappointment.

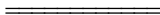
There was “the fulness of time,” the appointed *season*, the fittest time, for the Saviour’s advent (see Gal. 4. 4). An earlier period would have hindered many important *purposes*, or at least clouded their full development. The delay demonstrated the utter weakness of all other remedies. What could reason do with all her intellectual energy (see 1 Cor. 1. 21), or the law with all its heavenly sanctions? (see Rom. 8. 3). Successive disappointments prepare the welcome to the one, alone, efficient remedy.

Rightly to time things is the property of wisdom. And here indeed “the LORD is a God of judgment,” not only willing, but waiting the time, “that He may be gracious,” and “have mercy.” Blessed – truly blessed – “are all they that wait for Him” (Isa. 30. 18). Child of God, remember it is thy Father’s will, which hath appointed the *season*, and determined the *purpose*. All the wheels of providence subserve the *purposes* of grace. Every dispensation is most fitly chosen, and issued under the commission to do for thee nothing but good (see Rom. 8. 28). It is the will of the omnipotent God of wisdom and love. His will is always the best reason, and without there could be no reason at all. If thy “times are in His hands” (see Psal. 31. 15) in what better hands could they be?

“Our times are in Thy hand;
O God, we wish them there;
Our life, our friends, our souls, we leave
Entirely to Thy care.

“Our times are in Thy hand;
Why should we doubt or fear?
A Father’s hand will never cause
His child a needless tear.”

Here is thy best happiness in a world of vanity and sorrow. The grace for the present moment is inexhaustible and always ready, and (so writes an excellent Christian) “as exactly and exquisitely suited to your case and mine every instant, as if it had been appointed and contrived only for that single case, and that single moment.”



Thou canst not lay hold of Christ’s righteousness, till thou hast let fall the lie (thy own righteousness) which hitherto thou hast held so fast in thy right hand. When Christ called the blind man to Him, it is said, “He, casting away his garment, rose, and came to Jesus” (Mark 10. 50). Do thou likewise, and then come and welcome.

William Gurnall

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

By Henry Law (1797-1884)

“They shall make an ark” (Exod. 25. 10).

Reader, come see the chiefest wonder of the wondrous tabernacle. It is the ark. For this the holy tent was reared. For this the holiest place was set apart. This is the richest jewel of the sacred casket – the topstone of the hallowed pile.

Its form was first displayed in heaven. God gave the plan to Moses. In heaven it still is visible to faith. John saw it with enraptured eye. We read, “The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament” (Rev. 11. 19).

All this exhibits Christ. He is the Ark of redemption, the scheme of which was drawn above. In fulness of time it was set up below. And now it shines, and ever shall shine, the glorious glory of the new Jerusalem.

When God describes the holy vessels, observe, this takes precedence. He first shows that, which shows His Son most clearly. It is His will that Christ should be set forth without a cloud in full-orb splendour. May the same mind be ours! May He fill up the foreground of each thought and work! Let no reserve, let no unworthy veil obscure the brightness of His brightest smile. God puts the glories of His Firstborn first. Woe to the man who hides Him in the rear!

The ark is a plain chest. Its length is not four feet. Its height and breadth are scarcely more than two. Jesus is simple majesty. He needs no art to decorate His grace. It is impure and pitiable taste, which craves for outside show.

The substance of the ark is wood. This proves an earthly birth. Trees spring from this our lower soil. Here Jesus is portrayed as the woman’s Seed – the Kinsman of our race. O my soul, ponder more and more Christ’s visit to our low abode. He takes our prison rags, that He may bear our prison woe. He becomes Man, that with man’s lips He may exhaust our cup of wrath. Christ’s sufferings in the flesh leave us no sufferings to pay.

This is no common wood. Corruption cannot soil it. It defies decay. So human nature, as put on by Christ, is human nature without spot of sin. It is a lovely sight to see man treading earth, and no mire cleaving to the feet – and breathing our polluted air, without infection’s taint.

The ark is more than wood. Its every part is covered with pure gold. This metal, put over the coarse case, shows that our Jesus is much more than man. Grand truth! Sing, O ye heavens, and rejoice, O earth. The lowly Saviour is the mighty God. Vain were the wounds, the blood, the

agony, the death, unless the merit have a boundless worth. One soul, which never sinned, might buy one sinning soul from curse. But Jesus satisfies for multitudes, many as the seashore grains, and countless as the stars of night. His Deity enables. His every act and every pain is measureless as God can be. Infinite deaths are died upon His cross. Infinite obedience is wrought out in His life. O my soul, look often at the ark. It witnesses that Christ is very Man, and spotless Man – and Man conjoined with perfect Deity, and so the Saviour, whom your case requires.

A crown surrounds the summit. This speaks of kingly state. And is not Christ a King? The Father's voice decides it. "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion" (Psa. 2. 6). The Spirit cries aloud, "He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19. 16). Who will not add, Lift up your heads O portals of my heart, and let the King of Glory enter in? Happy they who give Him the throne of every thought, and crown Him daily with high crowns of praise! Let the ungodly pierce Him with mockery's thorns. Reader, place on His brow the jewel of your ransomed soul.

Coffers are made to hold some treasure. They are the custody of precious things. That surely, then, must be a priceless prize which shall be guarded within walls like these. And so it is. The ark receives the tables of the law. God had revealed His will. He had drawn on a chart His own transcendent holiness. This transcript of the eternal mind was folded in this chest. Now look to Christ. He is the law-containing Ark. The Spirit, not the letter, dwells in Him. The world reviled this code. Man cast it from him. Christ gave Himself to be its sacred home. He hid it in the chambers of His breast. Hear His appeal, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psa. 40. 8). Christ is embodied law.

Next, the ark is covered. A lid of solid gold is placed for especial purpose, and with especial name. The purpose is to hide the law from every eye. This brings us to the glorious work of Christ. The law has a stern voice. Mark its requirements. They are very long and very wide. Their breadth embraces the whole of each man's life. They rigidly exact obedience, without one falter or one flaw. Mark, too, its curse. It has one fearful threat. Eternal ruin is transgression's doom. Christ comes to hide these terrible demands. He spreads Himself along the vast dimensions of the requiring and the condemning code. His life is satisfaction to the whole. So, too, He bears its utmost penalties. He suffers, till its wrath can take no more. God looks upon His Son. He finds obedience rendered, and the curse endured. An exact covering conceals all claims. No part appears to ask for further dues.

The lid has an especial name. It is the mercy seat. We now are taught why pure gold, without any admixture, is its substance. Mercy has no birth place, but in heaven. It yearns, indeed, over our fallen race. It speeds, indeed, to earth. But its high origin is far above. Hence nothing but pure gold – God’s emblem – can form this mercy seat. It is a fitting name. For what is mercy, but Christ in His finished work? Christ is the ocean, in which every drop is infinite compassion. He is the mountain towering above mountains, in which every grain is God’s own goodness. He is the mirror of God’s loving heart – the pinnacle of tender grace. O my soul, know the full comfort of the mercy seat. When your shortcomings fill you with dismay, see Christ – your mercy – spreading His own robe around you; when threatening thunders peal, seek safety in His covering side. Bless Jesus more and more. His mercy shelters. His mercy saves. His mercy endures for ever.

Can more be added to the ark? Faith fain would see some token of redeemed souls. It looks again. Nor looks in vain. At either end a cherub has its place. No foreign metal frames this glittering pair. They and the mercy seat are of one piece. Aloft they spread their wings – thus shadowing the lid. Their faces turn towards each other, but look intently on the seat below. Reader, come learn some obvious lessons from these mystic forms. They rest upon the mercy seat. The heirs of life have no dependence but on Christ. On Him they lean for every help. On Him they cast the burden of their sins. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3. 11).

They are, too, part and parcel of the Lord. He is the Head – they are the members. One sap pervades the stem and branch. Christ’s Spirit animates each fibre of the church. All are “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1. 4).

Their expanded wings proclaim their readiness for instant work. The cry of grateful love is always one: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” Speak but the word, and swiftly I will fly. My plumes delight to speed in Thy behalf.

They turn towards each other. Oneness of purpose, oneness of heart, oneness of action, is the pure mark of God’s pure sons. They look not to their own, but to the common weal. Without diverging glance, in harmony and love, they seek the glory of their glorious Lord.

But every eye is rivetted on Christ. They dwell with prying gaze on the mysteries of the mercy seat. They have no look for other objects – nor mind for other knowledge. Their sigh is, Oh! that we might know Him more and more, and see with clearer view the wonders of His Person, His grace, His love, His work. The more they search, the more they learn. The more they learn, the more they crave. Eternity must end before the end of Christ be reached.

A promise, bringing heaven down to earth, surmounts the whole. God adds, "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat" (Exod. 25. 22). The anxious soul will often breathe the longing thought, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" Reader, there is no doubt. The spot is fixed. Come to the mercy seat. There God is present to hear, to answer and to bless. There He will open all His heart, and deal as friend with friend, in all the freeness of familiar love. Then linger not. Plead Christ, your law-fulfilling righteousness. Claim Christ, your law-appeasing Victim. Show Christ as "set forth" of God "to be a propitiation," or mercy seat, "through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3. 25). As you draw near, God will draw near to you. In Christ you come. In Christ He meets you. The mercy seat joins you to God. The mercy seat joins God to you.

Will any say, the Ark of Moses is no more? True. When the temple fell, this framework disappeared. But Christ, the substance, ever lives. In heaven the throne of grace cannot be moved. The name is changed, but the reality is one. Material forms are lost. Essential blessings have eternal life. Yes. While need lasts we may go boldly to a ready throne. God waits with open hand. With open hand His people take. O my soul, pass often through the parted vail. You will return laden with mercies – rich in grace – refreshed with heavenly converse – and meetening [made ready] for a heavenly home.

Moreover, the ark had staves. By these the priests conveyed it. It was the constant centre of the marching host. It moved, or tarried, as they moved or stayed. Thus Christ abides, the Inmate of the faithful heart. At home, abroad, in solitude, in work, indwelling Deity gives dignity and peace.

The staves might not be taken out. They kept their place in readiness for instant movement. It is true that Christ never finally deserts His own, who once have welcomed Him. But let them watch, and pray, and hold Him fast with clinging love and fervency of zeal. For if the world creeps in, and rival lusts are fondled, His gracious smile will cease to cheer, His precious presence will seem to vanish.

Let congregations, too, and churches fear. The staves give warning that departure may be near. The gospel comes. It calls. It is not heeded. What then? It passes on, and may be no more heard. The true light has shone on many a spot, which now is dark as death's dark vale.

Reader, let not the ark thus speak to you in vain. Receive it, prize it, and Obed-edom's blessings will enrich you (see 2 Sam 6. 11). Enshrine it in your heart. Then all strongholds of sin, like Jericho, will fall before it. The idols of self-righteous forms will lie, like shivered Dagon, at its feet. And when you reach the stream of Jordan, Christ, the true Ark, will lead you onward, and parting waters will be your passage to the land of rest.

THE HOLY GHOST: ONE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

By J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

J.C. Philpot in his excellent Meditations on the Person, Work and Covenant Offices of the Holy Ghost has previous to this extract been affirming the distinct Personality of the Holy Ghost.

We shall now, therefore, proceed to show from the firm Word of truth that the blessed Spirit is truly and really a divine and distinct Person in the eternal, self-existent Godhead.

Our first class of proofs, for they may be conveniently arranged under two leading heads, shall be taken from those passages in which *the Holy Spirit is spoken of in conjunction with the Father and the Son*; and as these are by general admission Persons – the Person of the Father being spoken of (see Heb. 1. 3), and the Person of Christ* (see 2 Cor. 2. 10) – the Holy Ghost is a Person also.

1. The first proof shall be taken from the words which our blessed Lord spake to His disciples when 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.” Let us examine these solemn words of our blessed Lord with a view to the Personality of the blessed Spirit as distinctly expressed in them. Baptism, all admit, is the outward sign of admission into the visible church of Christ, an ordinance of the Lord’s own institution. In its administration, the believer is baptized “in the name,” that is the authority,** of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Now does not this formula of baptism express a plurality of Persons? The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are each distinctly named. And then unity of Essence? for it is not in the names, but “in the name” of the Three Persons, clearly implying that the Persons are Three, but the name, the nature, the essence, the being, the authority but One.

But to establish this point as bearing upon the distinct Personality of the Spirit more clearly, try and substitute “a quality,” “a breath,” “an influence,” “a virtue of God” for the word “Holy Ghost.” Such plain, simple tests are often more convincing, at least to some minds, than direct, positive arguments. “Baptizing them in the name of the Father,

* The expression “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4. 6), might be rendered “in the Person of Jesus Christ,” it being precisely the same word as that translated “person” (2 Cor. 2. 10).

** The word “name” in the Scripture, as applied to God, signifies all that God has revealed of Himself, whereby He can be known, believed in, worshipped, feared and loved by the children of men. See, for the proof of this, Exod. 33. 19; 34. 5, 6. The name of God, therefore, includes and signifies all those glorious perfections of Deity which He has revealed of Himself in the Word of His grace.

and of the Son, and of love.” How flat, how uncouth, how confused! How unworthy of the divine majesty of the blessed Lord who spake the words! “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the divine breath.” Still the same flat, uncouth, confused mixture so that the veriest babe in grace could tell it was not such heavenly language as ever fell from Him into whose lips grace was poured. It is hardly worthwhile to pursue the argument by making another trial of “energy,” “power,” “authority,” or “influence.” The result would be still the same, that all such terms at once betray themselves by their own nakedness and nothingness, as unfit to stand side by side with the name of the Father and of the Son.

But now view the truth in its own pure and heavenly light, and read the words in the brightness of their own grace and glory. Read them as a believer in the blessed Trinity. Then how clear to faith is it that “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” declares that these are three distinct, co-equal, co-eternal Persons in one undivided Essence.

2. But now under the same class of proof – the name of the Holy Ghost in the same connection with the Father and the Son – look at another text of holy writ, in which the Personality of the Holy Ghost is most clearly seen. It is that well-known benediction which so often and so fitly closes the service of God in the sanctuary: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (2 Cor. 13. 14). See how the Three Persons of the sacred Trinity are here invoked and called upon to bestow each His distinct blessing. “The love,” the eternal love of God the Father; “the grace,” in all its richness and fulness, of God the Son; and the sweet, sacred fellowship and “communion” of God the Holy Ghost – will the believing soul part with either the Person of each divine Giver or the gift of each divine Person? Are not Giver and gift, Person and work of all Three alike inseparable?

We might, if it were worthwhile, try the same experiment with this text as with the one before quoted (Matt. 28. 19). “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion” – of what? Of an influence, a quality, a virtue, a power, an emanation? What do they all mean? What fellowship is there in a breath, or a quality, or an influence? There can be communion only with a Person. Can a virtue, or a breath, or an influence converse with me, talk with me, commune with me, or I with it? Who ever expected a breath to speak, or conversed with it as a man converseth with a friend? A poet might so speak in figurative language, or a lover may sigh his woeful complaints to the rocks, or tell his mournful tale to the purling stream, into which he drops his hot tears; but the blessing prayed for was not the longing of poet or lover, but the

solid, solemn, holy aspiration of a man of God, who knew for himself what the sacred fellowship of God the Holy Ghost, as a divine Person, communicated to his soul.

“Thy sweet communion charms the soul,
And gives true peace and joy,
Which Satan’s power cannot control,
Nor all his wiles destroy.” (H. 28)

This sweet communion never charmed the soul of those vile heretics who deny His Deity and Personality. Such sips and tastes of heavenly bliss are the sole portion of the living, believing, loving family of God.

3. Another testimony under the same class of Scripture proof to the Personality of the Holy Ghost may be drawn from His appearance at the baptism of our blessed Lord “in a bodily shape”: “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3. 22). Here again the Three Persons of the blessed Trinity were all present. The Father spoke with an audible voice from heaven, the Son was in the water, and the Holy Ghost descended “in a bodily shape like a dove” upon Him.

Now it does not matter to the argument whether the Holy Ghost assumed the outward form of a dove, which seems the better meaning, or descended with the rapid motion of a dove. The point and force of the proof lie in the words, “in a bodily shape,” and that His visible appearance was simultaneous, that is, occurred at the same moment, with that of the Father and the Son. “A bodily shape” presumes a personal subsistence. A quality, or an energy, or an influence, can have no bodily shape; but when the Holy Ghost would reveal in a sensible, visible manner His personal subsistence as a divine Person in the Trinity, He descended in a bodily form.

4. Another testimony of a similar character may be drawn from the celebrated passage of the three heavenly Witnesses: “For there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One” (1 John 5. 7). How plainly and clearly is the Holy Ghost there joined with the Father and the Word (or Son), and how positive the declaration that these Three are One – Three in a distinction of Persons, One in Unity of Essence!

The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.

Thomas Watson

REDEEMING THE TIME

*Prayer Meeting Address given by Mr. R.J. Bradstock,
at Zoar Chapel, Handcross, on Wednesday, January 1st, 2020*

Text: “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5. 16).

In the chapter we have read in Ecclesiastes (Ecclesiastes 3) we have been reading much about time. Time is that period of our life from our birth to our death. Time began in the day of creation – before was eternity – and God wrought a work. We read: “In the beginning God.” He was in the beginning of this work, this great creation. “He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” There was a beginning and God was in the beginning. “In the beginning God.” And He brought forth this great universe and planted here in this earth man. Man was created in the image of God and man was made to glorify God.

And we know what happened in the garden, which God had prepared for our first parents: the adversary came in and tempted Adam and Eve and they sinned, they broke God’s word, God’s law. And now man, descendants of Adam, are sinners. We have broken God’s law; we continue to do this, and when we consider the present day and the dreadful state of this nation, the dreadful state of the world – this nation, this country, into which the Lord has placed us – there is this exhortation in God’s Word: “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

I suppose really, this applies to all men, but it is a word to the people of God, and we need to search ourselves, my friends, we need to search our own life: are we redeeming the time? How much time is wasted! A friend of mine used to telephone me, before his death, and mourn over the wasted time in his life. Do we mourn over the time we have wasted, time that God has given to us, misspent time? O to be found redeeming the time.

And you say, how can we do this – redeem the time? Well for one thing, of course, we are redeeming the time if we are found in the house of God, if we are found gathered with the people of God, the worshippers of God. It is not time misspent, is it? Then it could be said, well, many people are found in the house of God – what are they seeking after? Are they redeeming the time? Are they mourners in Zion? Are they mourners, sitting in the pew, mourning over their sins, and after Him, after Christ, after the living God? To be found numbered with His people now and throughout eternity, is that our desire? Redeeming the time, friends. Redeeming the time – seeking Him. The Word of God says, “Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.” That is redeeming the time. It is much better to be in that place, than to be seeking after the things of the world, seeking to be

possessors of those things the world love and embrace. But remember this, that the time is hastening on when we will have to bid adieu to everything here below. But what a mercy if we are found redeeming the time, if the work of God's grace is begun in our hearts, if there is that desire to know Him, whom to know is life eternal. To be a possessor of that grace, that grace which He bestows upon His people – "redeeming the time."

"He giveth more grace." Grace. He "giveth grace to the humble." Have you ever pondered that word? He "giveth grace to the humble." If they are really humble, then they are already possessors of grace, because it is grace that humbles a sinner at the feet of Jesus. Redeeming the time, friend, low at the feet of Jesus; redeeming the time in real repentance and godly sorrow; redeeming the time in seeking Him, seeking to know Him, whom to know is life eternal, seeking to know more of Him.

And that leads me on to another thought, my friends. It is very nice to tear off the page of the calendar and read the text. What about then taking up the Word of God and reading a chapter? I thought today, ah, we need more than that. Have we the time – have we the time to take up the Word of God and read through a book, read through a whole book, say, one of the minor prophets, or the Book of Ruth, or a larger book than that, a larger book in the Word of God, and to be really interested in it, and really to ponder what the Word says? Redeeming the time in the Word of God.

But then, you see, well it may be one thing to read the Word of God, but the psalmist said, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." And when you come to the Word of God, and perhaps there are those things that you cannot understand, and I have got to admit this, that there are places in the Word of God that are very difficult to understand, but we do not turn away from it. Pray, pray that the Lord would help you and teach you and reveal the truth of His Word into one's heart.

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." And what about prayer, friends?

"Pray, if thou canst or canst not speak;
But pray with faith in Jesus' name." (H. 882)

Young friends, do you pray? I am not suggesting you say prayers; the verse in the Young People's hymnbook goes like this:

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

It is not just to gabble a few words, you know. Ah, it is God dishonouring, God dishonouring. But O to pray with faith in the name of Jesus. Redeeming the time on your knees before the throne of grace, with a desire to have that real, godly sorrow for sin, real repentance – redeeming the time. I have thought a lot of this, this past day or two, coming to the end of another year. The Lord has spared some of us to reach a great age, and we know this, that it will not be long, it cannot be long. O to be found “redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” And you do not need me to tell you that the days are evil. I am old enough to have seen better days than these days, much better days than these days – days when I believe we had godly leaders, praying leaders. Where are they now? If there are any about, they are very silent. They do not speak about it, they do not write about it, like some of those godly leaders that we knew in our day, in our youth. How in the time of great national trouble they sought the Lord God, and the Lord God heard their poor cries and had regard to their prayers.

Friend, if you are taught to pray, if the Holy Spirit prompts you in prayer and there is that cry to Him, it is redeeming the time, and the Lord does have regard to the destitute; He will not despise their prayer. He regardeth the prayer of the destitute, those cries, those tears that are seen by God when perhaps you are in some quiet place. The Lord spoke to His disciples: “When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” There is a promise there: “Shall reward thee openly.” Redeeming the time in that quiet place before God. Have you proved Him? Have you proved this: that you have prayed in secret and the Lord has rewarded you openly? There is that sweet encouragement in this, that the Lord will hear and hear again, and again.

What do we read in Psalm 107? “Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble.” They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, the different places into which the Lord’s people were found, and are found. It could be said, well, they got themselves into that trouble. And we do, we get ourselves into difficulties and into troubles. “Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. And He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!”

Redeeming the time in prayer and in praise. There is a time to pray, and a time to receive a sweet answer to one’s prayer, and a time to praise the Lord. Glorify Him in this: in returning thanks for all His goodness and great favours to us. And the people of God, they join together, yes,

and within that promise, the twos and the threes gather together, they have the sweet promise of God, He in the midst, there He will be. And we have experienced this, many of us. He does take knowledge, He gathers His people. Has He not said, "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice," those that have worshipped by sacrifice, and they bring their praises to Him to honour and bless His holy name – redeeming the time.

Well the Lord's dear people, they launch forth from that deceitful shore. They are found journeying on in their little boat, shall we say, and at His command they launch forth to go to the other side. They launch forth from this world, like Bunyan's Pilgrim; he realised he was in the City of Destruction, and he was led out. There were those who thought he was mad, and ran after him and tried to persuade him to return, but he could not, he could not return, he went forward. "Redeeming the time." The Slough of Despond, and other things in that pathway – he was enabled to press on towards the Celestial City.

The Lord calls His people out one by one, and it is still going on; His work is still going on. Moses prayed, "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." His work will continue until the end of time. "I will work," says He, "and who shall let it?" Who can hinder that work? And the Lord in His mercy continues, and this is what we want to see, my friends. This is what we want to see in Zion, this is what we want to see here, in Handcross chapel, His work, a manifestation of it, those found redeeming the time, leaving those things that are behind, pressing on towards the mark, for that great prize, heaven at last. O to be found walking in that celestial way, pressing on towards the mark for that great prize, Christ Jesus Himself, there, at the end of the journey, and His presence in the journey too. But there to see Him, in all His beauty, to see Him lifted up, to see Him and the beauty of His righteousness, and be clothed in that righteousness, to be cleansed in that fountain that was opened for sin and uncleanness, to be made right for that heavenly kingdom.

I often think of that word, you know, in Colossians. It speaks: "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." What a description of heaven we have here. What a description of heaven we have in other places, John 14 for instance, and other places. It is a real place, friend, a real place. Peter said, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables." He was an eyewitness; he saw the glory of God as it was revealed in the mount, when he was there with the other two disciples, and they had a view of Christ there in all His glory. We read, do we not, "Eye hath not

seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.”

“Redeeming the time,” friend, seeking to love the Lord with all the heart and all the mind and all the soul, with every spiritual faculty, and to be able to say with the psalmist, “I love the Lord.” Why, why did he say that? Because the Lord had heard him, because the Lord had heard his poor cries, and the Lord had appeared for him, blessed him. He was a sinner as all men are sinners, but a sinner saved by grace. What a blessed character, a sinner saved by grace. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” The work of God alone, you can add nothing to it. Man cannot add anything to that great work of salvation; it is done, it was done by the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary.

“Redeeming the time.” “Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him” – and you think of this, friend, the suffering, the ignominy and the death of the Lord Jesus. Joy? What joy was there in that? But the joy was in this: seeing all His beloved people, every one, gathered to Him in that great gathering. “For unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” The redeemed, gathered together before Him – “I” saith He, “I and the children which God hath given Me” – I and them.

May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

This, his last public address, was blessed by God to the profit of one of the young people present, who later referred to it in their testimony to the church at Handcross.

PATRIOTISM

By Ambrose Serle (1742-1812)

Political hypocrisy hath made the laudable name of patriotism almost suspicious. But he that is sincere in the best things and walks as in the sight of God will, of all men, be faithful in lower matters, and carry a sterling integrity from religion into every duty of social life. On the other hand, he that regards not God, nor yet other men but as they are convenient to himself, may very justly be suspected in his fidelity to his country. Profit and vain glory, indeed, will carry some men very far, as they have done; but strip a worldly man of these, and where are his motives for promoting the national welfare?

The Christian is not a mere showy patriot, for lucre or for fame; but he is, what none but a Christian can be, a patriot in spirit and in truth,

pouring out his secret and earnest prayers before God for the true prosperity of the land. The world, indeed, hath a low opinion of this artillery of heaven; but one who is wiser than the world hath told us that the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. And if one such person, like an Elias, can be instrumental in drawing down public blessings, what may not be hoped for from the prayers of legions of Christians throughout the nation? We may read what the prayers of such men have done, in Hebrews 11. 33, 34.

The Christian patriot will rejoice in all the good done to his country, though other hands rather than his have been employed in the doing of it. That man deserves not the name of a patriot to whom the peace, honour and prosperity of his country are valuable only as they may contribute to his own.

As the Christian's patriotism is founded upon the pure principles of religion, he is more desirous of his country's prosperity in true worth and virtue than in mere power and riches, which are often the dangerous fuel of luxury and pride both to states and individuals. He is no enemy to commerce, for a thousand reasons, but an utter enemy to commercial vices, for reasons infinite and eternal.

In wishing for his country all kinds of temporal blessings, he cannot forget to ask before God for a greater abundance of spiritual mercies. His heart's desire is, that the gospel and religion of Jesus Christ, happily countenanced and established by the laws, may for ever flourish through the land in all its genuine power and purity. Though he is not, and cannot be an enemy to any man, yet he is a well-principled adversary to all wicked and blasphemous errors and opinions, and to all profligacies of heart and life which flow from them, and which have overrun the country with guilt and shame.

The Christian carries religion into his patriotism, but not his patriotism into religion. The things of God are too holy and sacred with him, either to be mixed with or truckle to the little, low politics of men. He is the citizen of a better country, and a pilgrim in all others, though a peculiar friend to that in which he was born.

As he can say with Samuel, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for this nation, so he would act upon all occasions, as Samuel did, and endeavour to promote the welfare of his country by being a good countryman. He will contribute fairly and cheerfully to her burdens, live in all godly quietness and honesty among his people, and pray faithfully and earnestly for the whole public weal as a Christian. Were all the subjects such patriots, the nation, with God's blessing, would have but small reason to live in fear of the most mighty and numerous enemies.

“MY TIMES ARE IN THY HAND”

By J.W. Sperling-Tyler (1912-1989)

“My times are in Thy hand” (Psa. 31. 15).

I want you to think of our blessed Lord first. His times were in the Lord’s hand: the time of His incarnation, the place of it; His mother, the formation of His holy humanity in the womb of the virgin; the place of His birth where Rachel was buried; His boyhood; His coming to Jerusalem, “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions” (Luke 2. 46). Later, the time when He came from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him, then going into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil: all His times were in God’s hand. When He was baptized the immeasurable anointing of the Man Christ Jesus by the Spirit; His miracles, movement, place: all were in the hand of His Father. “I do always those things that please Him” (John 8. 29). “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me” (John 4. 34). The last Passover and the institution of the holy supper; the singing of the hymn. I am sure you would have loved to hear Jesus sing. Don’t you think He and His people sing together? “And Jesus leads the song.” We shall be there one day, I trust, so we shall know all about it. He shares in all His people’s praises and joys as well as their sorrows. He loves your communion as you love His. He *seeks* your communion as you seek His. Going forth to Gethsemane, drinking the cup, being brought before Pontius Pilate; the scourging. What sustained Him? His Father upheld Him because His times were in His Father’s hand. I can reverently say that this applies to the Lord Jesus:

“All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please *My Father in heaven.*” (see H. 64)

“The things concerning Me have an end” (Luke 22. 37). His sufferings, ignominy; everything had an end – not our salvation, but the accomplishment of our redemption, His triumphant death. He was buried. He rose on the third day and opened the gate of everlasting life to all believers. After forty days, He ascended and took His session at the right hand of God. From thence He will come to be our Judge. He will “appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9. 28). Everything is planned and settled.

“Eternal wisdom drew the plan;
In all things ordered well.” (H. 411)

Because His times were in His Father’s hand your times are in *His* hand.

REGINALD BRADSTOCK OF HANDCROSS

Call by Grace and Call to the Ministry

I am writing an outline of my call by grace and to preach the everlasting gospel. I feel much my need of the gracious aid of the Holy Spirit to be my Remembrancer, that I may record faithfully the way the Lord has led me. It is a solemn matter to give the reason of the hope within the heart. Remembering the word of the hymnwriter, J. Hart:

“Never, never may we dare,
What we’re not to say we are.” (H. 706)

Many times I have been cut down and much tried as to my calling by grace and to the ministry. Out of this darkness of mind I have poured out my feelings before the Lord and cried, “Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope,” having a humble hope raised up in my soul “that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

I, Reginald John Bradstock was born on April 5th, 1925 in Croydon. My parents at that time were worldly, but honest and morally upright. When I was about five years of age, my mother’s father, who was a widower, came to live in our home. My mother, who was his youngest daughter, agreed to care for him as he was then elderly and did not have very good health. He was a most gracious man and had a gracious influence in the home. Many things that were done before his arrival were not done afterwards. Often I heard the words: “Grandfather does not approve of that.”

In 1933, a neighbour offered to take my brother to a Baptist Sunday School not far from where we lived. We continued to go for a few weeks, until returning home one afternoon Grandfather asked if we could tell him what we had heard that day. On hearing that we had been playing with sand and plasticine, he said, “You have all the week to do that, but the Lord’s day is for rest and the worship of God.”

During the following week, arrangements were made for some children of a family who were already attending Tamworth Road Strict Baptist Chapel to call for us so that we could all go together to the Sabbath School. How many times I have looked back with sincere thankfulness to the Lord for this turning point in providence. Hymn 4, verse 4. At this time also we commenced to attend the chapel services with Grandfather, who often spoke of the sweet times he had had under the ministry of Mr. George Rose. I looked upon this people as the Lord’s, and I believe I had a desire to be like them.

I often had very serious thoughts of death and eternity when quite young. What an awful thing to spend eternity “where their worm dieth

not, and the fire is not quenched.” On two occasions, children that I knew quite well fell ill and died, and I wondered what would become of me should I die. Mother often read to us from the Bible, and the chapters 24 and 25 of Matthew had a great effect on my mind. What if I should be separated on the left hand when the day of final separation should come? The text often seen above the windows inside the tram cars in those days: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,” made a great impression on me. Many times I had bitter thoughts towards some who were unpleasant to me at school, sometimes even wishing something awful would happen to them. This I knew was wrong, and I wanted to be different and to try and pray about these sinful feelings. There were many occasions when I tried to seek the Lord’s help in difficulties and proved that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

When I was about eleven years old, I had a great disappointment. My heart was set upon a certain thing that the Lord was to deny me. I believe out of this I had to learn to pray, “Thy will be done,” and be submissive to the will of the Lord, for He knows best.

Early in 1943 I joined the communications branch of the Royal Navy and trained as a visual signalman. After this training period I was posted to a “Headquarters Landing Craft.” Most of the crew of about fifty men were young like myself. Many were very ungodly. I could not go along with them, and often found I had no companions. My parents gave me a pocket Bible when I left home, which I often read and I believe received much comfort from, especially in reading the Psalms. I knew there were those at home who were praying for my safety, and I tried to pray for myself. Oh, the solemn thought of death and eternity! I felt to be such a sinner in the sight of a holy God, and wanted to have a real repentance of heart, and to know within the power of forgiveness, and redeeming love and grace.

On June 6th, 1944, we arrived with many other ships off the beaches of Normandy, remaining there for several weeks. The Lord mercifully spared me. I witnessed the sinking of a number of ships with the loss of many lives. Psalm 91 was a great comfort to me, especially the words, “It shall not come nigh thee.”

In the assault on Walcheren Island on November 1st the same year, I was mercifully brought through again. Of the twenty-seven ships that formed the Support Landing Craft Squadron, less than half returned home, the others being either sunk or rendered completely useless. Although our ship had a hole torn in the side by enemy gunfire, we were able to make our way back to Dover after a stormy crossing from Holland.

Whilst on leave in April 1945, I met the one who two years later was to become my wife. When I was free to come home, we went to chapel together. I felt a desire in my heart to hear the Word of God to my spiritual profit. Sometimes I was softened in reading the Bible, especially Isaiah chapter 53, of the Lord's sufferings. "Wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." How I longed for a living, experimental knowledge of Christ and Him crucified; to know what He did in suffering and dying, shedding His blood and opening a fountain for sin and uncleanness: that all this was for me.

One Monday evening early in February 1947, I hurried home from my work and quickly made ready to go to the service at Tamworth Road. There was much snow which was lying very thick. When I arrived at the chapel, a man was clearing a pathway through to the schoolroom where the service was to be held. Apart from this man, I was the first to arrive. He soon followed me in and began a conversation which I listened to with much interest. I had prayed my way along that night, and begged the Lord for a token, in the psalmist's words: "Let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee." The minister that night was Mr. R.J. Morris, who preached from Isaiah 43, part of verse 1: "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine." The dear Lord poured pardoning love and grace into my heart and I could say, "My cup runneth over." The sweet savour of Christ to one so unworthy remained with me. I could see a preciousness in His shed blood. I could then see in Jesus everything requisite for salvation, for forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, everything in Christ for redemption. "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ."

When the service was ended I did not wish to talk, but went out into the cold night, feeling within what the two disciples felt on the Emmaus journey: "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?" A little time after this, while working at my bench planing off a piece of completed joinery, these words came very powerfully: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." I was greatly softened by this.

The exercise of following the Lord in His sacred ordinances was upon my mind with a desire to sit at His table and "this do in remembrance of Me." The word from Psalm 107 came again and again: "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." The Lord removed every hindrance and I felt

sweetly constrained to venture upon Him in humble obedience. My wife and I were baptized in June 1948.

About four or five years after this, I became exercised with regard to the ministry. This continued, although I tried to put it from me. I looked around the church of God and could see many men whom I thought were better qualified than I for this solemn work and office. Oh, the fear of running unsent! The account in 2 Samuel 18 of the death of Absalom; the request of Ahimaaz to run and bear tidings to the king, who when this was refused, nevertheless ran, and did outrun Cush, and came before the king in confusion, speaking of seeing a tumult, but knew not what it was. I wanted the Lord to make it plain to me that it was His will that I should go.

Whilst driving through Brockham one morning, I had a clear vision of the Lord lifted up and seeing "no Man save Jesus only." A voice speaking into my heart said, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." A few months after this I went to some anniversary services at Crowborough, and Mr. J.W. Tyler took this same verse for his text. This was very remarkable and confirming to me in my exercises. How ignorant and unskilled one felt to be for this great and solemn work of the ministry.

One Lord's day afternoon I went to Brockham Chapel and Mr. A.G. Charman spoke from the words in Acts 5 verse 20: "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." This I believe was for me, but I wanted the Lord Himself to open the door and direct my steps. I could not put my hand to the matter. Realising my need of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, I prayed that this might be given me. I had a great fear of speaking anything erroneous. Mr. L.R. Broome, on one of his visits to Brockham, was greatly helped to preach from Luke 11 verse 13: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

Early in 1969, Mr. Charman was laid aside in affliction. As he was unable to engage a minister for the Lord's day, he asked if I would go and read a sermon and conduct the service for his people at Brockham Green. I had a very high regard for this dear servant of God, and a love to his little flock, having attended the prayer meetings and several other services for many years. I prayed much about this request and felt I should go, seeking the Lord's gracious presence and help in my great need. During the intervening days until the Sabbath, I was much tried and had many fears. One thing I wanted, to do the right thing, for God to be honoured. After the singing of the hymn, I began to read from the Epistle to the Ephesians. I had such a persuasion to comment from the words, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." I was helped to

speak and truly felt the solemnity of the Word. The following day Mr. Charman telephoned to say he had received a favourable report from his people, and would I prayerfully consider helping again the following Lord's day morning by speaking from the desk as before. While seeking the Lord's direction, I began to read in Luke chapter 9 where towards the end of the chapter the Lord said: "Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." After this I had to tell Mr. Charman I would go and help as the Lord enabled me. Soon after this the church at Dorking where I was in membership gave their sanction for me to preach. The Lord opened doors and I received many invitations to preach from causes in Sussex, Surrey and Kent.

The time came when I could no longer continue in church membership at Dorking because of things that were allowed, and changes being made which I felt were not in accordance with the Word of God. The Lord made it clear that I should transfer my church membership to Brockham Green, which I did in 1976. I received a call from the church at Zoar, Handcross to the pastorate. After serving for three months in 1980, the Lord applied with power the words: "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." I ventured forth leaning upon the arm of all sufficient grace and strength.

BOOK REVIEW

The Transfiguration: A treatise written by Jonathan Ranken Anderson; 125 pages; £6.50; paperback; published by Free Presbyterian Publications and obtainable from Free Presbyterian Bookroom, 133 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G6 3LE.

This is an exposition of the sacred event of the Transfiguration, in which the glory of the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ shone through His holy humanity in a manner not seen before and only seen at that time by the three favoured disciples, Peter, James and John.

Jonathan Ranken Anderson was a highly esteemed minister at the time of the Disruption in the Church of Scotland and, alongside Robert M'Cheyne of the same generation, was greatly used of God in times of revival of vital godliness. These have characterised the church of Christ in Scotland in its rich history of the Lord's work in salvation.

The treatise consists of five chapters: The Satanic Attack on the Redeemer; The Transfiguration and its Meaning; The Father's Witness; The Father's Good Pleasure; and The Course Christ Pursued.

Though deeply taught both as a believer and a minister of Christ, the author's style is easy to read and profitable to the discerning reader. The subject

is of vital importance as it gives the pre-eminence to the Saviour's Godhead and humanity in His glorious Person.

The words of J.C. Philpot concerning Jonathan R. Anderson are very apposite: "We have not many preachers in England professing truth who handle a subject so ably, and enforce their views with so much closeness and earnestness."

It is a pleasure to commend this to our readers.

LONGING FOR SOUL REST

O that I could but trust the Lord
 Relying on His faithful Word
 In every trying scene;
 And prove that He is faithful still
 In all His words, and ways that fill
 My heart with anguish keen.

I do believe He knows what's best
 For wayward saints, whose hearts are blest
 With humble, gracious fear;
 But is my heart thus exercised
 To wait His will and thus sufficed
 To cast on Him my care?

When paths are rough and dangers fright
 With wishes crossed with little sight
 To see the way ahead;
 'Tis hard His faithfulness to trust
 When pride, self-will and envy thrust
 Themselves on every side.

Methinks if I could only hide,
 On Jesus' breast or at His side,
 My weary, sinful self,
 All would be well, no more I'd grieve
 O'er blighted hopes, nor would I heave
 One discontented sigh.

C. Sawyer (1876-1962)

The report of the Annual General Meetings held on April 8th, 2022, will be published in the July *Gospel Standard*, if the Lord will.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JULY 2022

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

GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY MEETINGS

*Report of the Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor
Relief Society, held on Friday, April 8th, 2022,
at Clifton, Bedfordshire*

“THE GREAT TRUMPET SHALL BE BLOWN”

Sermon preached at the evening service

Text: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (Isa. 27. 13).

In its first interpretation, this was a word of encouragement that would encourage the believing captives down in Babylon, who were scattered after the Chaldeans had ransacked Jerusalem; a word which would encourage them to believe that the day would come when they would return to the land God had promised and to the worship that He had ordained. Bearing in mind that Isaiah wrote some two hundred years before these events, it showed again what amazing foresight God gave to him. These captives would, no doubt, have taken the prophecy of Isaiah with them down into Babylon and elsewhere, and the godly would read it. And no doubt they would beg the Lord, “Lord, do as Thou hast said.” You only need to read the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah and you will see that the Lord did just as He said. God *always* does as He says. Many idle words fall from our lips, but not one idle word ever fell from the lips of Almighty God. Remember that! We sometimes sing:

“What Christ has said must be fulfilled;
On this firm rock, believers build;
His word shall stand, His truth prevail,
And not one jot or tittle fail.” (H. 352)

If you have a word of God written in your heart this evening hour, and as yet it has not been fulfilled – then plead with the great God of our text. See how many times He says, “It shall come to pass.” The “great trumpet *shall* be blown, and they *shall* come ... and *shall* worship” – these are divine certainties from a God who cannot lie. What a mercy to have a God such as that!

Have you got a God such as that? We must address this congregation not assuming it is so. The Lord alone knows the heart of each. Can you say, concerning the God of our text, “This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death”? (Psa. 48. 14). May the Lord examine your heart tonight. Search it out whether you are on the right side of the text or not; not just assume it, nor presume upon it, but ask for the witness of that infallible Spirit who cannot lie.

“Tell me, Lord, and make me feel it
I am Thine, forever Thine.”

Well, the deeper meaning, of course, is the wonderful gospel word. It is a word concerning the success of the gospel trumpet. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet” – of the gospel – “shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.”

I want to dwell for a moment on the trumpet and the trumpeters, and those who should hear. There is an implication! It says there will be a trumpet to blow. And there will be those to blow it and, by inference, there will be those to hear it.

Now, in the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, Paul makes a profound statement as the Holy Spirit guided his pen. There was much confusion in the church at Corinth for many reasons. One of the things of which Paul spoke was concerning the confusion of tongues, particularly the disorder in worship which this had brought. He asks: “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (14. 8) When Paul preached to the church at Corinth, he gave a very certain sound. “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2. 2). How clearly he sounded a trumpet in that disorderly church! And the Lord blessed it as well, and there were many things put right under that preaching. This is the answer to the generation in which we are living: the preaching of Christ and Him crucified. “I determined” says Paul, “not to know anything among you, save” – this one trumpet sound – “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” And is there not a prayer with one of you here tonight:

“Object of my first desire,
Jesus, crucified for me;
All to happiness aspire,
Only to be found in Thee.” (H. 988)

In other words, you are *glad* to hear the trumpet sound. You are not weary of hearing of “Christ, and Him crucified.” No!

Go back to the trumpet. In the Old Testament Book of the Numbers, we are told there were various times when the trumpet was to

be sounded. Sometimes when there was an alarm, an enemy was approaching; no uncertain sound had to be given for that. Other times they were to go into battle themselves. Sometimes they were called to worship. Sometimes it was the joyful sound on the day of jubilee, every fifty years. Every time that great trumpet was sounded, those in bondage were set free, the slaves could go back. And that must have been a very welcome sound, must it not!

But what Paul was saying to the church of Corinth was this: When the trumpet is blown, it must be distinct. It must be clear. It must not be wavering. It must be very clear as to the message the trumpet is giving. You can imagine in the time of Moses, if there were confusing notes, the people would not know what to do.

So the first thing that we must say about the great trumpet is that it must be distinct. It is a distinctive sound. Sometimes there is the holy law to be declared in all its solemn, awesome requirements upon fallen man. Sometimes it may be the trumpet of consolation, the precious blood of Christ being brought near to a poor, wounded soul. At other times, it may be the trumpet sound of guidance, direction. “This is the way, walk ye in it” (Isa. 30. 21). The point I am making is that it must be a distinct sound. It was an obligation on those who blew the trumpet, in Moses’ day, that they obeyed the sound they were given to proclaim. It was a responsibility that rested on their shoulders.

Does not this bring us to the gospel ministry? The solemn responsibility rests upon the shoulders of a gospel minister to be distinct in his preaching, in his declaration of sin and salvation; the doctrines of grace; the Person of Christ; the glorious Trinity; the infallible Word of God; the certainty of death, judgment, hell, heaven. Friends, these are distinct sounds. They must not be confused. So there is a responsibility resting upon the trumpeter.

And remember, they blew the trumpet as Moses commanded them. He was commanded by God. So, when a minister enters the pulpit he must come with a message that God has given him. And I would make this point: He is not there to entertain. When those trumpets were sounded in Moses’ day, they were not entertainments. No! They were commands. There was an authority there. So, those who stand in the pulpit are not there to entertain, they are not there to tickle ears, as the old preachers used to say. We are there to preach the preaching God has bidden us, and to proclaim the word He has laid on our heart to proclaim unto the people. It is God’s message. And we are God’s messengers *if* we are rightly sent. And that is a point that often exercises God’s people. So the trumpeter must come with a message God has given him, and he must blow it distinctly. If this is a responsibility that rests on the preacher, and the trumpeter, surely the responsibility also rests upon

those who were to listen. It was a solemn responsibility in the days of Israel. When they heard the trumpet there were three things they had to attend to:

Firstly, to listen to it. There was a command that had to be heard.

Secondly, they were to understand what command was being given. Was it saying they were to go to war? Was it saying they had to move camp? Was it calling them to worship? They had to understand the distinctive note.

Thirdly, they were to obey it.

So there was a solemn responsibility that rested upon those who heard the trumpet sound. Now you will say to me, "You know very well that man, by nature, has no ear for the trumpet sound." That I know only too well. But, my dear friends, that is not an excusable statement. We must not think that, because fallen man has no ear for the trumpet, that is in some way excusable. It is not! It is a fruit of our fallen nature that it falls on deaf ears, hard hearts and unwilling feet. It is a solemn thing to be under the sound of the gospel, and never know its power, never know its effects, and never be drawn by it, never be condemned by the law, and never comforted by the gospel. It is a solemn thing to sit under the sound of the trumpet, perhaps all your life, and never know its power!

Blessed be God, our text says there *are* a people who shall hear, shall understand, and they shall obey. Such is the power of the great trumpet when the Holy Ghost uses it! That is why, when a preacher ascends the pulpit steps, he desires: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 4. 6). That is the way. That is the only way the gospel trumpet will ever be effectual. It is not eloquence. It is not order, although we would be orderly in our preaching, do not get me wrong; a minister should be diligent in preparing, as God may help him. But when all is said and done, "power belongeth unto God." And He can make use of what we may sometimes feel to be the worst of our sermons, those where we feel to have utterly failed Him. God often uses such to show us that it is not *us*. It is "treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4. 7).

So, friends, the great trumpet in our text, particularly that jubilee trumpet – what a welcome sound that must have been to those poor slaves in bondage! When it sounded, to them it was welcome, more than to anybody else. It set them free. It proclaimed a liberty they had not had before.

Now, let us look at it in the gospel sense, if the Lord may help. The first thing we are promised here is that there will always be a trumpet to be blown while there is a work for the gospel to do. Right to the end of time, to the last day, the gospel trumpet will be sounded. Then it will no more be needed. It will have accomplished all that God ever intended it

to accomplish. No more will its sweet sounds sound out to guilty sinners, because the trumpet will have accomplished all that God ordained it should.

Friends, it will be a solemn thing when, as it were, God lays aside that gospel trumpet, never more to be sounded – and you are *left out*! Why? Because you had no ear for it. You had no heart for it. You had no desire after it. And, if you are honest, dear friend, that is the state you are willingly in. That is fallen man. It is fallen nature. What a wonderful thing if grace, as only grace can do, has so opened your ear to hear these blessed sounds of the gospel. What can you say? The hymnwriter put it absolutely right:

“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,”

Why was I made to hear the gospel trumpet?

“Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
And enter while there’s room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?” (H. 440)

It is all of grace. Some of us sat under the most blessed of ministries in our early days. The trumpet was sounded Sabbath by Sabbath, week by week, but had no effect on us. No! None until God began to work, and then there was a difference. We learned then that the difference was made by grace. So there is nothing to boast of. Those who understand the sound, and who have obeyed it and followed it, have nothing to boast of in themselves. Why was I made to differ? Why was I made to hear and others were not? How distinguishing then is this sound.

The second thing about it is: the Lord will provide trumpeters. It *shall* be – “it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown.” Yes, we come to what it says in a moment, to poor sinners. But the inference is that there will be those to the end of time whom God will ordain to blow the gospel trumpet. “Set the trumpet to thy mouth” (Hos. 8. 1) says one of the prophets. And when the Lord ordains a minister and sends him forth, that is what He says: “There is a trumpet to be blown – set it to thy mouth.” But the Lord gives him the notes to proclaim as he goes around in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. There is an implied promise here. God will give trumpeters. And we need more, don’t we? “The harvest truly is plenteous,” is another analogy “but the labourers are few” (Matt. 9. 37). Dear friends, “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers” (verse 38) more trumpeters, we might say, to proclaim the glad tidings of this great trumpet.

Then the text tells us to whom, especially, the tidings of the great trumpet will be blessed. We read of them: they are those who are ready

to perish; those who are outcasts; those who are far off from Jerusalem, in a spiritual sense; those who are at the ends of the earth; those who are ready to perish unless someone comes to their aid, like the man who fell amongst thieves. Although the priest and the Levite passed by, they had no trumpet sound for him. But the good Samaritan had.

These outcasts, these ready to perish ones – who are they? Well, friends, they are those whose eyes have been opened by the blessed Spirit. They have been opened to see both of these cases. Ready to perish! What is it to perish? What does the Word of God mean by “perishing”? We read that well-known word, in John 3. 16, it is not often spoken about: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not *perish*, but have everlasting life.” So, friends, to *perish* is to be without that everlasting life. To *perish* is to sink at last to that bottomless abyss where no gospel trumpet will ever be proclaimed, no mercy ever shown, no sin ever forgiven. But those whose eyes are opened to see their fallen state will know, and will say it tremblingly, “Lord, I deserve to be there. I deserve to be there!” You are like the dear publican; you are beating upon your breast. The only possible hope for you is the word “mercy.” “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18. 13). All other pleas have gone. Without that, you must perish.

“Ready to perish.” Is there one here tonight who is ready to perish? Your wretched heart has shown its true colours. You look back over your life, and it is one long catalogue of faults, failures, follies, foolishness. You look ahead, and you dare not promise any better. You know if your salvation depends on your words and your goodness, then you have got no hope whatsoever, not an atom, not a scrap of it. You are ready to perish. If the Lord does not stretch out His arm to save you, you will never be saved. If He does not show mercy, then there is no possible hope for you. “Ready to perish.” People may talk about “duty faith” and “duty repentance,” but you talk about that to the man who is ready to perish, he cannot even produce that, can he! He needs it. He wants it, but he cannot produce it; he cannot create it. But while he feels destitute of it, he is ready to perish. Yes! Says good John Newton, the same man who wrote “Amazing grace” – the same man said:

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

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

“I would, but cannot love,
Though wooed by love divine;
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine. (H. 278)

There is a man, a woman, a boy or a girl *ready* to perish. What does the Lord say to them? “The great trumpet shall be blown” to those cases who are “ready to perish.”

Also, the “outcasts.” Who are the outcasts? The leper was one. The leper was not even allowed to live within the city gates. He had to live outside because he was not fit to socialise with those within, for fear that he should pass to others the defilement he had. A convinced sinner may feel like that. More than one child of God, under the conviction of sin, has felt that their very presence at the house of God would defile it. Have you ever felt like that? Those who have the Pharisee’s religion do not think like that. They are so good. They are so full of works, so full of self, they think they are doing God a favour. But not the publican. He did not feel worthy to be there – but he dare not stay away! He was one of those “outcasts.” How the Pharisee looked down on him: “Even as this publican” who is really worse than all the adulterers, and extortioners that I have mentioned! (Luke 18. 11). Ah, that poor publican. He was an outcast, wasn’t he! But God had not cast him out. Nor will He cast you out, you poor “outcast,” this evening hour. The “outcast” – those who are near the ends of the earth – those who are beyond human help, and above all, are beyond self-help! Those who, perhaps, come into the house of God and see others blessed and favoured, but not them! Others have even got the liberty to follow our Lord, but not them! You may say, “O Lord, wilt Thou for ever pass me by?” Like the man at the pool of Bethesda – you argue that others get in before you, but you have no man to help you. “Outcasts.”

Outcasts in this respect, as well: the distance you seem from God. Your sins have come between. He is a holy, just, pure God – and you dare not wish Him to be otherwise. You do not want Him to adapt His holy law to suit your fallen nature. God forbid that! No, it is a holy law; it is a pure law; it is a just law. Yes! And you would not wish it otherwise, although it condemns you, although its trumpet sound says, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18. 4) – you would not wish it otherwise. But is there hope? Is there possibly hope for one like me, who is so far off, so out of the way? Ah, blessed be God, one of the features, one of the attributes necessary for a high priest was one who showed compassion on the ignorant, and those who were out of the way. Does not our Lord Jesus Christ have that compassion? We heard this morning of His power, the Son of God, as we come to the throne of grace. Also Paul mentions the One who is “touched with the feeling of

our infirmities” (Heb. 4. 15). Think of it: “But was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Touched. His human heart is still touched by the needs of His church here below – and His divine heart also. Touched.

You poor, outcast one this evening hour, there is One who is touched with the feeling of your infirmities. Others may not understand you. Perhaps you do not even understand your own case. He understands it. The wise Physician is skilful and exceeding kind. Yes! And He waits to be gracious.

Now what does this gospel trumpet say to such? First of all, its notes will reach those outcasts. There comes a day when, perhaps to their surprise, it may be at the house of God; it may be on their knees; it may be when reading the Word of God; it may even be as they are going about their daily duties – suddenly the trumpet sounds. It penetrates all the unbelief, all the darkness, all the blackness they have felt, all the temptations they have endured – it gets right to the root of the matter. And the trumpet sound that the Lord sends, heals them. Yes! Words like this: “Son, thy sins which are many are all forgiven thee.” “Man, thy sins are forgiven thee” (Luke 5. 20). You think of that man – that paralytic man – you would have thought, surely, the thing he wanted most was having his limbs restored. No! No, dear friends. The Lord knew his heart. He knew what his real burden was. It was sin. It was guilt. “Son, thy sins which are many, are all forgiven thee.” What a joyful sound it was to him. Yes! Yet the Lord healed him as well. Doubly blessed that day. But, friends, what made his steps so light that day as he went on his way? He was a pardoned sinner. He was a forgiven sinner. “My law debt has been paid. Justice is satisfied on my behalf through the One who spoke those words to me.” What a trumpet sound that was!

Think of the dying thief. If ever there was a man ready to perish, it was the dying thief. If ever there was an outcast, it was the dying thief. He fits both cases. At the very borders of the pit, literally. The bottomless abyss – he was peering over the edge of it. And he saw the solemnity of it. He turned away from looking down, and he looked across to the cross alongside him. He beheld there the King of kings and Lord of lords suffering, bleeding, dying. He knew by now, with the opened eyes that God had given him, that this dear Man was suffering for others. And the dying thief put in his plea. Our friend was speaking of boldness, this morning. This was a bold approach by the dying thief, wasn’t it, indeed! “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom” (Luke 23. 42). Now listen for the trumpet sound: “Verily” – surely – truly – “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise” (verse 43). Friends, that went right to the heart of that man’s

case. Yes! Although he had much more ahead, some more hours of suffering, we know, but his soul was secure. We sang just now: “All my safety is in Thee” (H. 347). He felt his soul was safe in the arms of a precious Christ. What a trumpet sound that was!

So you could go on through the Word of God. The great trumpet for great sinners – with great tidings – with great effect – “the great trumpet *shall* be blown, and they shall come.”

There is a lovely word of our Lord. Many of our Lord’s words are lovely. In fact *all* of them are, if viewed aright. Here is one of them: “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6. 37). The old Puritans (and I think John Bunyan was one of them) used to say, when the Lord called a sinner by grace, He sent “Shall-come” to go and fetch him. “Mr. Shall-come” goes and fetches him. That is what the Lord does. When He plucks the brand from the burning, “Shall-come” goes and finds that sinner where he is, in his lost estate – in his ruined state – and draws him. He opens his eyes to hear the gospel sound. He opens his ears to hear it, and his heart to receive it. “Here a little, and there a little,” “precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line” (Isa. 28. 10) the way is unfolded. And all the while this work is being performed, “shall come” – irresistible, invincible, victorious. “Sovereign grace o’er sin abounding!” (H. 766). Bless God for it!

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come” – yes – “which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria... and shall worship.” Friends, it is God who creates worshippers. Remember that! The Lord Jesus Christ expounded that to the woman of Samaria, when she began to debate with Him where God was to be worshipped. Was it Jerusalem? Or was it where she was used to worshipping? The Lord says it is not the place; that does not matter. It is the heart that matters. The day is coming, He said. “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father” – now, note this – “seeketh such to worship Him” (John 4. 23). And when God seeks out a sinner, that is the end He has in view – to bring them to worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is the beginning of the work of grace that will end in eternal worship in that congregation which will never break up, that Sabbath that will have no end. “This people have I formed for Myself; they shall shew forth My praise” (Isa. 43. 21).

Now look into your heart this evening hour, dear friends, and see, has God made you a worshipper? Has He? You say, “Well, how will I know?” Go back to the publican and the Pharisee. Which one was worshipping, do you think? The Pharisee *thought* he was. If you had asked him, he would have said, “I have been worshipping today! I have

said my prayers! I have been to the temple! I am sure things are alright between me and the God whom I prayed to!" Yet there was not one atom of worship in it, was there? Why? Because, dear friends, the trumpet had never been sounded in that man's heart. He was left to his own deceitful conclusions. Go to the publican. There was a true worshipper. That man had been in the presence of a holy God. What effect did that make? It made him an unholy sinner in his own sight. "The more God's glory strikes your eye," in that respect, dear friends, "the humbler you will lie." The more you will be a worshipper as well. For part of worship is humility. Part of worship is confession. Part of worship is humbling ourselves, like Job. This was worship: "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42. 6). You say, "That is not worship, is it?" In God's sight it is! There is a sinner being taught, by the Holy Ghost, what he is in God's sight. Yes!

What else is worship, then? A living desire in your heart, put there by the Holy Ghost. That is a real worship. The publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18. 13). Friends, that was real worship. He beat upon his breast, and cried from the very bottom of his heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner." You see the effect of the trumpet sound had reached that man. The law had reached him. He had heard its solemn sound. It had killed all hope in self. He was only left with that one word: mercy

At the time of Napoleon Bonaparte in France, there was one lad in his army who did something so bad that he was under the sentence of death. He was the only son of his widowed mother. She heard that her son was about to be executed. She walked forty miles to Paris to try to get an interview with Napoleon himself. She was very persistent, and no doubt prayed about it. When eventually she got into the presence of this great man, he said, "What do you want?" She said, "My son is under sentence of death, and I want you to pardon him" – seeking mercy. He said, "But he doesn't deserve it!" She answered, "I didn't say he *deserved* it! I am asking you to show *mercy*, because mercy is for the undeserving." And it so moved that great man's heart, that he did let him go. Mercy *is* for the undeserving – for the unmeriting. It is for:

"The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need," (H. 527)

That is the one for whom mercy is. It is not for those who are boasting of themselves of how good and great they are, and how much better they are than everyone else. No! They do not feel their need of mercy. The great trumpet has no news to them. But O that poor, lost sinner, that one under the sentence of death in that law sense, that one who has been wracked by his own wretched heart, by the devil, and wonders wherever

the scene will end – he is the one who needs mercy. He is the one who will obtain it as well. It says, “Shall worship.” The Lord will bring him to His feet, and He will show mercy. Blessed be God! We have heard again earlier today, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain” – what? Mercy! – “that we may obtain mercy” (Heb. 4.16).

Paul said, “I have obtained this.” I wonder how many of us tonight can honestly say, before God, I have obtained mercy. Many can say things in providence – and I do not despise that; if you have ever had doors opened and deliverances brought in providence, then thank God for it – but have you obtained mercy? That is what matters. Have you obtained mercy? Can you say, that great God who sent His trumpet, has shown mercy to you? Has He led you to the footstool of mercy, the only place where mercy abounds? The precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ – that is mercy! But I tell you this, dear friends, if ever one drop of that precious blood drops, as it were, from that precious Saviour to your heart, you will worship! You will worship Him! You will be at His feet! Not only that, you will be confessing your sins. And you will love the dear Saviour, and you will wish you could love Him more!

“O that my soul could love and praise Him more,
His beauties trace, His majesty adore;
Live near His heart, upon His bosom lean;
Obey His voice, and all His will esteem.” (H. 667)

They “shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem” – they will be welcome there. The Lord finds these outcasts, and He welcomes them.

Remember the man who was born blind, and was healed. And because he confessed that Jesus Christ had done it, then he was an outcast, excommunicated. “They cast him out.” Then we read such a beautiful word: *the Lord found him!* And what did the Lord say to him? “Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And *he worshipped Him*” (John 9. 34-38). Friends, a revelation of Christ does that! It makes you a worshipper. May it make us worshippers, true worshippers in spirit and in truth.

“And it *shall* come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown.” It *shall* come to pass that the Lord will ordain trumpeters to the end of time. It *shall* come to pass that there will be those in this condition: ready to perish! Outcasts! Far off! And it shall come to pass that gospel tidings will reach them, in God’s own time, and in God’s own way. And they shall become true worshippers of Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And they will put the crown where it belongs,

saying, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake” (Psa. 115. 1).

Go back to what the apostle said to the church at Corinth. What put matters right there? It was when the trumpet was sounded with no uncertain sound. No! The law was applied. The gospel was applied. And, blessed be God, Paul writes of it so often – those ransomed ones, those bought with the precious blood of Christ – they must come. They had been bought. Yes, they were lost in the ruins of the Fall, in Adam, but the Lord had not lost them! No! Lost in themselves, but the Lord had not lost them. He knew where to find them. “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return” (Isa. 35. 10), it says here. Why? Because the price has been paid. What price? Peter tells you. If ever there was a man who has proved our text, Peter did! “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1. 18, 19). Friends, that price must accomplish its purpose, if the Lord has not shed His blood in vain. “The ransomed of the LORD shall return” – these outcasts *must* come. But he says, “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isa. 53. 11).

And, yes, those “ransomed” – those “ready-to-perish” ones – those “outcasts” – how satisfied they are with this. Yes! “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious” (1 Pet. 2. 7).

May God add His blessing. Amen.

MORNING PRAYER MEETING

Mr. T.J. Parish (Luton) read Hebrews 4, and spoke as follows:

For a few moments this morning, with the Lord’s help, I would direct your prayerful attention to the closing verse that we have just read, Hebrews 4. 16:

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Thinking of today, and the meetings that are planned to be held, it seemed to strike me how suitable and fitting it is for us to begin this morning with a prayer meeting. And as we come to this prayer meeting, it is my desire, my prayerful desire, that we might know something of this boldness that the Apostle Paul writes of in our text this morning.

He says, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace.” Maybe in our view of this word *boldness* it seems to strike a discord with some other verses in the Word of God. But beloved friends, there is no discord. The publican who could not so much as lift up his eyes unto

heaven, “but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18.13) was coming boldly unto the throne of grace.

This boldness spoken of by the Apostle Paul here is not something which comes from within. This is not a man-made boldness. This is a holy boldness. This is a boldness which is the gift of the grace of God. And it comes from a view of this great High Priest that the Apostle Paul writes of. “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest” (Heb. 4. 14). And who is it? It is He that is passed into the heavens. From where? From here upon earth, having come into this sinful world, having made Himself of no reputation, the eternal Son of God has now finished His earthly ministry and passed into the heavens, a living – an ever-living Saviour, Jesus the Son of God. Paul says, “Let us hold fast” (Heb. 10. 23).

Well, what a mercy if God would be pleased to grant us each a measure of faith, a faith that the apostle speaks of which enters into the rest, into the finished work, into that complete work of our Lord Jesus Christ. He says in verse 11, “Let us labour,” not in a works way but in a prayerful way, labouring, striving, endeavouring, pressing. There are so many things that would hinder, so many things that would seek to obstruct. Satan would put up so many barriers. But the poor, tempted, burdened sinner labours, labours in faith. “Let us labour...” “Let us hold fast...” “Let us come...”

May the Lord help us to come before Him in prayer. May He grant to us each, whether called on to pray publicly, or as we join in prayer silently, may God be pleased to reveal the Person of His Son to us each. That is where this holy boldness will come from: from the knowledge of knowing the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His throne. It is He who sits upon that throne. It is to His feet that we seek to come this morning. It is He, and by Him, and in Him, that we shall obtain the mercy we need, this morning. It is there we will find the grace to help in time of need. And it is a time of need, isn’t it? We are not oblivious to the challenges of the day we live in. We are called to live in difficult days. We have many challenges. There are many difficulties. But, beloved friends, all of the difficulties that may arise between brethren in the church of God in this world, all of those difficulties and all of those hard things are removed and fall away when individually we are brought to the feet of Jesus. This is our common ground. This is our ground of acceptance. This is where true peace is found. It is at the feet of Jesus. “Let us therefore come boldly.”

May Christ be revealed. May our desire be personally – it will be, it must be – it must begin personally with us. Then collectively – collectively it will be seen. But it is first personally. “Let us therefore come boldly.”

The Apostle Paul expresses in his letter to the Philippians, “That I” – that is where it begins – “that I may know Him” (3. 10). This is the secret to this holy boldness. It is in your weakness, in your felt sense of need as a sinner. It is in fear and trembling as you approach a holy, holy God, whose laws you have gone against, whom you have sinned against so basely, so vilely. But it is seeing the Person of Jesus Christ. It is this which gives poor, trembling, fearful, weak, needy sinners a boldness to approach, knowing that He will not turn them away, although sinful. My mind went to verse four of hymn 176:

“Some tempted, weak, and trembling saint
Before Thee now may be;
Let not his hopes or wishes faint;
His springs are all in Thee.”

Not in me – “in Thee,” in the Person of Jesus Christ, our Mediator, the eternal Son of God.

“Let us therefore” – seeing all of these things with a view by faith of the throne of grace and the Person of Jesus – “Let us therefore.” What can hinder us? Can Satan? Our unbelieving hearts? Our fear of standing and praying publicly, brethren? “Let us therefore come boldly,” looking unto Jesus, our eyes fixed on Him. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Hymns 382, 679 and 683 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. S. Cottingham (Eastbourne), Mr. R.W. Woodhams (Pastor, Haywards Heath), Mr. G. Cottingham (Heathfield), Mr. G. Charmley (Leeds), and Mr. P. Hayden (Redhill). Mr. Parish closed with prayer and the benediction.

BUSINESS MEETING

After the singing of hymn 1139, the Chairman of the Society, Mr. G.D. Buss, called on Mr. J.R. Rutt (Pastor, Lamberhurst) to seek the Lord’s blessing on the meeting.

The Chairman then read Psalm 27.

CHAIRMAN: In verse 9 there is a very short, but very apposite expression: “Thou hast been my help; leave me not.” Just four very brief points from that sweet word:

First, *we have a good desire*: the presence of the Lord. We can desire nothing more needful than the Lord’s presence. “If Thy presence go not with me,” said God’s servant Moses, then “carry us not up hence”

(Exod. 33. 15). And surely every living child of God here this afternoon, and those listening, will say that this is something they are asking for continually. Nothing tries them more than when the Lord withholds the comfort of His presence. And we may say, without presumption, that where there is that longing desire for the Lord's presence, then already the Lord is presently working in that sinner's heart. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psa. 42. 1). So first we have a good desire.

Second, *we have a good retrospect*. He says, "Thou hast been my help." Now, if you look back over the past year – and years (and personally we have to confess how often we have failed: faults, follies, foolishness encumber us about in the memory of our lives) – and yet what a wonderful thing if you can say, despite all your unworthiness, all your unfitness, all that sometimes stares you in the face as a wretched sinner, "Thou hast been my help." It dishonours God if we fail to acknowledge that. We should acknowledge it more often. "Thou hast been my help." We can say that in the churches. We can say it personally in our pathway. Many of us here can say, "Yes, this is something of which we are blessedly persuaded. We would not have come thus far without it. We would have sunk to rise no more without it." "Thou hast been my help." Blessed be God, dear friends, if you have a good retrospect this afternoon. Yes, much to mourn over, much to confess, yet amidst it all, a golden thread: "Thou – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – hast been my help."

The third thing is, *we have a good prospect*. Where we may be enabled to say, by God's Holy Spirit in His teaching, "Thou hast been my help" – there is a prospect. The psalmist was pleading it: "Leave me not." "Lord, there are more steps to be taken. There are more chapters opening up before me. There is an unknown way. Lord, 'Thou hast been my help' – but now, just as I could not have managed without Thee in the past, I *dare* not go on without Thee in the future. 'Leave me not.' Leave me not to myself." Terrible thought that! "Leave me not to the temptations of the evil one, whether it be as an angel of light, or as a roaring devil, roaring lion. Leave me not to this vain world."

"Save me from this bewitching world,
That has to death ten thousand hurled." (H 954)

Leave me not to a bad spirit, an un-Christ-like spirit. Friends, we could go on, couldn't we! "Leave me not."

"If Thou should'st leave us, we must fall;
Without Thee, cannot rise;

For when our Jesus hides His face,
Our hope, our comfort, dies.” (H 679)

But the prospect is good. Friend, if you have got Ebenezers to look back to, there are Ebenezers yet to look forward to. Why is that? Not because you will be any better, not because you will have improved. Dear me, no! It is, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13. 8). O bless His holy name for that.

The fourth thing is, *we have a good claim*. What does he say? “Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me,” and here is the claim: “O God of my salvation” – the God who has answered my poor prayers; the God who has often come to my aid when without Him I would have sunk to rise no more; the God that has opened my eyes to see a little of my unworthiness, but of Christ’s preciousness. “O God of my salvation.”

Not just in grace, but in providence – the doors He has opened; the mountains He has levelled; the matters He has put right. You say, “There are many more matters to be put right!” Friends, I know that! But here is the claim: “Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” Friends, if He is not the God of your salvation, you have no salvation! “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4. 12).

A good desire, a good retrospect, a good prospect – yes – and a good claim. May God make these things spirit and life to each of us this afternoon hour.

CHAIRMAN: It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you here to this Annual General Meeting, and we do thank you for your loyal and loving support. It would be wrong just to let this day go without a mention of a very dear friend, the late John Kingham. We do not wish to extol anyone else above any other name. Our Lord’s name is the one we love the most. But, friends, the help John Kingham was to the cause of the Gospel Standard – the magazines, the churches, and in many other ways – only the Lord knows. It is only right to acknowledge how good God was to give us such a one to be of help to us. We felt we had need of him longer! But the Lord had need of him above. We bow under the Lord’s divine, sovereign hand in removing such a pillar, such an able, active man from our midst. May He make up the gap with others with like grace and talents. But we hold in sweet memory the man who was not just a second-mile man, but a third- and a fourth-mile man as well. He has left a sweet example of what it is to put Christ first, and the cause of God and of truth first in so many ways. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Alison, who has walked with him in that path so loyally and lovingly for many years.

A resolution was then put to the Meeting that the decisions taken at the Annual General Meeting which was broadcast remotely on Zoom on April 9th, 2021; the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on April 12th, 2019; the Annual Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society

for the year ended December 31st, 2019; and the Annual Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society for year ended December 31st, 2020 be ratified. The Chairman explained that the Charity Commission was rather vague on how valid Zoom meetings were, so we were clarifying the situation by passing these resolutions. There was no doubt that this was the correct action to take. The resolution was proposed by Mr. P.C. Tyler (Hastings), seconded by Mr. G.E. Hadley (Pastor, Stotfold) and carried *nem con*.

A resolution was put to the Meeting that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on April 9th, 2021 be approved. This was proposed by Mr. D.F. Stevens (Ripley), and seconded by Mr. F.A. Ince (Hope, Sedgley) and carried *nem con*.

The Secretary, Mr. D.J. Christian, then introduced the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society for the year ended December 31st, 2021.

MR. CHRISTIAN: Dear Chairman, subscribers and friends, at our Annual Meeting in April 2019, we announced that, subject to the Lord's will, the next Annual Meeting would be held here on Friday, 9th April, 2020. Little did we realise that it would be an extra two years later before we could all meet here. It reminds us of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."

The Lord has seen fit to allow the coronavirus to spread throughout the earth and we have been affected in many ways by the pandemic; some have been taken from us and others are experiencing long-term effects. How few will acknowledge the Lord's hand in judgment, but may we "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God."

In January, Mr. Michael Pickett, Pastor at The Old Paths, Choteau, Montana, U.S.A. passed away, and in September, Mr. Norman Roe, Pastor at Ossett and Birkenhead, also passed away. Although our report is for 2021, we would also mention some that have passed away in 2022: Mr. R.J. Bradstock, formerly Pastor of Zoar Chapel, Handcross, Mr. W.T. Wheeler, deacon at Moden Hill, and Mr. J.A. Kingham, a member at Bethel Chapel, Luton who over the years has done a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes in connection with our magazines as well as with the Gospel Standard Trust. Sadly, with the passing of Mr. Wheeler, the chapel at Moden Hill is now closed. We extend our sympathy to all those in bereavement, seeking that the Lord will draw near and grant comfort.

Our primary purpose is, as the name of the Society makes clear, the distribution of funds to those in need, although we are thankful that among our congregations there is not the same level of poverty as when the Societies commenced. During 2021, grants totalling £113,071 were paid out, and in the last three years over £367,000 has been distributed. Expenditure in 2019 and 2020 exceeded income by £196,724, but in 2021 income exceeded expenditure by £277,759. The main two reasons were the sale of Romford chapel and a legacy from Mrs. J. Painter, a resident who had been in the Studley Bethesda Home.

Interest rates remained very low in 2021 when we received just over £24,000 in interest. Ten years ago, the funds of the Society were very similar to 2021 but the interest received was over £57,000.

The individual funds for 2021 showed the following: Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society – income £418,706, expenditure £102,276; Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund – income £5,957, expenditure £33,176; Magazine Fund – income £50,846, Expenditure £62,298. This resulted in a surplus in the first fund of £316,430 and deficits in the other two of £27,219 and £11,452, respectively. These figures exclude an unrealised gain of £359.

We are thankful that our three Editors: Mr. G. Buss, *Gospel Standard*; Mr. G. TenBroeke, *Friendly Companion*; and Mr. T. Scott, *Perception*, have been maintained through another year and the magazines made a blessing. Mr. TenBroeke was taken ill and is still suffering from “long Covid” but, with the assistance of Miss Cori Legemaat, has been helped through. Thanks are also due to Mrs. Alison Kingham for her work with the magazines, and we extend our deep sympathy to her in the loss of her husband. May the Lord bless their labours.

For several years our magazines had been printed by Olive Press, founded by Mr. John Chapman and continued after his death by his daughter Rachel, but in June we were notified that they were not able to continue. Enquiries were made and it was decided to ask Orphans Press Limited to print the magazines. For many years they had printed *Zion's Witness*. The involvement of two printers made it difficult when it came to order the bound volumes and so these were rather delayed and also very expensive. It was reported last year that a substantial increase in cost had arisen after the prices for 2021 had been set, but there have been some cost savings with the new printers.

The Committee would like to encourage those who attend our chapels to consider becoming subscribers to the Aid and Poor Relief Society. A number of our elderly friends have passed away during the year, but there has not been a corresponding increase from new subscribers. Forms can be obtained from the Secretary, and there are some in the entrance lobby. There is a minimum annual fee of £5 and this gives voting rights and a copy of our Annual Report. In addition, subscribers can inform the Secretary of persons who may be in need, so that the appropriate enquiries can be made.

No ministers were added to the Gospel Standard list during the year, and the Committee would ask our churches prayerfully to consider recommending those whose ministry is in power and in the Holy Ghost, and who have preached for three years. Any church can recommend a minister if they have preached there seven times; it does not have to be the church where they were sanctioned to preach, but that church would be consulted in the process. The Committee realises that it may be difficult if a minister is a member of a small church where perhaps there are no other male members, but we would hope other churches might recommend that minister. Initially, recommendations should be sent to the Secretary.

In the Lord's mercy, during recent years there have been some raised up to preach the gospel and some constrained to follow Him in the ordinance of believer's baptism, but we long for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit amongst our churches that they might be built up again.

“Bid the refreshing north wind wake;
Say to the south wind, Blow;
Let every plant the power partake,
And all the garden grow.

“Revive the parched with heavenly showers;
The cold with warmth divine;
And as the benefit is ours,
Be all the glory Thine.” (H. 455)

Our Annual Meeting for 2023 has been arranged to take place here, if the Lord will, on Friday, April 14th, 2023. A prayer meeting for the nation and the churches was held at Clifton in November and, if the Lord will, another prayer meeting has been arranged for Friday, November 25th, 2022.

We think of our churches in Australia, Canada and the United States. No overseas visits were possible in 2021 due to the travel restrictions in place in the early part of the year as a result of the pandemic. However, using the livestreaming facility, several ministers have preached week evening services for the churches in Australia, although with the time difference it is early in the morning in England. We were pleased that recently Mr. Gilbert Hyde was able to travel to Australia and preach in the churches there. Later this year Mr. John Hart hopes to visit Australia and Mr. Jabez Rutt to visit Grand Rapids. May the Lord go with them.

Since the end of the year, two new members were co-opted on to the Committee, Mr. David Stevens (Ripley) and Mr. Andrew Wilderspin (Luton).

We thank our friends at Clifton, and in particular Mr. David Lawson, for the use of the chapel and the practical help given.

Finally, brethren, the members of the Committee seek your prayers that the Lord will grant wisdom in conducting the business of the Society and that His blessing may rest upon our churches.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Christian for all that he does for the Society, and much behind the scenes. He asked if there were any questions. There were none, and the proposal to approve and adopt the Annual Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society for the year ended December 31st, 2021 was put to the meeting. This was proposed by Mr. R.K. Wheatley (Pastor, Cranbrook), seconded by Mr. D.J. Sayers (Luton), and carried *nem con*.

The Secretary announced the result of the election of three members who were retiring at this meeting and eligible for re-election, and also two new members who had been appointed. 216 voting papers were sent out, of which 111 were returned. All members received over 95% of the votes cast, so the retiring members of the Committee, Messrs. J.H. Cottington, G.W. Hyde and T.H.W. Scott, together with Mr. D.F. Stevens and Mr. A.F. Wilderspin, were elected to serve for a period of three years.

Mr. G.W. Hyde then expressed thanks on behalf of the re-elected members of the Committee.

The Chairman explained that a new Funding Trustee was needed, and there was a motion put to the Meeting that Mr. T.H.W. Scott be elected a Funding Trustee. This was proposed by Mr. A.W. Chapman (Ashwell), seconded by Mr. J.R. Rutt (Pastor, Lamberhurst) and passed *nem con*.

The Chairman said the Gospel Standard Baptist Library had sent a note to read out:

The Gospel Standard Library, like most organisations, has been affected by the Covid 19, resulting in very restricted visiting to Hove Bethesda. This has also

meant very few visitors to the Library, so in turn this influenced the interest there. In an attempt to bring this valuable, and in some ways unique, collection to your attention our recent newsletter gave an overview of the books available either to borrow or for research. In a few instances the Library holds the only known copy. There is now a large selection of second-hand books. A list with a selection of available books for sale is circulated every two months, and has resulted in an increased interest in books and reading, and also provided income for the Library, both of which are to be welcomed. The Library, although staffed totally by volunteers, does run at a deficit. So we are endeavouring to try and remedy this, and would appreciate your support, and hope in so doing you will find the benefit of pleasure of reading.

The Chairman added that the Gospel Standard Library does a very valuable work. It is largely run by volunteers, which is much appreciated. He said the collection to be taken at the close of the evening service would be for the Gospel Standard Library.

The Chairman gave notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Trust to be held, if the Lord will, on Saturday, May 21st at 2.30 p.m. at Ebenezer Chapel, Matfield, when Mr. R.K. Wheatley will give an address on "A church with a little strength, and an open door set before it."

He also announced that the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund Annual General Meeting would be held, if the Lord will, on Saturday, June 25th, at 10 a.m., at Redhill United Reformed Church, by kind permission.

He thanked the friends at Clifton Chapel for their hospitality, not just for today, but at other times when the chapel is borrowed, and for all the work that goes behind the scenes, so willingly and lovingly given.

CONTINUING WITH THE LORD

After hymn 346 was sung, Mr. F.A. Ince (Hope, Sedgley) addressed the Meeting from Luke 22. 28, and spoke as follows:

Seeking the Lord's blessing upon us, as we seek to speak a few words in His name. The words that I bring before you are the words that, when the Committee sent me the invitation and asked me to give an address here, the words came immediately into my mind, and I felt sure that the Lord was in the invitation in respect of this address. And also this, that there is a word here for each and every one of us.

"Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." They are very gracious words. They are those words that belong to the whole of the church. I want to speak of the beginning, how that the disciples – and may they be seen as a type of the church today, of which we form a part – how they became followers, that they should continue. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations."

First, the Lord Jesus was One who suffered so much! He was sent of His heavenly Father into this sin-cursed world, that He should come to show all good, to show peace, to show mercy, to show sinners His grace, to save sinners. And He declared and showed Himself so clearly

in the gospel that He preached and in the miracles that He performed. He truly declared Himself to be the faithful Witness, One sent of His heavenly Father. And they despised Him. They rejected Him. They saw Him to be a Man of naught. All their malice, evil, arrogance, ignorance was poured out upon Him, the holy Child Jesus. He was scorned, mocked, thought to be a devil because He cast out spirits and devils, and they said, by the chief of the devils, Beelzebub. They blasphemed His name. They would not have this Man to reign over them. He was a Man despised.

Dear friends, how is it that the disciples could continue to follow Him? What is it that enabled them? There was something that they saw in Him, and beheld in Him! Dear friends, let us see this wondrous truth, and the application of these words, for ourselves today. It was God that began with us. And I want just to speak of a few of those things, how that they were brought to continue.

“Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.” It means this: that they remained – they continued. First, it was God that began with us. And I want to speak of love. God began with us. It began in His love, and it was an everlasting love. It began in electing and choosing us in that love, and in that love, in covenant love, gave us into the hands of Jesus, that His dearly-beloved Son would come forth in the nature of His brethren – in our nature, our human nature except sin – and that He should come and show to us, demonstrate to us in a most clear way, God’s heavenly love towards us. He gave His church, His people, into the hands of Jesus. And Jesus said, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6. 37). It was in love, dear friends. Jesus went forth and showed that love. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5. 8). Here is love.

And Jesus went forth to fulfil His heavenly Father’s will. “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4. 34). And His finished work was that He had sent Him to do. He spared Him not, “but delivered Him up for us all” (Rom. 8. 32); sent Him forth that He should “be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4. 10). And Christ went forth to Calvary. Dear friends, Calvary is called a little mount – a mount Calvary. It was a mount of love, a mount of dying love. Who for? Guilty, vile, ignorant sinners. Jesus went forth. He went forth to suffer, bleed and die, to give His life freely and lovingly for everyone whom His heavenly Father gave to Him. Jesus said to His disciples, just previous to this word, “Rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10. 20). That is when the church was given by God the Father into the hands of His dearly-beloved Son. Their names were recorded in the Lamb’s book of life.

Jesus went forth to the cross, fastened to the cross, and every name was inscribed upon His breast. And in His wounds, His sufferings, the bruises, the stripes, the agonies, “His visage was so marred more than any man” (Isa. 52. 14). His crippling form hung upon a tree, His body weight hanging upon those nails, a suffering Christ in agonies and in blood. Have we ever seen such love, dear friends, such love to guilty sinners, undeserving sinners, ruined sinners? No! Jesus, when He cried, “It is finished,” gave up the ghost, and in that moment the whole of the church, from the beginning of time to the end of time, was saved – saved through the blood and righteousness of Jesus, that precious blood that did atone for all the sins of the church. Dear friends, it was redeeming love and blood. Such were these disciples. Such has been the church in every day and generation to this day. Here these disciples then, they are going forth.

“Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.” They continued in love. Love held them to Him. Love – what He had done, those things that He had passed through for His people. Love bound them to Him. “As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you” (John 15. 9). And they continued in that love. They loved His name. They loved His Person. They loved His Word. They loved His gospel. They loved to be followers and disciples of Jesus. They loved His sermons. They saw His miracles. Dear friends, what a wonderment it is to be one of these disciples, one of these followers, to follow the Lord! But there is a wonderful truth here. Yes, they loved Him. They served Him. They delighted in Him. There was none like Him, to be compared with Him. He had done so much for them. They were true followers of Him.

But I want to take this word, “love,” because it is the very foundation that the church has been built upon and raised upon. They were all brought together in love. They were all brought through the cross together, through that precious blood that atoned for all their sins. And that blood of the Lord Jesus has brought the church together, united them together. They are bonded together in love. That is the very foundation. It is God’s everlasting love in Jesus and His gospel. And His church is being raised up today, that holy temple, all these living stones gathered together, raised up together. And the temple is being raised up today. What is it that binds them together? What cement is it? What bonding is it? It is love.

My thoughts are these: let us continue in this love. I just think of this love, dear friends. It is a commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you.” It is an important commandment. Let us follow in the commandments of the Lord. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one

another” (John 13. 34). This is the union. This is the bond. It is spiritual. And remembering this, because we are called with a holy calling, it is a holy love. It comes from heaven, dear friends. It is the love of our God to thy poor soul, in the Person of His dearly-beloved Son. Let us never forget what it cost Him, that we should come together in this love: bound up together in “the bundle of life” (1 Sam. 25. 29) – which is a bundle of love. Now this is a commandment, and we do pray that we may be helped to keep His commandments. “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15. 10).

Can we see here, dear friends, the important truth of what it is to be bound together in this love? It may be tried. It may be tested. We may have differences. We may understand this: our failings and our shortcomings, our falls, our mountain slips. Yes! We do not want to. I pray about it so much. I do not want to offend the Lord because of His sufferings for my sins. I do not want to offend Him any more. But our failings, our shortcomings – let us acknowledge them with respect to each other. Yes, this love may be tested.

But I want just to speak of something of this love. I want just a little more time on this love, because it is the principle thing, isn’t it? It is the principle thing that binds the church together. And friends, we must be very careful of any separation, anything that may come between this love. The adversary of souls, dear friends, is so exercised and lively. He wants to separate. He is our chief enemy. Let us beware of him.

But I thought of this love, dear friends. Let us look to the Word of the Lord in respect of it. It may be tested. Just bear with me while I read a few words out of Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians chapter 13: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” And then this: “Charity never faileth” (verses 1-8).

Dear friends, let us follow on. Let us understand each other. There have been many things that can separate us. The virus has been one thing. But there are many other things, dear friends, our failings and our shortcomings. Let us understand each other. It is only the Lord who is our Keeper and our Preserver. And, dear friends, it is for us not to

separate, but to bind each other together. This is the Word of the Lord. You see see how He purchased us with His blood. He owned us while we were yet sinners. He blessed us with salvation. He brought us unto Himself and reconciled us unto God the Father, who loved us in the beginning. He has done so much for us, dear friends. Let us be helped to please Him, to honour Him, to glorify Him, and to seek the spiritual good and bonding of the church together in union and in fellowship. And where there are faults, and where there are failings, let us be able to draw near together.

I just think of another word in respect of this love, just a few thoughts that came upon my mind. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue" (1 John 3. 18). You see, it is very good to show each other love, but not just in word and in tongue, dear friends. We may be apart from each other. We may say that we love each other, and so forth, but where is it? It is here: "But in deed and in truth." It must be shown. There must be a coming together. Where there may be differences there must be a coming together. I say this church is being raised up, bonded together. It is bonded in love. Let that love hold us together. Satan is always ready to sow the seed of discord. You may have known it and understood it. I came into the presence of two godlies on one occasion, and they were saying they were surprised that so and so had fallen. And, dear friends, I was not surprised. You know, we have got to come on our knees. We have not got to speak against them. We have not got to spread these things. We have got to get on our knees, and pray over them. "Lord, restore them, and bring them back." Love then is the principle thing. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love." We will need grace. We will need the Lord to help us, to humble us.

A little lower down below this text, you see the Lord said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22. 31). He was a man who stood a little in his own confidence, rather boldly, if you like; perhaps a little bit of pride. I know that he had a zeal for Jesus – he always stood for Him – but he was not humble enough. And, dear friends, let us come to that place: he was cast into Satan's sieve. And when he went into Satan's sieve, he was probably a big man, dear friends, a big man. But when he came out of it, he was a poor, weak worm of the earth. He came out a little man. And that is where we need to be, dear friends. We need grace to be nothing. I close with a word on this part of this subject, because Jesus was always an Example, or an Ensample, to the church – always. I just thought of this word to conclude with on this particular issue of love: "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the

Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2. 1-5). Jesus, dear friends, is our Exemplar. Let us be helped to seek more of His likeness, to follow Him, and let us glorify His name in our walk and path here below.

"Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations," in love. Then there is faith, dear friends. They followed Him in faith, this wondrous gift. You know, when the Lord was pleased to call us by His grace, we were blessed. We were blessed with repentance, and it was repentance that was a gift of our God, dear friends. We were brought to feel our sins and iniquities. But it was faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, because Jesus was our only hope for our sins and iniquities. And Christ was sent that He should cleanse and heal us from our sins and iniquities. And here is the mercy, that faith was centred in an Object of faith. And that is where our faith is fixed today. Faith is centred in the Object of faith. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Object of our faith.

Dear friends, we will need faith in Him to bring us through our course. Here is the mercy. Here is this wondrous gift of faith that is given to us, so that we should be able to serve the Lord, follow Him in our walk, and path, and conversation here below. It is faith in the gospel. This following the Lord, it will be the profession of our faith as we journey forth here below. The profession of our faith, it is what Jesus came to do. It is the wholeness of His gospel, all that He is and all that He came to do for sinners, the whole of the blessings of salvation that are found in Him – faith in Him, faith in His Word, faith in His doctrine, faith in this: in the written and the incarnate Word. It is faith in Him. And it is faith, dear friends, which will help us to serve and to follow Him. It is faith that will bring us through our course. You know, it is faith in His Word, isn't it! And His Word is precious to us, isn't it! We live by His Word. And it is faith in Him, faith in His Word. Dear friends, it is a most wonderful gift, this faith. It centres in, and upon, Christ. And it is a living faith. It is a faith in Christ, and it is a faith which will help us to follow Him, and to serve Him. "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1. 17). Then we walk by faith and not by sight. It is faith that will bring us through our course.

And it was going to be a troublesome course for the disciples, when the Lord would send them forth to preach the gospel. It was an afflictive path. But faith – that faith brought them through. That faith encouraged them to go forward in the name and the Person of Jesus. It is that faith today, dear friends, that will help us to go forth in His name. And it is

this faith – it is a conquering faith – it is an overcoming faith – that is given to the church. It centres in Jesus. And it is faith in Him. It is trust in His great and His holy name. We have not anyone else to go to, dear friends, for all our help and all our needs. Faith! “Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12. 2).

This faith – this faith in the gospel, this faith which comforts us through the Word. And I have sat under the ministry many times, dear friends, and it has been such a comfort to my soul. Particularly as I have come down to the West Midlands I have been able to sit more under the ministry than at any other time. What a wondrous Word it is, a gospel that we have got. It is a gospel which shows to us everything that Christ is, His offices and His characters that He holds for us, to meet our every case and our every need. And, dear friends, let us have faith in Him, faith to go forward in His name. And it is faith that will help us through our trials, our difficulties, our afflictive times and seasons, times of adversity, dear friends, times of trouble here below – faith in Jesus.

What is this faith, and who does it belong to? The weak ones, the helpless ones, the meek ones, the lowly ones, poor worms of the earth. This faith will help them to go forth in His name – yes, against all afflictions, trials and troubles. Faith – it is trusting in Jesus, confidence in Him. And it is leaning upon Him. This faith will help us to lean upon the Rock, Christ Jesus. Faith to continue.

Then faith in His Word and promises, as the Spirit of the Lord will apply them to us. It is everything that Jesus is. All the promises of our God are in Jesus, and they belong to us, dear friends, at those very times that the Lord would be pleased to apply them to us, to help us to continue. Faith. We have got a wondrous gospel, something here for our faith to lay hold upon, His infallible Word, His faithfulness, all that He is to us. Then we are journeying with this faith.

“Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.” Faith in Jesus. We are continuing. And are we continuing in faith? We are continuing to an end. And we have heard over these last few weeks that the Lord has taken to Himself some of His dear people. And, dear friends, yes we may miss them, but they conquered. They overcame. What was it? Faith. The great cloud of witnesses came through. Faith. Paul was pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3. 14). He was “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before” (verse 13). And when he was pressing, he was pressing through troubles and trials. He was a preacher of the gospel, but he met with much opposition. But he was pressing. He was pressing, through faith, to an Object – to Jesus. Jesus was the end of his faith. “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” We are pressing, dear friends.

“Ye are they which have continued with me in My temptations.” The Lord help us to follow Him, grant us this faith to serve Him – a faith that will always be looking to Him, a faith that will own Him. What a mercy it is – His gift to us, to help us poor worms of the earth to continue in His name.

Then we have, “Ye are they which have continued with Me” – in peace. In peace. Peace! Why, it is in peace, isn’t it! I do believe whatever trials, troubles and afflictions that we have got to pass through here below, there is a wonderful blessing of peace that can come to rest upon the souls of the Lord’s dear people. They are in the hands of Jesus. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you” (John 14. 27). Where did that peace first appear? Through the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, wasn’t it! That was a wonderful truth, when Jesus forgave all our sins, when He healed us, when He restored us, when He gave us that pardon and forgiveness. It was peace – peace in our consciences, peace with God, peace in liberty, liberty in the gospel, set free. It was peace, wasn’t it! Peace.

And, dear friends, it is a wonderful peace that has come to the Lord’s dear people. It is that peace of our God that passeth all understanding. And it does pass all understanding, doesn’t it, that peace in our consciences and peace with God! Because, you see, it was through the cross and where God showed His just vengeance, His just justice, His wrath for our sins and iniquities. And, dear friends, it was all laid upon Jesus. That which was due to us was laid upon Jesus. And O the peace that came, the peace with God that passeth all understanding. We were due, for all our sins, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6. 23) – eternal death, damnation. How was it put away? Jesus, upon the cross at Calvary, passed through that experience of hell in His sufferings. His sufferings were awful. We cannot come into them. Our poor minds cannot come into the awfulness of those sufferings. But, dear friends, it met with all the demands of divine justice – it satisfied them, upon His cross at Calvary. And the Lord laid all our iniquities upon Him. What a mercy it is, dear friends, Jesus washed them all away through His precious blood. And the blessing of that blood, and the application of it by and through the Spirit of the Lord, brought peace to our consciences, peace with God.

And, dear friends, let us live in peace together. We have peace with God, dear friends, and let us have peace together. We are bound together in the bonds of love and peace. We trust we have been brought into this wondrous peace of our God. Let us have peace together.

When I was a young man I remember a text that I heard in a sermon by Mr. Norman Roe, who has passed away, as we have heard, a dear

servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe this was the text. In the 14th chapter of Romans, a difference had come between the people. There were the Christians at Rome, and the Jews that I believe had been brought also into the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they were all fixed with eating and drinking, and there were going to be divisions, and so forth. But Paul says, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (verse 17). This is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are in this kingdom. We have been translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dearly-beloved Son. And this kingdom is peace, reconciling peace, and we are all joined together in this peace. And he quoted this word just a little lower down in this chapter, and it has stood with me all these years from being a young man: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (verse 19). Let that work amongst us. Let it bind us together, this peace of God. Heaven and glory is peace; it is love and peace. Those who have come through their course, they have entered into the glory of this love and this peace. They experienced it here below in a measure of it, and now they are in the perfection of it. And we are journeying. Let us know this peace together, dear friends. This is our mercy today. Let us love one another. Let us have Christ to be the Object of our faith, and let us continue in peace together.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ has left us that peace, a legacy that we should enjoy this peace. May we enjoy it together in our little denomination. Let us know what it is to please the Lord, to glorify His name, bound together in love and faith and peace.

Then we have another truth – and I will just close on this subject – and that is prayer. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." Jesus taught His disciples how to pray. Dear friends, it is the greatest arm of our religion, of our faith – prayer. We live by faith. We live by prayer. And I know that our friend this morning spoke of this throne of grace, but it was in my heart and mind to bring it here. And I pray that we may receive those things that were spoken this morning. That is the throne of grace. We live by prayer. It is one of the weapons of our warfare here below. Let us continue in prayer. Yes, we love the prayer meetings. One of our old ministers said that it is the boiler house of our religion – prayer meetings and prayer. And it is, isn't it! We will be praying our way to heaven, dear friends, as we journey here below.

The psalmist, David, was a great man of prayer. Virtually every psalm seems to be a prayer of David. The Lord Jesus is our Exemplar to prayer. See the wondrous prayer in John 17 to His heavenly Father. But it was regarding His church, His people, His deep concerns. You know, that prayer of the Lord Jesus in the 17th of John, it is a prayer for every

one of us. And if you read it, it is a prayer for our whole safety and preservation in a world that lies in wickedness, because we would never come through, dear friends. We have enemies on every side. We have never seen as much anti-Christ as we have seen it today. There are very few indeed that fear the Lord, very few indeed that serve Him, very few that live upon Him by prayer. But what a mercy it is to be praying people! We will need the throne of grace all our journey through. We do not know what a day may bring forth. And we live by prayer.

It is prayer where Jesus, in a wonderful testimony of His sufferings and death, has reconciled us unto God, the Father, and has risen and entered into the holiest of all, that He should appear for us, to be our High Priest above. Who “ever liveth to make intercession for” us (Heb. 7. 25) on our part. And it is our mercy to come to Him.

And, dear friends, He does want us to come to Him in prayer. “If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it” (John 14. 14). Let us go to Him in prayer. Let us take every matter to Him in prayer, everything that concerns us, in prayer. We should be living a life of prayer. He has given to us this wondrous blessing that the poor and needy sinner can communicate unto the God of his love, by prayer, with free access into the holiest of all. This is one of the greatest blessings of our salvation – that we can commune with our God. We can come and tell Him all our hearts, and all our concerns, and all our needs. We can lay everything before Him that concerns us. We can come to Him for all that help of which we have heard. We need it!

And He welcomes us. He welcomes us, His poor people here below. This throne of grace belongs to the poor, the helpless, the weak, the insufficient; yes, and those who are coming so continually, confessing and repenting. We will need the throne of grace unto our journey’s end. But is there anything too hard for Him? No, dear friends, nothing. Nothing is too hard. He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3. 20). He is better unto us than whatever we deserve. Let us live by prayer, live unto Him.

“Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.” Let us be helped to continue. One thing that we will need to do, to continue – we will need to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to follow Him (see Luke 9. 23). And just to close on this point: “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.” We will need to ask of the Lord, as we journey forth, for that low, that humble, that contrite spirit that will seek to know more of the nature of Jesus, so that, dear friends, we shall always resort to Him. We shall always need Him. I have mentioned that Peter had to be brought to that low place, and when he came to that low place, and the cock crew (the cock did crow) – he went and wept. He was brought to be a poor man, and that is where we need to be, dear friends.

May the Lord help us to follow in this word: “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.” Amen.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Ince for his address, and said, “May the Lord help us indeed to follow on in that path of continuing.”

The benediction, hymn 500, was sung.

ALL MY SPRINGS ARE IN THEE

To Thomas Godwin

My dear Friend,

I have often thought what a mercy it is that the people of God are not dependent upon one another for the supplies of grace whereby they live unto God. The ministry is useful, the conversation of friends is useful, correspondence by letter on the precious things of God is often useful, and from each and all of these we have derived or communicated profit. But how soon these cisterns may become dry, and indeed, unless supplied immediately from the Lord Himself, all the water contained in them is soon dried up and gone. What a mercy then it is for our souls that there is a most gracious Lord, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, that we might receive of His fulness, and grace for grace! How blessedly suitable He is to every want and woe, and how the poor soul is ever looking unto, longing after, hanging upon, and cleaving to Him as all its salvation and all its desire. Friends live apart, those whom we have known and loved are taken home, there are few opportunities for union and communion amongst Christian friends; but the Lord is ever nigh, ready of access by night and by day, full of pity and compassion to poor, sin-sick souls, and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. He never disappoints any who trust in Him, is more willing to hear than we to pray, and more willing to give than we to ask. The great, the only real grief of the soul is, that it should sin against Him, be denied His presence, not get a word from His lips, a smile from His face, or a touch from His hand.

We, my dear friend, are fast travelling down the vale of life; our lease will soon be run out, and after that, every year is beyond Scriptural limit of the appointed life of man. My desire is that my last days may be my best days, and I much dread sinking down into carnality and death. I have many things to try my mind; indeed some things, I may say many things, which try me most I have never named, and probably shall never name to any living soul. Every heart knows its own bitterness, and the wormwood and the gall which lie at the bottom of the heart do not always or often come to light; and yet it is felt that nothing but a word from the

Lord can purge them out or sweeten them. But I have proved this, that trials and exercises of body and mind keep the soul alive unto God, and thus I hope I have reason to bless Him, among other mercies, that He is pleased to keep my soul more or less alive unto Himself, and that chiefly through circumstances which in themselves are painful and distressing. Among the wonderful mysteries of the kingdom of God, this is not the least – the way in which He makes even those very sins which cause shame and sorrow to work together for our spiritual good. It is a wonderful thing to be a Christian, and the longer I live, the more I see how few there are, and what little real grace the very best Christians possess or manifest. In this life it is as it were the bud; the full fruit is reserved for a state of glory.

Yours very affectionately in the truth,

J.C. Philpot

Croydon, November 19th, 1868

AN EXHORTATION TO PREACHERS AND THEIR HEARERS

By Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

Exhortations to ministers

First, let me crave liberty to speak a word to the Elishas, my reverend and honoured brethren in the ministry. You are engaged in a glorious service. God has put great renown upon you. He has entrusted you with two most precious jewels, His *truths* and the *souls* of His people. Never was this honour conferred upon any angel to convert souls! What princely dignity can parallel this? The pulpit is higher than the throne, for a truly-constituted minister represents no less than God Himself. “As though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5. 20). Give me leave to say as the apostle, “I magnify mine office” (Rom. 11. 13). Whatever our persons are, the office is sacred. The ministry is the most honourable employment in the world. Jesus Christ has graced this calling by His entering into it. Other men work in their trade; ministers work with God. “We are labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3. 9). O high honour! God and His ministers have one and the same work. They both negotiate about souls. Let the sons of the prophets wear this as their crown and diadem.

But while I tell you of your dignity, do not forget your duty. Imitate this blessed pattern in the text: the Lord Jesus who, seeing the multitudes, went up and taught (see Matt. 5. 1, 2). He took all occasions of preaching. Sometimes He taught in the temple (see Mark 14. 49); sometimes in a ship (see Mark 4. 1), and here, upon the mount. His lips

were a tree of life that fed many. How often did He neglect His food, that He might feast others with His doctrine! Let all the ministers of Christ tread in His steps! May Christ be your Saviour, but also your Example. Suffer no opportunities to slip wherein you may be helpful to the souls of others. Be not content to go to heaven yourselves, but be as the *primum mobile* [the major attractive force in a galaxy] which draws other orbs along with it. Be such shining lamps that you may light others to heaven with you. I will conclude with that of the apostle: "Therefore, 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" (1 Cor. 15. 58).

Exhortations to the flock of God

Secondly, let me turn myself to the flock of God. If ministers must take all opportunities to preach, you must take all opportunities to hear. If there were twice or thrice a week a certain sum of money to be distributed to all comers, then people would resort thither. Now think thus with yourselves; when the Word of God is preached, the bread of life is distributed, which is more precious than "thousands of gold and silver" (Psa. 119. 72). In the Word preached, heaven and salvation is preached unto you. In this field the pearl of price is hid. How should you flock like doves to the windows of the sanctuary! (see Isa. 60. 8). We read the gate of the temple was called "Beautiful" (Acts 3. 2). The gate of God's house is the beautiful gate. Lie at these posts of wisdom's doors (see Prov. 8. 34).

Not only hear the Word preached, but encourage those ministers who do preach by liberal maintaining of them. Though I hope all who have God's Urim and Thummim written upon them can say, as the apostle, "I seek not yours, but you" (2 Cor. 12. 14), yet that scripture is still canonical, "So hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9. 14). Are not labourers in a vineyard maintained by their labours? says Peter Martyr. And the apostle puts the question, "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" (1 Cor. 9. 7). Hypocrites love a cheap religion. They like a gospel that will put them to no charges. They are content so they may have golden bags, to have wooden priests. How many by saving their purses have lost their souls! Julian the Apostate robbed the ministers, pretending conscience. I need not tell you how vengeance pursued him. Is it not pity the fire on God's altar should go out for want of pouring on a little golden oil? David would not offer that to God which cost him nothing (see 2 Sam. 24. 24).

Encourage God's ministers by your fruitfulness under their labours. When ministers are upon the "mount," let them not be upon the rocks. What cost has God laid out upon this city (London)! Never, I believe,

since the apostles' times was there a more learned, orthodox, powerful ministry than now. God's ministers are called stars (Rev. 1. 20). In this city every morning a star appears, besides the bright constellation on the Lord's day. O you that feed in the green pastures of ordinances, be fat and fertile; you that are planted in the courts of God, flourish in the courts of God (see Psa. 92. 13). How sad will it be with a people that shall go laden to hell with gospel blessings! The best way to encourage your ministers is to let them see the travail of their souls in your new birth. It is a great comfort when a minister not only woos souls, but wins souls. "He that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11. 30). This is a minister's glory. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye?" (1 Thess. 2. 19). A successful preacher wears two crowns, a crown of righteousness in heaven, and a crown of rejoicing here upon earth. "Are not ye our crown?"

Encourage your ministers by praying for them. Their work is great. It is a work that will take up their head and heart, and all little enough. It is a work fitter for angels than men. "Who is sufficient for these things?" (2 Cor. 2. 16). O pray for them! Christ indeed, when He ascended the mount and was to preach, needed none of the people's prayers for Him. He had a sufficient stock by Him, the divine nature to supply Him, but all His under-officers in the ministry need prayer. If the Apostle Paul, who abounded in the graces of the Spirit and supernatural revelations, begged prayer (see 1 Thess. 5. 25), then surely other ministers need prayer who do not pretend to any such revelations.

And pray for your ministers that God will direct them what to preach, that He will cut out their work for them. "Go ... preach ... the preaching that I bid thee" (Jonah 3. 2). It is a great matter to preach suitable truths; there are "acceptable words" (Eccles. 12. 10).

Pray that God will go forth with their labours, or else they toil and catch nothing. God's Spirit must fill the sails of our ministry. It is not the hand that scatters the seed which makes it spring up, but the dews and influences of heaven. So it is not our preaching, but the divine influence of the Spirit that makes grace grow in men's hearts. We are but pipes and organs. It is God's Spirit blowing in us that makes the preaching of the Word by a divine enchantment allure souls to Christ. Ministers are but stars to light you to Christ. The Spirit is the load-stone to draw you. All the good done by our ministry is "due to the Lord's excellent and effectual working" (Bucer). O then pray for us, that God will make His work prosper in our hands. This may be one reason why the Word preached does not profit more, because people do not pray more. Perhaps you complain the tool is dull, the minister is dead and cold. You should have whetted and sharpened him by your prayer. If you would have the door of a blessing opened to you through our ministry, you must unlock it by the key of prayer.

THE BENGAL OFFICER

By J.H. Alexander

James Bourne in his autobiography relates his exercises regarding the proposed marriage of his daughter to an officer in the Bengal army.

“In the midst of all this, a young gentleman, an officer of the Bengal army, who was then residing with his friends in London, called upon me to declare his attachment to one of my daughters. At first I felt obliged to refuse my consent for many reasons; but as I was walking across Hyde Park, it was plainly given me to understand by the Lord that I must not put my hand upon this. I was much surprised, but felt sure it was the word of the Lord, and was led to watch the event. Heavily laden with these two burdens, I was led to cry very earnestly to the Lord, and one day as I was going through Dorset Square on business, these words were spoken most sweetly and powerfully upon my heart: “Comfort me on every side” (Psa. 71. 21). Without considering any point particularly I was led to rejoice, and immediately settled in my mind a temporal fulfilment of the words – namely, the happy event of my daughter’s marriage and the restoration of my sick daughter to health and spiritual enjoyment. For a little while things seemed to turn into this (as I then thought) happy channel. But God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways our ways.”

This young Bengal officer was Lieut. Francis Jeffreys, youngest child of the Rev. B. Jeffreys, and closest in age to Henrietta [his sister]. He was born in India, but on the death of his mother, the whole family came back to England. At seventeen, while his clever brother Charles was still at Cambridge, Francis went out to India as a cadet. Francis is described as “an amiable and lively” boy. Some years after entering the army in India, there appeared a great change in his outward conduct. He linked up with some brother-officers who professed a value for evangelical truths; feeling they were on the best ground, he tried to follow their example, but could not attain satisfaction himself. His “frailties” proved more than a match for him, and after showing great zeal for several months, he became disconsolate and went back into worldly company and amusements. His endeavours to recover himself brought him into a common but most dangerous snare; for, seeing that his religion lacked power, he tried to supply it by great vehemency in notions and words. Both in letters and conversations, he would advance strong but crude statements of the principal doctrines of grace, while he really had no love for them and no renewed mind. He called this “the full assurance of faith.” Several of his letters home illustrated this:

“What an endearing title is *My son*. Surely we can turn round and say, *Yes, my Father*. There is no fear here of unscriptural confidence.

If one is chosen to eternal life and I am saved, God be praised. If I am not safe, may I from this moment lay hold of, apprehend and appropriate the free salvation offered me in Christ. Yes, it is mine. Nothing can shake my confidence!" and so on.

"The error in all these extracts," comments his biographer, "is the same, an inconsistency arising from his entire ignorance of the application of Christ's salvation to his soul; a want of the experimental knowledge of this: "A Christian is not the work of *persuasion* but of *majesty*."

"Admonitions from some at home better instructed than himself evidently disturbed him, but no more. Two of his long, confused religious letters were put into the hands of Mr. Bourne, who faithfully replied, taking up each point in turn and probing it to the full. But before this letter reached India he had relapsed into despondency and turned for comfort to the social life of the regiment. He did, however, thank Mr. Bourne for his letter, and something made him insert several pages of a diary. This betrayed more than the letters ever had.

"I have no heart to do anything. I think I could have taken pleasure in getting up a school at this station had I not such hanging down hands and feeble knees.

"As to religion, though I can't help speaking and professing it yet I have done more harm than good by my gloominess, which arises not from my religion but from the scantiness of it.

"During the week I am so occupied by business that I can just manage to get on. But were every day a Sunday I know not what I could do; prayer and reflection are such seasons of misery to me, not from coldness of desire but from utter despair of being able to attain my wishes. Want of faith – that is my disease."

"Once, writing to a friend, he says, 'You are treading in my former steps. I have often been in a state of too vehement rejoicing, and sometimes after I had been pouring out my soul in prayer and thought, 'I shall surely be heard now!' I have risen from my knees to spend a watchful and weary night."

"He came home from India in 1836, and such of his friends as understood real religion received him with much interest. But for two years after this, he continued in a dark and uncertain state of mind. He found a few persons (Mr. Bourne being one) able to enter fully into his case, and whose words appealed to his heart. He acknowledged that he felt this, but finding some members of his family most dear to him were otherwise minded, he tried to agree with both. Then he found himself left under the power of many temptations. He was secretly unhappy, even when most lively, and later confessed that he felt such a prejudice and opposition to Mr. Burrell that he had gone travelling to all quarters in England rather than hear him!"

This, then, was the Francis who now asked for the hand of Mr. Bourne's daughter, Fanny, whom he hoped soon to take back with him to India. Following on the intimation Mr. Bourne had had about this, consent was given, and the couple became engaged. "At the time it appeared in every way suitable," says one, "as they might be called on a level as regards religion." With what sympathy we can view them: they have had their counterpart in most generations. Francis was of an argumentative turn, and Mr. Bourne's daughter was a talented, spirited girl. Both religiously inclined, how they would compare notes, criticise their elders, and perhaps discuss, in the very understandable arrogance of youth, how they could harmonise the differences that they could not ignore in the two sections of the Jeffreys family – Charles's side, stressing the conflict of the inner life, and the others, with whom Francis was staying, who stood for a smoother religion. Mr. Bourne's daughters were each, eventually, brought to know the truth, but at that time the work of God was not discernible in Fanny.

Plans now went along happily, until very shortly before the marriage Francis was taken suddenly very ill. But life and health having become important to him now he went, as soon as he was well enough, to "Clapham in Kent" for rest and change of air. But in spite of all his care, his health declined. He came back to London, and stayed at his brother Charles' house in Dorset Place, where he became seriously ill. Bernard Gilpin (his brother-in-law) was in London just then, and visited him constantly, sometimes twice a day and found "both body and soul in great danger." Now the Lord laid a heavy hand upon him, and he spoke of despair at the discovery of his heart's corruptions. A few days later he told Bernard he was very happy: the Lord had pardoned his sins and he had never seen such beauty and comfort in the Psalms before.

"I am happy and full of peace," he said. 'I shall no more speak lightly against your religion, your friends and Mr. Burrell; I think now that those who opposed the teaching I have received here are wrong.' But next day a wavering began, and he could not bear those dear relations to be wrong. 'Both *must* be right,' he said, but this perplexity lost him his spiritual light, and it was not until later that he returned to that unity of spirit with those who had been used of the Lord to instruct him.

Now his desire for life and health reasserted itself. Finding his illness irksome and his cousins suddenly dull, he longed for some lively young society, and arranged to go off to Bath, and later Torquay. The day before going, he had a long, frank talk with Mr. Burrell, confessing that he had found no one who so surely understood his case. Mr. Burrell felt much tenderness for him, and expressed it, and felt great encouragement to think his case would clear up.

He went for his change of air, but, poor fellow, the journey to the West Country did him no good, and on his return he next tried Canterbury, where, however, a doctor told him faithfully that he could not live many more weeks as an abscess on his lung might suddenly break. He received the news with composure, and became very earnest in prayer, with hope. He soon returned to London, this time to his sister's house at North Bank, Regent's Park.

He said to one of his friends, "The question about my marriage is set at rest. I do altogether resign my dear fiancée into the hand of God, and pray for her protection and preservation. I was secretly much in earnest when I heard of the minister pointing out the unlawfulness of being unequally yoked together with unbelievers, and how he said the Lord would deal more kindly with His people than to direct them after their conversion to unite themselves with such as might prove snares to their souls. [Alas! how had these young people let their tongues run away with them, that Francis, receiving a little light, should now view Miss Bourne as an unbeliever!] I was continually praying, and that from first to last, that if the union were contrary to God's will it might never take place, but that *He* would be pleased to prevent it Himself or provide an alternative. I little expected the answer would be my death! The will of the Lord be done."

He was visited one day by his sister Henrietta, who had long watched for his soul. She read him the 106th Psalm. He kept inwardly saying, "O the wretches that they were! And such a wretch was I." When the verse was read, "Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry," his soul seemed dissolved in gratitude.

Henrietta said, "Those very words wrought a happy change in my own heart about a year ago at a moment of great danger and fear."

He replied, "Was it so with you? That's exactly what I felt at Dorset Place. O, it was wonderful! It came all of a sudden when I least expected it." He had told no one any details of that time when he had been made happy, so Henrietta listened with great interest. He went on, "I was one evening in agony of mind, and thought I must be lost, my sins were so dreadful. I called Charles and told him my sins. And he sat, as I thought, groaning with me. But while he was speaking of Jesus, such a strong feeling that I *must* cry to Jesus came that I interrupted Charles and said, 'Well, one thing is I know I shall cry to Jesus and look only to Him till I die, and I shall never give that up, I'm confident.' Then this wore away and I fell asleep. But I awoke and the devil said my religion would prove the death of me. I'd fallen, he said, into a melancholy snare. So I quite determined to write at once to a friend to come and take me away while my life could still be saved. I rose to write, but an awful horror fell on me. I tried to overcome it by moving about, opening and

shutting the door, drinking cold water, and so on. Then I *had* to try to pray. ‘Jesus! Jesus!’ I cried, but it was like being fearfully *walled in*. I felt not even God could ever save me. Then the feeling returned which I had when talking with Charles – ‘But you know you are to cast yourself on Jesus to your latest breath.’ I was calmed, sustained, but much amazed. What! Pray to Him when *in despair*? So I said, ‘Jesus, Jesus, Saviour of sinners!’ This supported me greatly for a few minutes; then I went low again. *Impossible*, sounded in my ears. I struggled hard, but in vain. I gave up, feeling I was now without hope. Without hope! At that dreadful moment these words shone in with wonderful power: ‘Against hope believe in hope.’ Then I shouted – oh! I *shouted*. It woke up the servants, and they woke up the rest, but who would not shout? It was enough to make anyone shout. I *truly* thought I was going to hell, but at that moment I saw that Jesus would take me to heaven just because *He pleased*! When all was quiet in the room again, I looked for my sins, but they were all gone. Like Bunyan’s Pilgrim, my burden had rolled off my back into Christ’s sepulchre. I’ve never felt the weight of them again.”

His friends were glad to hear this account given clearly at last. Charles remembered how when the servants called him up that night he had found Francis sitting up in bed, lost to all outward things, saying, “How very dreadful is the power of the enemy, but the power of God is greater! The instructions I have received here from this ministry are indeed the truth.” He never distinctly alluded to this again, but from that day forward he felt it was told him his part was to listen and learn, and this became very marked, for he used to start objections at every turn. But after this he constantly checked himself very seriously, saying, “I am forgetting myself; I must listen and learn.”

Mr. Bourne wrote to him and visited him daily, and had some sweet conversations. One day he said, “Yes, I am happy indeed. I have been shouting again. Did you hear me shout? I had been praying very earnestly that the Lord would search me, and the Lord Jesus answered, ‘Did I not tell thee before that I had given thee eternal life?’ and He revived afresh that moment in Dorset Place when my burden fell off.”

Mr. Burrell said, “Surely the experience of God’s love causes him to shout. I can truly say that I shout with him! It will be our mercy to watch this example of the grace of God to the end.”

The day before his death, he looked at Bernard standing at the foot of the bed and said, ‘O Jesus! Jesus! Whatever darkens round you, look to Jesus! Yes, whatever darkens, *darkens* and *thickens*, the thicker it all gets, look to Jesus! Pray to be enabled to look to Him, the Saviour of sinners. If you cannot see Him, watch and look and follow *hard* after

Him. If you see but a little glimmering, if you can but, as it were, get one hand in, press in there. That's the way."

Mr. Bourne said on the morning he died, "I remember your long, religious letters from India, how you used to go round about religion and about it, but never seemed to enter into it."

"It was so with me," he answered, "but the Lord has brought me into it now, and I enjoy the substance of the truth."

He asked to be moved. "But first let's have some reading." They read a hymn of Joseph Hart's, "Come, ye sinners." He was quiet, meditating on the line, "On the bloody tree behold Him!" and then said, with tears streaming, "We must hide ourselves in the dust and say, His atoning blood be upon us for ever!"

Later on he looked so happy his sister said, "You remind me of the pilgrims in the second part of *Pilgrim's Progress*, following each other over the river; one of them stood still and sang a hymn in the middle of it, and so could you if strong enough."

"Yes, I could," he said.

She added, "He that has brought you down dry-shod into Jordan will lead you safely up the bank on the other side."

He smiled and said, "O yes, He will!" Being moved, his lungs were disturbed. He said faintly, "This is death!" and was gone, April 16th, 1839, in his thirtieth year.

He was buried in the cemetery of St. John's Wood Chapel. On the tomb those words were put, "Who against hope believed in hope."

From More Than Notion

BOOK REVIEWS

Croydon Strict Baptist Educational Society 1920-2020: A record of the Lord's goodness over 100 years; hardback; 219 pages; free plus postage; obtainable from the Secretary, Mr. Paul Hanks, 65 Madan Road, Westerham, Kent, TN16 1DX.

The Croydon Strict Baptist Educational Society has held a warm place in the affection of many of the Lord's people, young and old, since its inception in 1920. A faithful and interesting record of these years has been produced by the Society, and several addresses have been included. It is pleasing for example to see names such as Mr. Vernon Farley, Mr. John Green and others remembered after all these years. We can heartily recommend this book and may it please the Lord to enable the present generation to continue this excellent Society, and cause a revived interest in the truths faithfully and lovingly declared over so long a period by the Lord's servants.

How Do You Read the Bible? by J.C. Ryle; paperback; 55 pages; price £3.50 plus postage; published by and obtainable from The Banner of Truth Trust or booksellers.

How we handle the holy Scriptures is of fundamental importance to our spiritual well-being. It is savingly so when the Holy Spirit makes its truths spirit and life in our hearts. In this excellent little book, J.C.Ryle in eight concise chapters emphasises the way the Scriptures should be read under the following headings:

No book is written in such a manner as the Bible; that knowledge of the Bible is absolutely necessary to salvation; that no book contains such matter; that no book has done so much for the world generally; that no book can do so much for everyone who reads it aright; that this Book is the only rule of faith and practice; that it is and always has been the food of all true servants of God; and that it is the only Book which can comfort men when they die. A concluding chapter addresses some points of application.

Although we differ from J.C. Ryle in his view of the atonement as expressed in some of his other works, this publication can be recommended without reservation.

ANSWER FOR ME, MY LORD

Answer for me, my Lord;
On Thee my cause I lay;
I dare not stand and plead myself;
Answer for me, I pray.

Condemned beneath the law,
I hear its awful word:
"The soul that sinneth it shall die."
Answer for me, my Lord!

Without the spotless Lamb,
Without the blood outpoured,
There is no pardon for my soul;
Answer for me, my Lord!

Answer for me till life
Hath loosed her silver cord;
And as I sink in death's embrace,
Answer for me, my Lord!

No righteousness of mine
A shelter can afford;
But when I stand before the throne,
Answer for me, my Lord!

Author Unknown

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
AUGUST 2022

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

**“MARK THE PERFECT MAN, AND BEHOLD THE
UPRIGHT: FOR THE END OF THAT MAN IS PEACE.”**

In Psalm 37 the sweet psalmist of Israel, David, was led of the Spirit to compare the lot of the godly with the ungodly. From his own experience he knew that sometimes it appeared the ungodly prospered without any hindrance, while the godly often suffered reproach and disappointment in their journey here below. However, in the words of verse 37, David is encouraged to believe that God will have the last word and in the day of the Lord's appointing it will be seen that He reigns and not the wicked nor their master, Satan.

The man in verse 37 is described in two ways: perfect and upright. Of course, in the highest sense only one Man has lived in full accord with the standard set, namely the Lord Jesus Christ, who as verily God and verily Man, is perfect in His Godhead and humanity. He lived an entirely upright life, in thought and word and deed. After the unspeakable sorrows and darkness of Golgotha, He died in perfect peace with His Father, offering up a perfect sacrifice of His life and death on behalf of needy sinners. He bears the mark of the peace He purchased in His hands, feet and side in glory now. That peace has procured peace for His church.

“Peace by His cross has Jesus made;
The church's everlasting Head
O'er hell and sin has victory won,
And, with a shout, to glory gone.” (H. 925)

But in the infinite mercy of a Triune God, the believer is also acknowledged by God to be perfect and upright. In what way can a fallen son of Adam be accounted thus?

In the following ways:

1. The believer has from the beginning of the work of grace, within him, a new and perfect nature created by the Holy Spirit. This nature is pure and upright, motivated by the fear of the Lord, which is a fountain of life, the same fountain promised to the woman of Samaria.

2. The possession of the new nature, dwelling so close to the old nature, reveals to the believer his true, fallen state in the first Adam, and makes him long for reconciliation with God, whose holy law he is

convicted of breaking repeatedly. This revelation and divine teaching leads the child of God to look out of self for his justification. Where is he to look but to the Holy and Just One, the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinners' Friend? Here he finds the perfection he longs for and the reconciliation with his God in Christ Jesus.

3. Looking now to Jesus only for his acceptance with God, he desires to walk worthy of the One in whom he has placed his trust. This engenders an upright walk before God and man. Though sadly he feels to come so short of the just standard, yet casting his anchor in and on the life and death of His Saviour, the believer is held on his way. His uprightness is both in Christ and from Christ. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1. 30, 31).

LAST SERMON BY J.H. GOSDEN

*Notes of a sermon preached at Priory Chapel, Maidstone,
on Lord's day evening, June 7th, 1964*

Text: "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only" (Psa. 71. 16).

This resolve of the psalmist was a great venture, for he had no resources, strength or wisdom of his own to go on, and he was greatly challenged by enemies who said God had forsaken him and "there is none to deliver him" (verse 11). What a trying position to be in! He could not of himself overcome one enemy nor one trouble, but faith enabled him to refer it all to the Lord. What a strength it is to refer all to God! Circumstances which make us dependent are humiliating, but when we prove our insufficiency, it is our mercy to go again and again to the Lord, without whom we can do nothing. The guilt of doing things without prayer is great. It is the forsaking of our privileges and mercies, and amounts to defying God. But here, when the suggestion was made to the psalmist, "God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him," then he flew to God for protection, saying, "O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help" (verse 12).

Many a child of God has proved that there is profit to be gained out of temptation, and the psalmist must have felt he had profited when he was brought well out of these trials. The best way to deal with all our enemies is to refer them to the Lord, for if we try to manage them

ourselves, we shall only make matters worse and defile ourselves in meddling. "Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more. My mouth shall shew forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof" (verses 13-15).

Then in the text he speaks of his resolve to be dependent on the Lord, and to go in the strength of the Lord God, not in his own; for he had learned the weakness of his own, and he knew God had enough strength and that His will was in the matter. And I believe that, in some measure, all the Lord's people will know what it is to venture in and on the Lord when difficulties and troubles confront them.

This strength of God is, first of all, a strength of communicated might, of invincible grace through which sinners are saved by faith in the almighty God. Paul was weakened by trials and buffetings. He was bruised and wounded, and so may you be, and you may be frustrated in seeking help. Paul in his dilemma besought the Lord thrice for the removal of his trouble; he prayed. O it is good to pray, to ask God to do for you, appealing to Him for what you want! When people pray, they want something bestowed, a way made for them, or deliverance from some trouble; and Paul prayed for deliverance from the thorn in the flesh which weakened him. Satan buffeted him, making it a fretting sore, as if he rubbed salt into the wound. Paul did not get the answer he wanted, but the Lord gave him a better answer – better in the view of faith, but not better in the view of fallen nature. By nature, self-will asserts itself, and self-will is dreadful. People are deceived by it. They make up their minds what they want to do, and then go to get direction from the Lord; but the tender fear of God will dictate, "Not my will, but Thine be done." Paul did get an answer, for the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12. 9), which was an answer to all his trouble, and what a great "all" that was! It took in, not only trouble in the flesh, but every other difficulty.

"I will go in the strength" of communicated grace. If the Lord says, "My grace is sufficient for thee," it will be a strength to live, not in a care-free state, for He says, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." So that Paul gloried in infirmities, but it will be a strength to hang upon the Promiser. That is how Paul lived, and what a supernatural response that was to a gracious promise: "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"! The strength of God is communicated by the Spirit through the Word of God; all the blessings of grace are according to His Word.

When we are faint in the way, we need a communication of the promise of strength, and we need the fruit of that communicated promise.

When we are in a state of need and a suitable promise is given, the man will say, "I'll go," even if he cannot see how such a promise can be fulfilled. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. 33. 25), is a common and oft-quoted word; but oh, the value of it when a poor sinner comes into need and has communicated the strength to lean upon it! You have to be weak to trust it. Poor, weak sinners are glad when they are enabled to trust in the Lord's grace in a promise, perhaps in a naked promise. The tempter may taunt: "If things are so bad now, how can you, a sinner, face things to come?" But the Lord is able to deliver, and it means we must look to Him. There are such things as supports in a negative way. We have a negative side, and the negative side seems to preponderate over the positive side; but here in this word is a positive promise: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Living like this in dependence upon communications is a supernatural life, but I believe it is a successful one. May we so live!

"I will go in the strength of the Lord." Do you know this strength in your heart? Jeremiah in trouble appealed to the Lord. Sometimes he said rash things about his birth, but when he asked, "Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" (Jer. 12. 1), he had this from the Lord: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" (verse 5). Jordan, that is death; and we shall need grace right on to death. Only the strength of grace communicated will enable us to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6. 13). There is much fighting to be done between this and that last day. Enemies must be overcome, and the fight of faith is fierce; but the sword of the Word of God is effectual. We may be overcome for a time through unbelief, but like Gad we shall overcome at last, for the Lord has promised that all His people shall be overcomers and by the way pilgrims are promised refreshment. Rutherford says,

"It were a well-spent journey,
Though seven deaths lay between;
The Lamb, with His fair army,
Doth on Mount Zion stand."

We say we have impossible things, but impossible things are no impossibilities with the God of all grace. He who came to earth for the express purpose of taking His people to heaven, will certainly include the overcoming of every enemy in taking them there; and the hope of this overcoming will be a source of strength, a hope of reaching that holy, happy place. With such a hope, a lively hope, you will live with a single eye in view of the end.

“I will go in the strength of the Lord.” As poor sinners look at Him who promises, they will find strength in His universal knowledge and wisdom. If you trust in your own wisdom, you have no need to look outside of yourself; and “he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool” (Prov. 28. 26). Can you trust yours? “Lean not unto thine own understanding,” is an admonition of God, and we are very apt to do both things. We should trust, not blindly, but unreservedly, in such an infallible Guide. Asaph said, “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa. 73. 24). The Lord has many ways of speaking, and one of them is in providence by opening and closing doors, though not every open door is the word of God to go forward, for we need counsel even with doors opened, perhaps a secret whisper or a caution. Then go depending on His word. His preserving word. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isa. 41. 10). And you see how, instead of becoming independent, we shall unceasingly need His help and become more dependent.

Then there is a going in the strength of the Lord regarding our end. To appear before God and be found in Christ is one of our chief concerns, and we want His assurance that He will own us at last. And we need His assurance now that that day may not overtake us unprepared. It is a sad thing when the Lord’s people go on and on with no assurance. Oh, the Lord knows I would not harrow the feelings of any feeble one, any doubting Thomas, but we need to be brought where Richard Dore was when he said, “There is a Man in heaven whom I love, and who loves me.” Job in all his pain and trouble knew his Redeemer lived, though he could not find Him, but that knowledge strengthened him to look forward through all the vicissitudes of his life. Paul prayed for the Ephesians and the whole family of God, that they might be “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. 3. 16), that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith. How desirable that blessing is! It is in the Scripture, and what is set forth in Scripture is obtainable. God will make known to His people the riches of the glory of this mystery: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” So let the Christian “descend into his heart, and find the Saviour there.” That will strengthen. Then you will go in the Lord’s ways without being weary.

“I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only.” Well, it is a mercy to be made righteous, living in godly fear; for that is a right proof of having living union with Christ. Hart says,

“Righteousness within thee rooted,
May appear to take thy part;

But let righteousness imputed
Be the breastplate of thy heart.” (H. 270)

Though our own works do not save us, yet if we do no righteousness it is because we are not righteous in the sight of God; but if we walk in His tender fear, we must still shelter in the righteousness of Christ. Although a person possesses this tender fear, he does not mention it before God for acceptance, but will make mention of Christ’s righteousness only. If you had to base your claim for admittance into heaven on your upright life, you would be rejected. Do as much good as you can, and none of us do as much good as we ought, but there is no salvation there. Mention only the righteousness, clean and white, that spotless robe made so through the blood of Christ, and put on by faith. And where will you mention it? First of all, at the throne of grace. There is no acceptance there without the Person and work of Christ, whereby He honoured the law, satisfied justice, and wrought out a human righteousness which was imputable to all for whom He died. This is a wonderful truth to me, because it is,

“Righteousness to full perfection
Must be brought, lacking nought,
Fearless of rejection,” (H. 800)

and no other righteousness but that of the God-Man answers to that. So His obedience renders righteous and just innumerable sinners. Indeed, it more honours God than the righteousness of perfect Adam. In Romans, Paul argues that the obedience of One, that is Christ, will much more render righteousness than the disobedience of one, that is Adam, rendered unrighteousness. Such is the value of Christ’s atonement, and there is no real confidence and peace apart from faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ. In the fifth chapter to the Romans there is a blessed experience, much to be sought after and valued: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is received by faith, and faith is the hand stretched out to receive the imputed righteousness of Christ and to walk in heavenly peace in consequence.

Even among men you will mention this righteousness, as you speak of what a value you set on the blood of the Lord Jesus, and that may well be a strength mutually, for His people do strengthen each other by the bond of perfectness. Who could go forward to the Lord’s table and sit there apart from His righteousness working by love? In the first Epistle of John, chapter 5, the apostle says, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” And in his gospel we read that Christ said to His disciples, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide

with you for ever" (John 14. 15, 16). That is an appeal to strengthen a weakling to go with a trembling, reverential obedience; not an unhumbled boldness, but with dependence on upholding grace. But if you deliberately walk in paths of temptation, then it is a piece of hypocrisy to say, "I will go in the strength of the Lord," for what is not in obedience is not in love, and what is not in love is not obedience.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD. I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only." And *when we come to the valley of the shadow of death*, we shall need Him to uphold us. Living a life of faith on the Son of God is the only good way to live. It is good down to the valley, and it is *good to die with*.

LAST LETTER OF J.H. GOSDEN

To Mr. E. Clark

Dear Friend,

It is with much reluctance I write to say that I fear it will be impossible for me to come to Barton next week. I returned from Irthlingborough very poorly, and have not been able to recover any strength. Mercifully the acute pain is subsided, but I hardly know what is coming. A few weeks' rest may bring renewed strength, if the Lord will.

I desire to submit to the Lord's will and to watch His hand and seek His manifested presence. In Him is my only hope for the pardon of all the numberless sins of a long life and profession; ministerial sins are not the least. Less than an infinitely-meritorious obedience rendered by the Son of God, Immanuel, God with us, can be of no avail. Christ's complete atonement and perfect righteousness, with His all-prevailing intercession, is my hope. I do want to feel His abiding presence and love in my soul, and to realise the fresh application of atoning love and blood.

I trust you may be enabled to pray for me, as I hope to remember you. There have been some favoured seasons at Barton. May the Lord be especially with you next Wednesday. My kindest regards, and am sorry to inconvenience you thus.

Affectionately yours in gospel hope,

J.H. Gosden

Maidstone, June 11th, 1964

DISAGREEMENT REMEDIED: TROUBLE AVOIDED

By B.A. Ramsbottom

We draw our readers' attention to an occasion when ancient Israel was in the depths of trouble – so much so that it seemed inevitable that the nation would be rent in two. Yet as grace prevailed on both sides, there was complete reconciliation – without the slightest compromise on either side. Reigning grace was seen in humility, love, a desire for God's glory and the submitting one to another.

There are a few vital principles in this little-known story which sorely need to be considered today.

We are told that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” This includes the whole of Scripture, the lesser parts as well as the well-known parts. In Joshua chapter 22, verses 9 to 34, we have the remarkable and interesting account of the building of the altar named Ed, and the trouble this occasioned in Israel. This account seems to be very little known, but in it there are so many important principles that touch on our life and behaviour today in the church of God.

You will remember that when the promised land was settled, two-and-a-half tribes were given their possession on the other side of Jordan – the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. This was agreed by Moses with divine permission. The only condition was that when Israel crossed Jordan to go in to possess the land of Canaan, the two-and-a-half tribes must go in with them to fight. This they gladly did, and now were dismissed to their own land and possession with Joshua's blessing.

Immediately on reaching their own land, they built an altar to the Lord. Now let us be clear. They did this with sincere intentions, to the glory of God. They dreaded the thought that their children might grow up and not realise they were one people with the nine-and-a-half tribes the other side Jordan. They dreaded that their children would forget the God of their fathers. So this altar, a very large altar, was set up, not for sacrifice, but *only as a witness*. In their intentions, they were blameless.

However, it must be said that they acted unwisely. Here is the first principle. In New Testament terminology they were not “avoiding the very appearance of evil.” They knew there was only to be one altar – for sacrifice. They knew that to build another altar – for sacrifice – was punishable with death. Why did they not consult with Joshua? or with the high priest? Why did they not ask for advice? Or, at least, why did they not explain to their brethren what they were doing? – that there was no thought of sacrifices so that there should be no misunderstanding.

Here, then, is the first principle. How much havoc has been caused in the church of God by doing a right thing in a wrong way!

On hearing of this event, the tribes settled in Canaan were angry. News soon reached them. The nine-and-a-half tribes were justifiably distressed, so much so that they thought of taking up arms against their brethren. Now here was something good and something bad.

1. *Their zeal is to be highly commended.* They had this burning desire for the honour and glory of God. They felt that God had been dishonoured. How different things are today in our churches! More often the attitude is: "What does it really matter?" or, "Is it really important?" or, "It has nothing to do with us." Here is another principle. May the Lord restore to us a godly zeal for the honour and glory of His name.

2. *The haste of their decision is to be deplored.* What need there is to avoid making hasty decisions on hearsay! We hear what some person has done, or what some church has done, and immediately we sit in judgment. But the report may not be true. Or we may only have learned part of the story. Or there may be a completely different side. Years ago we had to learn the truth of the wise man's words: "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." Here is yet another important principle.

Mercifully, prudence prevailed, and first of all a deputation was sent to remonstrate with the two-and-a-half tribes for what they had done. Eleven people formed this deputation, including Phinehas, noted for his zeal for the Lord of hosts. And the deputation did not spare their words. They clearly denounced what had taken place.

Now see the grace of God prevailing, so that at least it was said (by both sides), "This day we perceive that the Lord is among us."

1. *We see grace reigning in the two-and-a-half tribes.* They were "willing to give a reason for the hope that was in them." They did not resent the way they were spoken to. Quietly and clearly they made their position clear: their desire for the glory of God; their concern for future generations; their longing for the unity of all the tribes of Israel; their determination that there should be no false religion; and, above all, that the altar was but a *witness*, never a place for sacrifice in disobedience of God's command.

What grace we see here! How often today, if persons are spoken to (either with good cause or without), there is resentment! Pride and self-justification prevail. But here the scripture is beautifully exemplified: "A soft answer turneth away wrath." We have still another principle of godly behaviour here.

2. *We see grace reigning in the nine-and-a-half tribes.* They were completely, absolutely satisfied. They did not press their case further.

How different from so many who do not like to be shown they were wrong in their thoughts, but suspicion, condemnation, continues! Yet another principle of Christian behaviour.

So we find a blessed end to the whole matter. Would that these vital principles were more to be seen in the church of God today. We see the overruling hand of Israel's God, preserving peace and unity in Israel, restraining and constraining, giving grace to act tenderly and rightly in His fear. And the conclusion of the whole matter? "THIS DAY WE PERCEIVE THAT THE LORD IS AMONG US."

MINISTERIAL EXERCISES OF WILLIAM TIPTAFT

Extracts from letters written by William Tiptaft, who preached in many places in England (in addition to Abingdon) and frequently in Kent. The first letter was addressed to Daniel Smart, who earlier in that year had married his second wife, a widow, Elizabeth Reed. She had been born to distinguished and wealthy parents who lived approximately one mile away from Ripple Church where Charles Philpot, the father of Joseph Charles Philpot, was the rector. Elizabeth married William Reed, a Major in the Army, in Ripple Church in 1835. William died in Gibraltar in 1838.

The addressee of the remaining letters, each of which began with the words "Dear Friend," was most probably George Marchant (d. 1891), a draper who, for many years, had his home and business premises in the High Street in Sevenoaks, Kent. For some forty years he set aside a room within his property as a meeting-place for worship.

Through mercy I have got on quite as well as I expected in London and hope I have not been preaching in vain. I am going, if the Lord will, to speak at Rochester tonight, at Faversham tomorrow night and at Sheerness on Friday night. I hope the Lord will be with me to bless. It is a great mercy to be blessed with evidences and testimonies that we are in the narrow way to heaven. There are many things to cast down, harass and perplex, but we require a great deal to humble us. I wish to enjoy more and more of the Lord's presence and goodness. It is well when we are brought to self-loathing on account of our daily sins and are blessed with a spirit of prayer and sweet meditations. We need reviving again and again.

Remember me kindly to your wife.

W. Tiptaft

Pentonville, London
June 14th, 1848

What a mercy if we could value more highly the fear of God, which we hope we have in our souls and at times can fully believe it; but grace will surely be tried, and so will true faith. I hope that the Lord will be with you at Sevenoaks.

They are well kept whom the Lord keeps. How much we find opposed to vital godliness. I feel thankful for the least mark of grace, and I hope never to be satisfied with a lukewarm profession of religion; I wish that my affections were more fully fixed on Christ, and I desire to pray that my last days may be my best.

W. Tiptaft

Abingdon Oxfordshire
May 18th, 1860

Your kind letter was duly received, and I am willing, if the Lord will, to speak at Sevenoaks on Wednesday the 5th, Pell Green the 6th, and Collier Street the 7th. I have written this morning to accept the above invitations.

It is a great honour to be an instrument in the Lord's hands to do good to the souls of the Lord's people. I wish that I could be more concerned about the important work I am engaged in. If the Lord withhold His blessing, how ministers will preach and hearers hear in vain. I wish that I could pray more earnestly that the Lord might bless my ministry, and that my last days might be my best. I find so much within and without opposed to vital godliness. The greatest enemy a minister has is that monster self; how he strives for mastery. God's children will have to bless God for saving grace and also for restraining grace. I wish that I could exalt Christ more in the salvation of sinful worms.

I have been contending for salvation by grace for nearly thirty-two years, and the longer I live, the more convinced I am that, if I am to be saved, grace must save me and all that are to be in heaven.

W. Tiptaft

Marlborough, Wiltshire
May 21st, 1861

Your invitation to speak at Sevenoaks was duly received. How very important is the work of the ministry; it is a great honour to be made a blessing to the souls of a few of the Lord's people. I have no wish to come if the presence of the Lord come not with me. I intend to speak at Edenbridge on Wednesday evening and at your place on Thursday evening. I can walk over on Thursday. May the Lord's people pray that a blessing may attend the word. You are highly favoured if you have

good authority to say that Christ is your Friend. If a minister contends for realities, it will give offence to the mere professors.

W. Tiptaft

Hurst Green, Sussex
November 21st, 1861

Real religion will surely be tried, and it is a solemn consideration that only those who endure unto the end will be saved. There is no room for boasting; whilst we are in this world we need keeping every moment. I wish that I had more life, and more of the power of real religion. What a zealous man Paul was in the cause of truth; he enjoyed much and suffered much. What an able preacher Stephen was, but his work appeared short. I wish that I could love Christ more and could exalt His name more highly. The Lord will have the treasure in earthen vessels that He may have the glory.

If the Lord will, I am going to preach at Witney tomorrow night. It is a place more noted for good blankets than well-taught Christians.

I am glad to hear that the Lord was with our friend at Ide Hill. How many, at whose houses I have been, are dying about my age. What a very great mercy to be fit for the great change. I wish that I could be more exercised about my never-dying soul, and could see more clearly what the world is. Hart's hymn, "My brethren," is a very searching hymn. "No man can serve two masters," is very much against half-heartedness in our profession of Christ's name. The power must come from above.

I thank you for your invitation to preach at Sevenoaks on April 18th, but I must decline. I have been asked to open a chapel at Oldham on that day.

W. Tiptaft

Abingdon, Oxfordshire
February 6th, 1862

We may not measure grace by means. Was it possible that Manasseh, having been trained up in the religious court of his father Hezekiah, under the eye of so holy prophets and priests, under the shadow of the temple of God, after a childhood seasoned with so gracious precepts, with so frequent exercise of devotion, should run thus wild into all heathenish abominations; as if there had been nothing but idolatry in the seed of his conception, in the milk of his nourishment, in the rules of his institution, in the practice of his examples? How vain are all outward helps without the influence of God's Spirit, and that spirit that breathes where He listeth! Good education raiseth great hopes, but the proof of them is in the divine benediction.

Bishop Hall

LITTLE CHILDREN; YOUNG MEN; FATHERS

By Robert Candlish (1806-1873)

“I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2. 12-14).

I write it as my farewell word. Thus viewed, the appeal in these verses is surely very impressive and affecting. Let us look at it, first in itself, and secondly in the connection in which it stands.

Considered in itself, the appeal recognises, on the one hand, a common character in all believers, that of “little children,” and on the other hand a distinction between “fathers” and “young men.”

1. In addressing us all as little children, John makes a distinction between his first and his second appeal. In the first it is “because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake”; in the second it is “because ye have known the Father.” In addressing us as separated into two classes – as fathers and youths respectively – he merely repeats in the second appeal almost literally what he had said in the first. But in addressing us all as his beloved little ones, he varies the thought. The variation, however, is slight. It is the same thought in reality, only put in somewhat different lights. For the Father is truly known, only in the forgiveness of our sins for His Son’s name’s sake. It is when the Saviour takes us by the hand and leads us to the Father that we then know by experience, how the Father deals with us when the Son presents us to Him, saying, “Behold I and the little ones whom Thou hast given Me” – it is then, and then only, that we begin to know the Father. Up till that time we have not known Him. We have worshipped Him, perhaps, but it has been ignorantly. We have misunderstood Him, and done Him great injustice in our esteem of Him. We have had hard thoughts of Him, of His character and government and law, of His treatment of us and His requirements from us, of His ways and His commandments, nay, even of His very mercy itself. But we are moved to trust in the name of Jesus, and to make trial of the power of that name with the Father. And what a gushing tide of forgiveness and fatherly love does it cause to rush in upon our souls! How rich and free is the measure and manner of the Father’s pardoning grace! We do thus really know the Father, for we know Him through our sense and experience of His fatherly love in the forgiveness of our sins for His Son’s name’s sake.

2. The appeal is next made to the two classes or companies into which we may be divided: those who are fathers in Israel, and those who are young men. Ye fathers in Israel! the argument with you is, that “ye have known Him that is from the beginning.” You have reached a higher, deeper, more satisfying knowledge of Christ, as “Him that is from the beginning,” than that which is common to all the household of faith – all the little ones given to Him by the Father. Your clear and calm insight into the glorious Person of Him for whose name’s sake your sins are forgiven, and who thus introduces you to the knowledge of the Father, your mature acquaintance with Him, in His eternal relation to the Father and oneness with the Father from the beginning, should move you to give the more earnest heed to this writing or epistle of mine, both now and when I am gone.

Ye youths, ye young men, the flower of the army of the Lord of hosts! I have a hold on you also. You I summon, “for ye have overcome the wicked one” (verse 13); “ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (verse 14). As good soldiers of Christ, I would remind you of your high vocation; of what is committed to you; of what is expected of you. Your sphere is the field of battle. The quiet of contemplative study may best suit aged saints, advanced disciples, “fathers,” who may best serve the cause by enlarging – under the Spirit’s teaching – their own and the church’s knowledge of the Eternal Word; elevating their own and the church’s views of the Son in the bosom of the Father. But the vigour of spiritual youth points to the never-ending conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, as your special department. For you are called to wage war with the wicked one. And you have every encouragement to do so. You have overcome him already in Christ, for He has overcome him. You have but to follow up and follow out the conquest. You are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you. And through that Word which testifies of Christ’s victory abiding in you, the foe is already vanquished. You have overcome the wicked one.

To believers of all ages, to Christians in every stage of advancement, the apostle thus appeals. He first urges arguments and considerations applicable to all alike as little children, and then such as are proper to fathers, and such as are proper to young men. By these various and accumulated motives, he conjures us to give heed to his teaching in this epistle. It is a very solemn, as well as a very full and comprehensive appeal. And the place in which it stands in the epistle renders it still more emphatic.

THE INESTIMABLE VALUE OF THE BIBLE

Extract from a letter by Neil Cameron (1854-1932)

My dear Mr. Macdonald

Make the Bible more and more your companion daily, your counsellor in everything. You have infallible directions in it about every step you will have to take in the affairs of this world, as well as that of spiritual matters. I am very much under the impression that it was on account of the constant attention paid by the godly in the past generation to the Word of God that they were so spiritual, enlightened, strong and constant in faith in practice; and that we lose much by reading more human books than the Book which God gave us.

N. Cameron

Glasgow

August 3rd, 1910

THE COMFORT THE WORD OF GOD GIVES TO DOWNCAST SOULS

*Extract from a sermon preached by Joseph Charles Philpot, at
Gower Street Chapel, London, on Lord's day evening, July 19th, 1868*

Text: "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).

What a proof it is of the truth and inspiration of the Word of God, that no sooner is the Lord pleased to quicken our souls into spiritual life, than we find the Bible to become our companion, counsellor and friend. True, we might possibly before that time, from a sense of duty or out of custom, have read the Scriptures, and that diligently. We might have been taught them from childhood, and committed large portions to memory; or even have been able so far to understand them as to speak fluently upon the truths contained in them, and contend for the doctrines of grace against opponents. But though we might have done all this, and much more than this, for who can say how far nature may go? – yet for the most part, how listlessly and languidly was the Word of God read by us; how little was its spiritual meaning understood; how much less were the solemn realities revealed in it believed or acted upon.

We might not have doubted the inspiration of the Bible, and might have regarded it with a degree of reverence as the Word of God; but with all that outward respect, there was no real faith in our heart either to fear

the threatenings, or to receive the promises. We never obtained through it any well-grounded hope in the mercy of God; we never felt from it any spiritual love to His name, or to any truth connected with the Person and work of Christ. Nor did it ever work in us any humility of mind, brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, or any obedience to God's will, or create any earnest desire to please or solemn fear to offend Him. And thus, as regards what the Word of God was to us, as to any saving or sanctifying effect upon our hearts or upon our lives, it was a perfect blank to us, and we as great a blank to it.

But O what a change takes place in the soul's feelings towards the Word of God when God is pleased to quicken it into divine life! Nor indeed need we wonder why there is such a marked revolution in our feelings toward it; for it is by the power of God's Word upon the heart, that this wondrous change is effected. "Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (Jas. 1. 18). "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1. 23). "This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy Word hath quickened me" (Psa. 119. 50). By that same Word we were convinced of our sins; "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4. 12).

By the power of that Word also upon our consciences, we were, in due time, enabled to believe in the Son of God; for it is through His Word applied to the heart with a divine power, that faith is raised up to believe in His name; and then it is, as the Lord said to His disciples, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6. 63). And this spirit and life are the spirit and life of faith, and specially of that faith which embraces Him as the Son of God; for when He is pleased to apply His precious Word to the heart, and in the power of that Word to manifest Himself, faith is raised up to receive His testimony, and thus His Word is made spirit and life to the soul. This made Jeremiah say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer. 15. 16). In a similar way, when the soul is cast down by reason of the many difficulties of the way, that Word becomes its support. "My soul fainteth for Thy salvation: but I hope in Thy Word" (Psa. 119. 81). When we are in difficulties or perplexities, that Word becomes our counsellor, as David found it: "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors" (Psa. 119. 24). And again, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119. 105). And the counsel it gives us is good counsel, for it tells us how to act and what to do; bids us cast our care

upon the Lord, for that He will sustain us; bids us be still and know that He is God; warns us not to fight our own battles, or go forth to meet the enemy in our own strength; but to watch, and pray, and wait for the Lord to appear.

If we are persecuted by our enemies as David was by Saul, when he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, it is by the power and support of that Word we get strength to bear their cruel accusations and to stand firm against their attacks. This made David say, "They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Thy precepts" (Psa. 119. 87). If Satan come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord by the power of His Word lifts up a standard against him. If we slip and start aside from the strait and narrow way, the Word comes to restore us: "He restoreth my soul" (Psa. 23. 3), for it is by believing God's promise of freely forgiving all iniquity, transgression and sin, that our backslidings are healed and our souls brought back from bondage, carnality and death. In fact it is by the power of His Word upon our heart, that the whole work of grace upon the soul is carried on from first to last. By its promises we are drawn, by its precepts we are guided, by its warnings we are admonished, by its reproofs we are rebuked, by its rod we are chastened, by its support we are upheld; in its light we walk, by its teachings are made wise, by its revivings are renewed, and by its truth are sanctified. Not that the Word of God can of itself do all or any of these things in us and for us; but in the hands of the Spirit, who works in and by it as His effectual instrument, all these gracious operations are carried on in the soul.

Now can we say this, or anything similar to this, of any other book? Other books may instruct or amuse; they may feed the intellect, charm the imagination, and cultivate the mind. But what more can they do? I do not mean by this to despise or set aside every other book but the Bible, for without books society itself, as at present constituted, could not exist, and to burn every book would be to throw us back into the barbarism of the Middle Ages. Let, then, books have their place as regards this life, but what can they do for us as regards the life to come? What can our renowned authors, our choice classics, our learned historians, our great dramatists, or our eloquent poets do for the soul in seasons of affliction and distress? Can they heal a wounded conscience? Can they put away a sense of God's wrath? Can they restore the joys of salvation when, through guilt and fear, they seem well nigh gone? Can they support a dying man upon his bed of sickness? Can they take away the sting of death and snatch victory from the grave? How powerless all human writings are in these circumstances. Is it not as Mr. Hart well says?

"What balm could wretches ever find
In wit to heal affliction?"

Or who can cure a troubled mind
With all the pomp of diction?" (H. 814)

Now here is the blessedness of the Word of God, that when everything else fails, *that* comes to our aid under all circumstances, so that we never can sink so low as to get beyond the reach of some promise in the Word of truth. We may come, and most probably shall come, to a spot where everything else will fail and give way but the Word of God which for ever is settled in heaven. Then the word of grace and truth which reaches down to the lowest case, the word of promise upon which the Lord causes the soul to hope, will still turn towards us a friendly smile, and still encourage us under all circumstances to call upon the name of the Lord, and to hang upon His faithfulness who hath said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away" (Mark 13. 31). Thus, under circumstances the most trying to flesh and blood, where nature stands aghast and reason fails, there the Word of God will come in as a counsellor to drop in friendly advice, as a companion to cheer and support the mind by its tender sympathy, and as a friend to speak to the heart with a loving, affectionate voice. We need not wonder, then, how the Word of God has been prized in all ages by the family of God; for it is written with such infinite wisdom, that it meets every case, suits every circumstance, fills up every aching void, and is adapted to every condition of life and every state both of body and soul.

WHO WAS MELCHISEDEC?

By John M'Kenzie (d. 1849) and Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

1. Melchisedec was a *type* of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the very nature and essence of a type is to be a sign or figure of the antitype, or thing signified by it; it must, therefore, be distinct from it, and not the same with it. Thus the high priest under the law was a type of "the great High Priest over the house of God" revealed in the gospel; they are not, they cannot be identical, for then the type would cease to be such. So a picture is the representation of a man; but were it actually flesh and blood, it would not be the representation of a man, but the man himself. By parity of reasoning we argue, that if Melchisedec were the Lord Jesus Christ in human visionary form, he could not be a type of Him, for then Christ would be a type of Himself.

2. But to our mind there is nothing in the history of Melchisedec, as related in the Old Testament, which favours such an idea. He is thus introduced in the history of Abram: "And Melchisedek king of Salem

brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all" (Gen. 14. 18-20).

Is not Melchisedec here called "king of Salem"? Was not Salem a *real* place, and the city which was afterwards called Jerusalem? As we find in Psalm 76. 2, The Lord speaking of Himself in Zion said, "In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion." A *real* city would want a *real* king.

We read also that he was "the priest of the most high God." In this he was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus Christ; but according to Paul's testimony, the Lord Jesus Christ was to arise as *another* Priest after the similitude of Melchisedec (see Heb. 7. 15). But if Christ were actually Melchisedec, He could not be "another priest," nor arise after his similitude or order.

What creates the difficulty in some minds is what Paul says of Melchisedec, which they think is inapplicable to any human being. "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7. 1-3).

But we think the words admit of a simple and easy explanation.

The Lord Jesus Christ was "called of God a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec." There were then certain things connected with Melchisedec in which he closely resembled the Lord Jesus Christ. What these things were, it is the apostle's object to show.

1. First, he was a king and priest in the same person.
2. His *name* signifies "king of righteousness."
3. He was "king of Salem," which word signifies peace.
4. "Without father, without mother, without descent" (margin, "pedigree").

It does not mean that Melchisedec was literally without father, mother, or descent, but merely that these are not recorded. He steps, as it were, upon the scene without any mention of his worldly descent. Neither father, nor mother, nor pedigree, is mentioned. Herein he differed from the Levitical high priests, whose father and mother were strictly named and known, being limited to one tribe, and their pedigree or descent accurately recorded.

“Having neither beginning of days, nor end of life.” By this is not meant, we believe, *literally* that Melchisedec had no beginning and will have no end; but that in the Scriptures, where alone he is mentioned, it is not told us when he began to live, nor when he died. In all this he differed from the Levitical priests under the law, whose beginning of days and end of life were distinctly known. In all these points, Melchisedec was “*made like* unto the Son of God” – not the Son of God Himself in human form – “and abideth a priest continually” – that is, in the record given of him in the Word of God, he still is set forth as the priest of the most high God, and will appear there as such whilst the Bible stands.

We should bear in mind what is the scope and intention of the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 7. It is to preach a sermon to his Hebrew brethren upon this text, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (verse 17).

Taking, therefore, his stand upon this inspired declaration of God’s Word, he enters into all the historical circumstances connected with Melchisedec as revealed in the Scriptures. His very name, his residence, his office, *all that he was*, are mentioned; and not only so, but *what he was not*. The *statement* of the Scriptures and the *silence* of the Scriptures are alike brought forward. An actual or implied comparison is made throughout with the Levitical priests, and the difference as well as superiority of the order of Melchisedec clearly pointed out.

But were Melchisedec no priest at all – a mere visionary appearance of the Son of God – all that is said of him falls to the ground.

We therefore believe that Melchisedec was as much a real man as Aaron was a real man, and as much an actual, earthly priest of the most high God as was Aaron. But his *order* was different – much higher:

1. As being especially called of God to the office.
2. As being king and priest in one person.
3. As having no predecessor in his office and no successor.
4. As blessing Abraham, and therefore his acknowledged superior (see Heb. 7. 7).
5. As receiving tithes from Levi in the loins of Abraham (see Heb. 7. 9), and therefore *his* superior.
6. As abiding continually in the Scriptures of truth, without any mention made of his death, as in the case of Aaron.

In all these points was Melchisedec superior to Levi as an actual priest. But were there no such real character at all as Melchisedec, there would be no such real priesthood. The priesthood would be as visionary as the appearance; and the priesthood of Christ would thus resemble, not a substantial, actual order of priesthood that once existed among men, but a mere shadow. But to Melchisedec as typical of Christ, and therefore

distinct from Him, and as being king and priest in one person superior to himself, did Abraham pay tithes of all (see Gen. 14. 20); and thus, as the apostle argues, did Levi in the loins of Abraham acknowledge the inferiority of his priesthood and order to that of Melchisedec.

**“EXCEPT YE SEE SIGNS AND WONDERS,
YE WILL NOT BELIEVE”**

These words spoken by the Saviour to the nobleman, may seem to us at first somewhat harsh, even as the same Saviour at first dealt with the Syrophoenician woman's case. But as always, there was no mishandling or misjudging of the case, but rather that the Son of God should be glorified in the outworking of it.

What lessons, then, was the Saviour teaching the nobleman and His onlooking disciples?

1. That His physical presence was not essential to the performing of miracles. It was essential that our Lord assumed a true human, physical body and soul, in which to suffer, bleed, die and rise again. His presence as a Babe in the manger, in Gethsemane, on the cross at Golgotha, and now at the right hand of His Father, is vital and essential to our salvation. But because He is verily God, as well as verily Man, even though not physically present, in His omnipresence He is never absent from His people, nor from their circumstances. So, though the nobleman thought at first it was necessary for Christ to come to his home to heal his son, the Lord would have him learn that it is His word that is essential.

2. The same lesson was learned by the disciples on two occasions on the Sea of Galilee. Once when the Lord was in the boat, He stilled the storm. On another occasion He tried their faith by delaying, and then walking on the water at the fourth watch of the night. Even though their comforts were less when He was absent from them physically, their security and safety was no less secure. We know that His omniscient eye was upon them in the darkest hour, as He communed with His Father on the mount.

3. That we must not lay down lines for God to work in. To the nobleman, he could see no other way than that Jesus should go immediately to his house. How often the Lord's ways are different from ours, and always infinitely better!

4. That though the Lord has been pleased on many occasions to give tokens for good, and signs to encourage the faith of His children, yet these signs and wonders must never take the place that the Word of God

has as the foundation of our hope. It is to be feared that many are resting on *their* experience rather than the *God* of their experience. The psalmist, who no doubt had received many tokens for good in his walk of faith, said, "Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope." It is an astonishing, yet true, word which Peter spoke in his second Epistle chapter 1. 19. Speaking of his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, the excellent glory of Christ's majesty and the voice from heaven, he goes on to say: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." It is the unchanging Word of God upon which true faith rests. No doubt the feeling sense of the Lord's majesty had a profound effect on Peter while it lasted. But we know from his experience that the feeling did not last. But the word spoken did!

As Martin Luther said:

"Feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the word of God –
Naught else is worth believing.

"Though all my heart should feel condemned
For want of some sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart
Whose word cannot be broken.

"I'll trust in God's unchanging word
Till soul and body sever,
For though all things shall pass away,
His word shall stand for ever."

5. That the Lord honoured the faith of the nobleman, who believed, though he saw not with his natural eye. This was the lesson that Thomas had to learn in the upper room. Thomas had to learn that true faith rests on the faithfulness of God in the word. So, though the Lord gave him the privilege of exploring His wounds, He lovingly reprovved him with the words: "Thomas because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed."

6. In this sense the faith of the centurion was greater than that of the nobleman, in that he believed that Christ only needed to speak the word, and his servant would be healed. His great faith was accompanied by a sense of his unworthiness that Christ should come under his roof.

7. So, are we to expect signs and wonders? If the Lord sees that they will strengthen our faith in Him, then He may, as in the case of Gideon, give tokens. But these tokens are to lead us to rely on His faithfulness alone. So, if the token sometimes seems to be absent, may we say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

CONSOLATION FOR GOD'S LITTLE FLOCK

By R.J. Steward

The twelfth chapter of Luke's gospel records the public ministry of Christ in a passage similar to that commonly called "the sermon on the mount." But in this account, the Holy Spirit has inspired the writer to include an interjection or aside that the Lord made to His disciples – for they were His primary audience (see Luke 12. 1, 41). The Saviour speaks thus: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12. 32). This was no mere sentimental platitude, but a statement of great depth and preciousness – to every true believer.

Like a two-edged sword, the "fear not" statements of Holy Scripture cut both ways. As well as an exhortation to cease from anxious care, there is also the clear implication that circumstances exist which are liable to induce fear. The preceding words of the Lord's address reveal the causes: there are hazards of a personal nature, from antagonistic foes and their persecutory actions, even imperilling life (see Luke 12. 1, 11, 4); such spiritual dangers as ungodly influence, sin, final judgment and divine wrath (see verses 1, 10, 8-9, 5); practical troubles in this present world (see verses. 22-30); and the imminence of the world to come (see verses 20, 35-40). A list of this nature is sufficient to move the stoutest heart to fear!

All these things notwithstanding, "fear not" is the instruction of the Saviour – who knowest our frame, rememberest that we are dust, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (see *Psa.* 103. 14, *Heb.* 4. 15). Though His next words seem more inclined to inspire greater anxiety than increased confidence: "little flock." The fewness of the people of God relative to the unbelieving world is a constant theme of Scripture (see *Deut.* 7. 7, *Matt.* 22. 14, *Rom.* 11. 5), and a central feature of God's plan of redemption (see *1 Cor.* 1. 26-31). Contrary to foolish, post-millennial notions, the church always has, and always will be, a tiny minority of the earth's population.

The second part of the description is equally unflattering: "flock." As familiar as this Biblical analogy may be, the characterisation as "sheep" is somewhat disparaging. Of all the creatures ever domesticated for human agriculture, there is scarcely another species so defenceless, so vulnerable; endangered as much by their own waywardness as by the abundance of their predators. The contrast between the Lord's few people and the greatness of their opposition is stark: "them like two little flocks of kids," while their enemies "filled the country" (*1 Kings* 20. 27).

The antidote to fear, in the face of these seemingly-insurmountable odds, comes by virtue of a glorious, Holy-Spirit-inspired, "mixed

metaphor” in the text: “Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your *Father’s* good pleasure to give you the *kingdom*.” Who ever heard sheep described as having a “father”? But these sheep are also sons; they are the “flock of God” (1 Pet. 5. 2); “For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand” (Psa. 95. 7, see Psa. 78. 52, 79. 13, 100. 3). It is this provenance that makes all the difference. Christ says, more truly than David, “Thy Servant kept His Father’s sheep” (1 Sam. 17. 34).

Who ever heard of sheep obtaining a kingdom? They have not might nor means; they can hardly co-operate to achieve a common goal, much less mount a military offensive to secure a territory. But their wants and weaknesses are no obstacle, because it is “their Father’s *good pleasure* to give them the kingdom.” The psalmist prays, “Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion” (Psa. 51. 18), and that prayer is answered. “According to the good pleasure of His will,” God has, “predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself,” and “made known unto us the mystery of His will ... that ... He might gather together in one all things in Christ ... in whom also we have obtained an inheritance” (Eph. 1. 5-11). The outworking of which divine will is to be enjoyed in a coming day, when the King shall say to the sheep of His right hand, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, *inherit the kingdom prepared for you* from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25. 34). “Therefore will not we fear.”

THE NATURE AND CALL OF GOD TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

By Bernard Gilpin (1803-1871)

The call of God, of which I now speak – God’s divine call to His ministering servants to preach the gospel of His grace – is great, because God is great. As Elihu replies to the murmurings and questionings even of Job himself, “I will answer thee, that God is greater than man.” There is an exceedingly-great fault here, in that we are apt to make far too much of ourselves, and far too little of God. “But to this man will I look,” saith the Lord, “even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word.” The call of God is not in the heart of any man who is light-minded, who sees nothing but the people, whose frame of spirit does not bear witness with his word, that he is engaged continually in looking to the Lord, and finding the mind of the Lord, through the Spirit, by the written Word, in accordance with that record only.

But this divine call does not differ in its nature from the Lord’s gracious light and direction, found, when spiritually sought for, by every

quickened believer in his daily walk. This appears fanatical to those who are destitute of spiritual life, but others know that it is no fancy, but the sober truth. It is given only in accordance with what the written Word declares, as Christ says, "I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." But some will have it, that the written Word itself is to supply this direction, i.e. that this direction is only our judgment exercised upon the letter of the Word. In so thinking, they do greatly err, not really knowing the Scriptures, neither the power of God. A like mistake is in many, on the subject of a minister's divine call. But it appears remarkable that any who are truly spiritual should not see and own at once that so great a matter as becoming the Lord's mouth to the people must assuredly, in proportion to its greatness, require a very clear direction, and so a call from the Lord.

The man who is favoured to discern this divine call, is made conscious by it, that the Lord sends him to preach, not man. Though men may be subservient, as instruments, to give outward authority to the minister, or to strengthen his hands by their own call to him, in all this they do but act as God's servants, not as principal agents. The minister they thus acknowledge and the officers and people acknowledging him act, or should act, only as the Lord's deputies, the minister in *his* place, the others in *theirs*. Notwithstanding all the fiery controversies upon this subject, which have rent the visible church of Christ into a thousand sects, may we not thankfully and humbly believe that the Word of God, and practice of the first age, accords with the above view? Thus we read in the beginning of Acts 13: "There were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers," and "as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate *Me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." Then it follows immediately that these were thus sent forth, not by man (that point sinks down), but "by the Holy Ghost."

I know the case of modern ministers is not in all respects the same. Paul and Barnabas were greater than we are. Christ does not in our day set apart twelve apostles, nor the Holy Ghost add two to their number. But was not the Lord's direction and authority in this transaction, the *ordinary*, and not the *extra-ordinary* part of it? Was not the submission of these prophets and teachers to the will and choice of God, *their* duty no less than it is *ours*? Are we to imagine that Christ and the Holy Ghost have ceased from this rule in the church, contrary to Christ's express words that this rule shall last for ever? For the Spirit shall "abide with you for ever," says Christ (John 14. 16); and again, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28. 20). I know that many members of the outward church – yea, whole visible churches – would

have us think this rule to have been confined to the first age only; and if I address those who do not understand the Lord's effectual call of grace, they are not likely to understand or believe in His special call to the ministry; but such as know the Lord, will acknowledge the reality of both these calls, and also be very thankful for them both.

But to proceed with the main point in hand – the minister's divine call: I say further, that it is not merely one definite intimation of God's will that he should preach, but it is rather the concurrence of numberless intimations, and various circumstances, inward and outward, which all conspire together, and keep collecting as he advances, to strengthen him in the work. In the early beginnings of the spiritual course of many, there is often a kind of fleshly zeal, with much natural feeling in it, which the person for a time mistakes for this heavenly call; but those whom the Lord favours, are enabled sooner or later to detect the deception of this. Sometimes a *true* call begins in the midst of all this excess of feeling; but the subject of it, through God's mercy, gets disappointed, humbled, mortified, till perhaps he accomplishes, like Moses, forty years in the wilderness of Midian. Where the call is really of God, providential events, and spiritual exercises, conflicts, fears and hopes in the man himself, gradually prepare the way; so that, when the Lord's time comes, the open door is set before him.

There are often added clear and strong applications of the written word: only (as in such applications generally) the man who receives them does not satisfy himself merely with the words *coming* into his mind, for he knows that his own imagination, or even Satan's temptations, may bring the letter of the word to his mind: but he watches the *effects* of the application. Does it bring into his soul a divine light, so as to enable him to know, without the need of a neighbour to explain, that the Lord's power was in it? Does it soften, humble, enlarge and expand his heart, draw out his spiritual affections, kindle love to the Lord and His church? Does it quiet all the tumult of his conflicting feelings, confirm his faith and his hope, and strengthen his patience to endure, even though he should have long to wait; though man should not receive his testimony; or though all things for a time should conspire together against him? If so indeed, then is his call of God.

Such a call, when clearly felt, is also continually *increasing*. Not that it delivers the man from weakness, fears, temptations, unbelief and all other attendant evils; for these prove altogether "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan," to buffet him. The man is often bowed down with them all, and perhaps for a season, all hope, even in the reality of his call, is ready to expire. The Lord's time for action often comes when he is at the very lowest ebb through all these evils, so that he can scarcely venture one foot forward; yet then, coming with his empty vessel to a full

Christ, he is replenished all at once, and no one is able to stand before him until he has accomplished all the Lord's will and work.

Again, the man who has this divine call, may be straitened, chastened, deserted, and in his own feelings almost quite rejected, yet he finds, through all, that the Lord never disowns this *call* in his heart. Before action he felt confounded, but in the action he obtains clearness and confidence. Obedience to this call neither puffs him up, ensnares him, nor leads him into temptation, but invariably loosens his bands, weakens the hold of temptation, instructs and edifies his soul, so that often, while he preaches to others, the Lord enforces the same instruction upon himself.

Lastly, the man enjoys a reverential and spiritual communion with God in his exercises in obedience to this call. He may feel himself a most unworthy sinner; so he really is; yet he proves the word, that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"; and in nothing is the strength and reality of this divine call more clearly proved, than in this continual intercourse and communion with God, enjoyed from time to time in the constant following of it.

But it is needful to say a few words on another point; and that is, what I have mentioned as the people's call to a minister – which is in some cases needful for bringing a minister forward, and always useful in its place, provided we do not put it out of its place, by denying the Lord's call, and exulting man's call in its stead.

If such as fear God, and can give a scriptural reason of their hope, unite to call a minister, because he is manifested in their conscience as an accepted servant of Christ's, no good man will despise or lightly reject such a call. But he will never imagine that it can avail one tittle, except he can also prove himself to be called of God. How many, ignorant of this call of God, have boasted of the authority committed to them by man, or of the goodwill and good opinion of their hearers, so as to show that they only stand up in man's name, and in heart make flesh their arm! The Apostle Paul says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ" (1 Cor. 4. 1); i.e. if really and indeed we be so, if *God's call* clear that point, then indeed let us be so accounted. But the apostle does not mean that *otherwise* we should be so accounted. He goes on to say, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by" – i.e. against – "myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord." You see the weight and importance of the Lord's judgment (and therefore also of the Lord's calling) with him: for he does not despise the people; no good man will; only in comparison with the Lord's judgment, their judgment is a very small matter. As it was with the apostle, so will it be with all who receive of the same Spirit.

A BLESSED MEMORY

Charles James of Sevenhampton

“The memory of the just is blessed,” and, “A good name is better than precious ointment,” or than great riches. Through the exceeding riches of divine grace these words are very applicable to dear, godly, old Charles James, whose blessed and savoury memory is cherished by many of the family of God who were privileged to know him as a man in Christ Jesus.

Born on September 21st, 1856, in the image of fallen Adam, he lived a godless, careless youth until he was twenty years of age, or nearly so. Often he expressed his determination to have nothing to do with religion. This he often referred to in his later years with every token of shame and grief. He consorted with youths who, like himself, were given to the practice of many sinful follies. Sin was then a sweet morsel and promised many delights.

“But thus the eternal counsel ran:
 ‘Almighty love, arrest that man!’” (H. 134)

One day, as he was going to meet a young woman with whom he was keeping company, his way lay by a stone pit where some men were holding a service, reading the Scriptures and praying together. They told him the person he was seeking would be returning that way shortly and invited him to sit with them a while. One of them asked him, “Can you pray?” Charles James replied, “You might as soon ask the devil to pray as me.” His own words entered into his conscience and he was made to realise the awful state he was in, being without God, and having no hope.

Thus began a deep soul trouble: for three months he was sure he was lost. One day he remembered what he had been taught in the Sunday School about Jesus healing lepers and opening the eyes of the blind, etc., and a “Who can tell but He may help me?” came to him and he began to pray as never before. He was on his knees at every opportunity, and the young men he lodged with used to persecute him like anything and once turned the mattress over on top of him. At other times they would come and poke him while praying and say, “Put in a word for me, old chap,” and such like things.

One day he felt so forlorn and lonely, feeling that no man cared for his soul, when the words came so clearly: “I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee.” The tears rolled down his cheeks when he related this, and he said, “I can never give *that* up; *No, no, no never.*” This brought him great relief. He was working in a coal mine in the Forest of Dean. His workmates and former companions in sin had been quick to

perceive the change that had taken place and took delight in persecuting him. One man was persistently annoying. As Charles James was pushing his truck along the metals, this man would come close behind him with another truck and push it on to his heels, causing much inconvenience and pain. This was borne in silence for some time, until one day, as the men were eating their dinner, the man turned to him and said: "Yo've got summat as I 'aven't got." James said, "What do you mean?" "Why," replied the man, "look 'ow I've a treated you, and yo've said nothing, and done nothing. I couldn't a' done it. Yo've got summat as I 'aven't got." From that day the man ceased to annoy him.

At this time he was attending a General Baptist Chapel. There was but one man there to whom he felt a union of spirit. During his deep soul trouble, he asked the leading man of the cause if he thought there could be any hope for him? The answer was, "No," which distressed him greatly.

One morning, before going on the two o'clock shift, he went into his bedroom and got down on his knees once more to pray, when the words came with power, "Washed in the blood of the Lamb." This brought sweet relief. All his sins were gone, and he went to his work a new man. He knew then what it meant where it is written, "The trees clapped their hands" – all creation seemed to be praising the Lord.

Although he felt no union with the General Baptist minister, he wished to be baptized. When his workmates knew of this, they persecuted him worse than before, and one day several of them seized him and dragged him to a sump, a place where the drainings of the pit stables are collected to be periodically pumped to the surface. They swung him backwards and forwards over the sump, shouting: "We'll baptize un, we'll baptize un." He made no resistance, and when the men were tired they released him. One of his workmates went to the baptizing, and afterwards said to him, "When I saw you standing there, I wished I were in your place."

In those early days, Mr. James was an ardent advocate for the doctrine of free will, but one day while going to his work, the doctrine of election was revealed to him. It was as though the Lord spoke to him and said, "If I had not chosen you, would you have chosen Me?" The answer was, "No, Lord." Then again: "If I had not loved you, would you have loved Me?" and the answer was, "No, Lord." Yet a third time the Lord said, "If I had not called you, would you have come to Me?" Again the answer was, "No, Lord." From this time he saw the error and folly of the free will doctrine, and warmly embraced the doctrines of free and sovereign grace.

The General Baptists sent him out to preach, and he had to preach as God taught him. Complaints were made that he preached Calvinism.

Calvinism was a strange word to him; he knew not what it meant. He only knew that he preached those truths that had been powerfully and blessedly sealed upon his heart, and made very precious to his soul. This occasioned a breach with the General Baptists, and he was constrained to leave them. Feeling drawn to the people who had been gathered under the ministry of the late godly Mr. Roff at Stow-in-the-Wold, he became a hearer there and was received into church fellowship. The said Mr. Roff was a good minister of Jesus Christ. He and his near neighbour, Mr. Gorton, pastor at Milton-under-Wychwood, were both widely known and esteemed, not only by the godly seed scattered among the Cotswold villages and hamlets, but in London and other places far afield their ministry was valued by those who loved and prized a faithful, experimental ministry. Their names frequently appear in the early numbers of the *Gospel Standard*.

Mr. Roff had his ups and downs in preaching. One Lord's day, when Mr. Roff was helped to preach with considerable liberty, he exclaimed: "Friends, last Sunday we had the huds (Anglo-Saxon – the refuse of the field); now, today, we've got a fresh hitch." Mr. James explained that in those parts the shepherds put the sheep into a hurdled enclosure in a field of roots, and for two days the sheep feed upon the roots; on the third day the shepherd goes over the enclosure and with a hook lifts out of the ground the thin tail end of the roots. These are "the huds," and the sheep feed upon these that day. Meanwhile, the next piece of land is enclosed, and on the fourth day the sheep are turned into this "fresh hitch."

With the people who had been nurtured under this good man's ministry, Mr. James felt like a child at home. His soul was instructed and fed.

His path was not a smooth one. He knew what it means to be emptied from vessel to vessel, and that God's truth is not learned as schoolboys learn their tasks, but through many a storm and many a furnace. One morning, having a desire to go to Cirencester to hear the late Mr. Eli Ashdown, he rose before three o'clock to breakfast, but was in such darkness and confusion of soul and so tormented by the arch-enemy, that he decided it was useless for him to attend any services that day. Having taken off his boots, he was going upstairs and back to bed, when these words came with a degree of power, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." He turned round and went downstairs and, putting on his boots again, walked twenty miles to Cirencester. That day he never forgot. Mr. Ashdown read Colossians 1, and Mr. James was blessedly settled down in the truth of the Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was to his soul a time of sweet refreshment.

He was twenty-two years of age when he was united in wedlock to Emily Pulham, who died April 5th, 1923. On October 29th, 1923, he married Mary Ann Wood, a true helpmeet who survived him. He used to say, "The Lord gave me two such good wives, I don't know which is best."

(To be concluded)

BOOK REVIEW

The Secret of the Lord: The Life and Sermons of K.F.T. Matrunola; price £15 plus postage; hardback; 475 pages; published by and obtainable from Mrs. D. Topping, 25 Forrester Close, Cosby, Leics., LE9 1UP.

This is a most interesting and profitable account of the life and ministry of an "able minister of the New Testament," Kenneth Matrunola (1937-1994), Pastor of Salem, Portsmouth (1971-1994).

Gleaning from his sermons, writings and memories, his family have brought together a truly Christ-exalting account of the life of a man so evidently raised up to preach the everlasting gospel. It was a tremendous and mysterious loss to the churches when he was taken from us so early in his days. But his work was done and "he being dead yet speaketh."

Three things stand out.

He was eminently a man of the Word of God. Although a deep reader and most able theologian, it is his love for the inspired Word of God which stands out, and his adherence to the Authorised Version as the most faithful and reliable translation in our language.

His deep-rooted appreciation and love for the doctrines of sovereign grace. These were no hindrance to his concern for the souls of those to whom he preached and his desire to see the Lord gather in others who yet were strangers to these sacred truths. His unwavering adherence to the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard as setting forth what the Lord had taught him of sin and salvation makes encouraging reading in these days of wavering. Some of his lectures on the articles given at Bethel Chapel, Guildford have been published separately.

Although sprinkled as a babe in the Scottish church where he was brought up, he clearly saw that the believer's baptism by immersion is closest to the Scriptural order. Yet he retained many friends among the Free Presbyterians with whom he gladly worshipped on his annual holidays in the north. He particularly felt drawn to the ministry of the late Donald McLean of Glasgow.

It is a pleasure wholeheartedly to recommend this book. The price of £15 just covers the cost of publication, as the family do not want to profit monetarily from its sales. But purchasers should be prepared to pay the postage where necessary as this could be a heavy burden if borne by the family.

THE GREAT SAFETY OF THOSE WHO TRUST IN GOD

Unto the hills around do I lift up
 My longing eyes;
 O whence for me shall my salvation come,
 From whence arise?
 From God the Lord doth come my certain aid,
 From God the Lord who heaven and earth hath made.

He will not suffer that thy foot be moved:
 Safe shalt thou be.
 No careless slumber shall His eyelids close,
 Who keepeth thee.
 Behold, He sleepeth not, He slumbereth ne'er,
 Who keepeth Israel in His holy care.

Jehovah is Himself thy Keeper true,
 Thy changeless shade;
 Jehovah thy defence on thy right hand
 Himself hath made.
 And thee no sun by day shall ever smite;
 No moon shall harm thee in the silent night.

From every evil shall He keep thy soul,
 From every sin;
 Jehovah shall preserve thy going out,
 Thy coming in.
 Above thee watching, He whom we adore,
 Shall keep thee henceforth, yea, for evermore.

John Douglas Sutherland Campbell (1845-1914)

NOTICES OF DEATH

Joseph Clifford Woodhouse, beloved Pastor of the church at Bethel Strict Baptist Chapel, South Chard, since January 1976, passed to his eternal rest on June 24th, 2022, aged 90 years.

Ernest Saunders, deacon at Salem Chapel, Carshalton, for over thirty-five years, and a member for fifty years, passed away to his eternal rest on June 30th, 2022, aged 90 years.

“Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa. 12. 1).

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
SEPTEMBER 2022

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

“BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD”

(Psa. 46. 10)

Only eight words, but what a comfort they have been to the church of Christ ever since the psalmist was inspired to write this necessary and sweet exhortation!

Three things stand out as sacred principles of divinity.

Firstly, that there is a God, the one true and only God. “I am God, and there is none else,” He declares in Isaiah 45. 22. “He only is my Rock and my salvation,” confesses the psalmist David in Psalm 62. 2. This great God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush with the words of One who borrows no leave to be, “I AM THAT I AM” (Exod. 3. 14). But adding to the majesty of His being the mercy of His presence, “Certainly I will be with thee” (Exod. 3. 12). The three divine attributes of omnipotence (all power), omniscience (all wisdom) and omnipresence (always at hand) bring home to the believer all that is needed in life’s troubled sea. Mountains may shake, waters may roar, the swelling tide may increase, but this one true and only God is in complete control for His own honour and the good of His church as His purposes unfold.

“Loud may the troubled ocean roar,
In sacred peace our souls abide;
While every nation, every shore,
Trembles and dreads the swelling tide.” (H. 1141)

Secondly, that this God is to be known. There are a people of whom it is said, “For they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them” (Jer. 31. 34). “All thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isa. 54. 13). It is often in the deep waters, which the psalmist makes mention of, that God’s people are taught to know the Lord. They are brought to the banks of the river which makes glad the city of God (see Psa. 46. 4). This sacred stream, the Word of God, with its precious promises and invitations, can make them glad even though the waters in their pathway are greatly disturbed. When He speaks with such words as, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid” (Matt. 14. 27), the tossed-about saint knows there is a Friend at hand, waiting to be gracious and to send immediate aid as needed. In such paths we learn of the three attributes already mentioned, in addition to His mercy, justice and peculiar love for His people.

Thirdly, that the believer is exhorted to “be still,” and rest in the Lord in troubled times. If ever there was a precept which demonstrates the impotence of man to do as is rightly commanded of him, it is surely this one. Our minds are so often distracted from the one and only Object of living faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. While this is so we cannot be still. But when we are enabled to walk in Isaiah 26. 3: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee,” then we may enter into the sweetness of rest in Christ. Then for a few moments we may experience that “perfect love which casteth out fear” (see 1 John 4. 18). When we are enabled to taste the love of God towards us, then tormenting fears are banished as we rest in His perfect will and ordering of our ways, and like Noah’s weary dove are drawn into the bosom of His everlasting love. May the Lord so help us to do.

CHURCH ORDER

By B.A. Ramsbottom

In November 2020 the Gospel Standard Committee issued a statement which they believe to be the Scriptural position regarding the manner of transfer of members of one church to another of the same faith and order. However, as there are questions still being asked about New Testament church order, we commend the following article, written by our esteemed former Editor, Mr. Ramsbottom. This article reiterates that position which we lovingly yet strongly exhort the churches prayerfully to lay to heart, and follow, to maintain the union and love that ought to subsist between sister churches of the same faith and order.

Inter-church order

What of the relationship between one church of truth and another – order *between* or *among* the churches?

It must be clearly stated that there is no definite order laid down by Christ as King in Zion. In individual churches, every detail is governed by Christ Himself; but not concerning the relationship between one church and another.

Yet here there is the analogy of the New Testament and its general teaching (see, for example almost the whole of Acts 11 and most of Acts 15). The point seems to be the law of love, the standard of brotherly kindness, and the mutual good of the churches. Ephesians 4. 16 is peculiarly appropriate: “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

1. *Inter-communion.* It has always been the practice of our churches to receive occasional communicants at the Lord's supper, visiting members of a church of the same faith and order. On this there is no New Testament order. Rather we act according to the law of love and brotherly union. The churches over the years have granted this privilege and still do today. However, there is no New Testament order on it. Should any church feel it must decline (for any reason), then no visitor can ever have the right to object. If granted, it is a privilege, and must be understood as such.

Concerning communion between churches, it seems clear from the Acts of the Apostles and Romans 16. 1, 2, that if any member is to be away from his own church for any time, the right thing is for his church to send a loving letter of commendation to the church with whom he worships. This practice seems to have lapsed completely, yet is very clearly according to the teaching and spirit of the New Testament, and for the glory of God.

The present practice with many, when church members attend a place where they are not in membership, seems completely unscriptural. If moved in providence, a member should seek grace and, as led by the Lord, unite with the church in the place where the Lord has called him. A sentimental attachment to a former church, or happy memories of former days should not sway the issue here.

2. *Reproof.* In Puritan times, it was felt that such should be the loving relationship between one church and another, that if one church saw another church acting disorderly or unscripturally, it should approach that church in a spirit of love (just as between brethren in a church). This is something which now seems to be completely lost.

3. *Acts of discipline and censure.* Special emphasis must be laid here concerning the relationship of one church of Christ to another. Although it is right for our churches to be *independent*, they are not to be *lawless*. We seem to be in a solemn state today when inter-church order has collapsed.

One thing is very clear from the teaching of the New Testament: *if one church of Christ makes a decision concerning one of its members, that decision is binding on every other church.*

If a church here withdraws from one of its members, that solemn act is binding on a church of Christ in U.S.A. or Australia, let alone the churches in England. No other church can receive that disorderly member at the Lord's table, or receive him on testimony into membership. If a church refuses the application from one of its members to sanction him to preach, that decision in the sight of God is binding on all the churches.

How lightly this point is treated, and how often completely disregarded! It is, "Every man does that which seems right in his own eyes." The order of Christ, which in former, more prosperous, times was always honoured, is neglected. The result is confusion. Even if a church does not agree with a censure passed by another church, if it acts as a church of Christ, it honours that decision.

Question: Then is it not possible, under any circumstances, for a church to disregard a decision or censure in another church on one of its members?

Answer: Yes. But – if such action is taken, it can be taken on one ground alone: *that by so doing it regards the church passing the censure as not a properly ordered church of Christ.* Exceedingly solemn! The awful weight and solemn consequences of these things in the sight of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, are often not duly considered.

THE REVEALED CHRIST

*Address given by Mr. L.S.B. Hyde at Shaftesbury Avenue Chapel,
London, on Friday, April 21st, 1995*

Text: "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16. 15-17).

Clearly there are three definite points in these verses. Previously there had been all sorts of conjectures as to whom the Lord Jesus Christ was, and there are various answers given from various people who had no idea who Jesus Christ was. There are multitudes even in Christian circles who have no idea who Jesus Christ was or is, and therefore there is a veil over their faces.

Leaving the realm of conjecture, the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to His disciples; and, "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?" This should be a question which (may it go home to each of our hearts this afternoon) we have to answer ourselves and not for another. It must not be, "Well, I think," but it must be, "I know." The Apostle Paul was able to say, "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."

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?" How are we going to come to the conclusion that is mentioned in Simon Peter's confession of faith: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"? It

is only what is mentioned in the next verse (that is, revelation) that will enable us ever to come to the right answer. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

While having a true respect for scholarship of all levels, yet those that are well instructed in things of this life, when it comes to the things of God, if God has put the fear of God into their hearts, they will come to the conclusion, be personally persuaded, that they cannot "learn God's truth as schoolboys learn their task." Peter would never have been able to have answered as he did, were it not for the fact the Spirit of God had revealed to him that this was the Christ, the Person that was standing in the midst was the Christ. Whilst of course Christ Himself ascended up into heaven (now many years ago), yet nevertheless we believe that in the congregations, as we have here today, the desire of all God's people is that Christ may be present. It would indeed be a very solemn and sad thing if you agreed with that and yet had no knowledge of who Christ was, no knowledge that Christ was the Son of the living God.

Now I would draw your attention to a few things which are only discovered by divine revelation. We shall never know the truth unless God opens our understanding to receive it. Agrippa was not the odd man out when he said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Some people get very, very near to being a Christian, and yet may have left out of their experience the deep, personal, direct knowledge that Peter had, that "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." We need to be quite clear on this point: that the natural mind does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, and therefore Jesus Christ the Son of the living God will have no place in their thinking. They may have various thoughts, of course, but to come to the truth concerning Jesus Christ, that He is the Son of the living God, they are left right outside of the truth.

I would just endeavour to mention one or two points, how God works in revealing to the children of God that this Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. First of all, the revelation of what sinners we are must be a reality. I have no need to tell you, and I can try and persuade you till I am blue in the face (as people say), and you may to some extent accept what I have said, but after a few days, "a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still," and therefore you will revert to your own thinking. So then how is it that any person can be aware that he or she is a sinner?

There was an incident (some years ago now) in one of the Scottish churches when a young woman desired to take the Lord's supper. You may be aware of the system and their administration; and it required that this young girl should give some testimony as to why she wanted to sit

down at the Lord's supper. So she had the opportunity of coming before the elders, but when she got there she was absolutely dumb, and she did not know what to say or where to begin. One of the elders – surely a gracious man indeed – asked her a question, and this was the question: "Are you a sinner?" "O yes," she said, "I am a sinner" (and I should think a number of people would go as far as that). So the elder said to her, "Have you always been a sinner?" She said, "Yes I have" (and how many people would go along as far as that!) Then he asked this question: "Are you the same sinner now as you have always been?" She said, "O no! O no! Once I was a sinner and I loved sin, I rolled in sin, but now I'm a sinner indeed and I *hate* sin."

Well there is a distinction here. How do you think that young woman came to that conclusion? Surely we must put it down to what we have in the seventeenth verse: "Flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." Now what a mercy it will be for you and me if we can say, "Yes, I'm not the kind of sinner I was. Once I was a hardened sinner, once I was a wretched sinner, once I was a sinner that wanted to continue in sin for the rest of my life, and get my whole fill of it; but now, O free and sovereign grace has taken possession of my soul, and *God* has shown me, and nobody else could have shown me, that I am a sinner."

"Once a sinner near despair
Sought Thy mercy-seat by prayer;
Mercy heard and set him free;
Lord, that mercy came to me."

(H. 376)

So then going from the point of a revelation of a person being a sinner all bent for hell, there was another revelation, and that revelation was of mercy. Now you see, sometimes people have this exercise in their mind, particularly people who are gracious, and I think of one woman who came before one of our churches some years ago now. Before she came before the church, she spoke to her pastor and she said, "I don't think I know enough about sin." Well, you see that may be your question: you do not think you know much about sin. Now you see, the pastor gave a short reply. He said, "You will, you will," and she proved it to be so. So it ill becomes us to weigh up certain matters and say, "Well, I can't make a profession because I don't know enough about sin." God has His own work and I am quite sure that God will progress this knowledge of sin, and if you were to ask older friends whether they are sinners, are they greater sinners now than yesterday, they would say they were. That does not mean to say that they have gone into the low dives of wickedness and are even greater sinners than they were in the flesh, but no,

“To see sin smarts but slightly;
To own, with lip confession,
Is easier still; but O to *feel*” – (H. 806)

this is the point. And you cannot feel unless God has made your heart soft, and unless God has revealed to you sin by the feeling of it; not by the thinking of it, but by the feeling of it. And if we feel sin, then that is by revelation; because if you feel sin, then it is because God has done something remarkable in your hearts. We turn to one of the chapters in Ezekiel, and there we find, “A new heart will I give you.... I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.” You see, that will make you capable of feeling sin.

“To see sin smarts but slightly;
To own, with lip confession,
Is easier still; but O to *feel*
Cuts deep beyond expression.”

Now you see, if sin cuts deep beyond expression in your experience, then you cannot leave it there, because you are on the borders of the pit. If sin is in your heart, and in reality in such a way, then you just cannot leave it there. There are those ungodly people who come to a point where they feel that they have sinned, and what is the result? They terminate their own existence and perish in their sins. But you see, dear friends, is it so that with you sometimes (I myself can endorse the matter) that you have felt, “Is there any hope for me?”

Let me take you along this pathway of revelation, that the Lord Himself will direct your attention to Himself, He will say,

“‘Look here,’ the Lord replies;
‘Thy beauty’s all in Me’”, (H. 614)

and for the first time perhaps in your life, your eyes are turned. You may be looking down, but God will turn your eyes upward, and that will be a revelation. You do not need a revelation to look down; but you do need a revelation to look up, and you do need a revelation to hear, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.”

So then, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” We have a little account of Simon Barjona’s life in the Scriptures. He was a very strong character, and he was a capable spokesman for the disciples of Jesus Christ. However, he was not fully instructed in the truth; he was in no doubt in the general principles of it, but he was not fully instructed in the truth. I will explain that by the occasion when the Lord was speaking to the disciples about His ultimate decease; and the reason for His coming into this world, and the third day He would rise again. At the

thought of the sufferings of Christ, the natural mind of Peter began to work and he said, "This shall not be unto Thee." What did the Lord say? "Get thee behind Me, Satan ... thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." So you see here, as some people would say, that he was thinking in the best interest, but as far as the knowledge of Christ was concerned, he was thinking in the worst interest. He did not see that it was necessary that Christ should come into this world to save sinners. He did not see that blood must be shed. He did not see that he needed Christ to suffer and to stand in his law place and stead.

So we go on. Peter thinks on another occasion that though all men would forsake the Lord Jesus Christ, yet he would not forsake Him. Now this comes to the need for revelation, which contributed to Peter's confession that, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," "Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee" – that you might not be sifted as wheat, that you might not be allowed to fall? No. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

You see, sometimes we think that we shall never fall, and all the time we think that we shall never fall, there is a semblance of self-confidence that we can keep ourselves. Now God deals with us all. I remember as a young man I used to hear my pastor (of those days) say, "It is better to be kept than to be brought back." Now I just could not receive this. I thought, "Now surely it is better to be brought back than to be kept. It is more dramatic." So the time came when the Lord taught me by painful experience (this over a period of three years), to convince me: without any question it was revealed to me that it was better to be kept than to be brought back. I went far away (I shall not go into the details), God brought me back; nobody else could. It was a revelation, that unless God kept me I should go to all sorts of lengths, and sad to say I did go to all sorts of lengths; but I learned this, that "it is better to be kept than to be brought back." You see, obviously Peter himself was aware of this, convinced of this, because he says in his first Epistle, "Kept by the power of God." Not by my own resolution but, "Kept by the power of *God* through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

So just one or two of these points I have made relative to revelation. We shall not be sinners, feeling sinners, lost sinners, without revelation. We shall not come to Christ as a Saviour and Redeemer without revelation. Some people, of course, may say, "I was convinced because I read so-and-so's commentary, or I read such-and-such a book," and so on. But that can be false. I would not go so far as to say such mediums are not used, but nevertheless it must be by revelation. It is when you feel that you are a great sinner, and you are a lost sinner, and you are an undone sinner.

“Once a sinner near despair
Sought Thy mercy-seat by prayer;
Mercy heard and set him free;
Lord, that mercy came to me.” (H. 376)

Then this question, “But whom say ye that I am?” Have you been in a place, dear friends, where you have been forced, forced, forced by the love of God to make this confession? “But whom say ye that I am?” “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Is there any importance in the fact that Jesus Christ Himself died upon Calvary? Who was He? Was He just a man? No, He had to be the eternal Son of God. If He was going to die for your sins, He had to know all about them. But you had not been born yet? No, but He still had to know, when He offered Himself an atonement upon Calvary’s tree, all the sins that you would commit. That could only have been so if the Lord Himself was the eternal Son of God. We have read, “The Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” the Trinity in unity. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Revelation will make you positive in your confession. There are lots of people that are not positive. They prefer to take a negative view of things; they prefer to take a nondescript view of things. But you see, friends, if we are saved by the grace of God, then God will surely bring us to positive things. This one positive thing will be, “I’m lost,” and the other positive thing will be, “I am saved.” It is God that by revelation reveals to your soul how precious Christ is. We shall never come into the fulness and experience of our hymn that we have just sung of (972), “Crown Him, crown Him,” unless in our personal experience we have crowned Him whilst we are on this earth. But O how wonderful it is when Jesus Himself looks down upon poor sinners and regards them compassionately! You see, dear friends, we make so many mistakes; our natural mind will introduce all sorts of things that God will do and will not do, and so on.

Without projecting myself too much, let me just go back to this occasion. God gave me a clear call to the ministry, without doubt He did; because when the word was spoken, I was nearly torn asunder in my being. So, of course, after a bit I thought that it would not be long before I was in the pulpit. Well, I should say it was probably six weeks or so after the Lord had spoken so definitely to me, “Unto you ... is this grace given, that you should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,” I had a dream, and in that dream I appeared to be in Palestine. The familiar picture that we have of Palestine came before me in the dream, and someone came to me and said, “The Lord is next door and He wants to see you.” O I can never forget the joy that was in my heart, that

He should want to see me. He did want to see me too, so I went down and I went just along the road to where He was, and I fell down prostrate before His feet. Suddenly He took me by the hand, and He lifted me up, and as I looked up, so I saw His face. I am not a sentimentalist as most of you know, and I shall never forget it. O the compassion on His face! What did He say? “Ye cannot serve Me yet. You have got to be brought down first” – in other words, you will never preach Christ crucified as you are. So that was a revelation, and you see it took a long time for me to learn that, until God said, “Now you can go” (that was twenty years after). I am not laying this down as a yard stick. I am just speaking of my own experience to make this point; it needed revelation. It needs revelation to bring you to the point where you will be able to say, “Christ is All and in all. Without Him I must perish.”

“Then Jesus answered and said, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona” – a secret from Peter until now, but now a glorious word – “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.” O blessed be God if we have something in our experience that we can say, “Now flesh and blood did not reveal that to me; not my father and my mother, godly people though they were, but they did not reveal it to me; they told me about it but they did not reveal it to me. It did not come unto me that I was a dead man, it did not come to me that I was lost, but God revealed it to me, showed me that I was a lost sinner, showed me that Jesus, He was the Son of the living God, He was that One who came as a covenant Head to save me from my sins, to deliver me from all my distresses, and to give me the assurance that “if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have ... an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

If we should come into times of trial, as we shall do, then just think about those opening words in John 14, very well-known words. It begins, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” Isn’t it enough to believe in God? Well yes, we may believe in God and our heart be very troubled. God is holy. So what follows? “Believe also in Me.” Believe also that there is One that has come to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, by the power of the Spirit of God; and this is one of the glorious points of the everlasting gospel, that the Lord is able to save. Sometimes I have thought of those words, “He is able to save unto the uttermost,” and I dare say some of you have thought about them too. How many times have you had, if we consider that word “uttermost” as it were as a fence you have put up, have you got to move it, and you find that the uttermost is much wider than you ever thought? When we are young in Christian experience, well I should think a good many people think that they have got to the uttermost, but then as the years go on, they have got to move it, and you

see they have to keep moving it. The uttermost means that you will never find the fulness that is in Christ Jesus to save the very worst of sinners.

“Yes, the very worst of sinners.
Who upon His grace rely,
Shall of endless bliss be winners;
And shall sing, beyond the sky.” (H. 593)

“Whom say ye that I am?” Now you may at one time in your life feel just indifferent; you might say, “I don’t know, I’m not quite sure.” If God brings you from the borders of the pit, you will not be saying, “Well, I’m not sure,” but you will be bound to call forth His recovering grace. Therefore, “But whom say ye that I am?” Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” There is no doubt. If Christ is not the Son of God, then I am lost, then I perish in my sins, then I shall sink to hell. But with the work that Christ has done, I shall live to praise Him, I shall yet praise Him for the health of His countenance.

O what a wonderful blessing that is to be amongst those people that shall leave this world for one glorious life to live, to praise Him! Not to praise Him as an idol, but to praise Him as a living God, to praise Him from whom all blessings flow, to praise Him because your life comes from Him, to praise Him because your faith comes from Him, to praise Him because your hope comes from Him, to praise Him because your love comes from Him also. Then, “Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.”

May it be the mercy of God to grant unto us each of His good pleasure to know that we are, “Chosen of God ere time began, and choose Him in return,” and to feel that we are one with Him.

Just a point before I close in regard to, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” If we turn to the Song of Solomon, we shall see some of the outbursts from the soul which says, “He is altogether lovely ... the Chiefest among ten thousand ... His voice is most sweet.” The voice of the Lord is indeed sweet, and what would you say if the Lord spoke to you in those glorious words in the second chapter? “O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.” O this will be an experience never to be forgotten, because you can hardly believe that God will hear your voice. Does He hear your voice? He does; but it is, so to speak, overshadowed by the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord command His blessing and forgive all that has been amiss.

THE LORD'S PEOPLE JUSTIFIED BY A TRIUNE GOD

By Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

“The Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3. 26)

And who is this, indeed who can it be, but Jehovah? “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” But, my soul, mark how each Person of the Godhead is revealed in Scripture under this character, as if to convince every poor sinner that is looking for redemption in Israel only in Jesus, that God can be just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. God the Father justifieth the poor, believing sinner, for He manifests that “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” having found a ransom in the blood of His Son for sin, whereby He is faithful to all His covenant promises in pardoning us, having received at our Lord’s hand double for all our sins.

God the Son justifieth also His redeemed: for it is expressly said by the prophet, “In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.” And that God the Holy Ghost justifieth, is as evident also; because it was through the eternal Spirit the offering of the body of Jesus Christ was offered, by which Christ is said to have been justified in the Spirit and believers are said to be justified by virtue of it in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Hence all the Persons of the Godhead concur in the act of justifying every believer in Jesus, by whom we have peace with God, fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Here then is a portion to live upon through life, in death, and to all eternity.

REGENERATION ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION

Extract from a letter by Neil Cameron (1854-1932)

My dear Mr. Macdonald,

The way the Lord takes to save a sinner, from first to last, makes man’s carnal wisdom to appear the greatest folly. Man’s way would be, “O that Ishmael might live before Thee!” but God will have Isaac, the child of promise (the new creature), to be the heir of the promise. The body of death, the old nature, is not made any better by regeneration; but on the contrary, its enmity is aroused by the new principle of grace which the Holy Ghost created in the soul, so that the flesh warreth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these two are contrary the one to the other. These experiences caused Paul to exclaim, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

The religion so prevalent in our day will not understand this kind of godliness; it is to them like Samson's riddle. Still it is, and it will continue to be, the right way by which the Lord leads His people to the city of everlasting rest.

N. Cameron

Glasgow
September 24th, 1923

LONGING FOR FRUITFULNESS

Extract from a letter by Joseph Tanner (1808-1867)

My dear Friend,

I hope you feel more love and life in your soul than I do, and that inwardly and outwardly you are a more God-glorifying branch of the true and living Vine than I am; for He said, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." Not that the good fruit makes the branches good, nor that their fruitfulness makes them His disciples. The branch is made good by virtue of living union with the good, the true and living Vine; the tree being made good, the fruit must be good also; for a "good tree bringeth forth good fruit," and, "a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit"; but I apprehend it signifies being made manifest to others, by bearing much fruit, as Joseph Hart says:

"When on the boughs rich fruit we see,
'Tis then we cry, 'A goodly tree,'" (H. 256)

as also the sensible and blessed realisation of union in our own experience, and an inward bearing of the fruits of joy, peace, love, etc.

A wretched barrenness is often my soul's grief and shame; and yet I do hope I am a son, and not a servant, "and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

J. Tanner

Cirencester, Gloucestershire
July 10th, 1862

Learn from Adam's fall, how unable we are to stand in our own strength. If Adam, in the state of integrity, did not stand, how unable are we now, when the lock of our original righteousness is cut. If purified nature did not stand, how then shall corrupt nature? We need more strength to uphold us than our own.

Thomas Watson

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST 56TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at Ebenezer Chapel, Matfield
on Saturday afternoon, May 21st, 2022*

The meeting commenced with hymn 360. The Chairman, Mr. D.J. Christian, read 1 Corinthians 16. 1-11 and Revelation 3. 7-13 and asked Mr. J. Pearce to ask the Lord's blessing. The Secretary then introduced the 2021 Annual Report and Accounts. He briefly explained the Trust's work was divided into two parts, General and Publications. On the general side, the Trust provided advice on chapel trust deeds, the appointment and responsibilities of trustees, made available loans for pastors and chapel or chapel house improvements, and also, sadly, was involved in the sale of chapels and consequent administration of proceeds and maintenance of retained graveyards. On the Publications side, books are published which are loyal to our faith.

On the general side, he highlighted the need to know your trust deed and make any necessary administrative changes whilst the trust body is quorate. Help can be provided with registrations of chapel land and the Trust can also be appointed holding trustee to avoid the need to update the Land Registry title with subsequent changes in trustees. It is important for trustees to act consistently with the objects in the trust deeds. In some cases where a chapel has no longer been needed by a Gospel Standard church, the Charity Commission has very helpfully allowed trustees to take a pragmatic view. They have made schemes so that the chapel can be occupied by another group if there is no Gospel Standard church requiring it. One case was in hand to enable the trustees to sell at a fair price to another Calvinistical group, thus providing funds to support other Gospel Standard churches and charities whilst ensuring a Christian witness is continued. The Trust also assists with the administration of the Providence Chapel, Croydon Charity. Over fifty chapels and other charities had now been helped in various ways, including the maintenance, improvement and renovation of chapel buildings, car parks and houses; book publishing and distribution, including Bibles; education for young people; living accommodation for pastors; library facilities and digitalising of sermons. Grants agreed to March 31st, 2022 totalled over £846,000.

Turning to Publications, he reported that sales had improved from 2020. Financially there was often an outflow of funds before legacies, but the Committee regarded the distribution of books as a ministry and hoped readers would be spiritually profited. Mr. Ramsbottom's books in the *Miracles* series and *Bible Doctrines* still accounted for over 25% of sales. The *Faithful Footsteps* series accounted for a further 25%, with

over six hundred copies being sold of the latest in the series, *Rahab – Woman of Faith*. New publications included a board book for small children on *Bible Birds*, and *The Brook Besor*, by Andrew Bonar. Bonar particularly addresses those who are not able to do what they once did. Mr. Timothy Parish found that book helpful during his illness and wrote the introduction. It was hoped it would be an encouragement to the downcast and those who felt “useless” or even “a burden” to the Lord’s cause. A second book by Andrew Bonar, this time on *The Person of Christ*, was being proof read and would shortly be available. Another publication to be printed as a case-bound book, hopefully for arrival in July, was a book by Graham Chewter about *Olney, John Newton and His Friends*. That was to mark the 250th anniversary in January 2023 of the first singing of Amazing Grace.

The Library report and accounts were included as usual in the booklet, and he reminded the friends of the valuable and instructive books available there. He expressed appreciation for the continuing support of the churches and members of the Trust, and said that new applications from those with an interest in the welfare of the churches would be welcomed.

There were no questions, and the Report and Financial Statements were received by the Trust subscribers present. The three members of the Executive Committee retiring in rotation, Messrs. E.R.C. Buss, S.A. Hyde, and T.J. Parish, were re-elected, and Mazars LLP re-appointed as independent examiners.

The Chairman expressed appreciation to the Secretary and his secretary for the time and effort spent working for the Trust throughout the year. He thanked the Publications Manager for all he does on behalf of the Trust. Changes were taking place within Publications with Mr. M.J. Hyde gradually taking over some of the work, as well as producing further books, and the Chairman expressed gratitude for his help. He referred to Mr. John Kingham, who passed to his eternal rest on April 1st, and is sorely missed. During his twenty-one years on the Committee he had helped in many different aspects of the Trust especially concerning publications and the website. Further he thanked the friends at Matfield for their hospitality.

After hymn 286 was sung, Mr. R.K. Wheatley gave his address entitled, “A church with little strength but an open door set before it,” based on Revelation 3. 8.

Mr. Wheatley divided his subject into five main points. First, what is a church? He mentioned five things about a true church that are defined in the Bible. The church will be of those called with a holy calling, regularly meeting together for worship, walking together with each other and the Lord in love. Then the offices of the church

prescribed by God in 1 Timothy 3, bishops or elders, some as pastors, and the deacons. The church will recognise that God has done three things for the officers: they have been called by grace, called to that office and have gifts for that work. Under this point he strongly encouraged the small churches to be exercised about calling a pastor. Thirdly, the gospel according to the Bible will be preached. It will be Christ and Him crucified, the sovereignty and power of God. The same should also be reflected in evangelistic work. Fourthly, the church observes the two ordinances: believers' baptism and the Lord's supper, and lastly practises Biblical loving discipline according to Matthew 18. Mr. Wheatley recommended the booklet, *New Testament Church Order*, by Mr. Ramsbottom, *Sin and Salvation*, by J.C. Philpot, and chapter 26 of the 1689 Baptist Confession for further reading.

Secondly, the reason given for an open door set before this church – “For thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.” In five of the other churches, there were things that weakened them and brought the Lord's reproof. Some had left their first love, others held error, were lax in discipline or inclined to mysticism, placing experience of their members above the Word of God. However, at Philadelphia it appeared they were a small church with little strength in numbers and material wealth, but they had the spiritual strength of having kept the Word of God and had not denied Christ's name. Many of our churches are small, but may we have the strength spiritually that those at Philadelphia had.

Thirdly, what was meant by an open door? He explained the church existed for three main reasons: the glory of God, the edification and sanctification of the people of God and the evangelisation of the lost. The open door was an opportunity to preach the gospel to the unconverted as the church is commanded to do unto the end of the world (see Matt. 28. 18-20). Mr. Wheatley mentioned several examples of open doors in Scripture (see Acts 14. 27, 2 Cor. 2. 12). An open door, however, does not mean there will be no enemies or troubles (see 1 Cor. 16. 9). He thought of the open door set before Nehemiah, but then the adversaries he had in Jerusalem. Also when the apostles were arrested and charged not to speak in the name of Jesus, we read, “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5. 42) That was the commission they had and that is what they did, regardless of man.

Fourthly, the blessing of an open door set before a church and the assurance that no man shuts it. He had often pleaded that word in prayer: “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it,” a text from which Mr. Seth Mercer had preached at Cranbrook many years ago. He asked if we as churches had a love to souls and prayed for opportunities

to speak to those around us of the worth of their souls? Acts 16. 6-10 provided a good example of two shut doors followed by an open one. The shut doors made the open door even clearer. There was a large difference between a church with the attitude that “the Lord will bring people in,” and a church that knew the Lord had made them custodians of the truth, with personal experience of the remedy for sin and a longing to share that with whoever will hear it, and is testing doors like the apostle was, finding some shut but one open, very clearly of the Lord. Where the Lord opens the door, that work will not be in vain, and when that door closes, our work is done in that place. We are called to be faithful, leaving the issue with the Lord, and should not be discouraged by a lack of visible fruit. We should rather be encouraged by seeking the Lord to set before us one opportunity after another and speaking to His honour and glory.

Then lastly, he spoke of a number of open doors the Lord had set before them at Cranbrook over the years and the great encouragement these had been. These open doors into schools had arisen through their children and people they knew, to present Bibles and to address students; members moving into a care home that resulted in a twenty-two year ministry; the local historical society twice asking him to address their members, and free Bible distribution through the chapel website and boxes outside the chapel and his home. At one school, a child said, “So what you’re saying is, if I don’t believe in the Lord Jesus Christ then I will go to hell?” Mr. Wheatley said he could have answered in many different ways, but he just said, “Yes.” There was a gasp from the students and the teachers which he did not think he would forget. He said you could have cut the air with a knife. It was a Church of England school, but it was an opportunity to counter the godless teaching that there is no need to have a vital, personal belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. This was an opening that the Lord had given. What need there is to be faithful.

Mr. Wheatley suggested chapels give some thought to having their doors open during the service times and to be welcoming to visitors, who may have had to pluck up courage to come to the house of God. *[It is understood Mr. Wheatley put this into practice the following Lord’s day by leaving the outer door open. During the service two people came in and listened to the sermon. Mr. Wheatley was able to speak to one and give him a Bible before he left.]*

He mentioned one open door to minister to a visitor from the local Church of England who attended more and more regularly. Being now often confined to home and unable to join electronically, Mr. Wheatley regularly visits him. He is very thankful that with Bethel Chapel, Luton’s new website he is able to take prints of the *Bethel Pulpits* and prayer

meeting addresses which this man loves. The short reading and short address make them particularly suitable for those who cannot attend the house of God or cannot concentrate much, and we may be able to be the means of visiting the website, downloading them and distributing them.

The Lord may open very different doors to other churches, but the important thing is: do we look for an opportunity to bring the gospel light into a dark world? It is a privilege that the Lord sets open doors before us, and also an encouragement to go on although we may not see the fruit of all.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Wheatley for his very interesting address and expressed the desire that the doors continue to be opened both for him and others. The meeting concluded with hymn 1048 and the benediction.

D.J. Playfoot

A BLESSED MEMORY

Charles James of Sevenhampton
(Concluded from page 263)

It was from Stow-in-the-Wold Chapel that he was sent out to preach among the Strict Baptists. After he had exercised his gift before the church, hymn 1136 was sung:

“Thus the word, Thy power possessing,
 Shall declare from whence it came.”

He was engaged to speak again, and the old deacon met him, saying, “As God has opened your mouth, may the devil never shut it.” The Lord sustained him, and he continued many years to labour with much acceptance until the infirmities incidental to old age made it impossible for him to travel from home.

Humble to a fault, he would at times go beyond the bounds of discretion, telling young people that they were advanced far beyond him in grace and experience. His good wife would very gently reprove him, and warn him of the hurt those young folk were likely to receive from such unwise dealing; that it would put them in a false position and cause pride to swell. He did not resent reproof, but readily confessed himself in the wrong. A friend once said to him, “You are not troubled with pride, Mr. James?” His reply was, “I stinks on’t.” No one but himself would have said that he stank of pride.

In the early days of his ministry, having heard Mr. Eli Ashdown with much pleasure and profit, he thought to improve his own preaching

by adopting Mr. Ashdown's manner and phraseology. His foolish and vain design was soon detected by a godly deacon who promptly, but kindly and faithfully, pointed out to him the futility and the sin of it. Mr. James felt and confessed the justice of the reproof, and we believe he so profited by the lesson that he never again tried to borrow feathers from the wings of another bird, but kept within the limits of the gifts God had given him.

Charles James was a sincere lover of those who were commended to his heart and conscience as true children of God, and found much sacred pleasure in their company. His humble cot was always open to entertain those who feared the Lord. One day his one small living room was quite filled by a little party of friends. The dear old man was in his element, and expressed the pleasure he felt by saying, "My heart is big enough for fifty." He contrived somehow to get accommodation for the party for that night, and in the morning when the guests were departing, he took the hand of one (son of the late W.S. Cooper, of Lakenheath), while looking earnestly at him, and said, "I she-an't forgit your fa-ace." Mr. Cooper looked a little surprised. The old gentleman said again, "I she-an't forgit your fa-ace." When the friends had started on their journey he turned to the writer and said, "I could see grace shining in his fa-ace."

He would remark when he had been enjoying the company of those he loved in the Lord, "There was a nice breeze," or, "He chinked well." A friend from Holland called to see him one day, and they had a precious season together. Before they had parted, they had crept into each other's hearts. Some letters passed between them afterwards, and Mr. Docter still holds as valued possessions letters he received from the little Cotswold village.

At an anniversary, when the company was sitting down to tea, Mr. James and another godly man were missing. Search was made, and finally they were found deep in conversation on the matters that lay nearest to their hearts, seated in a farm wagon, while their hearts burned within them. Tea was far removed from their thoughts.

To his friends he was loyal and confiding. One Saturday evening someone called at the house where he was receiving hospitality for the weekend. The visitor began to speak in disparagement of a minister to whom Mr. James felt a warm attachment as a good minister of Jesus Christ. The old gentleman's righteous indignation was stirred. He rose from his chair, stamped his foot, and said sternly: "If ye speaks against 'e, ye speaks against I." The backbiting tongue was silenced.

As we were walking in a field near his home, he related the following incident. Many years before, he was walking near that same spot, in a very wretched state of mind, being sorely assailed as to his state

and standing. The adversary charged him with being nothing but a hypocrite. As he was musing upon his miserable condition, he lifted up his eyes, and in the distance saw a group of cottages where lived some dear saints of God with whom he had often had sweet communion. As he looked and thought of these people, his heart began to glow with love to them because of the grace he felt persuaded was in them. He said, as he considered the matter: "Satan, you've been telling me I be nothing but a hypocrite; how is it, if I be a hypocrite, that I feels such a love to these 'ere people?" The dear man's burden was gone, and he went on his way rejoicing.

His sense of sinnership was very deep, and he frequently spoke of himself in terms of self-abhorrence. He would say, "My worst besetment is legality; I be both a pharisee and a publican."

At the breakfast table one morning he said: "I lay awake in the night confessing my sins to the Lord, and *He smiled upon me.*"

He loved retirement, and often would resort to a wooden hut at the end of his garden, and there pore over his Bible or writings of good men, especially the writings of the weighty Dr. John Owen. Of the latter he said, "I gets along very well wi' he."

It may here be mentioned that at one time he worked on the railway line, but found the Sunday work galling to his conscience. He arranged with another man to do his Sunday duty, and he went to chapel. This made matters no better, for had he not caused the other man to break the commandment? therefore he himself was more guilty. The words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven," decided him to give up the work. The ganger said he had thought to make him foreman, but, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," clenched the matter, and he gladly took a roadman's job for less money. His friends thought him foolish, but he had the answer of a good conscience.

For some time he worked as a roadman, then a neighbouring landowner employed him to superintend the construction of a road on his estate. The work was done to the complete satisfaction of his employer, who gave him other responsible work to do. He was quite uneducated, but was intelligent and resourceful. Once he was required to move two well-grown trees from one part of the estate to another. Although he had no experience of such work, he carefully thought out a plan, carried it into execution, and the trees were successfully transplanted. A barn was to be converted into a village hall. This necessitated the floor of the loft being lowered to ground level. When the job was finished his employer said, "How did you get the idea?" Charles James replied, "It came to me while I was on my bed." The gentleman exclaimed, "It would pay me to keep you in bed for a fortnight; you have saved me several hundred pounds."

After a while, Mr. James began to find that his responsibilities took up so much of his time and thought as to leave little room for spiritual employments. He left his situation with all its superior advantages and returned to stone breaking. His employer gave him a cottage rent free for life as an expression of his esteem for him. One day he found Mr. James working on a stone heap, and said he wondered that he should choose such work as that when he could have done so much better for himself. Mr. James replied, "Oh, Squire, I gets many a sweet morsel on this 'ere stone heap." What the squire thought of it is not recorded.

One thing we are free to say, Mr. James's hearers were unanimously of the opinion that the stone-breaking sermons were by far the best. He himself had a very poor opinion of his ministry. Once when he had been persuaded to take special services at —, he prefaced his sermon by saying: "When I got Mr. —'s letter asking me to come, I didn't know what to do, but I promised to come; and when I had sent the letter I said, 'What a fool I be! There will be a lot of people there, and some ministers, and any on 'em can preach better than me. What a fool I be!'" Methinks this was the only part of his discourse that any of his hearers felt disposed to disagree with.

A friend was trying to engage him to preach at a certain place. He protested, "I'm only a country preacher."

Friend: "But — is in the country; there is a cornfield in front of the chapel and a wood at the back."

C. James: "I be such a poor fool."

Friend: "Well, there are some poor fools at — who will be glad to hear you."

C. James: "But I be such a poor thing, I has to have a day and night religion. I often has to get out of bed in the middle of the night to pray for mercy."

Friend: "They will like you all the better for that. That's just what they want."

C. James: "You're getting at me all ways. I'll tell ye what it is. I loves ye very much, but I couldn't come and preach to the likes o' ye."

For many years he preached mainly at Brockhampton, but in the later years of his ministry he accepted more invitations to preach away from home, and was much esteemed for his work's sake. His preaching was simple and his expressions often quaint, but full of meaning. His remarks at times provoked a smile, but there was nothing approaching levity, and it pained him when hearers smiled at his quaint expressions.

The ministry was no light burden to him, and cost him many sleepless hours. On one occasion he was at Swindon, being due to preach at Rehoboth on the Lord's day. He was awake most of the night,

and again on the Sunday night. He had not been alone in his wrestling as the following extracts will show. The first is taken from an obituary of the late Mrs. Wiltshire, of Trowbridge:-

“One day, feeling so desolate and as if she hadn’t a prayer in her, she sat down in a chair in her bedroom, when a powerful spirit of prayer came over her on behalf of our beloved ministers. Mr. James, of Sevenhampton, in particular came before her, but others were included as well. The exercise seemed to absorb all her strength, and when it passed she felt weak in body, but strengthened and blessed in her soul, and went about her duties in joy and peace. Not long afterwards Mr. James preached at Swindon, and the result of that preaching was that seven were added to the church” (*Gospel Standard*, September 1947 page 238).

The late Mr. F.J. Brown, deacon of the church at Rehoboth, wrote in a letter to a friend, as follows:

“On Saturday night, February 13th, it seemed I was enabled to spread the case all before the Lord with much liberty and an inward persuasion that He would answer my poor breathings. I asked, if it could be His will, that He might bless the labours of His servant, Mr. James, on the coming day, and that it might result in someone coming forward to declare what the Lord had done for them. I felt sure something would follow, but said nothing to anyone. Mr. James was much helped. Among other things he said, ‘You don’t know what you miss in neglecting the ordinances of God’s house,’ and quoted part of Grigg’s beautiful hymn:

‘Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?’ etc. (H. 427)

“I had not very long to wait. On the Monday a man who I had not on my mind at all called here to say both he and his wife felt that after what Mr. James had said they could stay back no longer. I felt sure things were not yet finished, and during the week two men said they must come too. On the following Monday a godly farmer called here to say he also must come. You can perhaps imagine my feelings. I had to turn aside to weep to the goodness of the Lord, and exclaimed, ‘What hath God wrought!’ I felt much humbled at His goodness, and wish to give Him all the glory. There are also two women, who have been baptized previously, coming as well, seven in all. We feel we can wholeheartedly receive each of these people, and I am looking forward to a good church meeting shortly when they come before us.

“You do not know Mr. James, I expect. He is now an old man of 80. Some would call him illiterate, but he is richly endowed with grace. Some of our ministers have said how they like to sit at his feet and hear

him.... He has been much helped in our pulpit, and we shall indeed be sorry when he is unable to come to us."

When Mr. James was told of this he was quite overcome, and said, "Don't tell me any more; I can't bear it." He was able to be present at the baptism of these five friends.

Our dear friend seized every opportunity that offered of hearing other ministers of truth proclaiming the glad tidings. He had his own way of expressing his appreciation. At an anniversary he sat opposite the preacher at the tea table and, looking across the table, said shortly: "If you gets to heaven, I shall."

As often as practicable he would invite ministers to take an evening service at Brockhampton, and was delighted to have them under his hospitable roof, a pleasure which was fully shared by his godly wife. Round that table, at evening and morning worship, what hymns were sung! what discourse there was of the things of God! and often what burning of the heart within! Usually, before the minister departed, the old gentleman would ask for the doxology to be sung, and he would sing with streaming eyes.

He would often use the preaching he heard as a yardstick with which to measure his own ministry. When he found the sound to be harmonious with his own humble efforts, he was filled with gratitude and felt it to be a confirmation.

He took a much lower place than those who knew him as a man in Christ were willing to allow. It could be said of him as was said of a godly woman in Scotland: "She did not know how gracious she was; and had she known it, it would have been marred." The dear man would with characteristic quaintness say, "I be that ignorant, I knows nothing; but I wouldn't part with what I does know for all the world."

Some years ago, he and his wife became acquainted with a young woman, Miss J—, but he could not for a while receive her. In later years he said, "I couldn't see with ye once, but the Lord said to me, 'Feed My lambs.'" This convinced him that she was a gracious character, and gave her a warm place in his affections as a sister in the Lord.

This friend relates that he once preached from: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3. 1). "Friends," he said, "*they never were the devil's.*"

The following remark was characteristic of him: "We be like the dishes turned bottom upards in the oven."

Preaching at Swindon during one very dry summer from Hebrews 10. 25, and exhorting to constant attendance on the means of grace, he said, "It has been a very dry time lately, and you ladies like a drop of nice rain water for your bit of washing; at least my wife does, and she was

anxiously looking up to the heavens, hoping for some signs of a shower. I told her to keep the bucket under the spout, and if there should be a shower in the night she would be sure to catch some.” He then applied it to the subject in hand, so should we be found constant in our attendance in the means of grace, both public and private; we never know what we may miss by neglect, or when there may be a shower of heavenly blessing. “So ye must keep the bucket under the spout, friends.”

Once when sorely tried about going out to preach, he asked the Lord if He would call someone by him as a token that he was right. At this time he used to speak in a thatched cottage once a month. A man, who was or had been a drummer in the village band, came that morning and was arrested. Poor man, his distress was great. The next time Mr. James preached there God set the man at liberty. Hymn 176 (Gadsby’s) was quoted and made especially useful: “Our springs are all in Thee.” He lived a godly life, and departed in peace to be for ever with his dear Redeemer.

Charles James was no lover of filthy lucre. The Brockhampton people were poor, and thought they could offer him 3s. 6d. per week, but he would only agree to take what was left after all expenses were paid! He was once speaking of a cause where he received £3 for his services. “It is,” he said, “such a nice help for the chapel.” He looked not on his own things, but on the things of others.

It was gratifying to hear from the clergyman, the station master, and other people in the district, of the high esteem in which he was held. He truly lived for others, and would say to his wife, “We are getting old; we shall not need the money.” In cases of need, he and his good wife were always willing to help.

“He is,” wrote one friend, “a truly humble old man, saying, ‘I’m a poor thing,’ and he’s never felt to be such a sinner as he is today. ‘Apart from the work and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, I have no hope at all.’ He then said, ‘And He’ll *never* turn a poor sinner away, O no, no, no, never.’”

Infirmities increased upon him, and the time came for him to lay down his ministry which he had received of the Lord. This was in the autumn of 1941, when failing strength obliged him to stay at home, and the churches among whom he had gone for many years preaching the kingdom of God saw his face no more.

He gradually lost his power of speech, and it became very difficult to understand him. As long as he was able, he attended the services at Brockhampton on those occasions when ministers were able to visit the little cause. In November, 1943, he was confined to his bedroom, from

which time he suffered much weariness and longed to be taken home, often repeating: "Weary of earth, myself and sin," etc., and

"Prepare me, gracious God,
To stand before Thy face," etc. (H. 471)

"A week before he died," his widow relates, "as I entered the room, he looked up so happy and peaceful, and said, 'I am sure I am going to heaven! Yes, *I am sure I am going to heaven.* The Lord has shone on my path from first to last!'" The night following he was taken worse, and gradually sank till he quietly breathed his last, September 14th, 1944.

The Editor of the *Gospel Standard* wrote (*Gospel Standard*, January 1945): "Mr. James was an unusually humble, gracious, affectionate and faithful friend of Zion and made useful in the ministry in the sphere in which he was called to move. His self-abhorrence as a sinner before God and the faith he was enabled to exercise before the Lord Jesus were very sincere. His earnestness for *real* things in religion made his conversation refreshing and edifying. The church militant has lost a true friend, and many ministers will miss his genuine love and humble brotherliness. We deeply sympathise with the gracious widow in her blindness and loneliness, and pray that her consolations may abound by Christ." For the surviving children of our departed friend we desire the blessing of their father's God.

Mrs. James writes: "My dear husband died September 14th, 1944, aged 88 years all but one week, and was interred on September 19th by Mr. H.E. Carr, of Chippenham, at Naunton Baptist Cemetery by the side of his first wife (an arrangement made with Mr. Carr when Mr. White, of Abingdon, died, whom he had formerly asked to bury him). The hymns sung were 466 and 143. He asked Mr. Frost to engage in prayer."

"Whatever the poor old dear would think or say, had he known yours and others' thoughts of him, I do not know!"

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. 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. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: 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. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7. 13-17).

BOOK REVIEWS

Scattered and Kept: Twenty-eight lost sermons of Thomas Boston; hardback; 46pages; price £24 plus postage; published by Ettrick Press and available from their website, ettrickpress.co.uk, or 98 The Brow, Brighton, BN2 6LN.

Of all the godly Puritans, Thomas Boston is, to many, among the most appreciated because of the directness yet simplicity of his works. These sermons are of the same calibre as his other works and are to be commended. They are for the most part sermons delivered at communion seasons. One sermon is by Henry Davidson on the sacred subject: "The fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Christ."

There are one or two reservations that should be noted by readers from our churches. As one of the leading men in the so called "marrow controversy," Thomas Boston was undoubtedly a free-offer man. Likewise, his references to infant sprinkling and the implied benefits thereof, we would graciously dissent from.

It is somewhat surprising also to see the comments on page 10 by Thomas M'Crie (the younger): "All precepts are included under the moral law, and that the gospel strictly speaking has no precepts, but consists simply of promises of mercy and salvation."

The gospel does have its precepts! "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13. 34). Mention could be made of Matthew 5. 38 ff. To these could be added the command for believer's baptism, and the remembrance at the communion table of the Lord's sufferings. Our own article of faith on the believer's rule of life is very apposite. "We believe that the believer's rule of life is the gospel, and not the law, commonly called the moral law, issued on Mount Sinai, which hath no glory in it by reason of the glory that excelleth, that is to say the gospel; the gospel containing the sum and the substance of all the laws God ever promulgated from His throne, and the Jews, because of the hardness of their hearts, being permitted some things which the gospel forbids."

Apart from these comments, I believe spiritually-minded readers will glean much from these sermons.

The Brook Besor: Words for those who tarry at home, by Andrew A. Bonar; paperback; 108 pages; price £4.75 plus £1.65 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom and agents.

This short treatise of six chapters is an encouragement for those who for one reason or another are deprived of active service in the church of Christ. Taking the two hundred exhausted men David left behind in his pursuit of the Amalekites, (see 1 Sam. 30) as an example of the Lord's equal care and concern over such with those who had the strength to pursue further.

Particularly helpful is the chapter listing the "fear nots" of Scripture.

Although we would not fully endorse all of Andrew Bonar's expressions in other works of his, this publication can be recommended.

OBITUARY

John Arthur Kingham, a member of the church at Bethel, Luton, for nearly thirty-three years, passed away on April 1st, 2022, aged 69.

John was born in April 1952, the first child of Joseph and Beryl Kingham, and he was brought up to attend Ebenezer Chapel, Luton.

He was sixteen years old when the Lord began with him, on the last Wednesday in July 1968. Before going for a cycle ride in the afternoon, his mother asked him not to be late home, as she wanted him to go to chapel that evening as it was a baptizing service. When cycling back, the Lord showed him the difference between the religion of the Lord's people and that which he had, which was only natural. He wrote, "It seemed my whole mind was absorbed in the solemn thought of the state I was in, with no religion and no hope for eternity, and the awful position of being lost, and the blessedness of having a well-grounded hope. It seemed from that day my whole life was turned upside-down, and I found no rest anywhere until I found it in Christ alone. Many times I felt my case was utterly hopeless, but I well remember what a sweet encouragement those two lines were to me:

‘Mine appears a hopeless case;
Such it had been, but for grace.’ (H. 1040)

And what a sweet word ‘grace’ has been many times since to me.”

There was also a change in John's feelings regarding chapel, and instead of this being a burden, it became a delight to be found in the house of God. The Lord showed him what he really was as a sinner in God's sight, and under the sight and sense of this he seemed to lose all hope of being saved. He walked under this burden for several months, but one day, when feeling to be the vilest sinner out of hell, this verse came as an echo:

“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.” (H. 527)

A few weeks after this, John was given a most sweet deliverance when hearing Mr. E. Clark preach at Barton from, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” John wrote, “The peace I felt that day under a sense of pardoned sin I cannot describe; it has left a mark which makes me yearn more and more to taste it again and again.”

There were three times during the months August to October 1971 when the Lord specially favoured him. The first was when Mr. Jesse

Delves preached from, “Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.” The second was from these verses:

“Now look up with faith and see
Him that bled for you and me,
Seated on His glorious throne,
Interceding for His own.
What can Christians have to fear,
When they view the Saviour there?
Hell is vanquished, heaven appeased,
God is satisfied and pleased.” (H. 788)

The third occasion was on a Lord’s day afternoon when he felt drawn into communion with the precious Lord Jesus. He tried to play the organ, but there seemed to be something wrong which he could not understand, until these lines were given in sweet explanation:

“No music’s like Thy charming name,
Nor half so sweet can be.” (H. 118)

Looking at these favours, he wondered if something was coming, but he did not know what. Then on October 20th, 1971, he was involved in a collision with a car while travelling home on his motorbike. The following six weeks he spent in hospital in traction with a broken leg. Yet he looked on this as one of the happiest times in his life. The morning after the accident, this verse broke his heart in love to his Saviour: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” He wrote, “The Lord’s sweet presence so outweighed everything at times that I have wished I could go through it all again, if only I might have the same manifestation of His mercy as I did then. I remember well, not having had much sleep during the first few days, waking up in the middle of the night with these words so sweetly resting on my mind:

‘He crowns thy life with love
When ransomed from the grave.
He that redeemed thy soul from hell,
Has sovereign power to save.’” (H. 420)

He felt the Lord had ransomed his life from the grave in a natural sense and also from the grave of spiritual death.

He continues: “Another occasion, a few days later, is still impressed on my memory, though much to my discredit. One of the patients in the ward was talking about something and I started to laugh at him. Immediately I felt condemned in my soul, because I was laughing at sin, and all the Lord’s sweet presence vanished immediately. O what a bitter thing it is to sin against God! I was left in sorrow to bemoan my folly before Him. Yet how tenderly did He deal with me, for it was only a day

or so after that the Lord whispered this verse so suited to my case and brought me again into the joy of His salvation:

‘Yet when they mourned their faults,
He hearkened to their groans,
Brought His own covenant to His thoughts,
And called them still His sons.’ (H. 318)

“I do not think I ever saw so solemnly as at this time the matchless wonder of the grace of God to poor, hell deserving sinners – that God, for Jesus’ sake, shows mercy freely to the worst of sinners who are brought to mourn over, to forsake and turn from their sin.”

In the following years, there were many exercises, trials, temptations, and also helps under the ministry. In March 1988, when the Lord brought him and his future wife (who was a member at Bethel, Luton) together, they felt that they could not continue to attend separate chapels. They both wanted the Lord’s direction, yet at the same time, John never really thought of leaving Ebenezer. Then in June, the Lord clearly led him to attend Bethel regularly, and in September, the reading one Sunday morning was Deuteronomy 31, when part of verse 7 was spoken with power: “Thou must go with this people,” followed by the first part of the next verse: “The LORD, He it is that doth go before thee.” Towards the end of the sermon, John picked his Bible up to look at the text, but the pages had turned over, and this verse seemed to look straight at him: “Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do His commandments and His statutes, which I command thee this day.” He knew what it meant, but he still felt to need further direction.

One day in the following February, it seemed as though the Lord pointed him back to the words, “He it is that *doth* go before thee” – not, He it is that *will* go before thee. The Lord assured him that the way was being made, even though he could not see it. He feared walking without the Lord’s leading, but a few weeks later, the Lord came and turned the captivity of his soul. With such a sense of the Lord’s smile upon him, he was given faith to venture, and was baptized on April 20th, 1989, when his Pastor (Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom) preached from, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.”

In January 2004, John was made redundant. He wrote, “When I was first told about the redundancy, I felt so sweetly supported under it, but since then I have been sorely tempted and sometimes have hardly known what I was doing. It is one thing to know that ‘all things work together for good to them that love God,’ but it is another to be submissive to God’s dealings when sense and reason are flying in your face and a tempting devil is at your side. Sometimes indeed I have been ready to

say, ‘I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing,’ yet hitherto have been preserved from being smothered in the mire, as it were. O how weak and helpless we prove ourselves to be when Satan is permitted to come in as a flood.”

After this John worked on computer maintenance in schools, also helping many people with their computer problems, as well as assisting the denominational societies in this way.

Coming to the last two to three years, John was diagnosed with cancer in December 2019, and knew times of the Lord’s special favour and direction, and also times of darkness, distress and temptation. Around the time of receiving his diagnosis he wrote, “Yesterday, before knowing the results, these words from hymn 472 in Gadsbys, seemed to come so gently and have stayed with me all day:

‘Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His.’ (H. 472)

“I have no ground to murmur, but every reason to trust in Him who knows and orders all things for His own glory and the good of His dear people. Sometimes life seems more to be feared than death, at least it does when faith is enabled to rest in His perfect will, in His abounding love and grace.”

Between February and June 2020, he was treated with six sessions of chemotherapy, but the cancer was not completely cured, and when at the end of the year he was offered two options for further treatment, this was a heavy burden to him. Then he felt the Lord showed him that he should not have either of the treatments offered. Throughout his illness, he frequently quoted the verse,

“When a sense of sin and thrall,
Forced me to the sinner’s Friend,
He engaged to manage all,
By the way, and to the end,” (H. 277)

and he often prayed that the Lord would “manage all, by the way and to the end.” He wrote, “If the Lord has engaged to manage everything, need I fear what the outcome will be?”

In the last few weeks, John frequently expressed a longing desire for the Lord’s mercy, often praying,

“Mercy, good Lord, is all I ask,
This is the total sum;
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit:
O let Thy mercy come.” (H. 1009)

On one occasion during this time he said, “The Lord knows what He is doing in a way I don’t understand, but He has got me in His hand.

‘I’m safe in my Redeemer’s hands,
Who bears my name upon His heart.’”

For the last twelve days, John was lovingly cared for in the Harpenden Bethesda Home. In his extreme weakness, he was unable to speak very much, but on one occasion he quoted, “A single touch from Jesus given,” and said, “I look back to some of those touches. ‘Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness, my beauty are, my glorious dress.’ Christ is everything.” It was said to him, “He will carry you through,” to which John replied, “I am sure He will.” At times he responded quite emphatically to what was said to him. One dear friend asked him if the Lord Jesus was precious to him, to which he replied, “*He is, He is, He is, He is.*” Another quoted to him the verse,

“The Lord be with you to the end,
And land you safe above,
A long eternity to spend
In singing, ‘God is love,’” (H. 631)

and said, “That is what you want, isn’t it!” John replied, “*Exactly, exactly.*” It was then said to him, “Eternity will not be long enough, will it?” John replied. “No.”

He passed away peacefully in the afternoon of April 1st, when all his family were with him. His Pastor visited him just a few hours previously, and in prayer quoted the verse:

“With what raptures He’ll embrace us,
Wipe away each falling tear!
Near Himself for ever place us,
And with love our bosoms cheer;
Hallelujah!
We shall with the Lamb appear!” (H. 769)

His Pastor took the funeral service in Bethel Chapel on April 21st. He read Psalm 107. 23-31, and spoke of how so much of it seems to describe the life, witness, trials and final glorious victory of John; how John did “do business in great waters,” and he did see the wonders of the Lord in the deep more than many, until he was brought safely through at last. Following the service, the burial took place at the Vale Cemetery, Luton, conducted by John’s nephew, Mr. Timothy Kingham, who spoke briefly from, “The Lord hath need of him.”

Alison A. Kingham

Note by his Pastor

It can truly be said that our friend John Kingham was a pillar in the church of God. As such he is sorely missed.

He did not take his religion for granted, but being burdened, prayed his way along, seeking the Lord, knowing His favour, finding deliverance, and being comforted that he was in the right way.

John was a loyal church member, desiring the church's true peace and prosperity. He was extremely kind, a practical Christian, and was a great help personally to many, both at Bethel and the Bethesda Home, and with the Gospel Standard Trust.

Our deep sympathy is with his wife Alison and his family.

"The memory of the just is blessed."

CHRIST SAVES UNTO THE UTTERMOST

Fall at His feet, poor sinner, fall,
And on the dear Redeemer call;
Though in thyself a sinner lost,
He saves unto the uttermost.

True, thou art vile from head to foot;
A sinner by thy birth, no doubt;
But think of this, thou tempest tossed:
Christ saves unto the uttermost.

Tempted by Satan though thou art,
Who says, "In Christ thou hast no part,"
Believe him not, nor all his host;
Christ saves unto the uttermost.

Sinners as great, as vile as thou
Are landed safe in heaven now.
Christ came to seek and save the lost;
He saves unto the uttermost.

Despair not, whatsoe'er thy case;
Remember Christ is rich in grace.
I would proclaim, from coast to coast,
He saves unto the uttermost.

A.H.

Correction

In the article on *Consolation for God's Little Flock* on page 255 of the August *Gospel Standard*, the reference to alternative eschatological views is the author's personal opinion and was not meant to be disrespectful to the many godly among our churches and elsewhere who sincerely hold to them.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
OCTOBER 2022

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

THE PASSING OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

On Wednesday, September 8th, the long, seventy-year reign of Queen Elizabeth II came to its end, when she passed away at Balmoral Castle, Scotland. We extend our deep and sincere sympathy to the new monarch, King Charles III, and to the members of the royal family.

Elizabeth II was a remarkable lady, whose life of dedication to the nation and beyond has been a shining example to millions, worldwide. We have reason to be thankful to God for this. Now she has had to leave this world, as we shall all have to, where she had such great influence, and meet her Maker, King of kings and Lord of lords. Many prayers have been put up over the years for her during her reign, and also that she would be prepared for that great and solemn event, which we each face.

She leaves a world profoundly different from the one in which she began her reign. Sadly, though there have been great strides in technology and in other fields, socially and morally the changes have been on a rapid downward spiral, and though on many occasions we have been thankful that she referred to her personal faith as a Christian, this nation is now largely atheistic in its outlook and standards, which has caused much grief to those who fear God. However, Isaiah expressed in Isaiah 6. 1: "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." The throne of our God is never vacant, and He who sits upon it has all power in His hand. This is our comfort in changing times.

We would pray for our new King Charles III as we did for his mother, that he may be led to seek wisdom from above in the heavy responsibility that now rests on his shoulders.

"Great God! how infinite art Thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee!

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

(H. 1)

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

In the conversation which our Lord had with Nicodemus, He twice emphasised that there is no other way into the kingdom of heaven but by the God-appointed wicket gate: "Ye must be born again." It is very clear that the Lord Jesus Christ did not say, "Ye *ought* to be born again," which would imply that this is somehow the duty of fallen man to accomplish. No! "The wind bloweth where it listeth" and thus the Holy Spirit accomplishes this vital change as and when and on whom He wills. So, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

So why did the Lord Jesus Christ use the word "must"?

Firstly, it was to emphasise a vital necessity. There is no substitute for this work of the Holy Spirit. Without this we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven by faith, nor will we have an entrance to the heavenly kingdom within the veil. We need a new heart and a new spirit. The very fact that the Lord Jesus said it, should be enough to convince us that it must be so. He cannot lie nor deceive.

Secondly, the natural man and the carnal mind cannot receive this truth. Being at enmity to God and godliness, there is no room in the heart of fallen man for the new birth. Thus, another nature is needed; new wine must be put into new bottles.

Thirdly, there can be no fellowship with a holy God and that which is sin. Therefore, a nature in which fellowship with God can be experienced is needed. Thus, no unquickened sinner can enjoy fellowship with God either here below or in heaven above.

Fourthly, the Saviour, in using this word "must," enforces this truth as one that if we are wise we will be greatly concerned about, to be the partaker of the new birth. The treachery of fatalism is no part of the Lord's teaching, neither is the presumption of assuming it is well with our soul without the new birth.

Fifthly, the example of the wind as a type of the new birth gives us the standard by which we are to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or not. The wind is unseen, yet its effects are. So, there is an effectual work wrought within the soul of conviction of sin, under a sense of the just demands of the holy law of God. The newborn soul is made acutely aware that he is unfit for the fellowship of a most holy God. There is nothing in his fallen flesh that God can approve. Furthermore, it is beyond his power to remedy the solemn breach that his birth in Adam and the fruit of that fallen nature has brought. Thus, the north wind blows sovereignly upon the innermost being of the newborn child of God. Then he begins to learn that he is in need of something out

of self to remedy the plague and dominion of sin and to answer for the immense debt it has procured under the holy law of God.

Sixth, in due season the south wind of mercy blows sovereignly upon the aching, longing soul. Some precious revelation of Christ is given in His suitability and ability to save, His blood to atone and His righteousness to cover the great sinner he feels to be. Now the child of God longs for the wind of the Holy Spirit to bear an infallible witness that the Saviour is willing to save such a wretch as he feels to be. Though he reads of the willing Saviour, yet because the matter is so vital, and the word "must" presses so heavily on his soul, nothing less than the witness of the Spirit will settle his awakened, convinced soul.

Seventh, the fact that "none can keep alive his own soul" implies the continuing need of quickening grace to maintain the work the blessed Spirit has begun. The word "must" is to a true-born child of God a continuing exercise in that respect.

"Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?
Great Comforter! descend and bring
Some tokens of Thy grace.

"Dost Thou not dwell in all the saints,
And seal them heirs of heaven?
When wilt Thou banish my complaints,
And show my sins forgiven?

"Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer's blood;
And bear Thy witness with my heart,
That I am born of God.

"Thou art the earnest of His love,
The pledge of joys to come;
And Thy soft wings, celestial Dove,
Will safe convey me home." (H. 24)

"Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will shew to you to day" (Exod. 14. 13). So spake Moses to Israel when the Red Sea was before them, and the might of the Egyptian army behind them. We can well imagine that Israel found it was difficult to "stand still" under these circumstances, and to feel that they had to do something to deliver themselves. So it is with us. When we face insurmountable problems, it is so difficult to "stand still," and to wait for God to bring peace to our troubled hearts. Israel found that when they committed their way to the Lord, He did not fail them, and so also will we who trust Him.

W.H. Burnett

SEEN OF ANGELS

*Sermon preached by Donald MacLean
on Lord's day morning, April 15th, 1979*

Text: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3. 16).

This statement by the apostle is in its own way a summation of the Christian faith. Many statements in the New Testament are of this nature, in which the apostle by the Spirit of inspiration brings before us (and before those who read the Word of God in every age and generation) a summary of the faith of the church of God.

Lying at the basis of this faith is the fact that it is a mystery. “Great is the mystery of godliness.” The word “mystery” here means (as it generally does in the New Testament) something which is revealed – something that could not have been known by man in the exercise of his natural heart, or the exercise of his natural intelligence. The exercise of man’s natural powers of reflection could never have brought him to know the things which are revealed by God. Therefore the phrase “the mystery of godliness” points to those particular things which could never have been made known unless God Himself had revealed them. Man could not have attained to these things, he could not have grasped them in the exercise of his natural intelligence and wisdom, but, “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit,” says Paul in another place, “for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2. 10).

Therefore lying at the very basis and foundation of this summary of Christian doctrine is the fact that what we know of God, what we can come to know of God, must be revealed and made known by Himself. This is because we are sinners, because we are ignorant, because we are brutish in our understanding, and because while we can grasp natural things and may show a great deal of ability in doing so, yet when it comes to the things of God, we are dark and ignorant. We do not understand these things, we have lost the knowledge of God, we can only come back to obtain that knowledge through the Word of God and especially through the revelation of God’s mercy and grace in His beloved Son.

Now on this particular occasion, we just wish to deal with one of the statements contained in this summary of the Christian faith. And that is the statement that the Saviour was “seen of angels.”

1. *Jesus was seen of angels*

It seems at first sight a very remarkable thing to include this in the mystery of godliness. Not only that He was justified in the Spirit, not

only that He was preached to the Gentiles, not only that He was believed on in the world and that He was received up into glory, but this is also told us, that He was seen of angels.

The angels saw Jesus at their creation

Now first of all we would remark that He was seen of angels at their own creation. Now of course there are many views as to when the angels were created, and it is not a matter on which one should be very dogmatic. What we do know is that they rejoiced at creation, that they were created certainly before the creation of man, that they were created by God as spirits, without bodies, and that they were created as a set of beings altogether glorious in themselves. And they were created to serve God, to praise God, and to rejoice in the glory of God.

In connection with all this, they saw the Son of God. Christ is the personal Word of God, and we are told with regard to Him, as the personal Word of God, that "all things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1. 3). We are also told with regard to the Son of God that He is the brightness of the Father's glory (see Heb. 1. 3). That is to say, all the glory of God that shines outside the Godhead shines in the Person of the Son. Therefore when the angels were created – in the moment they were created – the first Person they saw was the Son of God. The first glory that they saw, and the first glory that illuminated their spirits, was the glory of God in the Person of the Son of God. As the Father through the Son and by the Holy Spirit brought these beings into existence, as holy beings filled with divine light and love, so they saw the glory of God in the Person of the Son of God. In their first sense of being conscious in being, they saw the glory of God in the Person of the Son.

The angels saw Jesus at His incarnation

Now the next thing we would like to take notice of is that when these angels saw the glory of the uncreated God, and the glory of the eternal Son of God, they knew and had some understanding of the love wherewith the Father loved Him, and the love with which they themselves loved Him, and they glorified the Father in Him. There came a time when they saw this Person (as they told the shepherds) as One who was born in the city of David. This glorious Person – in whom they had seen the first rays of the glory of God from the first time of their existence – they saw Him now (as they had foretold) as One who was to be conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, and they saw Him as a Child to be laid in a manger, and they were to see Him there as God manifest in the flesh. They were to see their Lord as a Babe. They were to see their Lord in the stable surrounded by the brute creation. They were to see their Lord lying as a Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes,

lying in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn. With regard to that sight they had a song, and that song was: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2. 14). That was the song which the angels sang, seeing the Lord of glory as a Babe in the manger.

Why should they be singing of peace on earth? Why should the angels sing such a song when they had seen man fall in the Garden of Eden? Peace on earth had been destroyed. They had seen Adam and Eve driven out of the garden because of their sin. They had seen the whole human family born in sin and shapen in iniquity, in a state of rebellion against the God of heaven, adding sin to sin, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Yet here they are saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace."

That peace between God and man sprang out of the good will of God, the good pleasure of the God of heaven. It could come from nowhere else. All the ideas that men would like to return to God are all sheer fantasy. The god they would like to return to is a god of their own making, a god who would let them do what they like, a god who would let them satisfy "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," and yet let them escape the death due to their sins. There could be no return to God, there could be no peace on earth, unless that arose in the good will of God, in His sovereign and gracious love to a number that no man could number. And that peace could not be obtained in any other way than by what the angels saw in Bethlehem. What the angels saw in Bethlehem was the Lord of glory in a holy humanity, the Lord of glory having joined to His divine Person the humanity of a Babe, and that humanity veiling His divine glory, as the Prince of Peace who was to work out peace between God and man, the Solomon of the New Testament.

And when the angels saw Him, they sang that God was to be glorified in the highest. That expression, "in the highest," does not merely mean that He is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isa. 57. 15). It means glory to God in the sense that this is the highest revelation of God's glory. They had seen His glory when they themselves were created, when their intelligences were flooded with the view they had of the glory of God, when their spirits were warmed by the outgoings of love to themselves from the heart of God. They had also seen the glory of God in Mount Sinai, when the law was given. The glory that surrounded Mount Sinai caused the children of Israel to say to Moses, "Speak thou with us ... let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod. 20. 19). But far greater than the glory of God in condemning sin, and far greater than the glory of God in the ministry of condemnation, is the glory of God in the face of this Babe, in the Person and in the work

of Christ. In bringing peace on earth there is a glory which excels every other manifestation of God's glory.

Now, when the angels saw the glory of this Babe, when they saw His glory as He lay in the manger, when they discerned that this was their Lord, when the angels saw the One in whom the glory of God shone, now veiled with this humanity – with this sinless humanity – conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin – what a wonder it was to them! What a wonder! What a wonder it ought to be to us also! For if we could only see and know some of the glory of this Person, then we could understand why the angels desired to look into this.

The angels sang not only, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace," but also, "good will toward men." Good will, not towards the angels who kept their first estate, but towards men – sinful men, hell-deserving men, wicked men, men who are "the children of wrath, even as others."

What a view they got of their Lord at the incarnation! – these swaddling clothes, this holy humanity, as He lay an apparently-helpless Babe, and they knowing that at the very time He lay there, this divine Person in glory was upholding all things by the word of His power. The Lord of glory would be born, not in a king's palace, but in a manger, in a stable, the inn closed, the door closed – no place for the Babe that was in the womb of Mary, but to be born and laid in this manger! – born outside the place where the world were enjoying their fellowship, their companionship, their drinking, their songs, their enjoyment. To the angels these things would have been sheer vanity. Here was divine reality.

The angels saw Jesus in His sufferings

He was seen of angels with regard to His sufferings. Here was a very wonderful thing. These angels who saw Him at His birth, these angels who saw Him in His holy humanity, the angels who undoubtedly saw Him as He grew in wisdom and stature, in favour with God and with man, they also saw Him in His sufferings.

We read in connection with the Garden of Gethsemane that an angel comforted him. Dr. Duncan said, in his own usual, unique way, that of all the angels, the one he most wanted to see in glory was the angel that comforted Christ in the garden. That angel saw Christ in His sufferings, in the Garden of Gethsemane. He saw Him there stretched on the earth that He Himself created. He saw Him there with His sweat as great drops of blood falling to the ground, as in agony of soul He cried unto Him who was able to save Him from death. What a view that was to that angel! God the Father said, "Let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1. 6) – worship this Person here, this Person in the Garden of

Gethsemane, this Person who is saying to His Father, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matt. 26. 39). The cup of death. The cup of sorrow. The cup that caused Him to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." That sinless soul, that sinless body, now fearing and trembling in the presence of this awful death. This death which none could endure but Himself alone. This death in which His body was to be pierced. This death in which His soul was to be bruised. All this was already taking place, as He began in a special way to drink this cup of sorrow and death.

The angels saw Him. What wonder it must have occasioned them to hear this Person say, "The cup that My Father gave Me"! They had enough insight into the wonders of the love of the Father to His Son to be amazed at this, that the Father who loved His Son as He loved Him was giving Him a cup – and not the cup of love, but the cup of sorrow and the cup of death, which the sins of His people had filled. The Father was saying to His Son, "This is the cup of death which belongs to Thy people, and drink this cup Thou must." That was the answer. "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me," the Saviour had said, "nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22. 42).

He was seen of angels. Oh, my dear friend, how they must have been filled with consternation, filled with wonder, at seeing the Lord of glory in His holy humanity being broken and under the sentence of eternal death and under the enduring of the eternal wrath of God against the sins of His people!

He was seen of angels. I very much agree with Hugh Martin's interpretation of how the angels strengthened the Saviour. That is, as he said, when God sent the angel to the Garden of Gethsemane, He sent him with this command in his heart: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." And the Lord Jesus Christ – in the midst of all His sufferings, in the midst of His soul being exceeding sorrowful, even unto death – He found this angel worshipping Him. What a wonderful thing that was! The Jews turned against Him. The Roman soldiers and the Roman power were ready to arrest Him and bring Him to the cross of Calvary. The whole human race were joining hand in hand to despise the One who was born as a Babe outside the inn. He was now to go outside the city of the great king, He was now to be crucified on Calvary's tree, and when this all took place, as He said to His disciples, it was the hour of the power of darkness. Shortly these powers were to come into the Garden of Gethsemane, and when the question was to be put to them, "Whom seek ye?" they were to say, "Jesus of Nazareth."

In the midst of it all, here was this glorious being, this angel, and he worshipped Him. He acknowledged the God of heaven, Jesus of Nazareth. He acknowledged the Son of God. In that worship the angel was as much as saying, "Although there are Thy sufferings, I have seen

Thy glory. I saw it when I was brought into being in this world, and I see it still in some measure now, though I cannot enter into how it is that the eternal Son of the Father in truth and love is suffering the way that He is suffering.” Nevertheless He worshipped Him, and so the Saviour was strengthened in the midst of His sorrows, in the midst of the sorrows of Gethsemane’s garden, in the midst of the trembling of His human nature at the prospect of eternal death. This angel saw Him and He saw this angel, and the angel strengthened Him by obeying the divine command, even in the darkness of Gethsemane’s garden.

But all the angels of God worshipped Him, and they saw Him, not only in Gethsemane’s garden, but also as the One who suffered and died, who paid the great ransom price that none could pay but Himself alone. He paid that price in love to lost and ruined sinners – with love to the very disciples who forsook Him and fled – with love to those around the cross who at that time were crying, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him.” The Saviour cast the garment of His intercession over them and said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

And the angels saw redemption accomplished. When Lazarus died and his soul went out of his body into heaven, the angels of God were his companions going there. However much the angels had to do with this when the Saviour died, we cannot say. But we do say that the angels saw that when the Saviour said, “It is finished,” redemption was accomplished. They saw that salvation was secured for sinners lost, ruined and undone. He breathed out His soul into the hands of His Father. “Father,” He said, “into Thy hands I commend My spirit” (Luke 23. 46). He breathed out His soul into the hands of the everlasting Father and into the bosom of the Father’s everlasting love, and He left His body to be put in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

I read a very beautiful expression and a very beautiful thought in one of the old divines with regard to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. This old divine used the expression “a virgin tomb.” No man had been laid there, no man had ever been laid in that tomb – it was, as it were, a virgin tomb. He said that this Person who was born from a virgin womb came to have His body laid in a virgin tomb. And that was seen of angels. That holy humanity was conceived in a virgin womb, and after the death on Calvary’s tree, after the accomplishment of eternal salvation, His body was borne by His people and laid in a tomb in which man had never before been laid. It was a virgin tomb for the body that came out of a virgin womb. What a very wonderful thing! – a wonderful thought and a wonderful expression!

The angels saw Jesus at His resurrection

That brings me now to this, that He was seen of angels at His resurrection. The angel that rolled away the stone was an angel that sat

upon the stone, and the angels saw Jesus at His resurrection, when He rose from the dead by the power of an endless life.

He was seen of angels. They said to the women, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matt. 28. 5, 6). Come and see what we are seeing, we who have seen the resurrected Jesus – see an empty tomb, see the triumph of the One who died, see the triumph of the One who suffered, see the triumph of the One who was wounded for the transgression of His people – see now that the grave is empty!

You remember that when the grave was empty, the grave clothes and the face cloth (the napkin) were folded and laid in their place. That was to show that the Person who rose from the dead was the Captain of our salvation and that He was the Captain of death. He was the One who had said in the ancient prophecy, ringing down the corridors of the centuries, “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes” (Hos. 13. 14). He folded up the graveclothes to manifest and make known in the first place that He disrobed Himself of the clothes of death. He folded them as One who was completely triumphant. It was also to signify to His people that they would need to be clothed with death until the morning of the resurrection, when time shall be no longer.

The angels saw Jesus at His ascension

He was seen of angels at His ascension. We were singing of that in Psalm 68. “Thou hast ascended on high.” When Christ entered glory, the people of God – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the spirits of just men made perfect around the throne of God – would have sung as we were singing in Psalm 24 (metrical Psalms),

“Ye gates, lift up your heads; ye doors,
Doors that do last for aye,
Be lifted up,”

so that the King of glory may enter into His place. And do you not think, my dear friend, that as the angels went up with the ascended Christ, the One who passed through these heavens into the sanctuary above – do you not think that the angels joined in that song as well? Well, I am sure that they did. They joined in that song as well. They called upon the doors, the doors that do last for aye, to lift up, and they called on the gates to lift up their heads, so that the King of glory might come to His place. The King of glory coming to His place was Jesus, the Son of God in our nature, and that nature now glorified.

The angels will see Jesus at the day of judgment

He will be seen of angels also at the day of judgment. The angels will form the train of Zion's King. They will surround the glory and reflect the glory of the Father in the Person of the Son when He comes "to judge the world in righteousness, judgment to give each one." And these eyes that see me now, and these ears that hear my voice, it is Jesus that you will see. And it is Jesus whom the angels will see when He comes to ascend the great white throne, to judge the world.

When He comes, He will use the angels in connection with that work, to separate the sheep from the goats, and to gather in His elect from all places of the earth on the resurrection morning. The angels will have their own place with regard to the glory of the great white throne and the solemnities of the final judgment, when for all eternity the complete and final separation will be made between those whose hope and confidence was placed in Christ alone, and those who loved the world and its ways and its pleasures and its vanities.

Christ will say to the one, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To the others He will say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Then Christ and His bride shall be gathered at God's right hand, and they will sit down to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And can we not also say that when the angels see the marriage supper of the Lamb, although the angels themselves cannot sit down at that supper, surely they will see it and they will rejoice in it? Part of their heaven will be rejoicing with the Bridegroom, as John the Baptist said. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom ... rejoiceth greatly," because he hears the bridegroom's voice. That applied to John in a particular sense, but will not the angels and the archangels and the cherubim and the seraphim also rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory when they see Jesus, the Bridegroom of the church, and His Bride complete?

"They shall be brought with gladness great,
And mirth on every side,
Into the palace of the King,
And there they shall abide." (Psa. 45. 15, metrical)

From *Unsearchable Riches*
(*To be concluded*)

Oh it is good for thee to be among saints! Thomas by missing one meeting, did his soul unspeakable dis-service.

George Swinnock

A WORD FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

By J.K. Popham (1847-1937)

Individually and as a congregation we have much to thank God for this morning. We have entered on a new year, and if we look back, even though we may have been afflicted, we shall see – that is to say if we have a right sight and true light – we shall see that there is much more to give thanks for than there is to complain about. Indeed, truly we have nothing to complain about except sin. God has been good to us individually, has brought us on thus far, has not permitted us to make, as concerning faith and a good conscience, shipwreck; has not allowed us to turn away from the form of sound words, and this is much to be thankful for in this day. In providence He has been kind to us, giving us daily bread, feeding us, as the word is, with food convenient for us, and giving to us kind friends.

To the young I would say you have much to be thankful for, for homes, for right influences, for an open Bible, for the health you have had, and the blessings of God's kind providence; you have much to be thankful for: thankful for family life. O it is a great blessing, and I think never should it in the past, never could it have, appeared to be so great as today it must appear to all who have right feeling when the old-fashioned family life is departing very much from the land, and all that that used to characterise families is rapidly, so to speak, melting away. You ought, you who have right influences about you in your family, you ought to be very thankful for such mercies, and do not forget them, and do not follow the present fashion; do not speak disrespectfully of parents when you are out of their sight. Try not to associate yourselves with people who would lead you to think lightly of parental authority and family influence. Keep away from all such things. Keep away from bad reading; endeavour to follow that which is good. If you must read, read history, read church history, above all read your Bibles. You have them still. Eschew novel reading, eschew that that invades the mind, inflames the imagination and leads away from all good, moral, solid feeling. Eschew all that kind of reading and follow that which is sober and steady. Plenty of books there are still of a kind to do you good morally speaking; look for them; read them. Be thankful for your mercies, be thankful for any associations of a sort that are good, that have an influence upon you for good.

Young people, you are in danger, and let an old man warn you, you are in danger. God keep you; God keep you from danger. The danger of frivolity is very great; the danger of infidelity is very great; the danger of a sensuous religion, ritual, here and there is very great and the danger of that broad, critical view that brings the Bible under its scrutiny to

criticise it, to find fault with it, that danger is very great. 'Tis rife in schools; alas for the schools, alas for the teachers, and alas for the taught, it is rife in schools. Now I do pray God may keep you from all these evils, my dear young friends. I am glad to see you here and may I not have the sorrow of seeing you depart and depart from the form of sound words in which you have been brought up. The Lord have mercy on you.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF TRUE DOCTRINE

By B.A. Ramsbottom

There has sometimes been a tendency in rightly contending for an experiential religion, to ignore or even despise the mention of doctrine. It is a sad reflection if we hear it said: "I don't do doctrine." Martin Luther said, "Doctrine is heaven," and so it is under the sacred bedewings of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul in his epistles began by laying the foundation of the doctrines of grace, then contended for the experience of those truths and finally for the practical effects of rightly receiving doctrine by saving faith in our lives. The Epistle to the Ephesians is an outstanding example set before those of us who are commissioned to proclaim "the whole counsel of God." In this reported address given in 1999, our esteemed former Editor ably sets before us the vital necessity of true doctrine and the danger of neglecting it.

Mr. Ramsbottom explained how he had been led to this vitally-important subject. Many in our congregations seem to think that doctrine does not matter. They think the vital thing is experience. However, the epistles contain doctrine, gracious experience and practice. There must be a balance, and we are exhorted to contend earnestly for the faith.

He addressed himself to three questions. The first was, *Does it really matter what we believe if we have a good experience?* The answer was very simple. People may have wonderful experiences, but if not based on true, sound doctrine, they cannot be good experiences. He illustrated this by references to Roman Catholics and to poetry. He did not doubt that many may have powerful experiences when attending mass with all its trappings. However, such could not be right experiences because the mass is blasphemous and dishonours God. The same must be said of the amazing experiences of which we read concerning Roman Catholics and the Virgin Mary.

He referred to a very salutary lesson he had learnt in a strange and unusual way in his early days spiritually. He had heard an ungodly man speaking about poetry and the effect it can have. For example, you may

feel very down and suddenly a line of poetry flashes into your mind which sets you at liberty; your sorrow is changed into joy. This man's talk concerned experience and much of that experience was like the language which we use, and yet it was not based on sound doctrine.

How he emphasised the need for experience of the truth, of the new birth, of repentance, of faith and love to Christ! These things are absolutely vital, but if true experience, it will never be contrary to the Word of God and sound doctrine. He felt it to be a most solemn thing if experience is exalted above the Word of God and above the teaching of the Holy Spirit. This does not honour and glorify the Lord. It is a most solemn thing when a vital truth is denied and people say, "But does it really matter?" "I do not understand it." "Is it really important?" "Surely the thing that matters is to have some gracious experience of the truth." Does it really matter, he asked, that the Unitarians deny that Jesus is true, almighty God, that the Roman Catholics have a system of salvation by works, that the Arminians have a system of doctrine in which the Lord does His part and we do ours? Do these things matter or do they not?

His second question was, *How can it be that we have got to the position that it is possible that people say it does not matter?* He went back to the beginnings of our little group of churches, which largely came about as a reaction against the dry, unprofitable, doctrinal preaching that was then in vogue, in which there was no hint of gracious experience. The Lord raised up men like Gadsby and Kershaw and they contended so firmly against the dry doctrine of Sandemanianism and for the need of a vital, gracious experience of the truth as in Jesus, and God blessed such ministry to His living family. In 1999 [when this address was given], just as in 1799, we still need to contend earnestly for that vital point of gracious experience as much as ever.

He then mentioned the danger of the pendulum swinging too far and how this is found in the history of the church of God. However, Gadsby and Kershaw never made their insistence on vital, living, gracious experience at the expense of the doctrines of the gospel. Although J.C. Philpot was renowned as an experimental preacher, his preaching was never at the expense of true doctrine. Martin Luther said, "Doctrine is heaven." So it is when preached like this: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, My speech shall distil as the dew." The preaching of our godly forefathers contained the precious doctrines of the gospel, and they were sweetly attended by the bedewing power and influence of the Holy Ghost, and they were applied in sinners' hearts. Experience with no true doctrine is like a body without bones, just a flabby mass. He felt it was vital that we have clear views concerning the human soul of the Lord Jesus and of how He was made under the law as His people's law-

fulfilling righteousness, to magnify the law, make it honourable and fulfil it on their behalf. Now these things are vital, and we are in a solemn, awful, God-dishonouring state if people can say, "Do these things really matter?" or, "Are they really important?" When we come to die they will matter.

The third question was, *Why is true doctrine vital?* He gave five reasons. First, wrong doctrine always results in wrong preaching. That leads to wrong experience, and in turn to wrong practice.

Second, right doctrine has always been honoured by God and has always been at the heart of any true blessing in the church. Martin Luther was groaning over his sin and guilt until he opened a Bible on Romans 1 and read, "The just shall live by faith." There he rediscovered, by divine revelation, a precious doctrine which had been lost for about 1,000 years. So began the glorious Reformation, and Europe was turned upside down. Likewise at the time of the great evangelical revival in this country, Whitefield rediscovered, under the teaching of the Spirit of God, the vital doctrine of the new birth. He preached it, and England, as a country, was turned upside down.

The third reason was that it is for the comfort of the people of God; false doctrine is not. He mentioned the case of an old Independent minister he had known in Sheffield. Having been blessed when young, Satan then so tempted him that he thought he was lost until, one day, in the parish church he read in one of the Church of England Articles of Faith the truth of the everlasting safety of the people of God. The Holy Ghost so shone on that doctrine that he went out of that church rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thereafter he was always an ardent, zealous contender for the truth of vital doctrine.

Fourth, true doctrine applied by the Spirit of God is what gracious experience is. That is why Luther said that doctrine is heaven.

The fifth reason was that it is only true doctrine that really glorifies God. He had read only that week an article he had written in the *Gospel Standard* almost thirty years ago expressing these same concerns. God is glorified when we contend for the truth, and where any church deviates from the truth, whilst they may think it does not matter, it dishonours Christ, and when Christ is dishonoured, the Holy Ghost is grieved. He gave the case of the Free Church of Scotland, set up after the great disruption of 1843. This was a most godly church full of most godly, eminent ministers. However, one of their well-known ministers, W. Robertson Smith, went into error. Whilst the godly did not agree with him, some of them let his personality and preaching take precedence over vital doctrine, and within a few years the old Free Church was badly affected by his error. So did it really matter?

He closed with the desire that the Lord would give us grace in our churches, and personally in our hearts, to see the vital importance of true doctrine and how it affects the Person of Jesus and the honour and glory of our beloved Lord and Master, and enable us to hold the truth dearer even than life itself.

“A TIME TO WEEP, AND A TIME TO LAUGH”

Well-beloved Brother, grace, mercy and peace be to you!

Upon acquaintance in Christ, I thought good to take the opportunity of writing to you. Seeing it hath seemed good to the Lord of the harvest to take the hooks out of our hands for a time, and to lay upon us a more honourable service, even to suffer for His name, it were good to comfort one another in writing. I have had a desire to see you in the face; yet now, being the prisoner of Christ, it is taken away.

I am greatly comforted to hear of your soldier's stately spirit for your princely and royal Captain, Jesus our Lord, and of the grace of God in the rest of our dear brethren with you. You have heard of my trouble, I suppose. It hath pleased our sweet Lord Jesus to let loose the interdicted lords in His house, to deprive me of my ministry at Anwoth, and to confine me eightscore miles from thence to Aberdeen; and also (which was not done to any before) to inhibit me to speak at all in Jesus' name within this kingdom, under the pain of rebellion. The cause that ripened their hatred was my book against the Arminians, whereof they accused me those three days I appeared before them; but let our crowned King in Zion reign: by His grace the loss is theirs, the advantage is Christ's and truth's. Albeit this honest cross gained some ground on me by heaviness, and inward challenges of conscience for a time were sharp; yet now, for the encouragement of you all, I dare say it, and write it under my hand, Welcome; welcome, sweet, sweet cross of Christ! I verily think the chains of my Lord Jesus are all overlaid with pure gold, and that His cross is perfumed, and that it smelleth of Christ; and that the victory shall be by the blood of the Lamb, and by the Word of His truth; and that Christ lying on His back, in His weak servants and oppressed truth, shall ride over His enemies' bellies, and shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath.

It is time to laugh when He laugheth; and seeing He is now pleased to sit with wrongs for a time, it becometh us to be silent, until the Lord hath let the enemies enjoy their hungry, lean and feckless [spiritless, feeble, weak] paradise. Blessed are they who are content to take strokes with a weeping Christ. Faith will trust the Lord, and is not hasty nor

headstrong; neither is faith so timorous as to flatter a tentation, or to bud and bribe the cross. It is little up or little down that the Lamb and His followers can get no law-surety, nor truce with crosses. It must be so, till we be up in our Father's house. My heart is woe indeed for my mother-church, that hath played the harlot with many lovers; for her Husband hath a mind to sell her for her horrible transgressions, and heavy will be the hand of the Lord upon this backsliding nation. The ways of our Zion mourn: her gold is become dim, her white Nazarites are black like a coal. How shall not the children weep, when the Husband and the mother cannot agree? Yet I believe Scotland's skies shall clear again, and that Christ shall build again the old waste places of Jacob, and that our dead and dry bones shall become an army of living men; and that our Well-beloved may feed among the lilies, until the day break, and the shadows flee away.

My dear brother, let us help one another with our prayers. Our King shall mow down His enemies, and shall come from Bozrah with His garments all dyed in blood, and for our consolation shall He appear, and call His wife Hephzibah, and His land Beulah. For He will rejoice over us and marry us, and Scotland shall say, “What have I to do any more with idols?” Strokes with the sweet Mediator's hand are very sweet; He has always been sweet to my soul, but since I suffered for Him, His breath has a sweeter smell than before. O that every hair of my head, and every member, and every bone in my body, were a man to witness a fair confession for Him. I would think all too little for Him.

When I look over beyond the line, and beyond death, to the laughing side of the world, I triumph, and ride upon the high places of Jacob. Howbeit otherwise I am a faint, dead-hearted, cowardly man, oft borne down, and hungry in waiting for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Nevertheless, I think it the Lord's wise love that feeds us with hunger, and makes us fat with wants and desertions.

I know not, my dear brother, if our worthy brethren be gone to sea or not. They are on my heart, and in my prayers. If they be yet with you, salute my dear friend John Stuart; my well-beloved brethren in the Lord, Mr. Blair, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Livingston and Mr. M'Clellan, and acquaint them with my troubles, and entreat them to pray for the poor, afflicted prisoner of Christ; they are dear to my soul. I seek your prayers and theirs for my flock; their remembrance breaks my heart. I desire to love that people, and others, my dear acquaintance in Christ, with love in God, and as God loveth them. I know that He who sent me to the west and south sends me also to the north. I will charge my soul to believe and to wait for Him, and will follow His providence, and not go before it nor stay behind it.

Now, my dear brother, taking farewell in paper, I commend you all to the Word of His grace, and to the work of His Spirit, to Him who holdeth the seven stars in His right hand, that you may be kept spotless till the day of Jesus our Lord. I am,

Your brother in affliction, in our sweet Lord Jesus,

Samuel Rutherford

From Irving, being on my journey to Christ's palace in Aberdeen
August 4th, 1636

THE HUSBANDMAN'S LONG PATIENCE

By James Kidwell Popham (1847-1937)

One Lord's day morning I had particular liberty in preaching from John 15. 15, and said in concluding, "I shall resume the subject in the evening." This was my intention until four o'clock, when all was taken from my mind, and I began to be in great trouble and exercise about the evening service, until that word came to me: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name" (Psa. 142. 7). That was my text in the evening, and I felt more authority in preaching than even in the morning, and was sure the Lord was working in the hearts of some of the people. Then, foolishly, I expected to hear the next morning of the Lord's work by means of that sermon; but I heard nothing that day, nor the next, nor during the first month, nor the second month. But at the end of the third month, I went to visit some of the people, and as I was at the house of one member, she said, "Have you heard about Lizzie Crispin?" I said, "No, I have not; what about her?" "Well," she said, "she has been in great trouble, and the Lord blessed her under that sermon you preached from, 'Bring my soul out of prison.'"

From there I went to another house, where the person began telling me of the trouble and exercise she had been in, and that the Lord had come and delivered her under that same sermon. Then I went to good Charles Pooley. He had gone out, but his wife, whom I had not met before, asked me to come in. She began telling me of her trouble, and said that one Lord's day morning her husband came home from chapel and said to her: "You are to go this evening; I will stay and look after the children." But she said she would not. "Yes," he said, "you go this evening." "No," she said, "I will not go there again; Mr. Popham only strips and wounds me." But her husband insisted on her going, and the Lord blessed her with a clear deliverance.

So three times that day I heard of the Lord's blessing the word preached on that occasion. They were godly people, Mr. and Mrs.

Pooley. Mrs. Pooley was persuaded they would be the caretakers of the chapel, although we had almost settled with another couple to come; and her faith was so strong that she said, "If they come, they will have to go back again; we are going there." And so it was, and I suppose no chapel could have been better kept. It held 750 persons, and they scrubbed a piece of the floor every week.

Then there was good old Mr. Lacey. When going to chapel he was assaulted by the enemy thus: "You have been going to chapel a long time?" "Yes," he said. "And you never get anything, do you?" "No," he said. "Then give up going." And the temptation so far prevailed that he turned back again towards home; but the suggestion came that he had better try and go once more. So again he started walking towards the chapel; but the enemy again thrusting at him, he again turned back. Then these words came: "Who can tell?" and a third time he turned and ran, and was just in time for the service. My text was, "The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lam. 3. 25). And the Lord gave him a clear and blessed deliverance. Oh, the Lord did work by me in those days!

I was in great trouble and in a very low depressed state, and one day threw myself on the couch and said, "I shall rise no more." Then at that moment the Lord appeared and delivered me with the words, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever" (Psa. 146. 5, 6). At that word, "keepeth truth," all that the Lord had done for me in the past came to mind, and I said, "Thou wilt keep this word, Lord; Thou wilt do that; Thou wilt do all that Thou hast spoken to me of." The next day Lacey came to see me, and I told him what had happened, and how the Lord had delivered me. He said, "When did that happen?" When I told him, he said, "Well, that was just the time I left off praying for you!"

On two occasions I told the people I must resign and leave them, as the Lord was not working by my ministry. They would not have it, but I said to my wife, "I will go away; the Lord does not speak by me." But one day after the service, two men stayed behind and said, "Can we come and see you during the week?" A time was arranged, and they came; then a woman also came; and all three told how the Lord had spoken to them by my ministry during the time in which I was saying He was not doing anything by me. Then I said to my wife, "I have been like a servant discontented with his master's service, and his master would not let him go. Now I am going to unpack my boxes."

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO WOULD-BE COMMUNICANTS AT THE LORD'S TABLE

By John Flavel (1628-1691)

If the blood of the Lamb can take away the sin of the world, it can take away thy sin, though there be a world of sin in thee. For do but consider Christ, as designed from eternity to be our propitiation. "Him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6. 27), as sacrificed in our room, in the fulness of time. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5. 7) as accepted by the Father with the greatest content and pleasure, even "as a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5. 2). As publicly justified and discharged by God, the Creditor, at His resurrection (see 1 Tim. 3. 16). And lastly, consider Him as now in heaven, where He appears before God for us, as a Lamb that had been slain (see Rev. 5. 6), bearing the very marks of His death, and presenting them before God, as the most effectual and moving plea, to procure pardon and mercy for His people. Let these things, I say, be duly pondered, and nothing will be found more effectual to relieve the despondent minds of poor believers against the sinking sense of their sin.

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; than which nothing more effectually moves mercy, or stays the sliding feet of a poor believer's hope; and that whether we consider,

First, The dignity of that body which was wounded; the most hallowed and deeply sanctified thing that ever was created. "That holy Thing" (Luke 1. 35).

Secondly, Or His vicegerency in suffering. "He was wounded for our transgressions" (Isa. 53. 5). It was for that hard, proud, vain, dead heart, that thou complainest of. Or,

Thirdly, The end and design of those wounds; which was to repair the honour of God, and the violated law: the language of that blood (which is said to speak better things than the blood of Abel, see Heb. 12. 24) is this:

Father, have these poor souls wounded Thy name, Thine honour, Thy law? Behold the wounds Thy justice hath inflicted on Me, for reparation of all that wrong they have done Thee! O how sweetly doth the blood of the Lamb settle the conscience of a poor, drooping believer!

Fourthly, Is there any among you that are faint-hearted, and ready to shrink away from any sufferings for Christ, as unable to bear and endure anything for His sake? To such I would say in the words of this text, "Behold the Lamb of God"! Did Christ suffer such grievous things for you! and cannot you suffer small matters for Him? Alas! what is the wrath of man to the wrath of the great and terrible God? Besides, He was an innocent Lamb, and deserved not to suffer the least degree of

penal evil upon His own account; but thou hast deserved hell, and yet shrinkest under the sufferings of a moment. Did He suffer so much for you, and can you suffer nothing for Him? Surely He, in suffering for you, hath left you an example, that you should follow His steps (see 1 Pet. 2. 21). What! is our blood compared in dignity to the blood of Christ? What! are our sufferings compared in kind, or degree, to the sufferings of Christ! Nothing is found to fortify a man's spirit for sufferings, as the meditation of Christ's suffering for us doth.

Fifthly, Is there any among you that are impatient under your own personal trials and troubles, apt to howl under common afflictions from the hand of God, or swell with revenge under injuries from the hands of men! To such I would say, "Behold the Lamb of God"! Was Christ a Lamb for meekness, and art thou a lion for fierceness? Was He silent, not once opening His mouth, when He suffered most vile things from the hands of sinners, and can you bear nothing? He suffered patiently, and deserved it not; you suffer impatiently, and have deserved infinitely more.

O that you would learn to be more Christ-like in all your trials and afflictions! Let it not be said, that Christ carried it as a Lamb when He was tried, and we like swine, grumbling or howling when we are tried. O pray for a Christ-like temper!

Sixthly, Is there any among you that stagger at the promises, through unbelief, that cannot rely upon a word of promise, because their own unbelieving hearts fill them with unworthy suspicions of the power, faithfulness, or willingness of God to perform them to them? O that such would behold the Lamb of God, as represented in this ordinance! Are not all the promises of God sealed to believers in the blood of the Lamb? (see Heb. 9. 17-20). Are not all the promises of God, in Christ, yea and Amen, to all that are in Him? (see 2 Cor. 1. 20). Or is there anything put into any promise of greater value than the blood of the Lamb, that was shed to purchase it? Or is not the giving of Christ to die for us the accomplishment of the greatest promise that ever God made to us? And after the fulfilling thereof, what ground remains for any to doubt the fulfilling of lesser promises?

Lastly, Is there any among you that desire to get up your affections at this table, to have your hearts in a melting temper, to awaken and rouse up all the powers of your souls in so great an occasion for it as this? Behold the Lamb of God! and this will do it.

Christ calls off your eyes and thoughts from all other objects to Himself. "I said, Behold Me, behold Me" (Isa. 65. 1). Fix the eye of faith here, and you will feel a pang quickly coming upon your hearts like that: "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love" (Song 2. 5) Your eyes will affect your hearts; whilst you behold, your hearts will melt within you.

CHRIST'S WILL FOR HIS CHURCH

By Robert Traill (1642-1716)

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me” (John 17. 24).

Men's hearts are best known by their prayers. And by the same way we may know Christ's heart. Whosoever would know how deeply His heart is concerned in the saving of His people, let them read and believe this prayer.

Is Christ's will to have all His people with Him where He is? Then we are called to admire this wonderful will of Christ. This will hath its causes and springs, as you have heard. But these are so far from making it less, that they indeed make it more wonderful.

Jesus knows Himself best. We hear these words of being “with Christ; which is far better,” but little do we know what they contain and mean, because we know so little who and what Christ Himself is. But Christ knows Himself fully and perfectly; and therefore He knew what a great blessing He willed for His people when He uttered this suit to His Father. It is the wise constitution of God, that the knowledge of Christ and the enjoyment of Christ and the knowledge of that enjoyment are inseparable. We, alas, know little of Christ, we enjoy little of Him, and therefore know very little what perfect enjoyment of Him is. But Christ knew Himself perfectly, and what bliss His company would be to His people. This is one thing that may make us admire this will of Christ. As if our Lord had said: “My poor people know not fully wherein their greatest bliss consists; but I know it well, and will it to them.”

Our Lord knew best where He was to be. When Christ made known His will, He was near the lowest step of His humbled state. He was just going to the Garden of Agony, and from that to the death of the cross. But He prays as if in heaven already. And well did He know whither He was going, and what a high and happy state Himself was going to, unto which also He meant to bring His people. But we, when we pray for heaven, we pray in the dark. We pray for the blessing, but know it not but in a very small part. (see 1 Cor. 2. 9; 13. 12; 1 John 3. 2). But well did Christ know what heaven was, and therefore prays for it unto His people.

Christ knew well where His people were, in an evil world; and what bad entertainment they had, and were to have in it. In love and pity to them, therefore, He wills this blessed lodging for them in heaven. Christ knew also what their frame of heart and desires were. He knew what a heart He had put in them; that nothing less than being with Him where He was, could content, satisfy and make them happy. Would you know

when Christ begins to do good to a poor sinner? What is the first thing Christ doth to one He minds to save? It is plainly this: He makes a hole in the man's heart that nothing but Christ and heaven can fill. None but Christ, nothing but being with Him where He is, can satisfy this man. Christ's grace given, springeth up into everlasting life. And He that created this spring, will neither divert nor stop it; but as their hearts, by His grace, spring up to heaven, so Christ's heart, in this prayer, springs up to that same everlasting life for them.

Exhortation. Love this blessed Willer. Love Jesus Christ who wills to have all His people in heaven with Himself; and love Him for willing it. But some will say: "I know not that Christ wills this for me. If I did but know it, I would then love Him." Though you know it not, you doubt not but He deserves the highest love. No darkness as to your interest in Christ, can dissolve the obligation of duty to love Christ, nor excuse the sin of not loving Him. All the devils in hell, or out of hell, or in thy heart, cannot prove that thou art one that Christ hath no mind to have with Him. I will suppose thy state to be as bad as thou imagines; that thou hast no light, nor knowledge, nor ground to believe and hope that thou art in Christ's will and prayer; yea, that thou hast many fears to the contrary, and appearance of grounds for them. Yet it is certain that it is impossible to prove that Christ hath no mind to save you.

Is it not some considerable encouragement to you, that it is certain that many just such as you, are in this will of Christ? This prayer was put up and hath been oftentimes answered, for many just such as you are. You that doubt that you are not in Christ's will for glory, can you bless Him, and love Him, for willing salvation to so many others? It is a sad supposition, I own. And I think it sinful for any to lay it down as to himself, that Christ hath no mind to save him. Yet sad suppositions laid close to the heart and conscience do sometimes produce and draw forth some good thing that laid hid in the heart. Let me therefore argue with such. You fear, or conclude, that Christ hath no mind to save you, that He hath no thoughts of love to you. Well, is it not righteous in Him? Do you not own that you deserve not His love, and that you justly deserve His hatred? Proud quarrelling with His justice is very unsuitable to a pleader for His mercy. Is there any inclination in your spirits to admire, love and praise Jesus Christ for saving so many? I am persuaded that that person that admires Christ's grace in saving others, shall never be lost himself. Yea, there is some fire in this smoking flax or wick, that tender-hearted Jesus will not quench; nor will He let the many waters quench it, nor the floods drown it, although they be the floods of hell.

Exhortation. Search and try whether you are in this will of Christ. Blessed be the Lord, that no man can know that he is not in Christ's will; yet any Christian may know that he is in it. It is a matter of the vastest

concern, and calls for suitable diligence (see 2 Pet. 1. 10). *Christ's prayer and Christ's blood are of the same extent*; and both have an everlasting voice and virtue. This prayer of our Lord's was put up in the same night He was taken; and its force and virtue are still as great as when it was first uttered. So it is with the voice and virtue of His blood. It speaks to this day as precious things as when He shed it. Alas! our prayers have but little virtue and force when they are first put up, and that little is quickly spent; and were it not for our Advocate with the Father, they would all come to nothing and never more be heard of. But it is far (O how far!) otherwise with Christ's prayers. They have infinite value and virtue when first put up, and that virtue is of eternal duration. Here we have our Lord praying to have all His people with Him where He is. His prayers were always heard. "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always." And surely He was heard in His last and main prayer for His own glory and His people's blessedness. Christ did all the Father's will in working out the redemption of the elect, and the Father will do all the Son's will in giving the blessings [of the covenant] to the redeemed. It is then of the highest importance to us to know we are in the will of Christ, that always is effected; and in this prayer of His, that is, hath been, and will surely be answered. And for your help in this enquiry about your interest in Christ's will and prayer, I would look into this blessed chapter and Christ's prayer in it, and from it show some marks of them Christ prays for; and let your conscience judge of your interest in them.

Firstly, Mark 1 is in verse 6. "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." Then see if Christ hath manifested to you the Father's name. It is His work, and His only: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Many think they know the Father's name to whom Christ never revealed it. If you ask them if they know Christ's Father's name, they have a ready answer. Is He not the first Person in the Trinity? Is He not God the Father, the Almighty, the Maker and Ruler of heaven and earth? Yes. But this is the name of God only, and that in general. The name of Christ's Father is that name and discovery of God wherein He stands related to the Son, and the Son to the Father, with the power and virtue of this name: "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

The fruit of this is two:

- i. "They have kept Thy word": expressing their faith and obedience;

ii. "Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee." My Person, My calling, My furniture, My words and works, are all of Thee. This they knew: "We believe that Thou camest forth from God" (16. 30). The fruit of Christ's declaring the Father's name to them is: "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." The Father's name is a special discovery of the love of the Father unto His Son first, and then through the Son unto perishing sinners. See if you have anything of this. Christ teacheth the Father's name, and the Father teacheth Christ's name by His Spirit, when He draws men: "Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me."

Secondly, Mark 2 is: "For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me." Search if Christ hath given you any of His words. He hath the tongue of the learned from the Father (see Isa. 50. 4). We are saved by words; not words which men speak, but which Christ speaks: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." So here Christ saith, I have given unto them Thy words of love, and life, and power. Hath Christ at no time spoken to your heart, so as you have been made to say: "This is the voice of my Beloved"? Men must hear Christ's voice before they open unto Him. His voice makes the dead to hear and live.

Thirdly, Mark 3 is: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Our Lord was in the world, as never man was: "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." The world knew neither its Maker, nor Saviour. His people are in the world, but not of it. There is something sown and planted in their hearts that came from another world than this, and draws them to heaven as their home; and this world is but a passage and thoroughfare unto it. Are your hearts on heaven, and off this world? Conclude you are in Christ's prayer and will.

Fourthly, Mark 4 – Christ prays for believers in Him. Every one that can make out his faith in Christ (though he be but a weak believer) may lay claim to an interest in this prayer.

Fifthly, Mark 5 – Can you say Amen to all of it? Can you set your seal and Amen of faith and love to all that Christ prays for here? A hearty Amen to all Christ prays for His own glory, and the happiness of His body the church? Do you daily desire the same things Christ here prayed for, especially when you hear Christ's desire of having His people with Him where He is? Doth your heart echo to it: "I would; O that I were with Thee where Thou art!" If Christ's will and thy will jump together for the same blessing, then thou art in Christ's prayer and will, and there will be a performance of the Lord, when He shall get all His will on thee, and thou thy desires from Him.

GOD'S WINNOWING TIME

*Extracts from a letter from J. Tanner to Jacob Burchell (1788-1875)
of Grittenham, deacon at Providence Chapel, Clack (Bradenstoke),
near Dauntsey, Wiltshire*

We are living in solemn days. The love of many seems to wax cold; errors abound on every hand and amongst professors and preachers of truth there appears to be a sinking into an easy and smooth religion, so that at times I fear we shall not be very much distinguished one from another. When preachers get a little courted and followed by many it is a snare. I have lately thought that dear Mr. Tiptaft's removal is a much greater loss to the church than at first I felt it to be. He was the most honest, discriminating and separating man of God I ever knew, or expect to know, both in his walk and conversation and in the ministry of the gospel.

I sometimes feel as if the winnowing was almost done with; the threshing is often more like rubbing the corn out in the hands with a pair of kid gloves than using either a flail or a cartwheel; the people love smooth things, and smooth preachers abound, though I am persuaded there are a few who, through grace, see and feel this and cry to God in secret on account of it.

J. Tanner

Eastbourne, Sussex
September 12th, 1866

A REMARKABLE DREAM AND ITS FULFILMENT

From the Life of Robert Moxon (1840-1906)

Mr. Link, deacon of Gower Street Chapel, sent me a letter, asking me to supply their pulpit on the first Lord's day in May 1891. Having had a dream some time previously that I was preaching in London, I felt very desirous to oblige them if I could. I obtained the services of Mr. Carr for our anniversary, and then promised Mr. Link that I would try to oblige them. I accordingly went, and found a goodly number of the Lord's people. I felt a knitting together to them in the bonds of the gospel. I did not feel very well in body, but on the whole I much enjoyed my short visit among them.

When I was at Gower Street Chapel, I did not think it was the place I had seen in my dream. After a time I received an invitation from Mr. Ashdown to visit Great Alie Street. I felt a desire to go there, to see if that chapel was anything like the one I had seen in my dream. When

I was preaching there (October 18th, 1891), I told them my dream and that I thought that was the place I had seen. "And if it is," I said, "I have one particular message to deliver to you, which I distinctly remember in my dream:

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

(H. 212)

On the first two Sabbaths in June 1892, I was supplying at Trowbridge, and during the weeks after the Sabbaths, I preached at the following places: Swindon, Calne, Hilperton, Studley, Bampton and Grove. On my way to Bampton, I was met at Faringdon station by my very kind friends, Mr. Pembrey and Mrs. Goold, his dear sister. The distance from Faringdon to Bampton is about six or seven miles. It was a very pleasant drive, but one thing impressed my mind more than all the beauties of nature in God's fair creation. It was this. Mrs. Goold said, "I always think that if God gives a message to His ministers, there is someone to whom that message is sent." She asked, "Do you remember that, when in London supplying for Mr. Ashdown at Great Alie Street, you mentioned having had a dream in which you thought you were in London and that in preaching you had to say the following words:

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

I said, "Yes, I remember it very well." She replied, "So do I, and I believe it was for me. I was then about to undergo an operation, which had caused me much anxiety and fear, and many prayers to God for His blessing and help. Those words were made a comfort and deliverance to me before, during and after the operation. Again and again they dropped like honey into my soul. I felt that all sin was put away, all blotted out, all forgiven, all removed, and, with it, all fear. I could neither find nor feel sin, guilt or fear; and the words kept coming:

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

A Christian is what he is between God and his own soul.

John Mason

GLORIFYING GOD

Extract from a sermon preached by B.A. Ramsbottom in January 1970

“Glorify God.” There is this glorifying of God in the church. There is a *glorifying of God in contending for the truth*. We live in a day in which many, even among the godly, fail to see the vital nature of divine truth. How often we hear people say, “It does not matter,” and they cannot see the importance of it! The Lord will bless His own truth; and where any church deviates from the truth, they may think it is something that does not matter, but it dishonours Christ, and when Christ is dishonoured, the Holy Ghost is grieved. Then soon it will be “Ichabod, the glory of the Lord is departed.” We cannot be too careful concerning divine truth. The eyes of the Lord, we are told, are ever upon the truth and it is precious to Him, and any deviation from the truth, however small it may appear to man, dishonours God.

Friends, have you noticed in the ceremonial law, the tiny details the Lord insisted on? He did not leave anything to Moses’ choice; and if ever there was a godly, honourable man, it was Moses. But the Lord so laid down the details. He said, “See that ye do all things according to the pattern given thee in the mount” (see Heb. 8. 5; Exod. 25. 40). It is God’s religion, not ours. It is not for us to say what is important or what is not important. “Therefore glorify God.”

THE SECOND PETITION IN THE LORD’S PRAYER

By Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

“Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6. 10)

Answers to some doubts and objections that a Christian may make against himself

I fear the kingdom of grace is not yet come into my heart.

When a Christian is under temptation, or grace lies dormant, he is not fit to be his own judge, but must take the witness of others who have the spirit of discernment. But let us hear a Christian’s objections against himself, why he thinks the kingdom of grace is not yet come into his heart.

I cannot discern grace.

A child of God may have the kingdom of grace in his heart, and yet not know it. The cup was in Benjamin’s sack, though he did not know it was there; so thou mayest have faith in thy heart, the cup may be in thy sack, though thou knowest it not. Old Jacob wept for his son Joseph

when Joseph was alive; so thou mayest weep for want of grace, when grace may be alive in thy heart. The seed may be in the ground, when we do not see it spring up; so the seed of God may be sown in thy heart, though thou dost not perceive it springing up. Think not grace is lost because it is hid.

Before the kingdom of grace come into the heart, there must be some preparation for it; the fallow ground must be broken up: I fear the plough of the law has not gone deep enough: I have not been humbled enough: therefore I have no grace.

God does not prescribe an exact proportion of sorrow and humiliation; Scripture mentions the truth of sorrow, but not the measure. Some are more flagitious sinners than others, and must have a greater degree of humiliation. A knotty piece of timber requires more wedges to be driven into it. Some stomachs are fouler than others, therefore need stronger physic. But wouldest thou know when thou hast been humbled enough for sin? When thou art willing to let go thy sins. The gold has lain long enough in the furnace when the dross is purged out; so, when the love of sin is purged out, a soul is humbled enough for divine acceptation, though not for divine satisfaction. Now, if thou art humbled enough, what needs more? If a needle will let out the imposthume, what needs a lance? Be not more cruel to thyself than God would have thee.

If the kingdom of God were within me, it would be a kingdom of power; it would enable me to serve God with vigour of soul. But I have a spirit of infirmity upon me. I am weak and impotent, and untuned to every holy action.

There is a great difference between the weakness of grace and the want of grace. A man may have life, though he be sick and weak. Weak grace is not to be despised, but cherished. Christ will not break the bruised reed. Do not argue from the weakness of grace to the nullity.

1. Weak grace will give us a title to Christ as well as strong. A weak hand of faith will receive the alms of Christ's merits.

2. Weak faith is capable of growth. The seed springs up by degrees, first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. The faith that is strongest was once in its infancy. Grace is like the waters of the sanctuary, which rose higher and higher. Be not discouraged at thy weak faith; though it be but blossoming, it will by degrees come to more maturity.

3. The weakest grace shall persevere as well as the strongest. A child would have been as safe in the ark as Noah. An infant believer that is but newly laid to the breast of the promise, is as safe in Christ as the most eminent heroic saint.

I fear the kingdom of grace is not yet come, because I find the kingdom of sin so strong in me. Had I faith, it would purify my heart; but I find much pride, worldliness and passion.

The best of saints have remainders of corruption. "They had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season" (Dan. 7. 12). So in the regenerate, though the dominion of sin be taken away, yet the life of it is prolonged for a season. What pride was there in Christ's own disciples, when they strove which should be greatest! The issue of sin will not be quite stopped till death. The Lord is pleased to let the in-being of sin continue, to humble His people, and make them prize Christ more. Because you find corruptions stirring, do not therefore presently unsaint yourselves, and deny the kingdom of grace to be come into your souls. That you feel sin is an evidence of spiritual life; that you mourn for it is a fruit of love to God; that you have a combat with sin, argues antipathy against it. Those sins which you once wore as a crown on your head, are now as fetters on the leg. Is not all this from the Spirit of grace in you? Sin is in you, as poison in the body, which you are sick of, and use all Scripture antidotes to expel. Should we condemn all those who have indwelling sin, nay, who have had sin sometimes prevailing, we should blot some of the best saints out of the Bible.

Where the kingdom of grace comes, it softens the heart; but I find my heart frozen and congealed into hardness; I can hardly squeeze out one tear. Do flowers grow on a rock? Can there be any grace in such a rocky heart?

There may be grief where there are no tears. The best sorrow is rational. In your judgment you esteem sin the most hyperbolical evil, you have a disgust against it which is a rational sorrow, and such as God will accept. A Christian may have some hardness in his heart, and yet not have a hard heart. A field may have tares in it, and we call it a field of wheat; so in the best heart there may be a mixture of hardness, yet because there is some softness and melting, God looks upon it as a soft heart. Therefore, Christian, dispute not against thyself, if thou canst find but this one thing, that the frame and temper of thy soul be holy. Art thou still breathing after God, delighting in Him? Is the complexion of thy soul heavenly? Canst thou say, as David, "When I awake, I am still with Thee"? (Psa. 139. 18). As colours laid in oil, or a statue carved in gold, abide, so does a holy complexion; the soul is still pointing towards God. If it be thus with thee, assure thyself the kingdom of grace is come into the soul. Be not unkind to God, to deny any work of His Spirit, which He has wrought in thee.

BOOK REVIEWS

Why Were Our Reformers Burnt? by J.C. Ryle; paperback; 42 pages; price £2; published by the Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from them and from Christian bookshops.

This excellent and timely reproduction of a work by Bishop Ryle reminds us of the reasons for which the Protestant martyrs went to the stake. Their valiant fight against the errors of the apostate Roman Catholic church laid the foundation of the freedom of religion which we yet enjoy. Such freedoms, if taken for granted, could soon be withholden, so it becomes us to remind ourselves of those principles on which our forefathers would not compromise. Rome has not changed, though it seeks to present a benign face. Even now, in strongly Catholic countries, to be a true Protestant exposes one to exclusion and even persecution rarely, if ever, mentioned by the media.

The true nature and purpose of the communion service instituted by Christ in the upper room has long been perverted by the Church of Rome to suit its own ends. Once it yields on its error of the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Christ, the supposed power of the priest is gone, and with it the authority of the whole corrupt system. The martyrs of whom Ryle writes cogently and graciously contended for the truth and made the ultimate sacrifice, leaving the true Protestant in their debt.

We commend this book to our readers, especially our younger readers, who need to understand the vital stand these brave men made.

Thomas Charles of Bala, by John A. Aaron; hardback; 382 pages; price £15.50; **Thomas Charles' Spiritual Counsels**, selected from his letters and papers, by Edward Morgan; hardback; 355 pages; price £15.50; both published by the Banner of Truth Trust, and obtainable from them and from Christian bookshops.

These two well-recommended books cover the life and ministry of Thomas Charles, who among many other ventures in the cause of Christ was instrumental in the forming of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the forerunner of the Trinitarian Bible Society. The autobiography by John Aaron is a new publication and provides a fascinating and gripping account of the life and ministry of this man of God. The zeal and indefatigable energy which God gave to such men as Thomas Charles laid the foundation of the revival of true experiential religion in Wales in his generation. It also had a profound social impact through the many Sunday schools which came into being at that time.

The second book, foreworded by Iain H. Murray, is a reprint of selections from the writings and sermons of Thomas Charles. In these we see the gospel that Charles preached, and which God so significantly owned and blessed. Always Scripturally based, the writings are Christ-centred, and contend in a gracious and able way for those doctrines of grace on which the gospel is founded.

We warmly commend these two books.



THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

"He must needs go through Samaria" (John 4. 4).

Once as the Friend of sinners dear,
A Man of sorrows sojourned here;
Eternal love ordained it so,
That through Samaria He must go.

But what could His dear feet incline,
(Unless compelled by love divine,
From whence salvation's blessings flow)
That He must through Samaria go?

There, wandering from the fold of God,
He saw the purchase of His blood:
And o'er this wretch, to lust a slave,
Did sovereign grace her banner wave.

Herein discriminating grace
Shone with a bright, refulgent blaze;
While dead in sin ten thousands lie,
Grace brought this rebel harlot nigh.

Roused from her fond, delusive dream,
As Israel's God she worshipped Him;
Drank of that living water pure,
That shall to endless years endure.

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

Jesus, our Shepherd, God and King,
Thy guardian care and love we sing,
And hail that grace both rich and free,
That brings Thy wandering sheep to Thee.

Glory to God, till this takes place,
Bulwarks of fire and walls of grace
Keep all His blood-bought flock secure,
Till calling proves election sure.

John Kent (1766-1843)

If believers are condemned by the world, let them remember that they shall not be condemned with the world. Sin may live in a believer, but a believer cannot live in sin. It may lose its dominion, though not leave its habitation.

John Mason

THE

GOSPEL STANDARD

NOVEMBER 2022

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

SEEN OF ANGELS

*Sermon preached by Donald MacLean
on Lord's day morning, April 15th, 1979
(Concluded from page 306)*

Text: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3. 16).

2. *Have we seen Jesus?*

Now that brings me to this point in the second place: has He been seen by us? Have we seen Jesus?

Our seeing of Him is in nearly every aspect of the case different from the way in which He was seen by angels. The angels referred to here are without sin – they are those who desire to look into the mystery of godliness, who desire to look into the revelation of God's mercy and grace in His beloved Son. But they have no need of mercy, they have no need of the forgiveness of sins, they have no need of being illuminated by the Word of God and by the Spirit of God. These spirits are the elect angels, they are the angels who have retained their first estate, and who have been confirmed in that estate and who enjoy the knowledge of that confirmation.

As you know, there were angels who "kept not their first estate." They fell, by sinning against God. They fell in union with one another, and they are reserved in chains of darkness against the judgment of the great day. From being angels of light they became spirits of darkness. But the angels who did not fall, they knew perfectly well and understood perfectly clearly that the angels who fell were created in the same way as themselves. They too were created holy spirits, in the possession of the knowledge of God, and indeed one of them, the prince of them, whose name was Lucifer (which means a bearer of light – in his particular service to God in his original creation, he bore about the light of God's glory) – Lucifer became, as he is now, the prince of darkness. Therefore the angels who retained their first estate needed to have it revealed to them that they were elect angels, and that they would never fall. That was done in connection with the headship of the Saviour, so that when they look upon Jesus alone, they see Him as the Head of the angels as well as the Head of the church. And they know that through Him they

are elect – through Him they will never fall – through Him they will retain their happiness, their holiness, their enjoyment of the fellowship of God, their enjoyment of discerning the glory of God. This is a large part of their heaven, as it is a large part of the heaven of the spirits of just men made perfect. However, the case is very different with us, for we are sinners.

Therefore the question is very serious for us: “Have we seen Jesus?” Have we seen the Jesus of whom Paul spoke when he said, “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death”? Well, in order that we may see Jesus spiritually, we must see Him in connection with the mystery of godliness. In other words, we must see Christ in the Word of God.

Now you remember when the Saviour was teaching His disciples that He was to leave them, and especially after He rose from the dead, He told them that from then on, they would need to know Him by faith through His Word. You read in the case of Mary Magdalene, when she saw Jesus she did not know Him first of all, but when He spoke to her and said, “Mary,” then she recognised Him and said, “Rabboni.” Apparently she made as if to take hold of the Saviour. But He said, “Touch Me not.” Why did He say that? On the other occasion the women laid hold of His feet and worshipped Him and He did not say to them not to touch Him. But He said it to Mary Magdalene because of the intensity of Mary’s love and the intensity of Mary’s desire to enjoy the fellowship of her Lord as she had had it before. Mark that – as she had it before – as she said, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.” The Saviour said, “Touch Me not ... but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God, and your God.” The fellowship which Mary was now to enjoy with the Saviour was not a fellowship in which she would see Jesus with the eyes of the body, but one in which she would see Jesus with the eyes of faith.

Then we have the incident with the two on the way to Emmaus. They were cast down, they were sad, and their sadness was seen on their countenance. When the Saviour drew nigh to them they said, “We trusted that it was He which should have redeemed Israel.” But now – now we cannot see Him any more, now He is in the grave’s devouring mouth, now our hope is low – very low indeed, and as dark and cold as the grave itself. Then you see what the Saviour did. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” He asked. They needed a spiritual view of the sufferings of Christ, and therefore He began to open up to them the Old Testament Scriptures where Christ was made known – and the Old Testament Scriptures, of course, are full of Christ. And as He did this, this is what they had to say: “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and *while He*

opened to us the Scriptures?” He opened to us the Scriptures, and this is where we are to see Him today.

Here then is a question, whether the Lord ever spoke to us. Now many of the true people of God, who are very tender in their souls, sometimes worry about this. They say, “Well, I cannot say that I’ve got any particular portion of the Word of God which I felt that the Lord spoke to me.” Now the point is that if the Lord spoke to you in any part of the Word of God, whether or not that was in a particular portion, the way that He spoke was opening up that portion to your understanding. He opened up the truths in that portion to your soul. Whether it was one portion, or whether it was a sermon, or whether it was a chapter, or whether it was a sermon you read, or whatever it was, whatever Christ speaks to the soul by the Holy Spirit, the nature of the speaking is, “Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?” That is what He did. And then they saw Jesus in the Scriptures. They saw Jesus in the Scriptures that manifested Him in this way, that Christ ought to have suffered these things and to have entered into His glory.

Therefore, when the question comes to us, “He was seen of angels, has He been seen of us?” then the place where we must see Him is in the Scriptures. The place where we must see Him is in the Word of God. The place where we must see Him is in the gospel of the grace of God.

Now that involves this, that we see ourselves. You will remember the very simple and very instructive tale of Hector MacPhail. When he was travelling down from Nairn to the assembly, he stopped in a certain place and he was going to hold family worship. When the household gathered, he asked if everybody was there. There was this girl, a kitchen maid, who was not there, so he made sure that she was brought in. When he was setting off on his journey again, he bade her goodbye, and he gave her this prayer: “Lord, show me myself.” When he came back some time later, he found her that she had indeed seen herself and it had caused her pain and sorrow. He then gave her the prayer, “Lord, show me *Thyself*.”

Now between these two prayers, you have the experience of the sinner in coming to see Jesus. First of all, the sinner comes to see himself or herself in the light of God’s Word as a sinner, without God, without hope in the world, without any possibility of delivering oneself from one’s sins. And then the sinner comes to see Jesus as the Son of man who came to seek and to save that which was lost. The gospel becomes good news, in the sense of the term that it is bringing peace to sinners, the peace of God wrought out by God’s beloved Son.

Have we seen ourselves? Have we seen that we are guilty, that we are lost, that we are ruined, that we are undone, that we cannot deliver ourselves? Has it caused us sorrow? Has it caused us grief? Has it

caused us concern so that our question is, What must we do to be saved? Or, Is there salvation for a sinner such as I am?

Have we come to see that there is salvation for sinners? And if so, have we come to see that the Saviour is Jesus? – the same One whom the angels saw, in the ways that we have been endeavouring faintly to describe. But my dear friend, although the angels saw Him, and wondered, and desired to look into these things, they never saw Christ in the same way as Paul did, or as Peter did, or as the woman of Samaria did. “Come, see a Man,” said the woman of Samaria, “which told me all things that ever I did,” and a Man who revealed Himself to me as the Messiah – the Man who said to me, “I that speak unto thee am He.” Well, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner, and when she came to the feet of Jesus, there was nothing she could do but have a flood of tears. Do not believe that she meant it to be so. Evidently she felt deeply indebted to the Saviour – her sins had been forgiven, and she loved much. She sought Jesus out, but when she came near to His feet, the tears flowed. It could not be otherwise, because they were the tears of love, and the tears of gratitude, and the tears of thankfulness, that these feet that she now washed with her tears and dried with the hair of her head were the feet that were to be pierced with the nails in order that her sins, which were many, might be remembered no more for ever.

So we need to see Jesus, Jesus as the Saviour, the one name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved. And do you not agree with the two on the way to Emmaus, when they said, “Did not our heart burn within us?” that there is a going out of your heart? There is a warming of your heart. There is a drawing in your affections to the Jesus whom you see in the Word of God, the Jesus whom you see in the preaching of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God. However dark you may feel on many occasions, yet when you hear about Jesus, do you not feel some warmth in your soul? When you hear about the One who said, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out,” the One who said, “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me,” then do you not feel a warmth that is not of this world? A fire kindled in your soul that does not come from this world at all.

I have often told this incident and it might be helpful to repeat it. One time I was staying with my aunt, the mother of the late Mr. Donald Malcolm MacLeod. I was staying down in a farmhouse near Killin, and I always remember, one morning, just like this morning, I came out of the house and I noticed above the door a nest, and this nest was just as black as one could possibly think of. And while I was watching it, the mother bird came along, flying along with a worm in her beak. And she began to give a call, and when she gave this call, the nest that had appeared so black became full of the open beaks of the fledglings who heard the call

of their mother and who were now to be fed. I could not but compare that to how often I feel my heart to be, black and dead and earthly. But when the gospel is here, and when the joyful sound is heard, it awakens desires and longings, and the open beaks of these desires and longings looking towards Jesus.

Well, my dear friend, if that is true of you, you have seen Jesus. And you may as well stop worrying about it and doubting, because you can be as sure as you are sitting in your seat that if that is the case with you, that you feel these desires and these desires going out to Christ, then you *must* have seen Him. "Sir," said the Greeks, "we would see Jesus." When the voice of Jesus is heard in the gospel of the grace of God, this dead soul of yours and mine feels the warmth and the reviving, and that is a clear and unmistakable sign that we have seen Jesus.

Also, if we have seen Jesus, it will leave in our souls a desire to see Him again. "They have taken away my Lord," said Mary, but her desire remained: "and I know not where they have laid Him," she said. But the Word of God says,

"O all ye that do seek the Lord,
Your heart shall ever live." (Psa. 69. 32, metrical)

Those who have seen Jesus desire to see Him again and again and again. They are on their way to heaven where they will see Jesus, as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, world without end.

May He bless His Word. Let us call upon His name.

From *Unsearchable Riches*

TO A CHRISTIAN BROTHER ON THE DEATH OF HIS DAUGHTER

Consolation in her having gone before – Christ the best Husband

Reverend and beloved in the Lord,

It may be that I have been too long silent, but I hope that ye will not impute it to forgetfulness of you.

As I have heard of the death of your daughter with heaviness of mind on your behalf, so am I much comforted that she hath evidenced to yourself and other witnesses the hope of the resurrection of the dead. As sown corn is not lost (for there is more hope of that which is sown than of that which is eaten) (see 1 Cor. 15. 42, 43), so also is it in the resurrection of the dead: the body "is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory." I hope that ye wait for the crop and harvest; "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose

again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him” (1 Thess. 4. 14). Then they are not lost who are gathered into that congregation of the first-born, and the general assembly of the saints. Though we cannot outrun nor overtake them that are gone before, yet we shall quickly follow them; and the difference is, that she hath the advantage of some months or years of the crown before you and her mother. As we do not take it ill if our children outrun us in the life of grace, why then are we sad if they outstrip us in the attainment of the life of glory? It would seem that there is more reason to grieve that children live behind us, than that they are glorified and die before us. All the difference is in some poor, hungry accidents of time, less or more, sooner or later. So the godly child, though young, died an hundred years old; and ye could not now have bestowed her better, though the choice was Christ’s, not yours.

And I am sure, Sir, ye cannot now say that she is married against the will of her parents. She might more readily, if alive, fall into the hands of a worse husband; but can ye think that she could have fallen into the hands of a better? And if Christ marry with your house, it is your honour, not any cause of grief, that Jesus should portion any of yours, ere she enjoy your portion. Is it not great love? The patrimony is more than any other could give; as good a husband is impossible; to say a better is blasphemy. The King and Prince of ages can keep them better than ye can do. While she was alive, ye could entrust her to Christ, and recommend her to His keeping; now, by an after-faith, ye have resigned her unto Him in whose bosom do sleep all that are dead in the Lord. Ye would have lent her to glorify the Lord upon earth, and He hath borrowed her (with promise to restore her again) (see 1 Cor. 15. 53; 1 Thess. 4. 15, 16) to be an organ of the immediate glorifying of Himself in heaven. Sinless glorifying of God is better than sinful glorifying of Him. And sure your prayers concerning her are fulfilled. I shall desire, if the Lord shall be pleased the same way to dispose of her mother, that ye have the same mind. Christ cannot multiply injuries upon you. If the fountain be the love of God (as I hope it is), ye are enriched with losses.

Ye knew all I can say better, before I was in Christ, than I can express it. Grace be with you.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

Samuel Rutherford

London, January 6th, 1646

God’s gold is the world’s dross. They of whom the world is not worthy, are counted not worthy to live in the world.

John Mason

LOVE TO THE LORD CONFIRMED

*Extract from a sermon by B.A. Ramsbottom,
preached on December 27th, 2020*

“LORD, I have loved the habitation of Thy house,” the place where our Lord and Saviour dwells, where His presence is felt, where He makes the place of His feet glorious. One of our hymnwriters says,

“There I have been, and there would go;
'Tis like a little heaven below!”

Are there those times when you find it like a little heaven below? You feel the Lord is here, or your heart is touched with His love, and then you can feelingly say, and you can say it to Almighty God, “LORD, *I have* loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.” There have been times in my life when I have come to this: if I could not say anything else in Scripture, I have felt I could lay hold on this: whatever people think or say or do, “LORD, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.”

I will tell you a little experience of this I had many years ago when I was a teacher down in Wisbech. There was a man fairly well known in the district. He was notorious for his views of divine truth – the people he could not receive, the ministers he could not receive. But he invited me to go for tea one Saturday. He lived in the town of March. I had a nice evening with him and his wife, but he wanted to have a close talk with me. He wanted to ask me a lot of questions. One came, and then another, and they kept on. I was only young. I was not a church member. Then I found he had his notes on a piece of paper and he kept bringing them out. They were deep, searching questions. I had a nice time with the old man, but I went out and went home, and that night I felt destitute of everything. He just knocked the whole of my religion out of me. It was a terrible feeling. I felt really sad. Sunday morning came. I still felt pretty terrible. I was sitting in the little chapel at Wisbech which I attended, and I was feeling the blessedness of being permitted to be found in the house of God, and suddenly that word flew into my heart:

“Could I joy His saints to meet,
Choose the ways I once abhorred,
Find at times the promise sweet,
If I did not love the Lord?”

(H. 283)

It brought me right out. It was a deliverance. I have never forgotten that occasion, though it was many, many years ago now.

WHAT IS TRUE RELIGION?

The author of this piece was "Jabez of Preston," who wrote several articles which appeared in the Gospel Standard between 1845 and 1847.

What is true religion?

True religion comes down from heaven; it proceeds from God only, through the mediation of Christ. It dwells in the soul, and it is spiritual and eternal life communicated by the life-giving energy of the Holy Ghost in the day of grace. True religion is the life of God within: "You hath He quickened, who were dead."

Now all the outward forms of religion and morality in the world, without the quickening power of the Spirit, are only delusion. No man can enter the kingdom of God except he be born again, or from above. True religion is, therefore, the work of God alone in the heart; and when this is wanting – no matter how moral, how pious, how ascetic, how sound in doctrine, how steady in profession – it will all avail the professor of these things nothing, so long as the soul remains in the sleep of death. Such a profession of religion will only be like the rotten tree clothed with ivy leaves, or a case of stuffed birds of beautiful plumage. O the worth and glory of a heart changed by quickening grace, a human soul with the life of God in it! For God the Spirit dwells in every renewed soul, and this is the seat of true religion: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth *in* you?"; "The kingdom of God is *within* you"; "A good man out of the good treasure of his *heart* bringeth forth good things"; "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," speaking of the Holy Spirit. Thus we see the root and fountain of true religion are in the heart. And this living religion is communicated by the Lord Jesus from heaven as the Head and Fountain of all spiritual life, grace and glory. As all human nature has borne the image of their earthly parent, so all true believers shall bear the image of the Lord from heaven, who is "a life-giving Spirit" (see 1 Cor. 15. 49).

Who can estimate the worth, appreciate the blessing, and fully understand the glory of the life of God in the soul, which is true religion? Only think of the guilt, corruption, helplessness, blindness and enmity of the human heart by nature; and then think of the blessed and solemn contrast of a spiritual, eternal and holy life, communicated to such a person, never to be taken away or lost. Here is life for death, light for darkness, love for enmity, wisdom for ignorance, a soft heart for a hard one, a praying spirit for a filthy one, faith for unbelief, a holy nature for a corrupt one, a precious Jesus for a legal righteousness of filthy rags, the nature of the lamb for the lion, the ox for the bear, the dove for the bird

of prey, the chewing of the cud and dividing of the hoof for the unclean swine, the law of grace in the mind for the law of sin in the members, the new man for the old, the kingdom of Christ for the kingdom of Satan, the Prince of Peace for the prince of darkness, and the God of all grace and consolation for the god of this world. What a blessed and truly desirable change is this! and this is true religion.

But how does the Spirit operate on the soul in giving this religion? He is a Sovereign, and He operates how and when it pleaseth Him: "The wind bloweth where it listeth" – pleaseth – "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." He has given no account of His particular mode of action in quickening the dead. He has told us He does so, and that is sufficient; were we told more of the mystery of the immediate act of His operations, flesh and blood could not understand it. The Lord, in the act of breathing on His disciples, has given us a beautiful and clear symbol of the Spirit's communication to the soul: "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20. 22). He uses a variety of means by which He accomplishes this great work: He clothes Himself in the Scriptures, in the ministry, and in various other outward means, and enters the heart; or He works upon the soul without any outward means, just as it pleaseth Him. But by whatever method He chooses, He as certainly works a regenerating work of grace upon the elect soul as man is born of a woman.

But how is it to be known? By its *effects, graces and fruits*.

One of the first effects of divine life in the soul is *feeling*. A dead soul is without all spiritual feeling, but quickening grace gives a feeling sense of guilt. The soul feels sin and the guilt of it to be a painful reality. It is engraven in the conscience and memory, and causes uneasiness and distress; and it is sin against God which causes painful sensations and sinking despondency. These feelings produce a cry in the soul: "What must I do to be saved?" "Oh that I could feel sin pardoned, peace of conscience, and assurance of heaven at death!" The galling yoke of bondage, and the prison house, harass and perplex. A dread of God, and the sting of a guilty conscience, produce terror and fear. A sense of guilt leads to a cry for mercy: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" and to confession of sin: "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned."

Divine life gives a feeling sense of *pollution*. The corrupt fountain of a diseased heart is like a running sore, an incurable plague. A feeling sense of a polluted nature sickens the renewed soul, and causes the man utterly to loathe himself, like a diseased, outcast leper, and with hearty confession to exclaim, "Behold I am vile!" "We are altogether as an unclean thing!" "My own clothes abhor me!" But these feelings and confessions of pollution proceed from a holy and pure nature in the heart;

for it is only the pure in heart that see, feel, confess and mourn over a polluted nature. Holiness and purity discover pollution and make it loathsome: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It is a sheet of *white* paper which most clearly and quickly discovers a black spot; so it is the pure in heart who feel, painfully feel, a polluted nature. Such a one best knows it is that which "proceedeth out of the heart that defileth a man."

Divine life gives a feeling sense of the want and need of grace revealed to the heart. Feelings of guilt and pollution cause the feeling need of Christ in His atoning blood and justifying righteousness to be revealed with power to the heart, and of a conscious experience of the blessed unction of the Spirit. The former is a feeling of the disease; the latter is a desire of the remedy. Both are marks of life and true religion; and according to the depth of discovery by the Spirit of each of these, so will the intensity of feeling be. The Spirit discovers the depth of these things according to the measure of His own free gift and good pleasure. But He always works them so deep as to sicken us of self, and wean us from it, and make us willing and glad, with many prayers and desires, to receive salvation in all its fulness.

Nor does the blessed Spirit ever disappoint a longing, desiring, praying, needy soul: "A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory." The time may appear long to wait, but though it tarry, it will surely come. Christ will be revealed with sweet, heart-melting power; faith will fill the heart, and joy swell the affections; the love of God will be shed abroad within, and the Spirit will bear witness to the conscience that it is His own work. The poor, needy soul will then rejoice in God his Saviour, and with joy "draw water out of the wells of salvation"; for God is now become his salvation, he therefore sings unto Him and exalts His name, because He hath done excellent things for him (see Isa. 12. 5).

True religion is to be known by its *graces*; by which I mean the graces of the Spirit, such as true, spiritual faith, repentance, hope, fear, love, prayer, thanksgiving, spiritual light and knowledge of the mystery of the gospel, meekness, patience, and watchfulness. The most of these may be counterfeited and learned naturally; but when this is the case, the cloven foot will show itself from beneath some corner of these white robes; nor will counterfeits hold out to the end. But all these graces in their essence and in the bud are communicated to the soul in the act of divine quickening, and drawn forth as the Spirit who gave them is pleased to move and breathe upon them. He breathes and blows upon His garden that these spices may flow out; and in proportion as they flow out is true religion manifested in its graces.

But they do not all appear at a time, nor are they all in full bloom at once. These are for different ends and uses, and therefore called into exercise in the time of need, when really needed, and when God shall be most glorified. Where all these graces dwell, they shall all in their turn be tried by their opposites: unbelief shall try faith; doubts, hope; presumption, fear; ingratitude, thankfulness; deadness, prayer; forgetfulness, watchfulness, and so on. But these trying conflicts, which sometimes cause deep agony of soul, serve to the very drawing forth of these precious graces; for it is when the fiery trial is the hottest that the Son of God is nearest, walking in the midst. It is in times of need and days of trouble that the dear Lord, in the loving kindness of His tender heart, draws out and strengthens each grace as it is needed; when about to sink, then He puts forth His saving arm; when there is no helper, then He is a very present help in time of need; when at our wits' end, then is He the end of the law for righteousness; when fear prevails and strength gives way, then "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength"; when despondency and unbelief threaten to swallow us up, He speaks with a heart-melting word of power; when sin defiles, He shows His own holiness and righteousness; when self is utterly wrecked, He saves in Himself as the great Ark of Salvation, and turns the raging storm into a sweet, serene calm. Thus God is glorified, grace is manifested, the poor sinner is blessed, and his religion appears true, both to himself and to others.

Again, true religion appears by its *fruits*. True religion and its graces in the heart will produce outward fruits in some humble measure. It as naturally leads to this as a living tree to produce fruits in its season. It is true that most of the children of God and those deepest taught feel their shortcoming here; and it often causes them great sinking of heart that they are not more fruitful outwardly. Notwithstanding this, if matters are closely examined, they will perhaps be found more fruitful than some who make greater pretensions and show, and what they do will be found to spring from a purer principle. But being so sensible of their utter unworthiness, and of the spiritual nature of true religion, they are very reluctant to put any value on anything they do; and at times they can from their heart say, "We are unprofitable servants." Nor at the last day will they claim any merits of their doings, or set any very high value on them, though the Lord will (see Matt. 25. 33-40). But they in their right mind have humble views of themselves, and all they do; yet they are the salt and excellent of the earth, and true religion in the fruits of it more or less is seen in them: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation" teacheth "us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Tit. 2. 11, 12). They live a temperate, moral, sober, honest, upright life in the fear of

God, doing good as enabled, and as opportunity presents itself to the saints and all men; not living in riot, in brawling, in malice and wrath, but wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove; keeping themselves unspotted from the world, and being charitable to the fatherless, the widow, and the needy (see Jas. 1. 27). This, then, is true religion; happy is the man who has it.

THE VITAL NECESSITY AND PRIVILEGE OF SECRET COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

By Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a Man with him until the breaking of the day. And when He saw that he prevailed not against Him, He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as He wrestled with him. And He said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me” (Gen. 32. 24-26).

Never was there a conflict of so illustrious a nature, and of so strange a result, between powers so dissimilar and extreme. The incarnate God, as if to demonstrate His own divine power, and at the same time to make the victory of human weakness over infinite might more illustrious and palpable, touches the wrestling patriarch, and he is a cripple! Then at the moment of his greatest weakness, when taught the lesson of his own insufficiency, that flesh might not glory in the divine presence, Omnipotence retires as if vanquished from the field, and yields the palm of victory to the disabled but prevailing prince. And why all this? To teach us the amazing power of prayer, which the feeblest believer may have when alone with Jesus.

No point of Christian duty and privilege set before you in this work will plead more earnestly and tenderly for your solemn consideration, dear reader, than this. It enters into the very essence of your spiritual being. This is the channel through which flows the oil that feeds the lamp of your Christian profession. Dimly will burn that lamp, and drooping will be your spiritual light, if you are not used to be much alone with Jesus. Every feeling of the soul, and each department of Christian labour, will be sensibly affected by this woeful neglect. He who is but seldom with Jesus in the closet will exhibit, in all that he does for Jesus in the world, but the fitful and convulsive movements of a mind urged on by a feverish and unnatural excitement. It is only in much prayer – that prayer secret and confiding – that the heart is kept in its right position, its affections properly governed, and its movements correctly regulated. And

are there not periods when you find it needful to leave the society of the most spiritual – sweet as is the communion of saints – to be alone with Jesus? He Himself has set you the example. Accustomed at times to withdraw from His disciples, He has been known to spend whole nights amid the mountains' solitude, alone with His Father.

O the sacredness, the solemnity of such a season! Alone with God! alone with Jesus! no eye seeing, no ear hearing, but His; the dearest of earthly beings excluded, and no one present save Jesus only, the best, the dearest of all! Then, in the sweetest and most unreserved confidence, the believer unveils his soul, and reveals all to the Lord. Conscience is read – motives are dissected – principles are sifted – actions are examined – the heart is searched – sin is confessed – iniquity is acknowledged, as could only effectually be done in the presence of Jesus alone. Is there, among all the privileges of a child of God, one in its costliness and its preciousness surpassing this?

THE CALLING OF MATTHEW

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

The number of the apostles was not yet full; one room is left void for a future occupant. Who can but expect that it is reserved for some eminent person? And, behold, Matthew the publican is the man. O the strange election of Christ! Those other disciples, whose calling is recorded, were from the fisher-boat; this from the tollbooth. They were unlettered; this infamous. The condition was not itself sinful; but as the taxes which the Romans imposed on God's free people were odious, so the collectors, the farmers of them, abominable. Besides, it was hard to hold that seat without oppression, without exaction. One that best knew it branded it with polling and sycophancy.

And now behold a gripping publican called to the family, to the apostleship, to the secretaryship of God. Who can despair in the conscience of his unworthiness when he sees this pattern of the free bounty of Him that calleth us? Merits do not carry it in the gracious election of God, but His mere favour. There sat Matthew the publican, busy in his counting-house, reckoning up the sums of his rentals, taking up his arrearages, and wrangling for denied duties, and did so little think of a Saviour that he did not so much as look at His passage; but "Jesus, as He passed by, saw a man sitting at the receipt of custom, named Matthew." As if this prospect had been sudden and casual, Jesus saw him in passing by. O Saviour, before the world was, Thou sawest that man sitting there, Thou sawest Thine own passage, Thou sawest his call

in Thy passage; and now Thou goest purposely that way that Thou mightest see and call.

Nothing can be hid from that piercing eye, one glance whereof hath discerned a disciple in the clothes of a publican. That habit, that shop of extortion cannot conceal from Thee a vessel of election. In all forms Thou knowest Thine own, and, in Thine own time shalt fetch them out of the disguises of their foul sins or unfit conditions. What sawest Thou, O Saviour, in that publican, that might either allure Thine eye or not offend it? What but a hateful trade, an evil eye, a gripple hand, bloody tables, heaps of spoil? Yet now Thou saidst, "Follow Me." Thou that saidst once to Jerusalem, "Thy birth and nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, thy mother an Hittite; thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee: thou wast not salted at all; thou wast not swaddled at all: none eye pitied thee, but thou wast cast out in the open fields, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born; and when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live." Now also, when Thou passedst by, and sawest Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, Thou saidst to him, "Follow Me." The life of this publican was so much worse than the birth of that forlorn Amorite as "Follow Me" was more than "Live." What canst Thou see in us, O God, but ugly deformities, horrible sins, despicable miseries? Yet doth it please Thy mercy to say unto us both, "Live," and, "Follow Me."

The just man is the first accuser of himself. Whom do we hear to blazon the shame of Matthew but his own mouth? Matthew the evangelist tells us of Matthew the publican. His fellows call him Levi, as unwilling to lay their finger upon the spot of his displeasing profession; himself will not smother nor blanch it a whit, but publishes it to all the world, in a thankful recognition of the mercy that called him, as liking well that his baseness should serve for a fit foil to set off the glorious lustre of His grace by whom he was elected. What matters it how vile we are, O God, so Thy glory may arise in our abasement?

That word was enough, "Follow Me" – spoken by the same tongue that said to the corpse at Nain, "Young man, I say to thee, arise." He that said at first, "Let there be light," says now, "Follow Me." That power sweetly inclines which could forcibly command; the force is not more irresistible than the inclination. When the sun shines upon the icicles, can they choose but melt and fall? When it looks into a dungeon, can the place choose but to be enlightened? Do we see the jet drawing up straws to it, the loadstone iron, and do we marvel if the omnipotent Saviour, by the influence of His grace, attract the heart of a publican? "He arose, and followed Him." We are all naturally averse from Thee, O God; do Thou but bid us follow Thee, draw us by Thy powerful word, and we shall run

after Thee. Alas! Thou speakest and we sit still; Thou speakest by Thine outward word to our ear, and we stir not. Speak Thou by the secret and effectual word of Thy Spirit to our heart, and the world cannot hold us down, Satan cannot stop our way, but we shall arise and follow Thee.

It was not a more busy than gainful trade that Matthew abandoned to follow Christ into poverty; and now he cast away his counters, and struck his tallies, and crossed his books, and contemned his heaps of cash, in comparison of that better treasure which he foresaw lie open in that happy attendance. If any commodity be valued of us too dear to be parted with for Christ, we are more fit to be publicans than disciples.

Our Saviour invites Matthew to a discipleship; Matthew invites Him to a feast. The joy of his call makes him begin his abdication of the world in a banquet. Here was not a more cheerful thankfulness in the inviter than a gracious humility in the guest. The new servant bids his Master, the publican his Saviour, and is honoured with so blessed a presence.

I do not find where Jesus was ever bidden to any table, and refused. If a Pharisee, if a publican invited Him, He made not dainty to go. Not for the pleasure of the dishes (what was that to Him who began His work in a whole Lent of days?) but, as it was His meat and drink to do the will of His Father, for the benefit of so winning a conversation. If He sat with sinners, He converted them; if with converts, He confirmed and instructed them; if with the poor, He fed them; if with the rich in substance, He made them richer in grace. At whose board did He ever sit, and left not His host a gainer? The poor bridegroom entertains Him, and hath his waterpots filled with wine. Simon the Pharisee entertains Him, and hath his table honoured with the public remission of a penitent sinner, with the heavenly doctrine of remission. Zacchaeus entertains Him; salvation came that day to his house with the Author of it. That presence made the publican a son of Abraham. Matthew is recompensed for his feast with an apostleship. Martha and Mary entertain Him and, besides divine instruction, receive their brother from the dead. O Saviour, whether Thou feast us, or we feast Thee, in both of them is blessedness!

Where a publican is the feast-master, it is no marvel if the guests be publicans and sinners. Whether they came alone out of the hope of that mercy which they saw their fellow had found, or whether Matthew invited them in hope that they might be partners of that plentiful grace whereof he had tasted, I enquire not. Publicans and sinners will flock together, the one hateful for their trade, the other for their vicious life. Common contempt hath wrought them to an unanimity, and sends them to seek mutual comfort in that society which all others held loathsome and contagious.

What a table-full was here! The Son of God beset with publicans and sinners. O happy publicans and sinners, that had found out their Saviour! O merciful Saviour, that disdained not publicans and sinners.

What sinner can fear to kneel before Thee when he sees publicans and sinners sit with Thee? Who can fear to be despised of Thy meekness and mercy, which did not abhor to converse with the outcasts of men? Thou didst not despise the thief confessing upon the cross, nor the sinner weeping upon Thy feet, nor the Canaanite crying to Thee in the way, nor the blushing adulteress, nor the odious publican, nor the forswearing disciple, nor the persecutor of disciples, nor Thine own executioners. How can we be unwelcome to Thee if we come with tears in our eyes, faith in our hearts, restitution in our hands? O Saviour, our breasts are too oft shut upon Thee; Thy bosom is ever open to us. We are as great sinners as the consorts of these publicans; why should we despair of a room at Thy table?

The squint-eyed Pharisees look across at all the actions of Christ; where they should have admired His mercy, they cavil at His holiness. "They said to His disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" They durst not say this to the Master, whose answer they knew would soon have convinced them; this wind, they hoped, might shake the weak faith of the disciples. They speak where they may be most likely to hurt. All the crew of satanical instruments have learned this craft of their old tutor in paradise.

We cannot reverence that man whom we think unholy. Christ had lost the hearts of His followers if they had entertained the least suspicion of His impurity, which the murmur of these envious Pharisees would fain insinuate; He cannot be worthy to be followed that is unclean: He cannot but be unclean that eateth with publicans and sinners. Proud and foolish Pharisees! Ye fast while Christ eateth; ye fast in your houses, while Christ eateth in other men's; ye fast with your own, while Christ feasts with sinners. But if ye fast in pride, while Christ eats in humility, if ye fast at home for merit or popularity, while Christ feasts with sinners for compassion, for edification, for conversion, your fast is unclean. His feast is holy; ye shall have your portion with hypocrites, when those publicans and sinners shall be glorious.

When these censurers thought the disciples had offended, they speak not to them, but to their Master: "Why do Thy disciples that which is not lawful?" Now when they thought Christ offended, they speak not to Him, but to the disciples. Thus, like true makebates, they go about to make a breach in the family of Christ, by setting off the one from the other. The quick eye of our Saviour hath soon espied the pack of their fraud, and therefore He takes the words out of the mouths of His disciples into His own. They had spoken of Christ to the disciples;

Christ answers for the disciples concerning Himself: "The whole need not the physician, but the sick."

According to the two qualities of pride, scorn and overweening, these insolent Pharisees over-rated their own holiness, contemned the noted unholiness of others; as if themselves were not tainted with secret sins, as if others could not be cleansed by repentance. The Searcher of hearts meets with their arrogance, and finds those justiciaries sinful, those sinners just. The spiritual Physician finds the sickness of those sinners wholesome, the health of those Pharisees desperate: that wholesome, because it calls for the help of the Physician; this desperate, because it needs not.

Every soul is sick; those most that feel it not. Those that feel it, complain; those that complain, have cure. Those that feel it not shall find themselves dying ere they can wish to recover. O blessed Physician, by whose stripes we are healed, by whose death we live, happy are they that are under Thy hands, sick, as of sin so of sorrow for sin. It is as impossible they should die as it is impossible for Thee to want either skill, or power, or mercy. Sin hath made us sick unto death. Make Thou us but as sick of our sins, then we are as safe as Thou art gracious.

THE OVERRULING PURPOSES OF GOD

Extract from a sermon preached by James Kidwell Popham in 1926

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

Now the Scriptures do afford us abundant proof that circumstances are under God and used by Him for the good of His people and the glory of His name – the furtherance of the gospel in their hearts. It is very striking in respect of Israel how that their wilderness journey was for the furtherance of God's goodness and the opening of His faithfulness and wisdom and power to them. No water for their thirst was the furtherance of His goodness and power in smiting the rock and causing the water to flow to them in their journey. They could not grow wheat and make their own flour and bread, and that was for the furtherance of God's power and mercy in raining manna every morning for their hunger. They were exposed to hostile nations all about them and that made way for the protecting power of God. They did not know which way to go except as told, and they were nightly and daily protected by the cloud and pillar of fire. Oh, circumstances God uses. He does make use of them to His people's good. A threatened and inevitable shipwreck made way for

God's glory in the apostle and, by means of him, to the eyes of all those who were with him in that doomed ship. The things that fall out to the Lord's people are for their good and the furtherance of the gospel in them.

THE COMING OF CHRIST TO JUDGMENT KNOWN ONLY TO GOD

By Jabez R. Rutt

The Holy Spirit has not left us ignorant concerning this great and solemn truth as Paul on Mars Hill in Athens declared. "Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17. 31). In virtually every reference to Christ coming to judgment, especially in the New Testament, He is referred to as, The Son of Man. This term draws our special attention to the sacred, holy, human nature that the Son of God assumed in the womb of the virgin Mary. Hence the Holy Spirit draws our attention; "In that He hath raised Him from the dead." One hymn-writer refers to this. "See the Judge our nature wearing." God is a Spirit and cannot be seen with our natural eyes, but we will see the Son of God in human nature in the day of judgment. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them" (Rev. 20. 11).

Again, the Holy Spirit instructs us regarding this solemn event. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9. 27, 28). As sure as we know we are going to die, we can be just as sure we will each stand before the judgment seat of Christ. This appointment has been made by God.

In Deuteronomy 29. 29 we read: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever." In Acts 1. 7 we read the words of Christ: "And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." This truth is especially relevant to the second coming of Christ.

Many have speculated as to when this day will come; several of the godly Puritans said it was imminent in their day. Others have named the precise date. All have been proven wrong. By doing these things we contradict Holy Scripture.

Let us look at the teaching of Christ on this very subject.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matt. 24. 36).

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24. 42).

"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24. 44).

"Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24. 26, 27).

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24. 30, 31).

The second coming of Christ will not be a secret thing. "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1. 7).

Again and again in Holy Scripture we are warned that His second coming will be like a thief in the night. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3. 7-10). Deeply solemn words, the key words, "longsuffering to us-ward." To whom is he writing? The living church of the living God. He is not willing that any, chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, sanctified by the Spirit, should perish, but all come to repentance and faith in Christ, and when that last vessel of mercy is quickened by the Spirit and brought to Christ, then the archangel's trump shall sound and the dead in Christ rise first. The very first act of Christ when He comes is to send His angels to the four corners of the earth to gather His elect unto Himself.

No man knows when this great and solemn event will take place, only God knows.

Those in the church at Thessalonica were troubled about these things, and the Spirit of God sends them a solemn yet sacred message. “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2 Thess. 1. 7-10).

May the Lord preserve us from speculating and thereby contradicting the Word of God.

THE PEOPLE CHRIST’S CHURCH MUST FORGET

By Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house” (Psa. 45. 10)

Who they are that will not leave their father’s house, as exhorted and commanded of God.

1. Those, that in the midst of gospel light, yet continue in the darkness of the house; even all grossly ignorant persons. They that are brought out of their father’s house to Christ, are brought out of darkness to light, though they know not a letter. “They were sometimes darkness, but now are they light in the Lord.” If people remain ignorant under gospel means, we know what is the cause, their father has put out their eyes (see 2 Cor. 4. 3, 4). This will end in eternal darkness. “It is a people of no understanding: therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will shew them no favour.”

2. Those that retain the language of the house. When Peter spoke, the damsel knew what countryman he was. “Thou art a Galilean, for thy speech bewrayeth thee.” And what shall we say of thee, that art a curser, a swearer, a liar, a filthy speaker, but thou art a Hellilean. I appeal to your own consciences, what sort of language that is, whether it sounds like heaven or hell. To hear a man speak as if hell were opening; breathing out lies, as if inspired by the father of them; speaking as if an unclean devil were speaking out of him; what can one think in such a case, but that the person speaks like the house to which he belongs. But if you will not forbear that language, it will turn to blaspheming at length

through a long eternity. For the former is the language of the house in time, the other in eternity.

3. Those that wear the badge of the house on their breasts, the master of the house's mark on their foreheads, so that those who go by may easily know whose they are. Profane people. You that will not bow a knee to God. "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God." You that take room to yourselves in all licentiousness, that have nothing to do with religion, but to show aversion to all that is good, if not to mock and reproach others that seem to be religious. Will you pretend to any portion in Christ? No, no, you know not Christ, and He will disown you. A dumb devil possesseth you now, that you cannot, will not pray to God now; the day will come, that you will cry to the hills to fall upon you, and hide you from the face of the Judge. You will have a merry life of it now, but you shall weep; you will make a jest of religion now, but that will make you roar at length. Your heart is averse to all that is good now, the cope stone will be put on it in hell. You care not for prayers, godly discourse, examinations, or sermons; but some of you will go to the hill with the beasts, Sabbath after Sabbath, and desire no person to take that task off your hand. Well were it for you, if as you live with the beasts, you were to die with them also.

4. Those that give up themselves to the trade of the house, minding nothing but the world, earthly things. They have no trade with heaven. They know not what communion with God means. They will have their work on earth as far advanced as their neighbours, but their work for eternity is yet to begin. They are so busy they cannot get time for it. They have so much to do otherwise, they cannot get anything done to purpose for their perishing souls. That is folly, for the world will be consumed in flames, when that soul of yours shall continue to exist, to be either eternally happy or miserable, as it is now seen to be in time.

Lastly, those that are the hidden servants of the house. It has been said of some, that they have stealed away to heaven, without being observed; but there are others that steal away to hell, and the world never hears the sound of their feet; even deep-veiled hypocrites, whited sepulchres. "They are disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures." They wear Christ's livery, but yet are Satan's drudges. There are always some lusts, that have such persons absolutely under their power. The broad way is wide enough, so that they can easily get a bye path in it, to go by themselves to destruction, without mixing with the profane rabble that keep the highway. However, all come to one lodging at length. "As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity."

A WONDERFUL MYSTERY

By Henry Fowler (1779-1838)

“I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (John 14. 20).

My soul, contemplate this astonishing mystery with the deepest humility and with holy adoration! Christ, thy Kinsman, Redeemer, thy Righteous Head, is in the Father, is one with Him, is the Father’s co-equal and co-eternal Son. My soul, these are not the mere opinions of men, but the testimony of Christ Himself. *“I am in My Father.”* Here my faith is fixed. From this glorious union between Christ and the Father, which I discover by faith, my richest consolations arise. God is the Portion of mine inheritance; He fills my cup at times brim full of love. I want no other Christ but He that is in the Father. He shows me who the Father is, and makes me to know what He is. “God is love.” Away, vain speculations; begone, blind reason; faith is my sure guide into this sanctum sanctorum, this holy of holies, this blessed paradise of spiritual delights. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Compared with this, how poor, how empty, are all religious duties, however right and proper they are in themselves, and to be observed by men. He who is so favoured as to enter into fellowship with God is spoiled for this world; and fleshly professors of religion and their conversation are alike disgusting to him. Alas! how few are thus favoured in this cloudy day!

This union between the Father and the Son is the foundation of the saints’ happiness, both here and hereafter. Is Christ in the Father, and does He rejoice over His people to do them good? Then, to complete their happiness, that their joy may be full, He will lead them into the blessed knowledge of the Father’s love and of their interest therein. Christ discovers the Father’s heart to His children, until, enamoured with His love, they cry out, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

“And ye in Me.” This is another part of the great mystery. The saints are as truly in the Son as the Son is in the Father, and can no more be separated from Jesus Christ than Christ can from the Father. This is a sweet consolation to my soul, amidst all the miseries and sin that I am the subject of; for I know that I sinned in Adam, and I know that I am a sinner before God every day, and that I sin much in my very best doings. But my standing is in Christ, my place of security from wrath, death and hell, is Christ. That which grieves me most is my sin, but that which pleases me most is, that not one sin that grieves me shall appear against me in the day of judgment to condemn me. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.” O the blessedness of knowing that I am in Christ!

“*And I in you.*” This is another branch of the same great mystery. Christ is in the saints, the hope of glory. Hence their hope cannot perish; it is full of immortality. The believer has no life without Christ that can scarcely be called by the name of life; for so Paul means: “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” O blessed life this! All my springs of action flow from Christ, my Head; and as Christ is full of grace and truth and I am one with Him, I must conclude, I will conclude, that all will be well with me in life, in death, and to all eternity.

GOSPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND

15th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at the United Reformed Church, Redhill,
Surrey, on Saturday, June 25th, 2022*

Mr. M.D. Ridout (Chairman) welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting and briefly explained the background to the meeting, in light of moving, if the Lord will, to an incorporated charity, and in the meantime conducting business under the existing Trust Deed.

Mr. Ridout read from James 1. 27 and Isaiah 45. 2 and then called on Mr. J.B. Hart (Rotherfield) to ask the Lord’s blessing on the meeting.

Mr. Ridout then presented a series of slides, and for the benefit of those listening remotely on Mixlr, he explained the content of the presentation. During the presentation the following points were made:

1. Although there may be varied ideas as to what Bethesda should or should not do, it is important to remember that Bethesda is a provision that the Lord has made for those from Gospel Standard causes of truth and our desire is to seek the Lord’s perfect will for the work of the Charity.

2. Bethesda provides forty-five residential places in two care Homes, manages two sets of flatlets and employs forty-nine full-time equivalent staff, together with an investment portfolio of £2.4 million and an income of £2.1 million, of which £1.6 million is from residents and tenant fees.

3. The main responsibilities of the Trustees are to maintain the Christian ethos and purpose of Bethesda in providing suitable accommodation for the mental and spiritual well-being of the residents.

4. In terms of maintaining Bethesda, the declining Gospel Standard group of churches has impacted on the levels of occupancy, there is a higher average age of residents in the Homes compared with previous years, and the ageing building fabric provides challenges in meeting the current needs of residents (such as dementia) together with managing infection control. In addition, the focus of government is for people living independently in their own homes. There is, however, scant reference to older people coping with loneliness and the impact this has on mental well-being. Another concern is the effect of God-dishonouring ideologies within society and the promotion of humanistic values such as euthanasia.

5. One of the strengths of Bethesda is the loving care provided by the staff for the residents. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find those from Gospel Standard causes with a desire to serve the Lord in the work of Bethesda.

6. Covid-19 has been very challenging and we should not underestimate the human and operational “cost” to the residents, staff, relatives/loved ones, visitors and volunteers. Equally, we would acknowledge the good hand of the Lord in watching over Bethesda during this trying time.

7. One over-arching challenge for the Trustees and the management team is ensuring the way that Bethesda operates is fit for purpose, especially coming out of Covid-19, and Bethesda ensures that the correct standards of care required are maintained.

8. The other substantial challenge is providing appropriate accommodation and support capable of meeting the needs of future beneficiaries within the Gospel Standard group churches. We are thankful to the Lord how hearts have been constrained to make a way for the development of independent living accommodation at Swavesey. This project is moving forward and further details will be shared later in the year, if the Lord will.

In conclusion, Mr. Ridout remarked that the desire of the Trustees concerning Bethesda is found in those words: “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3. 6).

There was then a short prayer meeting, and the following were called upon in prayer for Bethesda: Mr. S.A. Hyde (Pastor, Redhill), Mr. G.E. Hadley (Pastor, Stotfold), Mr. F. Hayden (Redhill), Mr. J. Woodhams (Haywards Heath), Mr. P.J. Pocock (South Moreton).

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on April 24th, 2021, were taken as read. It was proposed by Mr. P.T. Hanks (Gravesend), seconded by Mr. J. Woodhams (Haywards Heath) and unanimously agreed to approve the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting.

Mr. A.J.H. Topping (General Manager) then gave his report, the focus of which was on the life and work of the Bethesda Homes, and made use of a series of illustrative slides. During the presentation the following points were made:

1. Bethesda had recently updated its Statement of Purpose, which is a key document lodged with the Care Quality Commission. Those wishing to review this document may do so on the Bethesda website.

This document sets out what our provision is, and whom it is for, being members and regular attenders of Gospel Standard chapels aged 65 years plus. This includes care and support for a range of needs, including physical, loneliness, dementia, and nursing needs that can be supported by external medical professionals.

2. The General Manager commented that in providing the services, our teams have proved themselves to be remarkably versatile, including assisting those with very complex care needs.

3. The Statement of Purpose also set out the types of provision provided, which are, in the two Homes, permanent, short stays and day care, all of which are currently being used.

4. Also included in the document is a restatement of our history and background which is important as it confirms “where we have come from and why we do what we do,” along with, and perhaps most importantly, how we achieve our purpose and the values that underpin this.

5. The General Manager then reported on how Bethesda achieves its purpose, by using visual examples on the slideshow. In summary, this is “by providing high quality care that meets the individual physical, mental, spiritual and well-being needs of the residents, and which is delivered with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect.”

6. The General Manager then read out examples of positive feedback from residents, relatives and visiting professionals, expressing appreciation of the service provided by our teams, which included the remark, “This is the best care home I visit” (area practitioner nurse).

7. Several examples of activities within and without the Homes were mentioned, which included remembering the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee.

8. The General Manager then spoke briefly about the financial activities of the Bethesda Homes, making use of graphs to illustrate the points. From 2015 to, and including, 2019 there were ever-increasing operating costs with substantial deficits, peaking in 2019 with an unsustainable deficit of £476,000. In 2019, there was a concerted effort by the Trustees and management team to address income and expenditure, and at this point, the hard decision was prayerfully taken to increase fees substantially. The 2020 result showed a significant reduction in the operating deficit arising from these efforts. In 2021, there was an increase in operating costs. However these figures were skewed by the need to close the Studley Home, which came with costs; otherwise the figures would have been broadly similar to 2020. In 2021, total income exceeded total expenditure by £230,000, arising in part from increased legacy income.

9. The General Manager concluded his report by sincerely thanking each member of the staff in the two Homes, along with the volunteers, morning readers and Home Support Group members, for all their willing help and support for the residents and each other. He also thanked the Trustees for their unstinting practical and prayerful support throughout another year.

There was a time for questions and discussion.

Mr. G.E. Hadley asked, given the difficulties in recruiting Christian staff, whether churches other than those on the Gospel Standard list had been contacted regarding the vacancies. Mr. Ridout confirmed that the vacant post had been advertised in the *Evangelical Times* and that Bethesda would review contacting other local churches.

Mr. Hadley asked if a decision had been made on the future of the Studley building, and Mr. Ridout confirmed that the Trustees were looking at various options but that no decision had yet been reached.

Mr. J. Woodhams asked if Bethesda had kept in touch with those residents of the Studley Home who had moved to Middlefields House, Chippenham (Pilgrims’ Friend Society), and the General Manager confirmed that this was the case.

A resolution was then put to receive and adopt the interim Annual Report and unaudited Financial Statements for the year ended December 31st, 2021.

This was proposed by Mr. J. Woodhams (Haywards Heath), seconded by Mr. P.T. Hanks (Gravesend) and unanimously agreed.

Mr. Ridout then asked Mr. Topping to declare the results of the secret ballot. Mr. Topping announced that 236 ballot papers were issued to subscribers, of which 129 were returned. Each Trustee standing for re-election had received at least 70% of the votes and they were duly elected as Trustees for three years.

Mr. Ridout acknowledged with thanks the Lord's keeping mercies over the last two years and the meeting was closed in prayer by Mr. R.W. Woodhams (Pastor, Haywards Heath) and the doxology was sung.

OBITUARY

William Thomas Wheeler, affectionately known by all as "Billy," passed away on February 28th, 2022. He was born on January 15th, 1924. His parents were poor, but possessed the fear of the Lord, which is His treasure. Leaving school at 14, Billy began working with his father in the building trade, but this did not suit his health, so he went to work in a steelworks, as a trainee electrical draftsman. Being able to study one day a week, plus three evenings at the local technical college, after five years Billy attained a high standard of education in this field.

At the end of these studies, Billy had his eye set on a position in Manchester, but he found that the Lord's way was different, and he was sent to the Ministry of Defence in Bath. So, at 20 Billy left home, little realising that his life was about to change. He began attending Bethel Chapel, Bath on the Lord's day but not in the week. On one prayer meeting night, he narrowly escaped drowning when a boat he had made with a friend, sank. Billy could not swim, but being near the bank was able to get out. He confessed that his chief concern was being teased by his comrades, and not the solemn realisation of eternity. However, in retrospect he was made to consider the words of the hymn:

"Determined to save, He watched o'er my path,
When Satan's blind slave, I sported with death" (H. 232)

Becoming concerned about his soul, Billy would spend Lord's day evenings in his room reading. His fellow-lodgers made life very unpleasant for him on this account, but he proved that the Lord could put His restraining hand on his persecutors. When Billy moved on to another lodging, his fellow-lodgers, finding he went to chapel, would stand outside jeering and laughing at him. Thankfully he was soon able to find another place and the persecution ceased.

It was at this time that Billy received his first visit from the Lord. Walking in Victoria Park, Bath, the Lord powerfully spoke these words to him: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt

go: I will guide thee with Mine eye" (Psa. 32. 8). He records: "I realised my life would not be my own from that day. So, I proved it."

During 1950, Billy was much exercised about a certain matter. He often laid this before the Lord, expecting a favourable answer. But after some time of beseeching the Lord, he received these words: "Pray no more for this." He said, "I saw that my ways were not the Lord's ways for me." At that time the words of Proverbs 8. 20 were made very helpful: "I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment." He was encouraged by many hymns and texts at this time. Also, at this time he began to attend Colerne Chapel.

In November of that year, he records: "I was asked to give out a hymn and pray at the prayer meeting. My first hymn I gave out was 295":

"I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face."

Billy felt this hymn expressed the present path he was walking in his soul. He only prayed briefly and was greatly tried later whether he should have ventured. The next week the text was, "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" (1 Pet. 5. 6, 7). Billy said that he felt anything but humble, but later verse 9 brought some quietness. Towards the end of the same year, in a desponding path, Billy was encouraged by the words, "Is any thing too hard for the LORD?" (Gen. 18. 14). He then felt he was not altogether without hope.

During 1951, the Lord deepened the work of grace, and Billy found that the "old man" was as strong as ever. He writes: "In my small way I tried to ask the Lord for that light which was in the tents of the Israelites while the Egyptians were in darkness. I believe that I did receive a little of that light when I was able to receive a word of reproof with joy." Inwardly Billy had been murmuring against the Lord's way for him, as he so wanted to return home. On January 15th, his birthday, Billy asked the Lord for some token of His love. In reading Psalm 35. 3, the words, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation," picked him up, though later re-reading it he found he had lost some of the sweetness. He was encouraged at the same time, when a proposal that he should go to Manchester was over-ruled without him putting his hand to it, in answer to prayer. Meanwhile in his soul, the enemy was waging a constant warfare, and the day of grace seemed as far distant as ever. Being crossed in providence in another matter, Billy felt alone and friendless, but reading Hebrews 12 put an end to these murmurings.

His diary records at this time that “the man of sin” raged within so greatly that Billy felt unable to pray for a word. In reading Malachi 3. 2, he could see the necessity of the refiner’s fire, that the work of grace could more clearly be seen. He felt that forgiveness could be given, and that his present path was the will of his heavenly Father who was tenderly correcting him. This he felt was a token for good, and a confirmation that his present position in Bath was the Lord’s way for him. Later that same year, Billy was encouraged by the words in Psalm 84. 11: “The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory.” Billy truly felt that the Lord had indeed shielded him from the enemy. Waking early one morning, he states: “Pardon came into my soul, and when I thought of the sin working in my wretched heart, the feeling of godly sorrow for my sins, all made possible by the blood of God’s dear Son.”

Once more the battle within was resumed, but the fact that he had not been dealt with as his sins deserved was a comfort to him. However, he felt that to continue in public prayer at this time was unwise, especially as the adversary seemed to be setting traps for him. He was learning that by prayer to be kept, was his safest course. The Holy Spirit graciously appeared in due time and gave him the mastery over Satan’s devices, and he was led to see the sufficiency in Christ to forgive all sins.

As the warfare raged within, his sinful thoughts seemed like a waterfall, uncontrollable. Hymn 740 given out one Lord’s day morning exactly described his state. Although he still went to Colerne, feeling on several occasions a darkness while attending the prayer meetings, and on one occasion having walked from Bath one foggy evening, only to find that there was no service, he concluded that it was the Lord’s will for him to return to Bethel, Bath. The Lord graciously confirmed this step when in reading the Word of God all rebellion was broken down and he felt pardon and peace in a measure not realised before.

Having returned to Bethel, he was asked to take part in their prayer meetings, which he felt he ought to comply with, though he was tried about it later. It was at this time Billy felt the Lord was withholding His felt presence, because of rebellion against following the Lord in believer’s baptism. The words, “I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect,” came with great power. The exercise deepened so much that he felt he had to speak to the deacons relative to joining the church. Having ventured this far, Billy was wonderfully confirmed in this step under a sermon preached by Mr. J.H. Gosden at Chippenham anniversary from Proverbs 27. 7: “The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet,” comparing the honeycomb to the sweetness of communion with God. The substance of this discourse was a confirmation to Billy that the Lord was with him in this step.

On June 15th, 1953, Billy came before the church at Bethel. While waiting in the vestry, in reading hymn 430, Billy felt encouraged in this venture of faith. He was unanimously received and was acquainted with the church's exercise of travail over many years for a godly increase. He felt truly humbled at God's love to him, an unworthy sinner. He was baptized by Mr. Samuel Champion on July 2nd and received into the church on August 2nd. He wrote: "The feeling during the actual baptizing, was better felt than can be described or penned."

After joining the church, Billy soon found that he needed to make a stand for right things, and that so doing could be costly. The lady with whom he lodged was a church member with him, but he was grieved by her inconsistent behaviour in listening to the radio on the Lord's day after returning from chapel, especially after the communion service. Raising this with her and fellow church members, she was so offended that she asked him to leave immediately. This meant that he had to live in a hotel during the week and return home for weekends. He still attended Bethel in the week at this time.

Meanwhile Billy felt that the cloud was moving away from his present employment at Bath. The Lord appeared for him miraculously in one very trying matter. A sense of fellowship with the Lord Jesus in His sufferings greatly supported him at this time, and the words of Isaiah 41. 12 were amazingly fulfilled when the trouble evaporated. Hearing that his employers were minded to send him abroad, Billy felt the time was near when he should resign his job. On one of his visits to home, he saw an advertisement for a position for which he was well qualified. He applied and was called for interview. To his surprise, when interviewed he was given a higher post than the one for which he had applied. He was to stay in this position for the rest of his working life.

When he left Bath, one of the members spoke warmly of his stand for the truth in the church and of his prayers at Colerne which had touched the hearts of many. One member had the words: "And the child grew" (Luke 1. 80) to which she said she was a witness.

The question now arose, where Billy should worship. He had often attended Arcal Street, Sedgley, and for a time worshipped there, and at other times had driven his father to preach. However, through the Lord's unerring overruling, painful events conspired which led Billy to Moden Hill, where the Lord had a work for him to lead the little remnant there.

For many years Billy gave addresses from the desk at Moden Hill when there was no minister and at the prayer meetings, which was the custom in many of our midland and northern churches. To these the Lord often gave His approbation. He was able to do this right up to his last Sabbath, just eight days before he died.

Billy was invited to the Lord's table at Moden Hill and unexpectedly asked by the deacon to join the church. This he did in 1961. John

Newton says: “God’s children are led or driven where they safest may abide.” So, it was with Billy at Moden Hill. In 1967 the Lord provided a true helpmeet for Billy, when he married Jurina.

In 1973 Billy was appointed deacon, and later the full responsibility came upon his shoulders when the last remaining deacon passed way in 1981.

At this time Billy passed through a fiery trial at work. Sitting silently and evidently troubled one Lord’s day evening, he was asked what the matter was. He replied that it was quite likely that he would be without a job on the next day. He was not prepared to sign a letter which contained an untruth. In answer to fervent prayer his decision was accepted, and he continued in the work.

Another testing time came when the firm was tendering for the work in upgrading control panels for Royal Navy ships. His superiors wanted the work and were prepared to give an unrealistic time scale to complete it. Billy warned them that the team from the Navy would not be bluffed and would soon see through anything suspicious. His boss told him to stay out of the meeting. However, after a while he was called in and asked the question: “Can your company do this job?” Billy, like Nehemiah, “prayed to the God of heaven.” “Yes,” he said, “but not in the time scale you are requiring. It would take half as long again to complete.” Remarkably they agreed to the amended time scale. Work was provided for the company for many years subsequent to this. Billy faithfully reminded his bosses of the need of honesty in dealings with others.

In 1981 the youngest child, Jonathan was born. He later passed away in 1986, although only four years of age, leaving a sweet testimony of simple faith in Christ. The words of the hymn greatly supported Billy at this time of heartbreak:

“That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst Thou not hear, and answer prayer;
But a prayer-hearing, answering God
Supports me under every load.” (H. 967)

In 1986, Billy became ill with a serious condition which required an operation. As his job was so specialist his firm offered to pay for private treatment so that Billy’s invaluable services could quickly be resumed with the ship in question. But the surgeon was unable to co-operate and so Billy had to wait. While he waited, the work was transferred to Bristol, and then eventually to Germany, where many problems needed to be overcome. Billy’s affliction proved in the Lord’s hand a blessing in keeping him in this country.

After his retirement in 1989, for the most part Billy enjoyed good health. On one occasion in 2019 he became seriously ill, and an

ambulance was called. Just before it arrived Billy said, "I am not afraid. 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness'" (2 Tim. 4. 7, 8).

Mercifully the treatment at the hospital speedily worked and he was soon returned home. A few days later he began to speak of the glorious prospect before him. His face changed and seemed radiant as he continued to speak. He seemed oblivious to all around him. He quoted several texts and hymns among which were these lines:

"'Twas Jesus, my Friend, when He hung on the tree,
Who opened the channel of mercy for me." (H. 11)

"Sinners can say, and none but they,
'How precious is the Saviour!'" (H. 806)

"And when in death they bow their head,
He's precious on a dying bed." (H. 174)

He repeatedly came back to the words: "What a prospect!"

From that time this heavenly-mindedness never departed, and his health and strength gradually declined. Often, he would sit in his chair and would say, "Precious Jesus."

He was able to continue conducting services until Lord's day February 20th, this year. It was noticed that he had only chosen two rather than the usual three hymns for the morning service. When this was pointed out, he said to Jurina, "You choose one." So, 1119 was chosen to which he said: "That is just right." At the end of the service before the closing prayer, Billy slowly repeated the last verse, his face shining with joy.

"Gracious Saviour, never leave me,
While my toils and conflicts last;
To Thy kind embrace receive me,
When the storms of life are passed."

He then prayed and slowly walked out of the chapel, in which he had served the Lord so faithfully for so many years, for the last time.

From that time his strength slipped away. During those last days he said many precious things. To his loved one he said,

"The Saviour, whom I then shall see,
With new admiring eyes,
Already has prepared for me
A mansion in the skies." (H. 469)

Not long before his end, when asked if he knew his wife, he smiled. Then when asked, "Is the Lord still with you?" "Yes, yes, yes." About one hour later he breathed his last breath and entered heaven where he longed to be.

“An honoured life, a peaceful end.
And heaven to crown it all!”

“Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace” (Psa. 37. 37).

J. Wheeler

A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE FIRE

(*Zech. 3. 1-5*)

With Satan, my accuser near,
My spirit trembled when I saw
The Lord in majesty appear,
And heard the language of His law.

In vain I wished and strove to hide
The tattered, filthy rags I wore;
While my fierce foe, insulting cried,
“See what you trusted in before!”

Struck dumb, and left without a plea,
I heard my gracious Saviour say,
“Know, Satan, I this sinner free,
I died to take his sins away.

“This is a brand which I in love,
To save from wrath and sin design;
In vain thy accusations prove,
I answer all, and claim him Mine.”

At his rebuke the tempter fled;
Then he removed my filthy dress;
“Poor sinner, take this robe,” He said,
“It is thy Saviour’s righteousness.

“And see, a crown of life prepared!
That I might thus thy head adorn;
I thought no shame or suffering hard,
But wore, for thee, a crown of thorn.”

O how I heard these gracious words!
They broke and healed my heart at once;
Constrained me to become the Lord’s,
And all my idol-gods renounce.

Now, Satan, thou hast lost thy aim,
Against this brand thy threats are vain;
Jesus has plucked it from the flame,
And who shall put it in again?

John Newton (1725-1807)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
DECEMBER 2022

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

“EMMANUEL ... GOD WITH US”

There is no sweeter subject to an exercised child of God than that of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Each of the four evangelists used a different emphasis on the same sacred truth: “God manifest in the flesh.”

In Matthew 1, the Holy Ghost has left on record two glorious names of the Redeemer: Jesus and Emmanuel. The meaning of both of these names is also given. “Thou shalt call His name *JESUS*: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1. 21). To Joseph, this was more than just a command how to name the holy Child, but for himself to have a personal interest in that name. But then we come to the name *Emmanuel*, where Matthew quotes from Isaiah 7. 14 (Matt. 1. 23). On this occasion, as in other parts of his gospel, he gives the interpretation of the name: “Which being interpreted is, God with us.” Again, this is more than the mere translation of a word into another language, but implies that there is something in this precious name which needs to be interpreted or revealed to us personally.

What does the name Emmanuel tell us?

1. That Jesus of Nazareth who was the Babe in Bethlehem’s manger, is none other than true, almighty God. He is God the Son, equal with His eternal Father and the Holy Spirit, in essence, majesty, dominion and power. Paul tells us that “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.” “In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” This is the fundamental foundation stone of the Christian faith, as Peter declared: “We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” The Lord Jesus testified that Peter had not learned this of any other but by the Father, and by implication the Holy Ghost whom the Father sends to instruct His children in the truth.

2. That Jesus of Nazareth is truly Man, in that pure, holy and unsullied human nature He assumed in His incarnation. He is God with us in our nature. This cannot be said of the angelic hosts as we read: “For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2. 16, 17). In being made under the law, He took the same nature as those who are under the same law. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a

woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.” He was made “sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

3. That Jesus of Nazareth being truly Man, though sinless, yet enters into the joys and sorrows of His people. He has a human heart, blessedly able and willing to sympathise and encourage burdened souls. He is God with us in all our afflictions, in every step of the way. “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” (Heb. 13. 5,6).

4. That Jesus of Nazareth has conquered death by dying and rising again. God is with His people in the tomb, and God will be with them when they shall rise from the tomb when He returns. “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1. 11).

“One in the tomb; one when He rose;
One when He triumphed o’er His foes;
One when in heaven He took His seat,
While seraphs sang all hell’s defeat.” (H. 405)

5. That He who is “God with us” has willed that they who are His children shall be “with Him” in glory. “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am” (John 17. 24). “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” To this great end did the Son of God become Emmanuel for us, who are blessed with the indwelling of His Spirit.

THE SAVIOUR OF THE LOST

*Sermon preached at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham, London, by
John Raven, on Wednesday evening, March 16th, 1938*

Text: “For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost” (Matt. 18. 11).

One thing does sparkle throughout the whole of the record that we have of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is this: that He is kind to sinners. A sweet thought that has been to some of us, that the Lord Jesus is kind to sinners. His heart is filled with the tenderest compassion to poor sinners; with the deepest sympathy toward poor sinners; with the kindest goodwill toward poor sinners; filled with grace for poor sinners; thoughts of peace toward poor sinners. In His teaching

again and again He emphasises this blessed truth, that He was sent by the Father to undertake the cause of poor, lost sinners. "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul." When a man feels, in some measure, by the Spirit's teaching, what a sinner he is, how guilty he is; when he is filled with shame and realises the woefulness of a lost condition, and he gets an inkling of this truth, O how attractive it is to him that Christ is the Friend of sinners! As Mr. Hart says,

"Christ is the Friend of sinners,
Be that forgotten never." (H. 806)

And as He went about in His ministry, O the words of grace that came from His lips and dropped into the weary hearts of poor sinners who were round about Him, so that they were attracted with the powerful influence of His grace. O they felt in hearing Him preach the gospel to the poor that this was what their poor souls needed, that this alone could satisfy their hunger, could quench their thirst, could meet their deep need. That was their conviction, and so, as we read just now, publicans and sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. He laid no harsh impositions upon them, He laded them with no burdens. He said to them, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light." They had never heard such words as these from the lips of their religious teachers. They had heard nothing but the crack of the legal whip in listening to their religious teachers; grievous burdens were laid upon them, impossible tasks, and do what people could, they could make no progress in that way; they were in bondage. But the ministry of Christ spoke of liberty, it was the trumpet of jubilee; He proclaimed "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." There was nothing in His Person or teaching to forbid and discourage the approach of poor sinners, however guilty and vile, however sick and polluted. Elihu said, "Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee." In that word, Elihu was a blessed type of the Lord Jesus Christ. His hand was not heavy upon poor sinners; there are no terrors in Him to frighten poor sinners from His feet, but everything to allure them.

What an attractive Object was Christ as He went about in His ministry, preaching as He was anointed to preach of the Holy Ghost, and He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor," and so on. So we find this again and again: He speaks to the fears and discouragements that beset poor

people who would come to Him, He answers the accusations of their adversary who would keep them back from Him, by saying this, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." He was full of grace and truth.

So here in our text He says, "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." Wonderful truth! Wonderful it is for a poor sinner to be enabled to believe it, to feel the truth and reality of it in his own heart: "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." The Lord Jesus Christ had just been giving the disciples some instruction in the matter of humility, and He called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them and said, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." And so He goes on to speak of these little ones; and who are these little ones, who receive the kingdom of heaven as little children? Who are they? Why, they are just poor, sensible sinners; they are people who are given, by the Spirit of God, such a real and solemn sense of their sinnership, that with all humility and sincerity of heart and mind they go before God and set themselves down in the lowest place at His feet. As the hymnwriter expresses it, "To Thee I come a sinner weak, To Thee I come a sinner poor, To Thee I come a sinner great, To Thee I come a sinner vile." They come, and it matters not how low He sets them down in His Word, they fall under it. They say like the Syrophenician woman when the Lord seemed to call her a dog, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." It is these people who, being given such a sense of their sinnership, guilt, ruin and helplessness before God, answer to the description the Lord gives here when He says, "The Son of Man is come to save that which was *lost*."

First of all, let us notice briefly this expression, "The Son of Man." There is for a poor sinner something so attractive when the Spirit speaks it in the heart, when the Spirit interprets somewhat of its meaning. "The Son of Man"! The Lord Jesus Christ Himself manifested great delight in this title of His; He delighted in it before the worlds were made. He looked forward before there were either angels or men formed; He looked forward to that point in time when He should come forth from the Father, sent by the Father, and should be born of a woman. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." And the great Son of God said, "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men." That was before the world was made. He looked forward to that which lay in the purposes of the Three-One God

concerning this world, and man upon it, and concerning the election of grace; and He looked forward to that body which He was to take into union with Himself. He looked forward with delight to it, looked forward with delight to the time when He should come forth from the Father and be clothed with human nature, and should do His Father's will upon this earth. "I delight to do Thy will, O My God." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me."

So this Son of Man is the eternal, the only-begotten Son of the Father in truth and love, and you know, when a soul is in some measure enlightened by the Holy Ghost and enabled to receive the truth, it is made a very precious, a very glorious truth to that soul. O how he loves it. How he exults in it, that Christ is God, that this Son of Man is truly the Son of God, that in this Person of Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. "The Son of Man"! But then we have here the Person who is not only truly, properly the eternal Son of the eternal Father, but we have particularly before us that human nature which He took into union with Himself, which He condescended to assume. The hymnwriter speaks of "the loves of our descending God," and I like that expression. O what condescending love is here; that the great Son of God of whom it is said, "From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God," of whom it is true, "The heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" should condescend to be born of a woman, laid in a manger, be "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" upon this earth, a Man of poverty; experiencing weariness and pain and temptation, entering into the trials and afflictions of His people in their daily lives, entering into them in a personal experience of daily life here upon earth, and that the humblest and most laborious kind of life.

"Nothing brought Him from above,
Nothing but redeeming love." (H. 90)

One says:

"On wings of love the Saviour flies...
To take a human birth." (H. 690)

Then there is this to consider, that He came as the Father's Servant. He came to do His Father's will, to labour and to suffer for His church, as Jacob willingly laboured and suffered hardship that he might have Rachel for his wife. So the Son of God became incarnate in order that He might labour and suffer for His church, that He might purchase her for Himself at the great price of His own most precious blood. "The Son of Man"! The Son of Man was under the law; He was responsible as the Surety of the church to fulfil every jot and tittle of the law; His every thought, word and act was foursquare with that law. The eyes of infinite purity never saw in His Person or in His life on earth the least thing that

was contrary to that law, contrary to His Father's will; He answered to it perfectly. "And this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

O the perfect obedience of Christ as the Surety of the church is very sweet to His believing people when they are led into it; it is food for faith. The believing people of God do love to be enabled to feed upon Christ's eternal righteousness as imputed to them. When a man is favoured to realise this, his filthy rags are gone, and he is dressed in garments white as snow, even the garment woven in everlasting love; such a garment as that the all-seeing eye of Jehovah can detect no flaw in it; and the one arrayed in it is without spot or blemish or any such thing. The Son of Man came to do this, and obey the law for righteousness for His people.

Then again, as a Surety He bore the curse; the sins of His elect people by imputation were His. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "It pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." The Surety answered for His people; He paid the awful debt; He made an end of His people's transgression, and that for ever. All our sins "He bore," says Peter, "in His own body on the tree." Here again that broken body, that shed blood of His, is meat and drink to His believing people. They eat the flesh and they drink the blood of the Son of Man, and they cannot be satisfied unless they do. Some poor soul may say, "Well, I wish, O I wish I could say I knew what it is, but it seems to be something altogether too high for me, an experience beyond anything I have ever known, to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ as crucified for me."

My old Pastor used to speak in a very tender way about these matters, and he used to speak to us about feeding on Christ in just a line of a hymn. It may be that sometimes you have had just a glimpse of Jesus Christ, of His atoning sacrifice, in a line of a hymn that has distilled a little sweetness into your heart, and drawn your soul in desire towards Him; you have felt the attraction of His Person and His grace. "A bleeding Saviour seen by faith." It may have only lasted a very short while, but there was an eating of His flesh, and a drinking of His blood. Perhaps it has been in that hymn:

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins." (H. 160)

Your heart has been drawn to Christ in it; Christ has been set before you, and you have felt a springing up of hope in your soul.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,"

and you have said,

“O there may I, as vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.”

(H. 160)

As the Son of Man, how very near He did approach to His people. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” I do like this expression, “among us”; it does express the very intimate relationship of the Lord Jesus with His people as bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, and also the very intimate way in which He entered into the very path His people have to tread. “In all their affliction He was afflicted,” and that is certainly true of the Lord Jesus. And, you know, when He was upon earth, how people with their sorrows, temptations, burdens, wants, sicknesses and sores found in Him a most ready, willing, sympathising help; they found no lack of compassion in the Christ of God. “The Son of Man.” There is such a wealth of tenderness in this word. The Lord Jesus Christ appeared in such a sweet view of Him, as drawing very near to poor sinners in order to their redemption. “For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.”

“He is come.” The Lord Jesus states the blessed fact, “He is come.” The church in the Old Testament, right from the beginning when the promise was first made, had been looking forward with longing expectation, with earnest desire to the promise of that coming One. The psalmist and the prophets sang of Him. The tabernacle which Moses was commanded to rear was significant of Him and His union with His church and people, what He was to do for them, and what He was to be to them. Then you find again and again expressed the longing of individual believers in the Old Testament for His coming. For instance, Job: how he looked forward to the day of Christ. He longed for a Daysman, and he had such a view at one time that he said, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” Isaiah spake of Him, and so we might go on and name others, but time will not permit. The church was looking for Him, and in the Song of Solomon you find her desiring His coming; there was the cry, “Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.” In the next chapter you have the response, “I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse.”

“For the Son of Man is come.” Then you remember what joy there was expressed by that company of believers when the Infant was brought into the temple; Simeon and Anna and others to whom the Spirit had revealed these things. How they rejoiced. Mary sang too, in the prospect of His birth. “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” “The Son of Man is come.” O if the Spirit of God repeats this in our hearts, it will be a fragrant word: “The Son of Man is come.” This is the burden of the gospel ministry, that the Son of Man is come. He is come, and the things written concerning Him were

fulfilled in Him; the work His Father sent Him to do was accomplished perfectly.

“‘Tis finished!’ said His dying breath,
And shook the gates of hell.” (H. 168)

“The Son of Man is come.” What to do? “To save that which was lost.” Here again this word, “to save”; what a great word it is. “*To save*.” But who is able at all to appreciate the greatness of it? To the majority of people, these words, “to save,” mean nothing at all; they are but empty words to the majority of people. And to some people who profess something of Christianity these words mean very little. O salvation is a very trivial thing, for the simple reason that sin is a trivial thing to them. More than that, their thoughts of God are trivial and unworthy thoughts; and if our thoughts of God are trivial and unworthy, our thoughts of sin will be superficial; we shall think lightly of sin; and if we think lightly of sin, certainly we shall think very little of salvation, we shall set little store by a Saviour. These words are great words, first of all because God is great. God is great!

And then to be the sinner, to have sinned against that great God, is a tremendously-solemn and awful thing. The sinfulness of sin lies in the fact that it is against Him who is infinitely holy. O then, what a hideous monster, what a vile, black thing sin is made to appear, when a sinner is given some discovery of what God is. Then, when these points are well fixed in the conscience, what a great matter salvation becomes! There are some poor people to whom salvation has been made a tremendously-great matter; to be saved from sin, from its guilt, its pollution, its consequences, to be saved from the ruin that is by sin, saved from the wrath to come, from the just condemnation and curse of a holy God in a righteous law is a great matter to a sensible sinner; and therefore, that word “Saviour” is a great word. The Person who bears, and who loves His name (for the Lord Jesus does love His name of Saviour), becomes a very great Person in the estimation of a sensible sinner.

“To save”! O what a salvation! How deep it reaches, to what sinners it comes, and how high it raises them! He that is their Saviour “raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.” “The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost.” Not the good sort of people, not the people who can do so much for themselves, but “that which was lost,” “that which was *lost*.” And that means guilty, filthy, ruined, helpless, incapable of one single act, of the least contribution toward their own salvation. “O,” says such a sinner, “if my soul is to be saved, God must do it without my help; I can make no contribution whatever towards it.” What a wonderful mercy it is,

what a precious truth it is, that this divine, almighty Saviour is able. He is able, and why? Because of His eternal Deity, because of the humanity He assumed, because of what He did in our nature, and because He is exalted high and ever lives to make intercession at the right hand of the Father. "This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." "The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." O His grace, His love, His salvation is as

"Deep as our helpless miseries are,
And boundless as our crimes." (H. 56)

"The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." And, you know, all that He does for poor sinners, He does so graciously; His work bears looking at. It will be matter for eternal praise in those who are raised to sit with Him upon His throne. Eternity will be required to be admiring His grace, and all that He has done in saving poor sinners from their sins, redeeming His people, and possessing them for Himself. Eternity will be required to admire it, to sing the praises of it.

"For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." The Lord command His blessing.

CHRIST: HIS WISDOM, POWER AND COMPASSION

*Address given by B.A. Ramsbottom, at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
on May 28th, 2020*

Reading: Isaiah 9. 1-7

This glorious chapter speaks of the coming of the Son of God into this sinful world and the heavenly light that came in with Him. But the whole world was walking in darkness, and the Jewish people were walking in darkness. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." That was the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, the Sun of righteousness arising with healing in His wings. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." But beloved friends, by nature you and I are no different. We are walking in darkness – the darkness of sin, the darkness of unbelief, the darkness of the knowledge of God. And the wonderful mercy is that that heavenly light that shone forth at Bethlehem and in the whole life, work and ministry of our Lord Jesus, shines into the hearts of His poor, unworthy people now, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Surely this is what some of you feel to need, for the Lord

Jesus by the Holy Spirit graciously to shine in our hearts where death and darkness prevail.

And so we have this beautiful word concerning the Saviour's birth – the Child born, the Son given, the Son of God from all eternity, the Child born to Mary. It is a beautiful word. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." But then we have these wonderful things which are spoken of Him: "The government shall be upon His shoulder" – the government of all things, great things, small things, the rise and fall of kingdoms, our life's minutest circumstance. How true this word is at this present time with this dreadful Covid virus and all the happenings and the changes, the bereavements, everything in the world! "The government shall be upon His shoulder." May we truly believe it – not on the shoulders of *our* government. We pray for them that they might be given wisdom, but the government of all things is not on their shoulders. Their shoulders are too small to carry it.

These are almighty shoulders. At times we get a glimpse that these were the shoulders where the sins of all God's people were laid when He suffered, bled and died on the cross, making atonement for sin, and His shoulders were strong enough to bear that weight, though as Joseph Hart solemnly says, "With strength enough, and none to spare." But may we see it in our own little lives – the things that are happening at present, the things that will happen tomorrow and next week and in the coming days, our thoughts, our plans, our choices, our decisions – may we see the Lord Jesus, now risen, exalted, glorified, in complete control; and the government of all our fears – in the church of God, at Bethel, in our homes and lives and families, in our hearts – "the government shall be upon His shoulder."

And then there are some amazing things said about our Lord Jesus. I just want briefly to bring three of them before you this evening. One Christmas time – I think it was either two years or three years ago – I tried to speak at Bethel from this verse. There were three things that especially impressed me, and really they seem to have remained with me ever since: the wisdom of the Lord Jesus – "His name shall be called ... Counsellor"; the divine, almighty power of the Lord Jesus – "His name shall be called ... The mighty God"; the tender, loving compassion and understanding of the Lord Jesus – "The everlasting Father."

"His name shall be called ... *Counsellor*." He is the all-wise God. How gloriously is His wisdom brought before us in the eighth chapter of the Proverbs, where wisdom is personified. What wisdom there is in the plan of salvation. What wisdom there was that the Son of God could become Man without ceasing to be God. What wisdom there was in devising a way in which He could be born of a sinful woman without contracting sin of any kind. O but, "His name shall be called ...

Counsellor.” We are favoured, we are permitted to go to Him to ask His loving counsel, His gracious advice.

It is a very good word for you young ones who are listening this evening: “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.” We may go to an earthly friend, or we may go to an earthy counsellor, and they do not understand everything. They may do their best; they may make a mistake. Even so with these eminent advocates. They are not always correct, but their advice is not given all that willingly, and certainly not all that freely. But the wonderful thing, that a poor, unworthy sinner who does not know what to do can go to the Lord Jesus and confess his lack of wisdom, his foolishness, and ask the Lord to teach him and show him and hold him, and the Lord will not be offended. We need this wisdom in so many ways. We need it in the church of God; we need it in our homes and lives and circumstances. But above all, never forget this: the vital thing, by the Holy Spirit’s teaching to be made “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” Don’t we need it! And isn’t there a beautiful suitability in it! The Lord’s wisdom. “His name shall be called ... Counsellor.”

Then His divine, almighty power. “His name shall be called ... *The mighty God*.” Just stop for a moment here. There is not a clearer word in all Scripture than this concerning the essential Godhead of our Lord Jesus. It is universally agreed that these words belong to the promised Messiah. Well, how can our adversaries get away from this: “His name shall be called ... The mighty God”? Don’t we need it in salvation!

“Mighty to save! He saves from hell;

A mighty Saviour suits us well,”

(H. 592)

because we are the opposite. We are so weak and helpless, especially in our sin and ruin. But this divine, almighty power! One day it will be put forth eternally against the wicked. What a mercy that it is put forth on behalf of His people, and it is promised especially to those who feel weak. “To them that have no might He increaseth strength.” I am sure some of you this evening are feeling weak. Perhaps it is all the things of this virus. Perhaps you are not too well. Often God’s people are feeling weak, certainly weak in divine things. O but a mighty God on our side, and, “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Then what a beautiful thought there is here concerning our prayers. “The cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto Me, and I will hear it.” There is nothing too hard for the mighty God. I am sure some of you in your thoughts and your circumstances, and thinking of the future, you have things that are too hard for you. In your weakness you feel completely helpless. With our God, nothing shall be impossible, and the whole of Scripture is a blessed commentary on this, whether you want to take circumstances like the crossing of the Red Sea, or whether you want

to take a sinner like Manasseh. O these hard things, and yet so easy with the Lord! He accomplishes His own will, and He delights to do it in answer to the poor, unworthy prayers of His people.

And then we have the Lord's tender compassion: "*The everlasting Father.*" I do not want you to misunderstand this word, beloved friends. This is not speaking of the relationship between the three Persons in the ever-blessed Trinity, because in that relationship, the Lord Jesus is not the Father; He is the Son. But it is speaking of how He delights to speak of His unworthy people as His dear children, and how He ever displays the love of a Father towards them, especially in this way of His compassion. It was the mourning prophet who said, "His compassions fail not." He proved it, and I think some of you have proved it.

It is a very attractive grace, the compassion, the sympathy, the loving understanding of the Lord Jesus. We have it so simply and blessedly in the one-hundred-and-third Psalm. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." You know what dust is. It is not worth anything. No-one would pay for a pile of dust. It is easily blown about and scattered. Sometimes we do not remember that. We perhaps think more of ourselves than we should. But the Lord in His kindness ever remembers we are but dust.

For many years I have been attracted by that thought, that the Word of God does not just say that the Lord has compassion, or He shows compassion. It says He is "*full of compassion*" (see Psalms 78. 38; 86. 15; 111. 4; 112. 4; 145. 8). It is a lovely word. The Lord Jesus is "*full of compassion.*"

How these three attributes coalesce well together! What would it be if we just knew the Lord Jesus as an almighty God, if we did not know something of His tender compassion! And what would it be if we knew how sympathetic He was, if we did not realise how wise He is to understand our case! I like that verse:

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
He pity ne'er withdrew." (H. 438)

"His name shall be called ... The everlasting Father." As I think of our congregation at Bethel – those unwell, those in trouble, our young ones – there seems to be such a suitability to meet your varying needs, however great they are, however different they are. The Lord Jesus in His wisdom, "too wise to err, too good to be unkind," and in His divine, almighty power, an almighty God and Saviour, and then in His tender compassion. "His name shall be called ... Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father."

Before just leaving the verse, it has a good beginning and end as well! "His name shall be called Wonderful." That seems to cover all these other things – a wonderful Counsellor, a wonderful God, a wonderful Father. And then that ending: "The Prince of Peace." Peace is something that all of us find attractive. "Peace by His cross has Jesus made." "Having made peace through the blood of His cross."

And then the Holy Spirit crowns the whole passage with this exceedingly-wonderful word: "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

THE CHIEFTAINSHIP

By Alexander Moody Stuart (1809-1898)

"My Beloved is ... the Chiefest among ten thousand" (Song 5. 10).

In Himself excelling all others, fairer than the children of men, brighter than the morning stars that celebrated His birth; the first and the last, the first and none before Him, the last and none after Him, none like, none second, none next, none other – the Beloved is the Chiefest among ten thousand.

Among ten thousand kings He is the one anointed King, the King of kings; among ten thousand lords, the one Lord over all, the Lord of lords; among ten thousand leaders, the one Leader and Commander of the people. Among ten thousand captains in the Lord's host, He is the one Captain of Salvation; among ten thousand conquerors with palms in their hands, the one Conqueror over sin, death and hell, who proclaims, "I have overcome."

Among ten thousand holy ones, He is the Holy One of God; among ten thousand shepherds, He is the Good Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, the Great Shepherd of the sheep. Among ten thousand priests unto God, He is the one High Priest consecrated for evermore; among ten thousand prophets, the one Prophet, "that Prophet" of whom Moses spake. Among ten thousand firstborn in the general assembly, He is the one Firstborn of the Father; among ten thousand born out of death, the Firstborn from the dead; among ten thousand holy creatures, the Firstborn of every creature. Among ten thousand risen ones, He is the Resurrection; among ten thousand living, He is the Life; among ten thousand names in heaven or in earth, His is the one name by which men must be saved.

Among ten thousand brothers, He is the Brother born for adversity; among ten thousand friends, the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother;

among ten thousand kinsmen, the Kinsman Redeemer, the next of kin. Among ten thousand advocates, He is the one Advocate with the Father; among ten thousand judges, the Judge of the world in righteousness. Among ten thousand physicians, He is the Physician of the sick for whom there is no healer; among ten thousand deliverers, the Saviour of the lost; among ten thousand philanthropists, the Philanthropic One, the Friend of sinners. Among ten thousand counsellors, He is the Wonderful, the Counsellor; among ten thousand eloquent orators, it is He that spake as never man spake. Among ten thousand truthful witnesses, He is the true and faithful Witness; among ten thousand martyrs, the Martyr who witnessed a good confession.

Among ten thousand meek and lowly, He is the meek and lowly One; among ten thousand valiant ones, He stood alone in the breach in the day of battle. Among ten thousand wise, He is the Wisdom of God; among ten thousand just, He is that just One. Among ten thousand mourners, He is the Man of sorrows; among ten thousand joyful souls, He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Among ten thousand stars, He is the Sun shining in its strength; among ten thousand trees of righteousness, the one true Vine; among ten thousand branches, the Branch of the Lord; among ten thousand roses in the desert, the Rose of Sharon; among ten thousand lilies in the midst of thorns, the Lily of the Valleys; among ten thousand sheep, the Lamb of God. Among ten thousand faithful servants, He is the Servant of the Father; among ten thousand children, He is the Father's only-begotten and well-beloved Son.

"This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem"; "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell"; and "that in all things He might have the preeminence"; He is "the Chiefest among ten thousand."

He is the Chief of ten thousand, the bride declares, but she speaks also of another chief of a different character. Through the mouth of one of the first of the virgins she announces, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." How sad the preeminence in guilt – how shameful to be chief among transgressors. Yet the Chief among ten thousand holy ones came to save the chief among ten thousand sinners. "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend"; I the chief of ten thousand offenders, He the Chief of ten thousand deliverers; and we meet together, for "my Beloved is mine, and I am His." The greatness of salvation and the greatness of transgression by their very contrast suit each other; the chief of sinners needing the Chief of saviours – the Chief of saviours sufficient for the chief of sinners, and condescending as it were to need an amount of loss in us corresponding to the amount of salvation in Him.

Are you chief among sinners – among ten thousand transgressors the boldest, among ten thousand liars the most false, among ten thousand drunkards the most brutish, among ten thousand worldlings the most sordid, among ten thousand formalists the most Pharisaic, among ten thousand slanderers the most malicious, among ten thousand blasphemers the most ungodly, among ten thousand cumberers of the ground the most worthless, among ten thousand triflers with eternity the most foolish, among ten thousand lovers of pleasure the most thoughtless, among ten thousand earthworms the most grovelling, among ten thousand sleepers the most slothful, among ten thousand sick the most incurable, among ten thousand condemned the guiltiest – chief among sinners? The Father sends the Son, the Son presents Himself as the Chiefest among ten thousand, gives Himself for you, gives Himself to you if you will receive Him [see John 1. 11-13, *Ed.*] and has come into the world to save sinners, of whom you are chief.

THE SECURITY IN CHRIST OF A TRUE BELIEVER

Extracts from a sermon preached by J.A. Wallinger, in 1843

Text: “And he put upon him the coat, and girded him with the girdle, and clothed him with the robe, and put the ephod upon him, and he girded him with the curious girdle of the ephod, and bound it unto him therewith” (Lev. 8. 7).

“We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb. 8. 1), a kingly Priest, a living Priest, who hath “ascended up far above all heavens” (Eph. 4. 10), and is there set down at the right hand of God until He shall appear “unto them that look for Him ... the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9. 28). He shall come without sin, having thrown it all off, aye, and without charge of sin. “What!” say you, “without charge of sin?” Yea, as to His redeemed. No charge against them. He will indeed come to condemn, but it will be those who know Him not. To those who know Him He will say, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25. 34). Yes, the kingdom was eternally prepared for them, and they must be prepared for it.

The point of preparation troubles many, but what is it? Being chosen in Christ before all worlds by God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, and called to the knowledge of ourselves and of Jesus and His work by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and so regenerated and made a new creature and called by grace. Here is meetness and preparedness for eternal glory. Thus, a new creature of yesterday, or a babe in Christ,

when it departs shall go to its home above, be welcomed amongst the family, received as an heir of God, wrapped in the Father's arms and bosom for ever. And if the babe in Christ lived to be a father in Christ, or a mother in Israel, there could be no greater meetness, all the believer's doings in time being independent of salvation.

What step could the thief upon the cross take towards meetness? Said our Lord, a few minutes after the thief's birth: "To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23 .43). Why? Because a child, an elect vessel, a saved soul; and so called by grace to know and love Jesus. Every soul so called is a justified soul, a pardoned soul, though he may not enjoy the happy experience of it, for in the kingdom of grace the infant of days and the old man that hath filled his days are alike; "the child shall die an hundred years old," being perfect in Christ, "but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (Isa. 65. 20).

JOB'S ACCEPTANCE

*Letter by Joseph Pitts Wiles (1849-1929), pastor of
the Old Baptist Chapel, Devizes, Wiltshire*

The things which are seen are temporal. The Lord has been kind to you and me, teaching us to look at the things which are not seen, and which are eternal. The things of which I tried to speak last night are eternal realities. I will try to give you a little sketch of them.

It is written, "The LORD also accepted Job" (Job 42 .9).

1. When did He accept him?
2. Why did He accept him?
3. What did all the rest matter?

1. The Lord accepted him as soon as he had nothing to say for himself, and no fault to find with God's righteous dealings. So long as Job maintained his own righteousness and found fault with God's dealings with him, he had no sweet sense of acceptance. The Lord held him, as it were, at arm's length. So it is with us until we are brought down to real poverty, and cry for mercy on the ground of grace. It is not easy to say from the heart,

"Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling." (H. 143)

2. The Lord accepted Job, not because of his righteousness, not even because of his humility and poverty of spirit, but because of the acceptability of Christ His Son. He looked upon His own Son and said, "I have found a Ransom." That is where God looks, and that is where all

His people have to look sooner or later. The blood of Jesus Christ, and nothing else, cleanseth us from all sin.

3. What did all the rest matter? Nothing at all. Where are Job's afflictions now? Nothing is left of them but the good that they did him. That remains, and the afflictions are gone for ever. So it will be with us, if we fear God. Afflictions may burden us, the devil may tempt us, and friends may call us hypocrites; but these things will do us no real harm and will soon come to an end.

Let us pray the Lord to teach us these lessons of eternal life in our hearts.

J.P. Wiles

Devizes, Wiltshire
July 10th, 1907

A SUITABLE WORD FOR THE END OF THE YEAR

Extract from a sermon preached by J.H. Gosden in 1958

Text: "Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." (Psa. 27. 9).

"Thou hast been my help." It is profitable, it is humbling, softening to the heart, and sanctifying to the spirit, when you can remember by the Spirit's help past things, past promises. Has He ever spoken to you? Has He ever said to you, "Because I live, ye shall live also"? (John 14. 19). Has He said to you, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee"? (Isa. 41.14). Has He ever said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"? (Heb. 13. 5). O some words in this blessed Book are not only printed in the pages but burnt on some hearts; and you are wealthy people, rich people, spiritually, upon whose heart the Lord has engraven any promise in blessed truth. It is a covenant promise: "I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb. 10. 16).

"Thou hast been my help; leave me not." O if the Lord left us, what would become of us? Personally, if He left us, what could possibly keep us from despair, from falling into sin, from making shipwreck of faith? "Leave me not." If He leaves us to ourselves, woe be to us; if He leaves us to our enemies and Satan's temptations, then we are undone. "Leave me not." And if He leaves a people, what is left but form, if that remains? He speaks here: "Leave me not," as if he should say, Leave me not a moment. That is a wonderful promise in Isaiah 27. 3, a blessed promise to be pleaded by people who dread being left of the Lord; the Lord said He would keep His vineyard: "I the LORD do keep it; I will

water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” – every moment, never intermitting His watchful care and love toward His people. It is not often we feel it, but you will deprecate being left, especially in trouble, to any sin, to rebellion and unbelief and Satan’s temptations.

“Leave me not, neither forsake me.” To be left and to be forsaken are two suggestions, as it were, and the Lord’s people deprecate being left for a moment. I have looked at that word in John 14. 23 – it has made my heart long to experience the fulfilment of it – “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” – dwell with him. If He dwells with us, that will be well, and has He not promised to dwell with His people? Look for it friends, whatever we lack and lose, if only the Lord is with us, abidingly, if He makes His habitation with us and takes us for Himself and allows us to claim Him for ourselves, that is the best we can have here below; the world can go. What is the world to me? –

“Compared with Christ, in all beside
No comeliness I see;
The one thing needful, dearest Lord,
Is to be one with Thee.” (H. 940)

The world is a wilderness without Christ, but with Christ the wilderness blossoms as a rose. “Neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” It is all in Him; in the Lord is the salvation of Israel. Is He the God of your salvation? Has He made it known to you, given you faith to believe in Him as the Author of eternal salvation, accomplished by His precious death, and assured you by His blessed Spirit that He will not be in heaven and leave His people for whom He died to be a prey to sin and Satan? No, He will bring them at last to Himself. The Lord teach us to seek Him in the means of grace, in the Word of God, at the throne of grace. And when He grants us a little of His presence, and union with Him, we shall have heaven and we shall want to praise Him then and we shall want to be without sin.

When you get a blessing from the Lord it emphasises the heinousness of sin, it endears the Lord Jesus to your heart, and you want to be with Him. It may be the Lord blesses His people to make them His witnesses. He could take His people to heaven immediately He blesses them and satisfies them with His mercy, but it pleases Him to keep them here below for a time. Very solemn it is and yet very blessed, solemn because of the trial of faith. When I was blessed in my early days, I wanted to get to heaven, and believed I should do in due time, and the anticipation was sweet, but O the difficulties since, the trial of faith.

The other thing is this: He keeps His people here below that they may be His witnesses to speak, as He said to one: “Go home to thy

friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (Mark 5. 19). The Lord Jesus Christ in His intercessory prayer to His divine Father said, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17. 15). But the best part of that prayer, the ultimate goal of the desire of the child of God and the purpose and will of Christ is this: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (John 17. 24). Then the sun will go no more down, there will be no more clouds, there will be no more weeping and mourning because there will be no more sin.

OPEN THY MOUTH WIDE

My dear E.,

We have had our dear Pastor (Mr. Popham) this morning. He preached from John 14. 26 for forty minutes. Towards the end he was tired and done. In the evening just as he was starting for chapel, he was taken bad and sent a message requesting the deacons to hold a prayer meeting. The ordinance was postponed to the coming Sunday, if all is well. Many visitors were present, and it must have been a disappointment to them, as also to us.

He was out on Wednesday, though weak, and we had a wonderful sermon, which seems to grow the more you think of it. He read Ephesians 3, and the text was Psalm 81. 10: "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." He spoke first of how slow we are to praise God and how much we have to praise Him for; and on the trend of the Psalm, and how the Lord said to His people: "I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt"; and how when brought into the wilderness the children of Israel murmured when there was no water. So do we. With no bread, no water, they had to cry to God, and He rained it upon them.

He spoke reprovingly to those content with their complaints, of hearing ministers describe their case and going home satisfied, instead of being stirred up to seek healing; content with a little help (good indeed, and not to be despised), instead of seeking to know more and asking the Lord to speak and say, "I am the LORD that healeth thee." That is opening the mouth wide, and He has said, "I will fill it." It made me feel how remiss I was. Yet that is the way I have been led: "Ask, and ye shall receive"; and how often in venturing I have felt dead, as helpless as a log with no feeling at all, and while thus venturing to go as I was, full of evil of all sorts, the Lord has heard and not only answered, but far beyond, yea exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.

I could not help thinking of you, feeling it a good deal described your case and wishing you might have some God-given energy to call and call until He answers you, which He will. Mr. P. spoke of our desires being like those of the sluggard, so half-hearted. It was a wonderful sermon; so tender, yet reproving. When concluding, he spoke of heaven and said, some hope to get there. It was touching. Then he said, the sluggard will get there, but he will miss much here – a good remark. He quoted out of hymn 850:

“Heaven is that holy happy place,
Where sin no more defiles;
Where God unveils His blissful face,
And looks, and loves, and smiles.”

He spoke also of the smile of God, that it cannot be expressed; it makes a summer. This was most impressively spoken and made us feel rather sad.

Several were affected who were earnestly seeking. It had the right effect of making one feel thoroughly ashamed. Might it stir us all up to seek earnestly the best gifts, and ask for grace to hold loosely the trivial things of this life. How much time and thought we give to earth! If only we gave it to God and His things, we should be different. Then the every day vexations would sink into their proper place. What a mercy there is a throne of grace, a Refuge for sinners who need daily, hourly cleansing! There is nothing God cannot do to help a sinner, *nothing* in any shape or form in heaven or earth, *nothing* too hard for the Lord, *nothing* impossible. However bad the case, He has a remedy for every coming sinner. The last hymn was so suitable (379), especially the verse:

“Thou art coming to a King;
Large petitions with thee bring;
For His grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much.”

Well dear, I know we cannot give you the release from the trouble and temptation you are labouring under, but we can, as dear Mr. Popham says, “Speak well of God.” Go to Him as you can, with thy rags about thy neck, and fall before His feet, and you will be received. It is very bad weather and it seems like a judgment. Many are in trouble over the crops and fruit. But we have many mercies. May they be kept for us.

Much love, dear, and sympathy to you each, and may you both have all that help and patience needed. Although you cannot see and feel His help, He supports you still.

Yours very affectionately,

M. Suffell

August 6th, 1936

GOD'S CANDLE

By Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

“The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly” (Prov. 20. 27).

God has not left Himself without witness in His own benighted world (see Acts 14. 16, 17). At the first creation bright indeed was “the candle of the Lord,” shining in the little world – man (see Gen. 1. 26). But every faculty partook of the Fall. Still enough is left in the inner mind and conscience, to show, even in the thick darkness of heathenism, the divine perfection (see Rom. 1. 19, 20) – the just desert of sin (see Rom. 1. 20, 21, 32), and even some faint glimpses of the standard of right and wrong (see Rom. 2. 14, 15). But dim indeed is *this candle*, except it be lighted at God’s lamp (see Prov. 6. 23). When the Word and Spirit of God give light to it, it will effectually perform its important offices (as Bishop Reynolds defines them): “direction, conviction and consolation,” not only exhibiting the outward acts, but *searching the innermost parts of the belly* – all the hidden acts and conduct of the inner man (see 1 Cor. 2. 11). The man of ungodliness would be glad to extinguish this *candle*. He is too great a coward to venture into his secret chamber in the dark, yet he hates the light (see John 3. 20), which, in spite of all his opposition, drags forth into day many secret, lurking evils; never allowing the plea, “Is it not a little one?” Most valuable is *this candle*, throwing the light of God upon the narrow path; so that we “are not scrupulous and nice in small matters, negligent in the main; we are still curious in substantial points, and not careless in things of an inferior nature; accounting no duty so small as to be neglected, and no care great enough for principal duties; not so tithing mint and cummin, that we should forget justice and judgment; nor yet regarding judgment and justice, that we should condemn mint and cummin” (Bishop Hall’s *Works*).

Now let me ask – when God causes *His candle* to shed a clearer light, can I abide it? Do I welcome the hateful discoveries which it brings out? Do I value its light, as opening the secret business of communion between a sinner and a jealous, holy God? Do I exercise myself to preserve the light from being dimmed in the atmosphere of sin; to guard its purity, as the means of establishing my confidence with God? (see Acts 24. 16). Oh, let there be *no inward part* of my soul, where I am not most willing, most earnest, to bring “the candle of the Lord,” that all secret indulgences may be searched out and mortified. “He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3. 21).

BOOK REVIEWS

Sermons and Addresses of George Smeaton, hardback; 288 pages; price £13; published by the Banner of Truth Trust and obtainable from them and from Christian bookshops.

George Smeaton was an eminent and much-respected minister and professor in the Free Church of Scotland at the time of its separation from the Church of Scotland. These sermons and addresses are prefaced by an interesting, brief but informative biographical introduction by John W. Keddie.

The sermons are very profitable, in particular the one on Immanuel, in which the sacred doctrines of the eternal Sonship and sacred humanity of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ are clearly and graciously set forth..

The addresses, which were given as lectures to his students, are on a range of subjects and are graciously challenging to those who desire the extension of Christ's kingdom on earth. The works understandably have many references to the state of the churches in Scotland at the time.

Olney; The Home of Amazing Grace, subtitled: John Newton and His Friends, by Graham Chewter; hardback; 198 pages; price £15 plus £2.25 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom and agents.

This is a well-researched and most interesting account of the history of the Lord's work of grace at Olney, famous of course for the name of John Newton whose labours there were abundantly blessed of God. Other gracious men of the dissenters are also brought before the reader, who like Newton had one object in view, the furtherance of the gospel among those to whom the Lord called them. Many illustrations add to the unfolding history and make it suitable for young and old alike. In reading this history, those desirous of the true prosperity of the church in our generation, can only say with Elisha at the departure of Elijah: "Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me."

The Gospel Pointing to the Person of Christ, by Andrew A. Bonar; paperback; 125 pages; price £4.75 plus £1.65 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom and agents.

It is at first sight rather surprising that Gospel Standard Trust Publications should publish a work by a man who was unashamedly a "free offer" man. This anomaly has sought to be addressed by the publishers, who have sought to explain the word "offer" as something distinct from the connotation we might naturally put to it. They have reminded readers that there are other aspects of Bonar's ministry from which we would also graciously differ.

With that proviso, the object of the book is admirable and indeed necessary. It seeks to point the believer to the Person and work of Christ as the only safe and sure Rock on which to build and be found in. It is rightly pointed out that many true believers remain uncertain about their standing in Christ, because they dwell more on the gifts that flow from Christ rather than on Him, the great Giver of eternal life. Job's declaration, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" is a blessed example in this respect.

Joshua, Man of Courage, written and illustrated by Mark Philpott; 44 pages; hardback; £6; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from Harpenden bookroom and agents.

This is another, book for children in The Faithful Footsteps Series and is of the usual high standard of previous books in the series. It is warmly recommended both for its content and presentation.

OBITUARIES

Joseph Clifford Woodhouse, beloved Pastor of the church at Bethel Strict Baptist Chapel, South Chard, from January 1976, passed to his eternal rest on June 24th, 2022, aged 90 years.

The family have sent a brief summary of his early days, and this is followed by the address given at his funeral.

Clifford was born in Loveday Street Hospital, Birmingham, the second child and first son of Leonard and Ruth Woodhouse. His maternal grandfather was Joseph Field, Pastor at Hope Chapel, Sedgley and his paternal grandfather was Benjamin Woodhouse, chainmaker for the Titanic. They lived at Rowley, but attended Cave Adullam Chapel, Beeches Road, Blackheath, requiring a walk of six miles twice every Sunday. He passed his eleven plus examination and attended Dudley Grammar School. He joined the Royal Navy in 1950 where he gained the many skills needed in future days and in 1953 took part in the Queen's coronation procession, marching through Singapore where they were based. On leaving the Navy in 1956, he joined the Austin Motor Company and trained as a draftsman where he won a prize from the Draftsman's School that was presented to him by the late Sir Alec Issigonis, the designer of the Mini. Clifford went on to become a production engineer and devised the manufacturing process of the first automatic gearbox for the Mini. After leaving Austin, he became a technical representative for Alfred Herbert Ltd., Coventry, who requested he relocate to Sheffield. Having no leading from the Lord, he had to accept redundancy. He moved to A.E. Clark & Co. (Tools) Ltd. Hockley, Birmingham, with the promise, "My presence shall go with thee," and left his position as General Manager to take the pastorate at South Chard in January 1976.

Funeral address

Dear friends, it is for me a sad privilege to be standing before you this afternoon. Sad, because a dear friend to me, and of course even much dearer to his dear wife and family, and the friends here at South Chard chapel, has been taken; and we feel a gap, even though for the last seven years of his life he was very incapacitated. Yet, as long as he remained on the face of this earth, Clifford was our friend, and it is an

honour, of which I do not feel worthy, to be asked to take this service this afternoon. What Clifford would be saying, I am sure, were he standing in this place now, would be, "Put the crown where it belongs." It is to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the church, who made Clifford a child of God, a minister of the gospel and a faithful Pastor, we give the honour and the glory. As we read in 1 Corinthians 15 just now, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

The word that is on my spirit this afternoon to speak from for a few moments, as well as point to a few things in Clifford's life which bear this testimony, are words that he spoke to me on at least one occasion, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1. 21). Friends, if the first part is true of us, then "to die is gain"; but if we are strangers to the first part, then the second part will be our eternal loss. O that we might know, as Clifford could say, and he very much emphasised that first part, "For to me" – it was personal, for, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." We will come back to that in a moment.

Let me just refer to one or two things that I have been able to glean about our dear friend. He was born in a godly home on September 13th, 1931, brought up to attend Cave Adullam Chapel, Beeches Road, Blackheath, Rowley Regis, where at that time the late Mr. Leslie Falkner was the pastor. He had a very gracious fellowship with his mother, whom I highly esteemed, but he especially mentioned his grandmother, the late Mrs. Joseph Field. She was a very godly woman, so much so, that even before his call by grace he knew there was something different about real religion. In 1950, at the age of eighteen, he joined the Royal Navy and was there until 1956. These were what he called his unregenerate days, and more than once he spoke to me of the escapades he got up to and the way he lived, on one occasion nearly going overboard when he was not altogether sober. He looked back with sadness at the way he spent his time before the Lord dealt with him, but he always felt he was a brand plucked out of the burning, and he was. When he came out of the Navy, Clifford felt drawn to attend Ebenezer Chapel, Old Hill, at first only on the Lord's days, but as the work of grace took root, he began to attend there on the week night also.

Clifford had an exercise from the Lord about a wife, and being frustrated in one or two instances and everything coming to nothing, in the end he got on his knees and asked the Lord to give him the wife that the Lord knew he needed. The Lord did just that, and our friend Marcelle was provided for him to be not only a loving wife and mother, but a pastor's wife for many years; and especially these last years when she so loyally and lovingly cared for him as his mind and body weakened. The Lord certainly gave him the wife that he needed.

At this time the Lord began to work in his heart, and he says in his writings that the first three verses in Psalm 40 really described his early

days: "I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD." Those three verses epitomised what he felt when he was first called by grace and brought to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; the hymn, "Join all who love the Saviour's name," was his daily song, and he went around the house singing it to the tune Niagara.

He recorded in the writings that his faith was greatly tried, and real faith will be greatly tried if it is of the Lord, but he said his unchanging Friend, Christ, never forsook him. When Mr. Harold Crowter took the pastorate in 1964 at Ebenezer, Clifford became exercised about following the Lord in believer's baptism. About that time, those well-known words in 2 Corinthians 12 were made very precious: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." The point with Clifford was that he had a very strong disposition and he knew it; he knew he could be easily led as well, and his past bore witness to that. How would he bear an honourable profession of the Lord Jesus Christ? He felt he had not got the strength for it. The Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and so he proved it.

A very remarkable word was given after he held back for some while, when he went with his Pastor to a service at Nottingham and his Pastor read in Luke 9. 56 these words: "And they went to another village." The reason was that one village would not receive the Saviour so He went to another village. Clifford said that took such hold of him as he thought, "Am I like that first village, not willing to acknowledge my Lord?" It made him get out of his chair when he got home and he wrote to his Pastor. Unbeknown to him, Marcelle was also exercised to come forward at the same time. So eventually they were baptized together at Ebenezer in 1968, remaining in membership until 1976 when they came to South Chard.

For ten years Clifford carried an exercise about the ministry. He kept it to himself, but nonetheless it was there, and one of the lady members put into his hand a little book called, *Chronicles of a Chequered Pathway*. It was the experience of the late Mr. Edward Carr from Bath. She put it into his hand and said, "Clifford, read this; I think it might suit you." As he read it, he saw his own experience mirrored both in his exercise about baptism and about being a minister of the gospel. He knew he had to give this book back, but did not want to say anything about it, so he slipped it into this woman's hand a few days later, and she said, "Have you read it Clifford? Have you read it?" He said, "Yes, I have read it"; he would not say any more for the moment.

He prayed that another minister would preach from a certain text in Hebrews 13. 23: "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty." He felt that if a minister came and preached from that, he would feel able to tell his Pastor. However, it was actually his Pastor who preached from the word. At this service Clifford turned the page of his Bible back and these words forcibly arrested him: "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh" (Heb. 12. 25), and he knew that he had to proceed with the matter. In 1973 he came before the church. Just before the church meeting, Mr. Colin Dawson was preaching at Ebenezer anniversary services, and his text was: "Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col. 4. 17); (that is the gospel ministry). As he went down the aisle, another lady got hold of him and said, "Clifford, see that thou fulfil it." So he knew that the church was exercised about him.

In 1973 he went forth to preach, his first text being 1 Timothy 1. 15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." That was Clifford's ministry from the beginning to the end; he delighted to set forth the Christ he knew.

In 1976 he took up the burden of the pastorate here; I believe he was the longest serving of the ten pastors here, and he was the tenth. He preached to five generations of Astons in that time and also at the same time was a very active deputation speaker of the Trinitarian Bible Society. He was well known in the South West and further afield speaking on behalf of that honourable society. He also was a very fervent Protestant in some of the other organisations that seek to defend our Protestant heritage.

Of his ministry, a deacon in one of our northern chapels was asked by someone, "Mr. Woodhouse, what sort of minister is he?" "Well, it is like this," he said. "He is his own man; he doesn't copy anybody, but this I do know about him: he preaches from his heart; he preaches what he has tasted, handled and felt." I thought that was a very nice, lovely testimony.

Clifford loved his people here: he travailed for this people. Dear Chard friends, he rejoiced in your joys, he wept in your sorrows. He entered into your pathway, taking a deep interest in the young as they grew up and as they went forth into life. He was a faithful pastor. Yes, he was Clifford Woodhouse, he was a man of his own disposition, as we all are. The Lord put him here, the Lord maintained him here, especially in his later years giving him abundant evidence of the ability that God had given him to preach as a pastor. His later years bore much fruit to his labours. Some of us watching and praying for Clifford were so thankful to see the sheaves being brought in before the end of his days.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psa. 126. 6).

Then the years of affliction came, and it may be a question, “Why did the Lord not take him, say, seven years ago?” Now God is a sovereign, and who can tell what work of grace was going on beneath the surface that we could not comprehend. On one occasion he did break out, saying to Marcelle unexpectedly, so to speak, “The Lord is good. You know that I love the Lord.” Something was going on even then. I have thought about the building of Solomon’s temple: all the stones were measured and fashioned in the quarry before they were brought to the temple site, and some stones lay a long while before they were brought. Why? Because the position they were going to was not ready for them. So I think when the Lord delays, as we may say, and we wonder why, it is because there is a time and a place for a living stone of Christ’s to be put in its place in the temple God is building: “Fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2. 21). Then just a few days ago, Clifford quietly slipped away to take his place before the throne of the Lamb in whom he delighted.

Friends, I have taken many funerals in my time; some are more easy than others (in the right sense – you understand me), but we can say without a shadow of a doubt concerning our friend Clifford, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” As it was said of Lazarus, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth,” his body is sleeping, soon to go into the grave; but his soul is not sleeping; his soul is among “the spirits of just men made perfect.”

“Where congregations ne’er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”

What was Clifford’s religion, then? It was this: “For to me” – personal, whatever it may be to anyone else – “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” What did he mean: “To live is Christ”? It meant to have the Holy Spirit of Christ within him; it meant to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd; it meant to feel His presence; it meant to follow Him wherever He would lead him; it meant to be fed by Him, watered by Him, instructed by Him, corrected by Him, upheld by Him and at last brought safely home to Him. Before Clifford’s call by grace, it was anything but Christ, and so it was with some of us as well; but when he was called by grace this was the one ambition of Clifford’s life: “Christ and Him crucified.” A lesson to us all dear friends: is it, “To live is Christ,” with you? Or is it just to get a good job and money, pleasure and leisure; is that what you call living? At one time Clifford thought that was, but when God opened his eyes to the light in God’s light, he knew there was no life in that life; his life was Christ.

“This prayer and this ambition mine,
Living and dying to be Thine.” (H. 1052)

For to him it was, “To live is Christ,” and when he died it was gain. He left behind that body of weakness and that mind of weakness, and in perfect freedom of spirit and full of love in a measure we cannot begin to estimate, he stands before the throne this afternoon hour and he is singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” This is what he desired; this is what he desired for his people, and those to whom the Lord sent him. So it is a question with us now, is it not, this afternoon hour?

We pray for his dear wife, family, his grandchildren, and his friends here and elsewhere. His one desire for them was that they might know what it was to be able to say, “For to me to live is Christ.” Those of us who I trust know a little of Christ, I think we would say with the hymnwriter,

“Lord, it is not life to live,
If Thy presence Thou deny;
Lord, if Thou Thy presence give,
'Tis no longer death to die.” (H. 988)

That was Clifford's religion; that whole hymn summed him up.

Well, what can we say as we lay these things before you this afternoon hour, dear friends? It will not always be somebody else's funeral you attend; sooner or later it will be yours or mine. Will it be said of us, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,” in union, in communion, in fellowship, in the Lord's care? A blessed thing if so, but if not so, O how solemn.

I thought of a little hymn that is sometimes sung, and I will close with it; it is a question asked:

“How stands the case, my soul, with thee?”

Listen carefully; I will read it through,

“There is a day, 'tis hastening on,
When Zion's God shall purge His floor;
His own elect shall then be known,
For He shall count those jewels o'er.

“Nought but the grains of gospel gold
Will ever stand this trying day,
When like a scroll, together rolled,
The starry heavens shall pass away.

“How stands the case, my soul, with thee?
For heaven are thy credentials clear?
Is Jesus' blood thy only plea?
Is He thy great Forerunner there?

“Is thy proud heart subdued by grace
 To seek salvation in His name?
 There’s wisdom, power and righteousness,
 All cent’ring in the worthy Lamb.

“Then thou may’st rest assured of this,
 And lift thy favoured head with joy,
 Thy hopes of heaven’s eternal bliss,
 Earth, hell and sin shall ne’er destroy.”

Friends, may God answer that question for you and for me; that our credentials may be clear and not found wanting in that solemn day when the Bridegroom will say, “Go ye out to meet Him.” Clifford had the oil of grace in his lamp. He went out and is forever shut in with his dear Saviour. How awfully solemn to be shut out, no oil of grace in our lamp. Lay it to heart, dear friends.

May God bless you, and we commend into God’s gracious care Marcelle and the family in their deep loss, and the church and congregation as well. Yes, it is a long while since Clifford was able to preach to them, but he had a place in their hearts right to the end. May the Lord provide for them as this new chapter in the long-honoured history of this cause of truth opens up.

May God give His blessing. Amen.

Margaret Ruth Rutt, the beloved wife of the pastor at Lamberhurst, passed away on Lord’s day, March 13th, 2022, aged 69 years.

I believe my late dear wife was one of the Lord’s little ones. It could be said of her as it was of Lydia, “Whose heart the Lord opened.” She was brought up to attend Hope Chapel, Blackboys, through the long pastorate of Mr. R.S. Jupp, of blessed memory. The sweet savour of his ministry will long be remembered. I met my dear wife in autumn 1974 and we married in February 1976. I was already a professing member of the church of Christ, so my great concern was, is she also a God-fearing person? In the conversations we had at that time I felt satisfied that she did indeed have the fear of the Lord and was a praying soul. In all the subsequent leadings I had, this proved to be true.

In married life we had many, many trials, especially my own afflictions, and she for many years had a very serious spinal problem which caused her severe pain. We had many providential trials too. She proved to be an excellent helpmeet, especially as a mother, a minister’s wife and eventually a Pastor’s wife. She privately gave me good counsel on many occasions. We proved the truth of the word, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.” This was so true of us.

Through the years, I often spoke to her on spiritual matters, but her usual answer was, “I am just a nothing.” She often prayed, but said, “I do not get answers” She was very concerned that she was out of the secret.

She was diagnosed with CJD (an untreatable neurological disease that is always fatal) in May 2021. She was greatly distressed because she did not feel ready to die. She said she was terrified to die. While she was still able to get to chapel, one Lord’s day morning we closed the service with hymn 385, and as we drove home she asked for that hymn to be sung at her funeral. The whole hymn was felt to be special; it expressed her feelings, especially the last verse.

“To glory bring me, Lord, at last,
And there, when all my fears are past,
With all Thy saints I’ll then agree,
God has been merciful to me!”

Before we reached home, she had chosen the other two hymns, 64 and 143.

In October I was wrestling in prayer with the Lord for her, what I can only describe as an agony of soul, and the Lord breathed these words into my soul: “For I am persuaded” (Rom. 8. 38). The sweetness and power of those words I will never forget, and I was fully persuaded that she was going to glory. About two weeks after this I asked the Lord to give me a testimony from her own mouth that this was true. One Lord’s day we closed the service with hymn 539. She was by this time bedridden, and her physical functions were rapidly failing. I walked into the room and her face literally beamed, and she said, “O the last verse of the last hymn was so sweet and precious to me.”

“The time will shortly come,
When you, with sweet surprise,
Will find yourself at home
With Christ, above the skies;
With Him to live, with Him to reign,
And never, never part again.”

This was the precious token the Lord gave me from her own mouth that she was ready and prepared to die. Our children, who all helped nurse her, commented that she was much more peaceful after this.

As she was drawing towards her end, I sat by her holding her hand and asked her how she really felt in herself, and she sweetly answered, “Sometimes I feel really comfortable.” This was so precious as normally she so feared to presume.

The professor who visited her at home on four occasions had told us that when she could not swallow, she would only be with us for seven

days. On Lord's day, February 6th she could not swallow; this was caused by the brain failing to send messages to do so. Thankfully she was still able to talk. My brother Joseph came to see her on the Monday. He read the account of the Good Samaritan with her and prayed. A few minutes later she called him back to her bed. The following is his account.

"Following the reading I said to Marg, 'You're like the poor, helpless man in the parable; he could do nothing to help himself or relieve his sad condition.' She answered, 'I can do nothing.' I then said, 'He could not go to the Samaritan, and nor can you get to Jesus, can you?' She replied, 'No.' I asked her if she desired Jesus. She answered, 'Yes.'

"I said to her, 'Jesus was speaking of Himself in this parable. The poor man, like you, could not get up and go to the Samaritan; the Samaritan came right where he was. Jesus still has the blessed ability to come where helpless sinners are, and like the Samaritan Jesus has all a poor, helpless sinner needs.'

"My wife joined us for a while, and I went over to speak to my brother. After a little while, my wife came to me and told me that, 'Marg wants you.'

"I went over to her. She was smiling and said, 'That was nice what you said.' I said to her, 'Do you feel you're in need of Jesus?' She replied, 'Yes.' I asked her if she was looking to Jesus. She replied, 'Yes.'

"I encouraged her to keep looking to Jesus and praying to Him.

"At the end of our conversation, dear Marg was in much weakness, but her countenance was peaceful, and she gave me a lovely smile. I have thought since only faith can make a poor sinner smile like that in death."

She was unconscious from Tuesday, and passed away peacefully at 3.15 a.m. the following Lord's day. We firmly believe she is now in glory, for ever with the Lord.

"One gentle sigh their fetters breaks;
We scarce can say, 'They're gone!'" (H. 1155)

"I shall sleep sound in Jesus,
Filled with His likeness rise,
To love and to adore Him,
To see Him with these eyes.
'Tween me and resurrection
But Paradise doth stand;
Then, then for glory dwelling
In Immanuel's land."

Jabez R. Rutt

THE INCARNATE SAVIOUR

Awake, awake the sacred song,
To our incarnate Lord;
Let every heart and every tongue
Adore the eternal Word.

That awful Word, that sovereign power,
By whom the worlds were made
(O happy morn! illustrious hour!)
Was once in flesh arrayed.

Then shone almighty power and love,
In all their glorious forms,
When Jesus left His throne above
To dwell with sinful worms.

To dwell with misery below
The Saviour left the skies;
And sunk to wretchedness and woe,
That worthless man might rise.

Adoring angels tuned their songs
To hail the joyful day;
With rapture then let mortal tongues
Their grateful worship pay!

What glory, Lord, to Thee is due!
With wonder we adore;
But could we sing as angels do,
Our highest praise were poor.

Anne Steele (1717-1778)

NOTICES OF DEATH

Harry Alexander Wallis, formerly from Zion, Prestwood, and Ebenezer, Luton, and a loved and faithful minister of the gospel, passed to his eternal rest on Monday, November 7th, 2022, aged 96 years. “Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace” (Psa. 37. 37).

Frank Hayden, much-loved and esteemed deacon at Hope Chapel, Redhill, for forty-seven years, passed to his eternal rest on Friday, October 14th, 2022, aged 94 years. “For he was a faithful man, and feared God above many” (Neh. 7. 2).

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INDEX

EDITOR'S PIECES

Doctrinal and Experiential Editorials	4, 33, 65, 114, 129, 160, 162, 233, 253, 265, 298, 361
New Year Address	1
The Passing of Queen Elizabeth II	297
The Queen's Platinum Jubilee	161
The War in Ukraine	97
<i>Sermons and Addresses</i>	
The Lord Teaching His Disciples to Pray (Luke 11. 1-13)	81

GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY AND BETHESDA FUND

Society Meeting	193
Bethesda Meeting	351

GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST

Annual General Meetings (2021 and 2022)	57, 278
---	---------

HYMNS AND POEMS

A.H.	Christ Saves unto the Uttermost	296
Author Unknown	Answer for Me, My Lord	232
	O For a Perfect Trust	32
Campbell, J.D.S.	The Great Safety of Those who Trust in God	264
Dawson, H.	The Blessed End of the Righteous	159
E.J.	"Thou art Mine"	64
Hennah, A.	Complete in Him	127
Kent, J.	The Woman of Samaria	328
Newton, J.	A Brand Plucked out of the Fire	360
Pepler, S.	The Sun's Behind the Cloud	95
Sawyer, C.	Longing for Soul Rest	192
Steele, A.	The Incarnate Saviour	392

LETTERS

Cameron, N.	The Inestimable Value of the Bible	247
	Regeneration Essential to Salvation	276
Gosden, J.H.	Last Letter of J.H. Gosden	239
Hemington, C.	Encouragement to Those of Little Faith	113
Pierce, S. E.	Nothing to Discourage the Coming Sinner	107
Philpot, J.C.	All My Springs are in Thee	222
Popham, J.K.	Gracious Advice on Choosing a Deacon	121
Rutherford, S.	A Letter to a Young Believer	153
	"A Time to Weep, and a Time to Laugh"	312
	To Christian Brother on Death of Daughter	333
Suffell, M.	Open Thy Mouth Wide	379
Tanner, J.	Fighting the Good Fight	56
	God's Winnowing Time	322
	Longing for Fruitfulness	277
Tiptaft, W.	Ministerial Exercises of William Tiptaft	242
T.S.S.	The King's Daughter is All Glorious Within	155
Wiles, J.P.	Job's Acceptance	376

MEMOIRS AND EXPERIENCES

Alexander, J.H.	The Bengal Officer (Francis Jeffreys)	226
Campbell, M.	Charles Calder of Ferintosh	22
Covell, F.	Fragments from Francis Covell	25
Gilpin, B.	Thy Brother	19
Kershaw, J.	The Preaching that I Bid Thee	28
Mackenzie, L.	"Muckle Kate"	123
Mijnders, J.	In the Valley of the Shadow of Death	156

Moxon, R.	A Remarkable Dream and Its Fulfilment	322
	A Revelation of Jesus Christ	44
Paton, J.G.	A Sabbath Day on Aniwa	86
Popham, J.K.	The Husbandman's Long Patience	314
Raven, J.	A Blessed Memory (Charles James)	260, 282
Stevens, J.	A Testimony of the Advocacy of Christ	14
Tingley, W.	A Sinner Saved by Grace (Caroline Stephens)	91
Warburton, J.	"A True Witness Delivereth Souls"	78

MISCELLANEOUS

Anon.	A Parable: Getting Ready to Move	154
Berridge, J.	A Real Christian	105
Boston, T.	The Believer's Heaven Better than Adam's	23
	Christ, the Second Adam	110
	Man Made in the Image of God	108
	The People Christ's Church must Forget	348
Bridges, C.	The Blessedness of Hearing Wisdom	17
	God's Candle	381
	God's Wisdom Displayed in Little Things	150
	Our Times in God's Hand	171
	The Sanctifying Effect of Grace	77
Bryan, R.	The Loveliness of Christ to the Believer	120
Candlish, R.	Little Children; Young Men; Fathers	245
Charles, T.	God's Seasonable Help	46
Dell, W.	Redemption through Christ's Blood	53
A Goodly Heritage	The Believer's Rule of Life	21
Flavel, J.	Paul's Readiness to Suffer	88
	Encouragements to Would-be Communicants	316
Fowler, H.	The Fisherman and the Gospel Net	49
	A Wonderful Mystery	350
Gilpin, B.	The Nature and Call of God to the Ministry	256
Gosden, J.H.	A Suitable Word for the End of the Year	377
Hall, J.	The Calling of Matthew	341
Hammond, H.	Sayings of Henry Hammond	148
Hawker, R.	The Certainty of the Lord's Help	122
	The Final Triumph of the Church	106
	The Imputed Beauty of Christ's Church	141
	The Lord's People Justified by a Triune God	276
Hazelton, J.E.	The Blessing of Reuben	152
Henry, M.	"In the End of the Sabbath"	22
Jabez of Preston	What is True Religion?	336
Kershaw, J.	Qualifications for the Gospel Ministry	116
Law, H.	The Ark of the Covenant	173
	The Budded Rod	136
Mackenzie, L.	The Happy Man	154
M'Kenzie, J.	Who Was Melchisedec?	250
Moody Stuart, A.	The Chieftainship	373
Morris, H.M.	One Day as a Thousand Years	135
Owen, J.	The Everlasting Covenant as a Refuge	167
Philpot, J.C.	The Holy Ghost: One with Father and Son	177
	Who Was Melchisedec?	250
Popham, J.K.	A Believing View of the King in His Beauty	76
	The Christian's Expectation	54
	The Overruling Purposes of God	345
	A Word for Young People	308
Ramsbottom, B.A.	Church Order	266
	Disagreement Remedied: Trouble Avoided	240
	Glorifying God	324
	Love to the Lord Confirmed	335

	The Vital Importance of True Doctrine . . .	309
Rutt, J.R.	The Coming of Christ to Judgment	346
	Spiritual Lessons from the Book of Ruth	142
Serle, A.	The Ascension of Christ	140
	Patriotism	184
Sibbes, R.	Prayer Before His Last Sermon	119
Smith, J.	Acquiescing with God's Righteous Will	90
Sperling-Tyler, J.W.	A Living Hope	55
	"My Times are in Thy Hand"	186
Steward, R.J.	Consolation for God's Little Flock	255, 296
Trail, R.	Christ's Will for His Church	318
Wallinger, J.A.	The Security in Christ of a True Believer	375
Watson, T.	Christ's Exaltation	117
	An Exhortation to Preachers and Hearers	223
	The Justice of God	48
	The Second Petition in the Lord's Prayer	324
	Unseen Love	80
Winslow, O.	Vital Necessity of Communion with Christ	340

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES

Bradstock, R.J.	Redeeming the Time (Eph. 5. 16)	180
Gosden, F.L.	Nothing Too Hard for the Lord (Jer. 32. 27)	6
Gosden, J.H.	Last Sermon by J.H. Gosden (Psa. 71.16)	234
Green, J.S.	The Son of Man Lifted Up (John 3. 14, 15)	98
Hazelton, J.E.	The One Stone (Zech. 3. 9)	35
Hyde, L.S.B.	The Revealed Christ (Matt. 16. 15-17)	268
MacLean, D.	Seen of Angels (1 Tim. 3. 16)	300, 329
Philpot, J.C.	The Comfort to Downcast Souls (Psa. 42. 11)	247
Ramsbottom, B.A.	Christ: His Wisdom, Power and Compassion	369
	The Government on Christ's Shoulder	131
Raven, J.	The Saviour of the Lost (Matt. 18. 11)	362
Sperling-Tyler, J.W.	God Faithful to His Word (Heb. 10. 23)	163
Warburton, J.	The Kingdom of God (Matt. 6. 13)	66

OBITUARIES AND NOTICES OF DEATH

Bradstock, R.J.	128, 187	Rutt, M.R.	389
De Vriend, W.	61	Saunders, E.	264
Hayden, F.	392	Wallis, H.A.	392
Kingham, J.A.	160, 291	Wheeler, W.T.	128, 354
Roe, N.H.	62	Woodhouse, J.C.	264, 383

BOOK REVIEWS

The Adoption of Sons, by T. Houston, 127; The Brook Besor, by A. Bonar, 290; The Christian Sabbath, by T.L. Johnson, 61; Croydon Strict Baptist Educational Society 1920-2020, 231; Fighting the Good Fight, by H.M. Cartwright, 126; The Glorious Feast of the Gospel, by R. Sibbes, 126; The Gospel Pointing to the Person of Christ, by A.A. Bonar, 382; How Do You Read the Bible? by J.C. Ryle, 231; Joshua, by M. Philpott, 383; The Mystery of Providence, by J.J. Murray, 127; Olney; The Home of Amazing Grace, by G. Chewter, 382; Scattered and Kept, by T. Boston, 290; The Life and Sermons of K.F.T. Matrunola, 263; Sermons and Addresses of George Smeaton, 382; Servants of the Living God, by G. Chewter, 31, 61; Thomas Charles of Bala, by J.A. Aaron, 327; Thomas Charles' Spiritual Counsels, 327; The Transfiguration, by J.R. Anderson, 191; Various Reformation Press books, 31; Why Were our Reformers Burnt? by J.C. Ryle, 327.

Through the Lord's goodness and mercy our three denominational magazines have been continued through another year. Our warm thanks are extended to all who have provided such invaluable background support in enabling each month's edition to go forth. May the Lord give His indispensable blessing to the truths we have endeavoured to set before our readers. Brethren pray for us. G.D. Buss