

The Friendly Companion



An Eastern Oil Lamp

“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119.105).

January 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

As we begin another year, we wonder what it will bring. What changes will take place? The world in which we live is very unstable. We ourselves are constantly changing. What a sweet comfort it will be if we may perceive something of the watchful eye of God upon us.

There are some beautiful examples in the Bible of God's watchful care. One of those examples is the account of Noah sending out the dove from the ark. She could find "*no rest for the sole of her foot*" (Genesis 8.9). The prevailing waters of the flood had destroyed all her former resting places.

Thus, when the Lord quickens a soul into life at the new birth, that soul goes forth with a living exercise. It is troubled with a sense of sin and guilt. The soul is pressed down with thoughts of eternity. Former pleasures and companions can no longer satisfy. Religious duties, such as Bible reading, chapel going, and forms of prayer, provide no resting place.

In the beginning, one may try to rest on the thought that his parents or grandparents are children of God. He may attempt to find rest in the knowledge of the doctrine of salvation, or he may try to rest in the thought that he is not so bad as others. But after a time, he becomes weary with all such thoughts and longs for real, lasting rest.

When the dove returned to the ark, she was so weary; but how could she enter in? She could not open the window of the ark. She hovered over it, longing for the rest inside. All the while, Noah was watching for her return. "*Then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.*"

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

Another beautiful example of the Lord's watchful care is found in the well-known story of the prodigal son. Having

gone from his father's house, he wasted all his father had given him. We are all like this son in departing from the Lord.

When a famine was sent, he came into great need, yet no man gave to him. So poor sinners who are made to feel their need, will find that no man can fill that need.

As the prodigal son thought of his need, he remembered that in his father's house there was provision for all. With a repentant heart, he turned to go to his father. *"But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him"* (Luke 15.20).

How the father watched for his son's return! Much more does the Lord watch for the return of poor sinners to Himself.

May you dear young friends prove something of the Lord's watching for you, as Noah watched for the weary dove and the father watched for his returning prodigal son.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

A lamp, such as is shown on the front cover, was commonly used in Bible times. What a faint light it would have given on a dark night! Although only a faint light, it would have been greatly appreciated. How different from our homes today, where we flip a switch and the whole room is lit up.

When Paul and Silas sang in the prison at midnight, God sent an earthquake to open the prison doors. Upon hearing Paul cry out that all the prisoners were still there, the jailor (who had been ready to take his own life) called for a light or lamp. He could only see a short distance with the lamp, but it was sufficient to bring him to the inner prison where the apostles were.

When David wrote Psalm 119, he made many references to the Word of God, his love to it, and his hope in it. He also declared what the Word of God was made to him. *"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* (Psalm

119.105). David had proved many times that his own way was one of darkness. How he stumbled when he was not enlightened and governed by the Word of God! David learned that the Word of God was sufficient for his present path. Thus, he needed to seek light from it continually.

When the Lord converts poor sinners, they are taught that they need a light to direct them in the way they should go; not only in their daily paths, but especially in the way that leads to LIFE. May we learn the prayer that David was taught: *“O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles”* (Psalm 43.3).

We remember reading of a boy who walked with his Sabbath School teacher to their schoolroom at night. He was so pleased to be able to carry the lantern, and he held it up high, thinking that was surely the best way. The streets were really dirt roads. They had numerous holes and became very muddy when it rained. One night they both fell into a mud-hole, and the teacher said, “You must hold the lamp lower to light the road.” The boy never forgot the lesson.

What a good and practical lesson for us! It is not so much to hold the Word of God up to our intellect, but we need to have it as a guide to our feet in the daily path and to show the way we should go.

GOSPEL LAMPS

No man would light and maintain a lamp fed with golden oil, and keep it burning from age to age, if the work to be done by the light of it were not of a very precious and important nature. What else are the dispensations of the gospel but lamps burning with golden oil, to light souls to heaven?

Flavel

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**REHOBAM BECOMES KING**

After Solomon died, all Israel came to make his son Rehoboam the next king. They asked Rehoboam to make their burdens lighter. He told them to return in three days, and he would give them an answer.

Rehoboam first consulted the old men that had stood before his father. What answer should he give? They told him to speak kindly and to do as the people had asked. Then Rehoboam consulted the young men that grew up with him. They told him to be firm and to add even more burdens and taxes to the people.

When the people returned, Rehoboam spoke harshly to them. He did not follow the advice of the old men but listened to the advice of the young men. After hearing his answer, ten tribes of Israel departed and would not accept Rehoboam as their king.

Rehoboam gathered Judah and Benjamin to fight against those ten tribes. But the Lord sent a prophet, saying: *"Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren ... for this thing is done of Me."* Then they obeyed and returned to their homes.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the people ask Rehoboam to do? (4 words)
2. Whom did Rehoboam consult first? (3 words)
3. Whose advice did he listen to? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 2 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Pharaoh's daughter.
2. Turned away his heart.
3. The kingdom.

*“...for
this thing
is from
Me.”*

1 Kings 12.24

BIBLE LESSONS**THE GREAT UPROAR AT EPHEBUS**

Even though God had so abundantly blessed His Word to the Ephesians, Paul felt he must soon depart to Macedonia, where on his last journey he had established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. Then he would go to the church at Corinth in Achaia. He sent two of his companions, Timotheus and Erastus, to prepare those churches for his visit.

While he remained at Ephesus, there arose a great stir against all those who followed Paul and the preaching of Jesus. In the city of Ephesus stood an idol temple dedicated to a goddess named Diana. It was one of the greatest and richest temples of that day. People from all over Asia and the world worshipped Diana. Those who were unable to journey up to the temple would purchase a small image of Diana made of silver. No doubt other people purchased these miniature shrines as souvenirs. It was a very profitable business for the silversmiths.

One of the silversmiths, a man named Demetrius, soon realised that Paul's preaching had caused a great decline in his business. He called for a meeting of all those of the same occupation. He said, *"Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and bear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands."* He reminded them that their craft was in danger of being lost. Also, the temple of the goddess Diana would be despised and her magnificence destroyed.

This angered the silversmiths, and they began to cry out in unison: *"Great is Diana of the Ephesians."* They spilled out into the streets, and shortly a great crowd was gathered. They worked themselves up into a frenzied state, and soon there was utter confusion. Some cried one thing, and some another. The greater part did not really know why they were come together. What an unruly mob Demetrius had caused!

They took hold of Gaius and Aristarchus, two of Paul's companions, and rushed them into the theatre. This was a place of entertainment, where men would fight with other men or with beasts, unto their death. Paul's heart was stirred, and he tried to go into the theatre. The other disciples, and even some of the chief men of Asia who were his friends, urged him not to venture there.

The wild scene grew even worse! They laid hold of another man named Alexander and put him forward. As he tried to speak in his own defence, they realised that he was a Jew, and began to shout him down with one voice. For two hours, they cried out: "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*"

As the day wore on, the town clerk came and quieted the people, saying: "*Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?*" O what dark superstition! The town clerk went on to say that the worship of Diana could not be spoken against.

What images we also set up in our hearts, that we do not like anyone to speak against! They may be people we love, places we go, or things we possess. They are put ahead of God in our lives and in our affections. Yet, when the gospel of the Lord Jesus is blessed to the heart of poor sinners, these images, like that of Diana, begin to fall before Him.

When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, he mentioned the "*beasts at Ephesus*" with which he had fought (1 Corinthians 15.32). Those beasts were the powers of darkness that possessed the hearts of men. Paul later wrote a very beautiful letter to the believers in Ephesus.

You can read about this in Acts chapter 19 verses 21 to 41.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who did Paul send to prepare the churches in Macedonia for his coming?
2. Who was the silversmith that started the great uproar?

3. How did he say Paul had persuaded and turned the people from their idol? (11 words)
4. What two companions of Paul were brought into the theatre?
5. What did Paul say he fought with at Ephesus?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 2 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Two years.
2. "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?"
3. "Brought their books together, and burned them before all men."
4. Fifty thousand pieces of silver.
5. The Word of God.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First! How we love to be first! First in line at school. First to have our plate filled at the dinner table. First to sit on Grandma's lap. Well, the Lord taught me that I had to put His Word "first."

Growing up, the Bible was only read at the table after a meal. I never remember seeing my parents or siblings reading the Bible, other than when sitting at the table, waiting for my father to finish so we could get outside and play. Much to my shame, those habits I learned and followed, and I did not read the Bible for myself. In my heart, I thought reading the Bible was for after meals and service time. I did enjoy reading biographies and other stories, though, of how the Lord worked in His people's hearts.

One evening (as an adult) I sat down and was reading a biography, and these words were spoken to me in a voice that only I heard: "READ THE BIBLE." I was startled that I heard

those words and looked at my husband, who was sitting next to me. He did not hear a thing, because if he did, he would also have looked around. I knew this only could have come from the Lord, because I had been feeling guilty sometimes for not reading His Word. I would hear sermons week by week and know that I should be reading the Bible, but I ignored my conscience speaking. After this happened, I tried to pick up the Bible and read it. Then I stopped. Why bother?

A while after this, those words kept sounding in my heart again: "READ THE BIBLE." But I didn't pick it up to read. Some time passed, and the Lord allowed me to become very sick, and I had a lot of pain in my body. I would sit and look at the Bible and know I ought to read it, because those words wouldn't go away that I had heard. Someone actually had to pick up the Bible for me and put it on my lap because of the pain from my illness. I knew the Lord was teaching me that it was time to heed what He had said to me. But now, before opening the Bible, I had to "first" pray that the Lord would help me to read His Word and bless it to my soul! This was the first impression that I can remember, and it has been a lasting impression.

Contributed

THE SHEPHERD BOY'S PRAYER

One morning the voice of a little boy was heard behind a hedge, reciting the letters of the alphabet. Looking through the hedge, a man saw the boy on his knees, with his hands clasped together, and his eyes closed. He was repeating, A, B, C, on down to Z. "What are you doing?" the man kindly asked.

The little boy looked up, saying, "Please sir, I was praying."

Then he asked the boy, "But what are you saying your letters for?"

"Why, I didn't know any prayer, and I wanted God to take care of me and my sheep; so I thought if I said all I knew, He would put it together and spell all I want."

"Bless your heart, my little man; He will! He will!" answered the man.

The Lord knows the desires that come from the heart, even when the words are not expressed in a clear way. *"For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, Thou knowest it altogether"* (Psalm 139:4).

Adapted from Friendly Companion 1973

A BOARD AND A PIECE OF CHALK

Long ago there lived a man who did not believe in God. He was a successful carpenter who had everything he wanted in this world. His wife was quite religious; in fact, she was a loving, praying and gracious person. Yet this man still hated the Bible and anything to do with God.

The man had one daughter, whom he loved very much. However, in spite of his wife's requests, he refused to send his daughter to school. He was afraid that she would learn to read the Bible and be taught about God. So instead of going to school, the little girl had to stay at home and learn from her mother, who kept praying that her husband's heart would be softened to receive the truth.

One day, the man became sick. The illness turned out to be quite serious, and his wife became very worried. "What if he would die?" she thought. "What will become of his soul?" She prayed and prayed, and when she saw that her husband had become very weak, she decided to go to the minister and ask him to visit her husband.

The minister had attempted to speak to this man before, but he had always been met with insults and contempt. This time turned out to be no different. As soon as the sick man saw the minister, he became very angry. He cursed at the minister and told him to leave. "Don't ever come back here again!"

The minister saw that anything he said would be useless. Sadly he turned and left, silently praying that the man might yet be led to turn and repent.

The man's wife, dismayed at what had taken place, was left alone with her husband, who was still very angry. He began to berate his wife for having asked the minister to come. She meekly took his words of abuse, continuing in prayer for her husband. Finally, the man exclaimed, "I'll never let that man in my room again to talk to me of his God. Bring me a board and a piece of chalk!"

His wife obeyed, but her feelings turned to horror when she saw his hot, fevered fingers slowly write in capital letters, "GOD IS NOWHERE."

"Place this at the bottom of my bed," he said, "so that I can see it every time I open my eyes, and so that everyone who comes in may see that I do not believe in God."

His wife dared not refuse. Tremblingly, she did as she was told. Then she left the room, still pleading for forgiveness for her hardened husband.

The fever increased, and the man became delirious. His life was in imminent danger. He began to rant and rave, and death seemed to be at the threshold.

The man was now unaware of what was going on around him, so the minister could safely come back to help the rest of the family. He encouraged the sorrowing wife and prayed with her, and he took the little girl into his own home so that she would not catch her father's illness.

The minister's wife took the little girl under her wing. She found her to be a willing and eager learner, and she took her to the Sunday School, where she heard the Word of God read and explained for the first time. At family worship, the minister prayed that the little girl's father might recover.

Before long, God mercifully answered the prayers for recovery. The fever went down, and the man was pronounced out of danger. The wife's heart was full of gratitude, and the minister thanked God before his congregation. The first request the sick man made was to see his little daughter, and

the doctor promised that if all went well, he would be able to see her in a short time. As the days went by, the sick man gained strength, but he showed no gratitude to God. The terrible words on the board remained at the bottom of his bed.

Eventually, the doctor gave permission for the little girl to see her father for just a few minutes. She was placed on the pillow near her father, who was very happy to see her.

"Well, my dear," said the man, "where have you been while I have been so sick?"

"Oh, I've been so happy," the little girl replied. "The minister took me away, and his wife is so kind to me. They have taught me to read, and they gave me a book full of beautiful pictures, and I can read so many little words!"

The father listened, and said, "You can't read much yet, I should think. Could you read me the words on that board at the bottom of my bed?"

"O yes, Father, let me try," she said. She began slowly spelling and repeating each letter, "GOD IS..." Then she stopped, got very red, and looked again, trying to read the longer word. "Oh, now I've got it!" she said. "GOD IS NOW HERE. Yes, Father, so He is, and He's been here the whole time you've been so sick."

"You must go now, dear," the man told his daughter in a low, broken voice. As soon as the door closed, he burst into tears. The Lord had used his daughter's words to break his hard heart. He was awakened to a sense of his transgression, and he began to pray to the true, living, prayer-hearing God for mercy. The prayers of his wife were finally answered. Now the man very much wanted to see the minister. The minister went and preached to him the way of access by Jesus, and saw the man rise from his bed of sickness a new man in Jesus Christ.

Friendly Companion 1965

A PRODIGAL RESTORED

How many individuals are, or have been, prodigals! The following narrative is a touching illustration of this.

A Christian tradesman, named Mr. Carr, had an assortment of Bibles in a prominent place in his shop window. Beside them was a printed card with this statement: "Luther's sword sold here!" With one of these "swords" the following battle was fought and won.

A group of young men, with hands and faces blackened and dressed in costumes, came before this tradesman's door one day to give one of their "performances." After they had sung a mixture of happy, sad, and humorous melodies, with their own peculiar accompaniments, one of the party, a tall young man stepped up to the door to ask for money from the people.

Mr. Carr, taking one of the Bibles out of his window, addressed the youth: "See here, young man," he said; "I will give you a shilling, and this Book besides, if you will read a portion of it among your companions there, and in the hearing of the bystanders."

"Here's a shilling for an easy job!" he chuckled to his friends. "I'm going to give you a public reading."

Mr. Carr opened at the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, and he requested this young man to commence reading at the eleventh verse.

"Now, Jem, speak up!" said one of the party, "and earn your shilling like a man!"

Jem took the Book and read, *"And He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living."*

There was something in his voice, as well as in the strangeness of the circumstances, that caused all to listen in silence. An air of seriousness took possession of the young man, and still further commanded the rapt attention of the crowd.

He read on, *"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."*

"That's you, Jem!" said one of his comrades. "It's just like what you told me of yourself and your father!"

The reader continued, *"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."*

"Why, that's you again, Jem!" said the voice. "Go on!"

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."

"That's like us all!" said the voice, once more interrupting. "We're all beggars, and might be better than we are! Go on; let's hear what came of it!"

The young man read on, and as he read, his voice trembled. *"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father..."*

At this point, he broke down and could read no more. All were impressed and moved. The whole reality of the past rose up to view, and, in the clear story of the gospel, a ray of hope dawned upon him for his future. His father, his father's house; his mother too; the plenty and the love ever bestowed upon him there; the hired servants, all having enough; and then *himself*, his father's son; his present state, his companionships, his habits, his sins, his poverty, his outcast condition, his questionable mode of living – all these came climbing, like an invading force of thoughts and reflections, into the citadel of his mind, and overcame him.

That day proved to be the turning point of that young prodigal's life. He sought the advice of the Christian friend who had thus providentially interposed for his deliverance. Communications were made to his parents, which resulted in a long-lost and dearly-loved child returning to the familiar

earthly home. Still better, he found, as I trust many of my readers will, how true are the promises of the parable of the “prodigal son,” both for time and for eternity!

Robert Maguire, M.A. Our Young People's Treasury, Book 2

THE WISE PILOT

Many years ago, at a small seaport in Massachusetts, a strong storm came up. As the northeast wind increased to a gale, those in the town began to fear for the safety of a ship that was on the water. The ship had been in and out of the bay since the beginning of the storm. The officers of the ship did not seem to know which way to go. They had refused the offer of a pilot, a man to navigate the ship.

On the morning of the Lord's day, many old sailors stood on the highest point of land in the place, looking anxiously at the ship. It seemed to be doomed. The ship was completely surrounded by land, except in the direction the wind was coming from, and there were extensive sandbanks between the ship and the shore. Unless it could make the harbour, it was sure to be destroyed.

Eventually, a group of men who knew the bay well set off in a small schooner. They were determined to bring the ship into port if at all possible.

A tremendous sea was rolling in the bay. The schooner made quite a scene, first lifting up on the top of a dark wave, then plunging down into the trough of the sea, completely lost from view. Thus rising and sinking, it eventually reached the ship, and offered a pilot. To their amazement, the offer was again refused.

Irritated by the refusal, the skipper turned his little schooner around and set off for the harbour. Suddenly, a gun was discharged from the labouring ship, and the signal for a pilot was run up the mast.

The little schooner came up alongside the ship, and the pilot was soon on its deck.

It soon became clear why the ship was in such a quandary. The officers had taken on board a pilot several days before who was completely ignorant. The crew, aware of his incompetency, was almost in a state of mutiny. When the schooner had first hailed the ship, the captain was below, and the first pilot had refused their offer. Upon hearing of the refusal for help, the captain had gone on deck and immediately reversed his answer by firing the signal gun. So the new pilot came on board.

After making some enquiries about the working of the ship, the new pilot requested the captain and his trustiest man to take the wheel. He gave orders where the men were to be stationed and commanded the captain not to change the course of the ship except by his own order. He carried himself with the confidence of a man with knowledge and experience, and the sailors began to take hope.

All of the sails were now in use, and it was completely silent on board, as the ship headed directly towards the foaming waves. The ship kept going until it was so close that it seemed as if it would be destroyed in the waves. "Shall I turn?" shouted the captain with intense excitement.

"Steady!" the pilot replied calmly. The sea was boiling like a cauldron just under the bow of the ship.

In another moment, the same calm voice ordered, "About ship!" The ship turned from the waves and took a different direction.

"He knows what he is doing," said the captain to the man beside him.

By the way the water was moving, the sailors could see that the ship was now approaching two sunken rocks. It seemed to be sailing straight for them.

"Full and steady!" the pilot ordered with calm authority. He stood with his arms folded in the ship's bow, the water drenching him completely as it broke over the sides. The ship passed safely between the rocks.

The ship again changed direction, heading once more for the foaming waves. The waves came closer and closer, but still the pilot gave no order to turn, standing like a statue amid the storm. The ship laboured hard as the broken waves roared around. It seemed like it was about to collide, when the pilot finally said, "About ship!"

Again the ship changed direction, and soon it was in the harbour, casting anchor in safety. If one more hour had gone by, the wind would have been too strong, and the ship could not have been rescued. The ship's crew and more than one hundred passengers would have been lost.

When the ship finally cast anchor, the captain ran to the pilot and embraced him, the sailors and passengers crowding around. Many were in tears, pressing forward to shake the pilot's hand and thank him for saving the ship.

There are a few lessons we can learn from this story.

First, *the ship's crew had faith in their new pilot*. Since he came to them from the harbour they wanted to enter, of course he knew the way.

Second, *their faith gave them confidence in the pilot*. They gave up the ship to his direction. It was obedient confidence. They did not say, "He will save us," and then sit down and neglect his orders. They followed every direction he gave, and they did not disobey, even when it seemed as if they were heading into certain danger.

Third, *it was an affectionate confidence*. One person on board said, "Never did a human being look so lovely to me as that pilot when he first took his place and gave his orders. As he led us through one danger after another, he seemed more and more lovely; and by the time we were safely anchored, I felt that I could have died for him."

Such is faith in Christ. The sinner struggling in the storm of the law, guilty and despairing, is directed to Jesus, the heavenly Pilot, who came forth from heaven, which the sinner desires to enter. As the sinner approaches, he becomes convinced of

Christ's ability and willingness to save. He casts his soul upon His merits, wisdom and love, giving up all other guides, and resting entirely upon Jesus.

Reader, is Jesus *your* Pilot?

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1885

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS (2)

The Sower (continued)

Last month we wrote about the seed as the Word of God. We noticed how there were four types of ground upon which the seed fell, but out of only one was fruit brought forth.

Let us look a little more at what is meant by the ground. The Lord Jesus was speaking of the ground of our hearts, meaning our souls, our conscious innermost being. What do the Scriptures teach about man's heart? *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"* (Jeremiah 17.9). *"That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man"* (Mark 7.20-23). When Adam and Eve fell, the "good ground" which God created was destroyed by sin entering in. God created man for His own glory, but after man fell, the good ground was destroyed. Man is only able to bring forth sin.

The wayside hearer. *"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side"* (Matthew 13.19). Every time we read or hear the Word of God, the Lord is speaking, but Satan (the wicked one) will attempt to prevent us from receiving the Word by taking it right away from us. By nature our hearts, like the wayside path, are very

hard and trodden down by sin. We prefer to think about natural things, worldly things, carnal things, and pleasurable things, more than the Word of God. Satan does not like to see us at the house of God sitting under a sound ministry, so he tries to make us think about other things during the service. If anything remains after the service, then he will have his “fowls” ready to swoop down and take away anything he can of the good Word of God.

The stony places. *“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that beareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended”* (Matthew 13.20,21). One very simple fact is that the seed did not go in very deep, but grew up very quickly. Because the roots were not established in good soil, the plant would have little water or food to sustain it. In time of drought and hot weather, it would wither away. The pathway for every child of God is one of tribulation. Difficulties and sorrows will come into our lives, like the drought and heat, and they will test whether our religion has good roots. *“In the world ye shall have tribulation”* (John 16.33), and *“We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14.22). Here we see the trial of faith. We need a religion which is *“rooted and built up in Him [Christ] and stablished in the faith”* (Colossians 2.7).

The seed among the thorns. *“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that beareth the Word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word, and he becometh unfruitful”* (Matthew 13.22). If there is one type of ground so applicable to the day in which we live, surely it is this. What is meant here might be summed up by what the Lord Jesus spoke to Martha: *“Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful ...”* (Luke 10.41.42). We are so often taken up with the many cares of this world, and we neglect the one thing that is needful –

vital! If any piece of ground is left uncultivated, it will soon be overrun by weeds. Without the grace of God in our hearts, and the dear Lord maintaining that grace our hearts, we will very soon be overrun by all the things of this world.

The good ground. *"But he that received seed into the good ground is he that beareth the Word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty"* (Matthew 13.23). If any fruit is to be brought forth unto God, then our hearts need to be prepared. We cannot prepare our own hearts, just as the natural ground cannot plough itself up. When the plough enters the ground, it overturns and breaks up the earth, which in turn may be followed by the harrow, to break down even further the hard lumps of earth. Only God can prepare our hearts. The Lord directs His Word into the heart as an arrow of conviction and shows the impossibility of any fruit proceeding from the corrupted heart. God prepares the hearts of His people by teaching them their need of salvation. He overturns and breaks up the sinful ground of their hearts and leads them to the sinner's only hope – the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord strips them of all their own self-righteousness and gives them a hunger and thirst after God's righteousness.

As with the natural ground, we need our hearts to be continually prepared. When the weeds of sin begin to show themselves, we need the Lord to destroy them. May the Lord, in His rich mercy, be pleased to prepare our hearts, that we may be found among those good ground hearers who, by grace, bring forth fruit unto God. *"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples"* (John 15.8).

"Father of mercies! we have need
Of Thy preparing grace:
Let the same hand, that gives the seed,
Provide a fruitful place!"

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about PRIDE AND HUMILITY. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 2 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Which king confessed, "those that walk in pride He [God] is able to abase"? (Daniel 4.37)
2. What comes "only by pride"? (Proverbs 13.10)
3. Whom did God commend saying, "Thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord"? (2 Kings 22. 19)
4. "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." To which two people was Jesus referring in the parable He had just spoken? (Luke 18.14)
5. Write out the proverb beginning "Pride goeth before..." (Proverbs 16.18)
6. Whom did God reprove, saying, "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before Me?" (Exodus 10)
7. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee ...". What does God require? (Micah 6)
8. Who said, "I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart," but was sadly mistaken in his judgement? (1 Samuel 17)
9. God dwells in "the high and holy place." Where else does He dwell? (Isaiah 57)
10. "God resisteth the proud." What does He give to the humble? (Two references please).

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
2. Abraham.
3. Peter.
4. Stephen.
5. Repentance toward God.

6. Works. (James 2.17,20)
7. The word preached. (Hebrews 4.2)
8. Boasting. (Romans 3.27)
9. A shield. (Ephesians 6.16)
10. A Roman centurion. (Matthew 8.10, Luke 7.9). A woman of Canaan or a Syro-Phenician woman. (Matthew 15.28)

JESUS, SAVIOUR, PILOT ME

Jesus, Saviour, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea:
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rocks and treacherous shoal;
Chart and compass come from Thee,
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.

As a mother stills her child,
Thou canst hush the ocean wild;
Boisterous waves obey Thy will
When Thou sayest to them, "Be still!"
Wondrous Sovereign of the sea,
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me.

When at last I near the shore,
And the fearful breakers roar
'Twixt me and the peaceful rest,
Then, while leaning on Thy breast,
May I hear Thee say to me,
"Fear not, I will pilot thee."

Edward Hopper, 1871

The Friendly Companion



An Italian Potter at work on his Wheel

“... we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we all are
the work of Thy hand” (Isaiah 64.18).

February 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

By J. R. Rutt

My dear young friends, you are exhorted by God to: *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them”* (Ecclesiastes 12.1). May God by His Holy Spirit seal these words into your heart.

There are a number of times in the holy Word of God when we are exhorted to “remember.” If you hope and trust the Lord has helped you to seek Him, or as the apostle puts it, *“feel after Him”* (Acts 17.27), then you are also instructed to *“remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee...”* (Deuteronomy 8.2). What a great mercy if the Spirit of God is leading you and teaching you!

We need to keep being reminded by the Lord: first, that we are sinners; second, that Jesus only can save us from our sins. This is the divine work of the Spirit of God in the heart. This work, especially when you are young, is often a very gentle work in the heart, as the prophet says: *“But the Word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little”* (Isaiah 28.13). Sometimes you feel there is nothing going on in your heart; at other times you feel so burdened about your soul and death and eternity. The day of judgment becomes a solemn reality to you, and these solemn thoughts bring you onto your knees in secret before God. Like the publican, you cry: *“God be merciful to me a sinner”* (Luke 18.13). Perhaps like the dying thief, you cry: *“Lord, remember me”* (Luke 23.42). Or like the little hymn, you plead with the Lord: “Do not pass me by.”

Gradually the Lord is leading you by His Spirit, here a little and there a little. This is consistent with what we read concerning the Holy Spirit, when He comes to a poor sinner’s heart and takes up residence there. *“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”* (John 16.8). Another word for “reprove” is

“convince.” Although the work may be gentle, yet you are convinced: first, that you are a sinner in the sight of God; second, that God is righteous and holy; and third, that one day you must appear at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ to give an account of your whole life.

Another part of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart is spoken of in John 16.13,14: *“Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you.”* The Holy Spirit will make Christ very precious. He will shew you how precious His sin-atonement blood is to cleanse away all your sin, and how needful His righteousness is to clothe you, that you may stand in the presence of God pure and holy through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.

My dear young friends, keep seeking, keep watching, keep waiting, and listen to God’s Word. *“Now therefore hearken unto Me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep My ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. 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”* (Proverbs 8.32-36).

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

What great skill the potter on the front cover is blessed with! He starts with a lump of clay, and by turning it on a wheel and adding a little water, while applying pressure with his hands, he moulds the clay into a beautiful vase. Years of experience have taught him how much water is needed and the amount of pressure he must apply.

When he begins to work, the potter has in mind the shape that he wants the clay to take. He pushes his hand into the middle of the clay with great care, as he opens a hole in the centre. With constant pressure, he widens the vessel by thinning the sides. As it becomes larger and thinner, he easily gives it the shape he pleases.

What lessons the Lord teaches His people by the image of the potter! The prophet Jeremiah was commanded by God to go down to the potter's house, where he would hear the Word of God to Israel. As Jeremiah watched the potter, the vessel the potter was making was marred (damaged) in his hand. He then made the clay into another vessel. The Lord declared: "*O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? ... Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel*" (Jeremiah 18.6).

In the Bible, the potter's vessel was a symbol of something frail, weak, and easily broken. On another occasion, Jeremiah was told to take a potter's earthen bottle, to break it before the people, and to say: "*Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made again*" (Jeremiah 19.11).

The Apostle Paul used the same teaching when writing to the Romans. When some were reasoning against the sovereignty of God, Paul simply responded: "*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?*" (Romans 9.20,21).

God has divided all men into two classes of people. Some are said to be vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, while others are called vessels of mercy prepared unto glory.

When one is taught the fear of the Lord, he feels more and more the words of Isaiah: "*But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand*" (Isaiah 64.8). What a change from the

lump of clay to the beautiful vessel that is formed! The sinner is like the lump of clay, who under the forming hands of God, becomes a vessel made meet for the Master's use.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Many who hope they are true Christians find it difficult to determine when the work of grace was begun in their hearts, particularly if they have been brought up in a godly home and were never left to outwardly rebel against God and His ways. They may also find it difficult to tell the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in true spiritual conviction of sin and the working of the natural conscience possessed by all human beings. This causes much anxiety, because they long to know that they are true Christians, as expressed by Mr Newton in his hymn:

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

My first spiritual memory goes back to when I was about 11 years of age. I had spent a long day in very worldly company, helping out on a farm. On my bed that night, I came into very deep distress of mind, feeling that I had been carried along with the worldliness, that I had sinned and been greatly defiled. I feared to go to sleep, expecting that I would wake in hell, and I pleaded with God for mercy. I did not receive the knowledge that my sins were forgiven until years later, and gradually this particular conviction wore off. However, it left a deep impression, which I have never forgotten.

We should not despise these first impressions, however uncertain we may feel about them. Just as the wax must be warm and soft for the stamp to leave a permanent impression upon a document that is being sealed, so the hard, cold heart of a sinner must be softened to some extent by the Holy Spirit

for any lasting spiritual impression to be left by the conviction of sin.

Dear children and young people, we may test our convictions by the effect that they have upon us. Do they drive us away from God? Then we have reason to fear that they are only natural. But if they draw us to the Lord in prayer, pleading for mercy and forgiveness, then we may believe that they are spiritual. However, we must not rest here, but keep confessing at the throne of grace and pleading for the forgiveness of our sins until we receive it. God has promised in His Word that *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1.9).

Contributed

THE CHRISTIAN'S GOD

There was a noted infidel named Collins. One Lord's day he met a plain countryman on his way to a place of worship. He asked the man where he was going, and he answered, "To church, sir."

The infidel then asked why he was going there.

"To worship God," the man answered.

Next the infidel asked him, "Please tell me whether your God is a great God or a little God?"

"He is both, sir," replied the countryman.

"How can He be both?" questioned the infidel.

"He is so great, sir, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; and so little that He can dwell in my heart," was the beautiful answer given.

The infidel declared that this simple answer from the countryman had more effect upon his mind than all the books which learned men had written against him.

The Little Gleaner 1943

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**JEROBOAM AND THE GOLDEN CALVES**

Rehoboam was king over Judah and Benjamin, but the other ten tribes chose Jeroboam as king. Jeroboam did not want the people to go to Jerusalem to worship the LORD. He was afraid they would return to Rehoboam.

Jeroboam made two calves of gold and put one in Bethel and the other in Dan. He told the people that it was too hard to go up to Jerusalem. They should worship the golden calves instead of the LORD. Jeroboam made his own priests of the lowest people, who were not from the tribe of Levi.

A man of God was sent to warn Jeroboam as he stood by an altar he had made. Jeroboam put out his hand to take hold of the prophet. *“And his hand ... dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him.”* Jeroboam asked the prophet to pray for him, and the LORD healed his hand. Yet Jeroboam did not turn from his evil ways. He still made his own priests and worshipped the golden calves, and it *“became sin unto the house of Jeroboam.”*

QUESTIONS:

1. Whom did ten tribes of Israel choose as king?
2. What did he tell the people to worship? (2 words)
3. Who was sent to warn him? (4 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 26 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. Make their burdens lighter.
2. The old men.
3. The young men.

*“And this
thing
became
a sin.”*

1 Kings 12.30

*BIBLE LESSONS***PAUL PREACHES AT TROAS**

After three years, the time had come when Paul must leave Ephesus. He called the believers to him and embraced them. No doubt, it was a tearful goodbye because of the love he felt for them and the love they had to him. The bonds of the gospel unite believers in love to Jesus Christ and to one another.

Paul and his companions made their way to Macedonia, visiting the churches at Philippi, Berea and Thessalonica. In each place he gave much instruction to the believers. Then Paul came into Greece and went to the city of Corinth. He had spent a year and a half at Corinth on his second journey. Now he stayed for three months and then prepared to return to Jerusalem. As Paul was about to go on a ship and sail to Syria, he was warned that the Jews were lying in wait to kill him.

Paul changed his plans and travelled back through Macedonia, and once again, he escaped from the Jews. We will see how God overruled this for the good of His people. How often the enemies of the Lord and His people are used to further the gospel! Having to pass through Macedonia, Paul came to Philippi for the third time. The Jews' feast of unleavened bread (the Passover) had arrived, so Paul spent the days with the church at Philippi. What a benefit for the church! There were some matters in the church which required the apostle's attention and guidance.

As Paul prepared to sail to Asia, a number of eminent church leaders agreed to accompany him on his journey. Landing at Troas, they waited for the Lord's day (the first day of the week), when the disciples gathered together for worship. In the evening service, Paul preached a farewell sermon, intending to depart in the morning. The meeting took place in an upper room on the third floor.

Paul continued preaching until midnight. As the evening wore on, they began to light their lamps. No doubt, with many

lamps burning and many people in the room, it became very warm. One young man named Eutychus sat in a window. As Paul was long in preaching, he fell asleep. Suddenly there was a loud noise, as the young man fell out of the window onto the ground.

What a terrible thing it was, for he was taken up dead! *“Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.”* We wonder if Paul thought of how Elijah had taken the widow’s son and stretched himself upon him, while praying that his soul might come into him again.

You might think that such an event would break up the meeting. However, Paul went back to the upper room and broke bread (the Lord’s supper) and ate it with them. He then talked until the break of day. He was reluctant to leave them, feeling very strongly that he would never see those disciples again. Thus, he was diligent to instruct them in the doctrines of the gospel, the administration of the Lord’s supper, the promises of the Lord, and the importance of walking in love and forgiving one another.

As the account at Troas concludes, the Holy Ghost tells us: *“And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.”* The raising of the young man to life had a profound effect upon them! It was used of God for the good of many others in the city. Here too, the Jews’ design to kill Paul was overruled by God for the increase of His kingdom. (Please see hymn on back cover.)

As the day began to dawn, Paul departed from them.
You can read about this in Acts chapter 20 verses 1 to 12.

QUESTIONS:

1. On what day did Paul meet with the disciples at Troas?
2. How long did Paul continue preaching?
3. Who fell from the window and was taken up dead?
4. What did Paul do to him? (6 words)
5. How long did Paul talk with them? (5 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 26 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. Timotheus and Erastus.
2. Demetrius.
3. "Saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands."
4. Gaius and Aristarchus.
5. Beasts.

WHAT "FORGIVEN" MEANS

In former years, the doctor would often make a house-call when someone was sick. If there was a lot of illness in a family, the bills would soon mount up.

In a Scottish village, there lived a doctor who was noted for his skill and kindness and also for his devotion to God. After his death, his account books were examined. Several accounts had written across them in red ink: "Forgiven – too poor to pay." His wife was of a different opinion. She said, "These accounts must be paid." Sadly, she went to a court of law and sued to obtain the money.

The judge asked her whether it was her husband's handwriting in red, and she replied that it was. Then the judge said, "There is not a court in the land that can obtain the money where he has written 'Forgiven'."

So, when a poor sinner has been told by the Lord Jesus: "Thy sins are forgiven," he is released from his spiritual debts. No further payment can be demanded of those for whom He shed His precious blood: "... *having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross*" (Colossians 2.13,14).

Adapted from Cheering Words 1993

THE LOST SIXPENCE

Many years ago, a young boy named Charles was serving an apprenticeship in a place of business. He worked hard to satisfy his employer, and was very careful to be honest in all of his actions. But one day he got into trouble. He lost a sixpence of his employer's money.

Being a poor boy, Charles could not replace the money from his own pocket. However, he did the best thing possible under the circumstances. He went straight to his master and told him what had happened.

The master looked at him suspiciously, and Charles turned red, for he could tell that the master did not believe his story. Charles thought, "He thinks I am a thief." He was upset and embarrassed. What could he do to clear his character and prove his honesty?

Outside the house was a place called the Wood Lodge. Charles crept into this place. After closing and locking the door, he fell on his knees. He had been told that God heard and answered prayer, and now was the time he wanted to prove it. With earnest words he told the Lord about his trouble, and begged that deliverance might be sent.

After a short prayer, Charles returned to the house. Little did he expect such a speedy answer to his prayer. Happening to pick up a piece of paper, to his amazement, he found underneath it the lost sixpence. With joy in his heart, he ran and restored it to his master.

Charles now knew that God did hear and answer prayer. He determined that in the future he would carry all his troubles to the same place. He found again and again that there is no better spot on earth to which a troubled sinner may resort. He was later led to go there with the burden of his lost soul, and found, through God's grace, a mighty Saviour.

Reader, do you pray?

Adapted from the Little Gleaner 1885

“I DON’T KNOW YOU”

During a time of much poverty, a meeting place was opened in London to help the wives of poor workmen. A poor woman, looking very thin and with threadbare clothes, ventured in one day. At the close of the meeting, she went up to the lady in charge to have her name entered in the book. The lady looked at her carefully, as if trying to recall her face, and then said, “I don’t know you; I never saw you before.”

As this poor woman was returning home, she thought over what she had heard. The words came back to her with great force: “I don’t know you; I never saw you before.” “Oh!” she thought, “If I was to die tonight, and stand at the judgment seat of Christ, He would say to me, ‘I don’t know you; I never saw you before.’”

She tried to shake off the impression and to think of other things, but the words came to her again and again: “I don’t know you; I never saw you before.”

She went home, shut the door, and prayed earnestly to the Lord. When she returned on the appointed day to the meeting, she said, “If my Saviour were to call me home tonight, He could not say ‘I don’t know you,’ because I’ve been to Him, and I’ve talked to Him, and He’s forgiven me all my sins; nor could He say, ‘I have never seen you before,’ because I have seen Him by faith, and He is mine.”

Reader! has the thought ever struck you, as you are leading your careless, sinful life, that Jesus will say to you, “I never knew you”? If not, may the words that touched the young woman touch your heart; for to be disowned by Jesus is to be cast into hell.

Adapted from The Gospel Echo 1915

THE TROUBLED TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

Before telephones became common, people used to send long-distance messages via telegraph. A telegraph is a system that allows messages to be sent over a wire using electrical signals. People did not have telegraphs at home; a trained operator working in an office would operate the telegraph.

A young telegraph operator in an English provincial town was anxious about his soul, but he could not have guessed that a message would reach him as it did.

He had been sleepless all night, thinking of his need of a Saviour, and in the morning he went to his work with his heart uttering the publican's prayer. The sunny weather and beautiful summer scenery did not engage him now, for he was longing after the peace of God. Absorbed with this desire, he continued to pray, *"God be merciful to me a sinner!"*

He was still repeating the words when the click of the signal told him that his office was being called. He took his place at the telegraph. Quickly, and with unusual emotion, he spelled a message from "Herbert" at Windermere to "J.B." at Warkworth: *"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world"* (John 1.29). *"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"* (Ephesians 1.7).

The young man had never known such a telegram as that to pass the wires before. It was sent to a servant girl who, in her distress of mind, had written a letter to her brother "Herbert." But it proved a double benediction, for it came to the operator as a direct reply from heaven to his prayer. He received it as such, and his faith saw and rested in the Lamb of God.

Meanwhile, the golden telegram went to its destination, and brought peace to the anxious soul of the servant girl. Thus two were blessed instead of one; and those words are living words still, and as potent in the hands of the Spirit to bless not only two, but ten thousand times ten thousand seeking souls.

Adapted from the Little Gleaner 1885

WHITER THAN SNOW

In one of the beautiful palaces of England, many years ago there lived a nobleman who was not a Christian and never went to church. He had a lovely little girl about six years old. Her name was Alberta. One day she was alone with him in his library, playing. Presently she stopped, and looking earnestly into her father's face, she said, "Father, do you know anything whiter than snow?"

"No, my darling," said he, "there isn't anything whiter than snow."

"Oh! but there is," said the child.

"What is that then?" he asked.

"Father, the soul washed in the blood of the Lord Jesus is whiter than snow."

The nobleman was surprised and displeased at this. He had never taught his child anything about religion, and he did not want anyone else to teach it to her.

"Who taught you that?" he asked.

"Mary, my nurse," was her reply.

Her father rang a bell and asked for Mary, Alberta's nurse, to come at once.

The nurse was asked if she had taught Alberta this about the blood of Christ. She admitted that she had. Then the nobleman said, "I cannot allow you or anyone else to teach my child such things as this." Taking out his watch, he said, "You can go to the manager and get the wages due to you, and then leave within an hour."

Not long after this, a royal prince came to spend a few days with this nobleman. It was an occasion of great rejoicing to all in the castle. One day during this visit, the prince was sitting with the nobleman in his library engaged in conversation. Alberta was there playing with her doll. The Prince called her to him, and taking her on his knee, had a talk with her. Presently she fixed her large eyes on his face and asked, "Prince, do you know anything that is whiter than snow?"

“No, dear,” said he, “I have never heard of anything whiter than snow; have you?”

“Oh yes, Prince; the soul washed from its sins in the blood of Jesus Christ is whiter than snow.” There was silence in that library after this. Neither the Prince nor the nobleman had a word to say. But the repeating of these words by his child had a strange effect on Alberta’s father. It led him to think and pray over it. Before long, he became a Christian. Alberta’s nurse, Mary, was brought back to the castle. She was given her old place and told that she might talk to Alberta about Jesus as much as she pleased.

We think of the snow, in its purity, as one of the most beautiful things in the world. And so it is. But yet, the soul that has been washed in the blood of Jesus is whiter and more beautiful than snow.

Cheering Words 1990

LOST

One winter afternoon, a boy named Willie was sent on an errand to a town a few miles from his home. Soon after he started, it began to snow very hard. Willie plodded on, delivered his message, and was soon on his way home. He walked fast at first, but the snow came down harder and harder. As it drifted in the wind, it was soon more than knee-deep in places. His progress became slower and slower. While he was still a long way from home, it began to grow dark. Willie had trouble seeing the path and wandered off from it. He was lost! He could not tell which way to go. The fearful darkness, along with the wind and blinding snow, made it impossible for him to find his way.

This is a picture of us by nature. We have wandered from the path. “*All we like sheep have gone astray*” (Isaiah 53.6). The utmost we can do in our own strength is to get farther and farther away; our best attempts to save ourselves from perishing are in vain.

But Willie's state grew worse and worse. He was beginning to feel his strength fail, for struggling against the storm made him very weary. He suddenly stepped into a deep hollow place, where the snow had drifted. There he lay, unable to get out. The more he struggled, the deeper he sank.

In like manner, when we begin to struggle to deliver ourselves from sin, our experience is:

The more I strove against its power,
I sinned and stumbled but the more.

Willie soon found the snow increasing around him. All hope of escape seemed to be taken away. What could he do? Only one thing, and this he did: he cried! And what do you think he said? "Lost! lost! lost!" Not knowing whether it would be of any use, in his extreme danger, he cried out as loudly as he could. With failing strength, he cried out in the hope that someone would hear his cry.

And this is all that poor, wandering, perishing sinners can do. When the Holy Ghost reveals their ruined, lost, hopeless, helpless condition, they can only cry to heaven, "Lost! lost! lost!"

Was it possible for poor lost Willie to be saved? Let us see what was happening at his home. When he did not return, Willie's parents became alarmed, and his father set out to search for him. Many anxious and weary hours were spent in vain. At length, his father began to fear he must give up Willie as lost. Suddenly a voice was heard in the distance: "Lost! lost! lost!" Was it an echo of his own thoughts? He looked around, but he could see no one. He listened. He heard the voice again more distinctly: "Lost! lost! lost!" It was Willie's voice! He soon found where it came from. With much effort poor Willie was rescued, but he was greatly exhausted, and so escaped as by the "skin of his teeth." Willie's salvation from death depended upon the love of his father in seeking him, and upon his father's ability to find and rescue him from the snow-drift.

Likewise, lost, perishing sinners are unable to save themselves. Their salvation depends upon the love of the “everlasting Father” in coming to seek and to save them. That is what the gospel declares Jesus came to do. *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19.10). The cry of the lost one always reaches His ear. Jesus has all power, and *“He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him”* (Hebrews 7.25).

Adapted from Religious Stories for Young and Old, Volume 4

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS (3)

The Ten Virgins

The teaching of the Holy Bible is very clear. Not everyone goes to heaven! When we hear of the death of a well-known person, there is often a presumption that they have gone to heaven, especially if they have been benevolent or charitable. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people and none other. It will be our eternal mercy if we are found amongst those people who are being prepared for heaven.

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish” (Matthew 25.1, 2). In this parable the Lord Jesus sets forth Himself as the Bridegroom, but the ten virgins are set forth as all those who have a profession of religion, especially those who profess to be Christians and to love the Lord Jesus.

The lamp represents a profession of being the Lord's people. The wise were distinguished from the foolish only by the fact that they had oil in their vessels. There was no other outward difference! How solemn to consider that people may outwardly appear to be children of God, but still lack the grace of God in their hearts! They may imitate the language of a child of God and be very well educated in the letter of the truth. They may be church members and speak of things they

feel the Lord has done for them and of what they have done for the Lord. Yet, they may still be dead in trespasses and sins. Those who are born in a foreign land may know and keep all the customs and traditions of that country. They may speak the language fluently, and others may believe they are part of that nation. Yet, they were not born to parents who were of that nationality. Jesus was teaching that unless God puts His “oil” of grace into our hearts, we are not His. This grace is imparted at the new birth. The Lord Jesus said, *“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”* (John 3.7).

The Lord separates His people from the world, including the religious world. It is only the grace of God in the heart which causes this separation. Just as the oil in the vessels of the wise virgins was out of sight, so the grace of God, which causes the great difference, is out of sight. It is in the heart. How then can we discern the difference between the foolish and wise virgins, between those who possess this grace and those who do not? Let us consider the words spoken to the foolish virgins when they were shut out: *“Verily I say unto you, I know you not”* (Matthew 25.12). This implies that the wise virgins were well acquainted with the bridegroom, but the foolish were not. Those who have been made “wise” cannot be satisfied with merely a desire to be right when they come to die. They want to know Christ *now*, and it is a deep concern to them to be prepared for eternity *now*. Joined to this is an earnest seeking to know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and to love Him. They feel the guilt of their sins, which causes them to mourn over them and seek forgiveness and communion with the Lord Jesus. It is these inward things which demonstrate the presence of the “oil.” They are known of God, but not seen by those outside. Yet, the effects of them cannot always be hidden. Thus, where there is grace, there will be spiritual life and real prayer. While man looks at the outward appearance, God always looks at the heart. *“To this man will I look, even*

to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word” (Isaiah 66.2).

There was no grace in the Pharisee who went to the temple and told God what a good, upright and moral person he was; yet what a display of grace was in the publican who cried out in great need, “*God be merciful to me a sinner*” (Luke 18.13).

There was no grace in Saul of Tarsus, when he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel and felt himself “*touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless*” (Philippians 3.6). But what grace was displayed later, when Paul the apostle cried out: “*Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?*” (Acts 9.6), and when he said: “*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*” (Philippians 3.7,8).

We read that “*they all slumbered and slept.*” The wise virgins could not keep themselves, and neither can those who fear the Lord. They are exhorted to watch and pray, for they know not when the Bridegroom, the Son of man, may come,

Unbelief is a most awful sin. So is presumption! The foolish virgins presumed that because they possessed a lamp, all would be well at the end. But they were wrong! They found to their horror that they were lacking the “one thing needful” and that it could not be shared or bought with money. The door was shut against them, and they were truly left outside. May the Lord, in mercy, keep us from a presumptuous religion. Attending a place of worship and sitting under a sound ministry, in and of itself, will never take us to heaven.

Every soul that gains salvation,
Must and shall be born again.

How very different it was with the wise! Having oil in their vessels, they were ready when the great cry came: “*And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom*

cometh; go ye out to meet him" (Matthew 25.6). They were ready. With joy they entered in with the bridegroom, and when the door was shut, they were safely inside.

We must each leave this world and stand before the judgment seat of Christ. "*It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*" (Hebrews 9.27). There was a separation made between the wise and foolish virgins, and it was an irreversible separation. How will it be with each of us in that tremendous day? Oh to be made wise unto salvation!

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about THINGS NOT UNDERSTOOD. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 26 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did Jesus say to Mary and Joseph when He was twelve years old, that they did not understand? (Luke 2.49,50)
2. Jesus often spoke to those around in parables. What reason did He give in Mark 4.12?
3. What did Jesus teach His disciples, of which it is recorded that "they understood not that saying." (Mark 9.31,32)
4. Two people came to Joseph, sad because they had had dreams which they did not understand. Who were they? (Genesis 40.8)
5. Who said, "I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest," but afterward deeply repented of what he said? (Mark 14.68).
6. What was the name of the altar that caused a serious misunderstanding between the tribes of Israel? (Joshua 22)
7. Who did Stephen speak of in Acts 7, who was misunderstood by his own brethren?

8. Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." What did the disciples think He meant, and what did He actually mean by this saying? (Matthew 16)
9. In Deuteronomy 32 God bemoans the lack of understanding of Israel. What would they "consider" if they were wise?
10. On one occasion God confounded the language of some builders so they could not understand one another. What was the name of the place and what was the result of the confusion?

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. Nebuchadnezzar.
2. Contention.
3. Josiah.
4. The Pharisee and the publican.
5. "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."
6. Pharaoh. (Exodus 10.3)
7. "To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." (Micah 6.8)
8. Eliab. (1 Samuel 17.28)
9. God dwells "with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isaiah 57.15)
10. Grace. (James 4.6 and 1 Peter 5.5)

Contributed

GREAT IS THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

Without dispute 'twixt bond and free,
 Great is the gospel mystery;
 How God in Christ was reconciled
 To guilty man by sin defiled.

Shall seraphs try the same to prove?
 'Tis buried in eternal love;

'Tis lost in this unfathomed sea,
And swallowed up, great God, in Thee.

Here the divine perfections meet,
Mercy and Truth each other greet;
Justice and Peace in Jesus see,
Unite in sacred harmony.

Great was the mystery of that grace
That chose, from Adam's fallen race,
Ten thousand thousand sons to praise
Its glories through eternal days.

By man came death, sin, hell and shame;
By man the resurrection came;
He bruised the subtle serpent's head,
And captive all his legions led.

Great was the mystery, truly great,
That hell's designs should hell defeat;
But here eternal wisdom shined,
For Satan wrought what God designed.

Great was the mystery of that love,
When Jesus left His throne above,
Exposed His life and precious blood,
To bring rebellious man to God.

O deep abyss of love profound,
Too vast for angel-minds to sound;
To scan the same our thoughts are lost;
Hail Father, Son and Holy Ghost!

John Kent

The Friendly Companion



“And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced”
(Zechariah 12.10).

March 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Isaiah asks a very solemn question in the 53rd chapter of his prophecy: *"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?"* What was the report of which he asked this question? It was the report that he had to write concerning the death of Jesus Christ. Isaiah wrote of it with such detail, describing the whole event as if it were already accomplished and he had been an eyewitness to it.

This leads to another question: Why is it that men do not believe the report? Isaiah tells us the reason why: *"For He shall grow up ... as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."* A growing tree is a beautiful sight. We admire its great boughs, yet we see no beauty in the roots. There is even less beauty in the roots of a barren vine, dry and withered. The kingly line of David had become so small and insignificant that its appearance could be described as a withered root. This ROOT, as Isaiah calls Him, was a real Person, the Lord Jesus, a Man of sorrows. He was rejected by the Jewish leaders, despised by the Roman authorities and soldiers, and lightly esteemed by the people, so that they hid their faces from Him.

He suffered all this for sinners! He was wounded for transgressions, bruised for iniquities, and chastised with many stripes, that sinners might be healed. His Father laid on Him the iniquity of all His people.

NO BEAUTY! It is not very pleasant to look at a dying person. The whole visage or appearance of Jesus was so changed, that they could not look on Him, and they hid their faces from Him.

Yet the Lord Jesus will never be a disappointed Saviour. In verse 11, Isaiah tells us that the suffering Saviour *"shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."* He will *"divide the spoil [souls for whom He suffered] with the strong."*

For those who are brought to see their sin, guilt and miserable state, one day their eyes will be opened to see such beauty in the sufferings and shame of the Lord Jesus.

So fair a face bedewed with tears;
What beauty e'en in grief appears!
He wept, He bled, He died for you;
What more, ye saints, could Jesus do?

May the Lord lead you dear young friends into the wonders of Isaiah 53.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The ship on the front cover is a re-creation of a 19th century three-masted Great Lakes schooner, but with modern communication and navigation equipment. It was built in the year 2000 as an educational sailing vessel.

Ships have served a wonderful purpose from ancient times up to the present day. Modern-day ships are indeed a wonder, with their many comforts and navigational systems. Their size and power can be daunting, whether they are cruise liners that carry passengers, aircraft carriers that carry airplanes, or cargo ships that carry oil or iron ore. Whether large or small, propelled by motors or sails, the purpose of ships is the same: to carry people and goods safely across a watery expanse.

We read that Solomon built a navy of ships on the shore of the Red Sea to bring him gold from distant places. Every three years, the ships of Solomon went to Tarshish and returned with gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks.

As with many other things, there are good and bad uses of a ship. Jonah tried to use a ship to flee from the presence of the Lord. (See the questions for this month.) That ship would never get to Tarshish as long as Jonah was on board.

The disciples, Peter, Andrew, James and John, had ships which they used for fishing. On one occasion, the Lord Jesus

used Peter's ship to preach to the people. What a good use that was!

The Bible tells us of those "*that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great [stormy] waters*" (Psalm 107.23). When the Lord causes the stormy wind to blow, "*which lifteth up the waves,*" what tossings of the ship! What fears fill the hearts of those on board, so that they cry unto the Lord, and He makes the storm a calm. The Lord brings poor sinners into such storms in their lives, that they may learn to pray. Then He brings them to their desired haven, the place of safety and rest.

The Apostle Paul suffered shipwreck on several occasions. The last time was on his journey to Rome, when the ship he was on was broken up. Yet he and all those who sailed with him were preserved. That was indeed a great miracle. What a wonder to be brought safely through all the storms of life into the eternal haven!

Sadly, not all shipwrecks end without loss of life. In 1847, a passenger ship with over 300 persons on board, many of them children, slowly made its way through the Great Lakes. The passengers were mostly Dutch immigrants, hoping to start a new life in the farmlands of America. The ship passed through several storms and finally came down the western shores of Lake Michigan. Just five miles from the Sheboygan harbour, the ship caught fire in the middle of the night. Within sight of their destination, hundreds perished in the fire or the icy cold waters of Lake Michigan. What a terrible tragedy it was!

As we journey through this life, there will be many dangers from which we will need a deliverance. Thus, for the Lord's people, it becomes an increasing wonder that they should be brought safe at last.

Safe home, safe home in port!
Rent cordage, shattered deck,
Torn sails, provision short,
And only not a wreck!

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES
ABIJAH, SON OF JEROBOAM

Jeroboam had a young son named Abijah. He was very sick, and Jeroboam wondered if he would recover. He told his wife to go to the land of Judah and ask the prophet Ahijah. He was the prophet who told Jeroboam that he would be king over Israel.

Ahijah was old and could no longer see. The LORD told him that the wife of Jeroboam was coming to ask about her son. When he heard her feet at the door, Ahijah told her to come in, for the LORD had given him a sad message to tell her.

Because of the sins of Jeroboam and because he made Israel worship other gods, the LORD would destroy all his family. When the wife of Jeroboam returned home, her son Abijah would die. All Israel would mourn for him and bury him: "... *because in him there is found some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel.*"

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the name of the young son of Jeroboam?
2. Who would mourn for him? (2 words)
3. What was found in him toward the LORD God of Israel? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 50 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. Jeroboam.
2. Golden calves.
3. A man of God.

Contributed

*“... in him there
is found some
good thing
toward the LORD
God of Israel...”*
1 Kings 14.13

BIBLE LESSONS**PAUL COUNSELS THE ELDERS OF EPHEBUS**

When Paul departed from Troas with his companions, they found a ship going to Assos, about twenty-five miles away. Paul decided to have Luke and the others go by ship, while he went by foot. We are not told why Paul wanted to walk, but perhaps it was to be alone, so he could pray and meditate. There had not been much time for that on the journey thus far.

After Paul arrived at Assos, he boarded the ship where Luke and the others were waiting for him. For three days they sailed, until they arrived at Miletus. It meant they had to sail right past the city of Ephesus. We are told that Paul was determined not to stop there, lest he should be detained too long by the brethren. He was hoping to return to Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost.

At Miletus Paul sent a message to the elders (ministers) of the church, asking them to come to him at Miletus. He longed to give them his last words of counsel and exhortation for their oversight of the church.

He told them to remember his conversation and conduct from the first day he had come among them: *"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews."* He reminded them how faithful he had been, both in public meetings and privately in their homes, teaching of: *"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."*

He told them he was going up to Jerusalem *"bound in the spirit,"* meaning he felt the powerful constraint of the Spirit upon his heart. He told the elders that *"bonds and afflictions"* were awaiting him. No doubt, many urged him not to go to Jerusalem. Why would he risk his life? However, all the persuasion of men could not turn Paul from his purpose.

He answered them: *"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of*

the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." A short while later he would write to Timothy: *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."*

Paul knew that whatever awaited him at Jerusalem, he would surely not be returning to the churches in Asia. With sadness of heart, he told them: *"And now, behold, I know that ye all ... shall see my face no more."*

Paul had such love and concern for the believers at Ephesus that he exhorted the elders to take heed to themselves and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost had set them. Their great concern should be *"to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood."* Paul warned that after he had departed from them, grievous wolves (false teachers) would enter in, not sparing the flock, but turning men away from the truth in Jesus Christ.

Paul knew the remedy for these dangerous men: *"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."*

He reminded these elders of how he had behaved while he was with them. He had coveted no man's silver or gold, and he had laboured with his own hands for his daily needs. Further, he wanted them to remember how he sought to support the weak in faith through the ministry of the Word. Paul reminded them of the words of Jesus: *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

Last, Paul kneeled down and prayed with them all. Surely they would never forget the prayer Paul put up for them. What a wonderful thing when God's people pray for us! When Paul had finished praying, they were overcome with sorrow. *"They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him."* They could hardly bear the words that *"they should see his face no more."*

You can read about this in Acts chapter 20 verses 13 to 38.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was to be the great concern of the elders (ministers)?
(6 words)
 2. What did Paul say that God had purchased the church with?
(3 words)
 3. To whom did Paul commend them? (9 words)
 4. What words did Paul quote of the Lord Jesus? (9 words)
 5. What did they do when Paul finished praying? (12 words)
- Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 26 for the address). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.*

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. The Lord's day (or the first day of the week).
 2. Until midnight.
 3. Eutychus.
 4. Fell on him and embraced him.
 5. Until the break of day.
-

THE EYES OF THE LORD

A godless, profane diver working at the bottom of the sea was reflecting on people who thought that God was everywhere. "They tell us that God is everywhere. I don't believe it! I don't believe He is at the bottom of the sea!"

At that precise moment, he spotted something white among the seaweed. He drew forth an oyster clasping a fragment of paper in its shell. It proved to be part of a tract containing these words: "Thou God seest me!"

You may not be a diver, and you may never have walked on the ocean floor; but has such thinking ever entered your own heart?

If so, then please consider this: "*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*" (Proverbs 15.3).

Cheering Words 2008

BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES

Many years ago in the mountains of Virginia, there was a certain school that no teacher had been able to manage. The boys were so rough that each teacher soon resigned.

One day a new, young teacher applied for the job. The old director interviewed him and asked if he knew what he was in for. Every teacher that had tried teaching at the school had received an awful beating from the pupils.

The young man replied, "I'll risk it."

Finally, he appeared for duty. One big fellow, named Tom, whispered, "I won't need any help; I can lick him myself."

The teacher said, "Good morning, boys; we have come to conduct school!" They yelled at the top of their voices, but he continued, "Now I want a good school, but confess I do not know how unless you help me. Suppose we have a few rules. You tell me, and I will write them on the blackboard."

One fellow yelled out, "No stealing!" Another yelled, "On time!" Finally ten rules appeared.

"Now," said the teacher, "A law is no good unless there is a penalty attached. What shall we do with the one who breaks them?"

"Beat him across the back with his coat off," was their answer.

"That is pretty severe, boys; are you ready to stand by it?"

After another yell by the children, the teacher said, "School will come to order!"

In a day or so, 'Big Tom' found that his dinner had been stolen. Upon inquiry, the thief was located. It was a hungry little boy, about ten years of age. The next morning the teacher announced, "We have found the thief, and he must be punished, according to your rule, with ten stripes across the back with his coat off. Jim, come here!"

The little fellow, trembling, came up slowly. He had a big coat on, fastened up to the neck. He pleaded with the teacher, "You can lick me as hard as you like, but please don't make me take my coat off!"

“Take that coat off; you helped make the rules.”

“O teacher, please don’t make me!” cried the little boy. He slowly began to unbutton his coat, and what did the teacher see? The lad had no shirt on, but strings for braces over his little bony body!

“How can I whip this child?” he thought. “But I must do something if I hope to keep this school.”

There was silence in the room. “How is it that you have no shirt, Jim?” asked the teacher.

He replied, “My father died and mother is very poor. I have only one shirt to my name, and she is washing it today. I wore my brother’s big coat to keep warm.”

The teacher, with the rod in hand, hesitated. Just then ‘Big Tom’ jumped to his feet and said, “Teacher, if you don’t object, I’ll take Jim’s licking for him!”

“Very well, one can become a substitute for another. Are you all agreed?”

Off came Tom’s coat, and after five hard strokes, the rod broke. The teacher bowed his head in his hands and thought, “How can I finish this awful task?”

Then he heard the entire school sobbing, and what did he see? Little Jim had reached up and caught Tom with both arms around his neck. “Tom, I’m sorry I stole your dinner; but I was awful hungry. Tom, I’ll love you till I die for taking my licking for me! Yes, I’ll love you forever!”

We have each broken every law of God and deserve eternal punishment! For His people, Jesus Christ took the scourging that was due and died in their stead. He clothes them with His garments of salvation. How great should be their love to Him! How willing they should be to follow Him and serve Him forever. *“He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed”* (Isaiah 53.5).

A .C. Dixon

Adapted from The Children’s Story Hour

THE BURDEN OF A SINNER

*In his book, **The Pilgrim's Progress**, John Bunyan writes about the journey of a man from the city of Destruction to the Celestial City. It is a picture of the life of a Christian after he begins to see his lost condition. The guilt and fear of wrath that he feels are like a heavy burden on his back. He cannot get rid of it by his own efforts. He longs to have his sins forgiven and for peace with God.*

*The man in the narrative is named Christian. He has been reading the Bible. In his great distress, a minister is sent to help him. **The Pilgrim's Progress** is written in the language of the King James version of the Bible.*

I dreamed, and, behold, I saw a man clothed with rags, a Book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I saw him open the Book, and as he read, he wept and trembled; and he broke out with a lamentable cry, saying, "What shall I do!"

I saw a man named Evangelist, coming to him, and he asked, "Wherefore dost thou cry?"

He answered, "Sir, I perceive, by the Book in my hand, that I am condemned to die, and after that to come to judgment, and the thoughts of these things make me cry."

Then said Evangelist, "If this be thy condition, why standest thou still?"

He answered, "Because I know not whither to go."

Then he gave him a parchment roll, and there was written within: "Flee from the wrath to come."

The man said, "Whither must I flee?"

Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field. "Do you see yonder wicket-gate?"

The man said, "No."

Then said the other, "Do you see yonder shining light?"

He said, "I think I do."

Then said Evangelist, "Keep that light in your eye, so shalt thou see the gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do."

So I saw in my dream that the man began to run, crying: "Life! life! eternal life!" So he looked not behind him, but fled towards the middle of the plain.

Two neighbours followed after the man, named Christian, to persuade him to return. When Christian refused to go back, one neighbour went home. The other, named Pliable, agreed to go with Christian. Pliable urged Christian to hurry along, but Christian replied, "I cannot go so fast as I would, by reason of this burden that is upon my back." As they talked together, they drew near a very miry slough, named Despond, into which they both suddenly fell. The slough represents those discouraging fears and anxious apprehensions which often harass one whose heart is awakened.

Here they both wallowed for a time, being grievously bedaubed with the dirt; and Christian, because of the burden that was on his back, began to sink in the mire.

Then said Pliable, "Ah, neighbour Christian, where are you now?" At that, Pliable began to be offended. He gave a desperate struggle or two, and got out of the mire on that side of the slough which was next to his own house; so away he went, and Christian saw him no more.

Wherefore Christian was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond alone: but still he endeavoured to struggle to that side of the slough that was farthest from his own house, and next to the Wicket-gate; ... but he could not get out because of the burden that was upon his back. A man came to him, whose name was Help, ... and he drew him out, and set him upon sound ground, and bid him go on his way.

Now as Christian was walking by himself, he espied one crossing over the field to meet him. The gentleman's name was Mr. Worldly Wiseman.

Mr. Wiseman represents the men of this world who take notice of those who begin to have religious convictions and try to turn them from serious thoughts. Their advice brings confusion and hinders those who are truly seeking the Lord.

Mr. Worldly Wiseman, therefore, by beholding his laborious going, by observing his sighs and groans, and the like, began to talk with Christian, and to ask where he was going.

Christian answered, "I am going to yonder Wicket-gate before me; for there I shall be put into a way to be rid of my heavy burden; ... get it off myself I cannot; nor is there any man in our country that can take it off my shoulders; therefore am I going this way, that I may be rid of my burden."

Mr. Worldly Wiseman warned Christian of the dangers and sorrows that were likely to come upon him in the way.

Christian told him, "Why, sir, this burden on my back is more terrible to me than are all these things which you have mentioned: I care not what I meet with in the way, if so be I can also meet with deliverance from my burden."

"How camest thou by thy burden at first?" asked Mr. Wiseman.

"By reading this Book in my hand," answered Christian.

Mr. Wiseman told Christian that there was a remedy near at hand, without the dangers of the way he was going. He directed him to a village nearby, called Morality. There, a gentleman named Legality would help remove his burden, so he might live a happy and comfortable life. After hearing this, Christian came to a stand. If this was true, perhaps he should take his advice; thus he asked the way to Legality's house.

So Christian turned out of his way to go to Mr. Legality's house for help: but behold, when he was got now hard by the hill, it seemed so high, and also that side of it that was next the way-side did hang so much over, that Christian was afraid to venture further, lest the hill should fall on his head; wherefore he stood still, and wist not what to do. Also his burden now seemed heavier to him than while he was in his way. There came flashes of fire out of the hill, that made Christian afraid that he should be burnt: here therefore he did sweat, and quake for fear. He began to be sorry that he had taken Mr. Worldly Wiseman's counsel. *(to be continued)*

Extracts from Pilgrim's Progress and notes by Thomas Scott

JOTTINGS FROM A VISIT TO PALESTINE

Early one morning, two of us set out to visit Gethsemane. The sun had just risen, and few people were on the road. Descending Mount Moriah and crossing the dry bed of the Brook Kedron, we soon came to the low wall enclosing the plot of ground called Gethsemane. Clambering over, we examined the sacred spot and its eight olive trees. These were very large and very old, but their branches were still strong and vigorous.

At evening, when the gates of Jerusalem were closed, it must have been a place of peace and rest. The Lord Jesus must have distinctly seen the band of men and officers sent to apprehend Him, with their lanterns and torches and glittering weapons, descending the side of Moriah and approaching the garden. By the clear moonlight, He saw His three chosen disciples fast asleep in His hour of agony, and by the gleam of the torches, He observed His cruel enemies coming down to seize Him and carry Him away to His last sufferings. Yet He *"was not rebellious, neither turned away back"* (Isaiah 50.5). He said, *"The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"* (John 18.11).

While seated there, we read over all the passages of Scripture relating to Gethsemane. We read of the weakness of those three disciples, and we remembered that they were sinful men, like disciples now. But the compassion, the unwavering love of Jesus, appeared in contrast to be infinitely amazing. For such souls as ours, He rent this vale with His strong crying and tears, wetted this ground with His bloody sweat, and set His face like a flint to go forward and die: *"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5.8). Each of us occupied part of the time alone in private meditation, and then we joined together in prayer.

It is probable that Jesus often resorted to this place, not only because of its privacy, but also because it was a suitable place to meet with His disciples. Having been dispersed through the city by day, they were to join His company in the

evening and go with Him over the hill to Bethany. This seems to be the reason that *"Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples"* (John 18.2).

A. A. Bonar and R. M. M'Cheyne
Adapted from Friendly Companion 1960

MY FATHER IS THE CAPTAIN

A ship at sea was in the midst of an awful storm. The winds were fierce, the waves were high, and the passengers on board were filled with fear. They seemed to feel almost certain that it would go beneath the waves. But there was one little girl who went about the ship with confidence and a smile on her face. No matter how rough it was, she was still smiling or humming a little song. Her attitude made a great impression upon the passengers. One of them said to her, "You do not seem to be afraid of the storm."

She calmly answered, "No, why should I be? My father is the captain of this ship, and he will bring us safe to shore."

How wonderful to have such a quiet confidence in the Lord, who is able to calm the wildest storms in our lives! *"Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven"* (Psalm 107.28-30).

Climbing the Heights
Adapted from Cheering Words April 2007

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS (3)

Men ought always to pray

“And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18.1).

One of the greatest privileges we can know in our lives is the privilege of prayer. Prayer is communion with God. God hears and answers all the prayers of His people according to His wisdom and will. However, not all that is called prayer really is prayer. We are warned about the Pharisee, who *“prayed thus with himself,”* telling God what a good person he was. That was not prayer. Again, when there is prayer in word only, without any felt need or desire from the heart, that is not prayer. What, then, is prayer? Prayer is the language of the heart, as breathed into the soul by the Holy Spirit, of a person who has been brought into need by God. That person then comes to God at the throne of grace, with the humble hope that God will, in mercy, supply that need.

There are providential needs and there are spiritual needs; yet the same God in heaven supplies both needs. Providential needs are those things in our natural lives, like troubles, afflictions, losses, disappointments, and so on. But spiritual needs are those things which concern our never-dying souls and a never-ending eternity. The publican prayed, *“God be merciful to me a sinner,”* because God had taught him that he was a sinner in great need of God’s mercy to forgive his sins. It is God the Holy Spirit who gives that spirit of prayer.

In the parable before us, a widow woman was brought into great need. As a widow, she had no husband to provide for her, and she also had an adversary who was troubling her. The Lord then told of an unjust judge in the city. He was the only one who could help or relieve this widow, so she came to him with her request: *“Avenge me of mine adversary”* (verse 3). However, the judge, being a hard, unfeeling man, who perhaps took bribes in return for helping people, refused to help this widow. What could she do? Her case seemed hopeless. She

went back to the judge again and again. Then we read of him: *"But afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me."* (4 & 5). For all the wrong reasons, the judge dealt with her need. *"And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"* (7 & 8).

From the unjust judge, we now turn to the just Judge, the Judge of the whole earth. He is merciful, gracious, full of compassion and lovingkindness, and He never turns away any who come to Him in need. *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4.16). The throne of grace is a beautiful name for the place where sinners can approach unto God, through Christ, in prayer. It is from this place that the Lord, in His mercy and for Jesus' sake, will answer their prayers.

However, God does not always answer us straight away. When we need an immediate answer to our prayer, then God will give it. Often, though, like Elijah's servant, we must *"go again seven times"* (1 Kings 18.43). God teaches us to come again and again unto Him. The Lord teaches all His people to wait upon Him in prayer and to go to no one else but Him. Very often, when we feel our prayers are not being answered, we are tempted to give up praying. This temptation has often troubled a child of God. That is why the Lord Jesus gives this exhortation: *"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."* Yet so often we do feel faint, and we echo the language of the hymnwriter:

How long, O Lord, shall I complain,
Like one that seeks his God in vain?
Canst Thou Thy face for ever hide,
And I still pray and be denied?

We often ask the question: “*How long?*” (See Psalm 13.1,2 and also Psalm 94.3,4). No doubt, this widow woman thought: “How many more times do I have to go to this judge and still be denied?” Yet the Lord commends her for venturing again in hope of an answer. The temptation to give up and pray no more is very powerful at times. But then another question may arise: “*To whom shall we go?*” (John 6.68). In Psalm 107 verse 12 we read, “*They fell down, and there was none to help.*” How often the Lord, in His gracious dealing with His people, will bring them to this place. He will shut up every other door of help – from man, from idols, and from ourselves, so that there is no help to be found in any but God Himself. The Holy Spirit helps that soul to continue, like those in Psalm 107, “*Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.*” If we are among the Lord’s people, we will need to be taught again and again to cry unto the Lord in our troubles and not to go to man.

We will prove, in God’s time and way, that He will answer our prayers; He will help us, He will deliver us, He will appear for us, and He will supply all our needs. But let us also remember from this parable: “*Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18.8). May the Lord give us that true faith to believe in Him and plead with Him to answer our poor prayers for Jesus’ sake.

Could the creatures help or ease us,
Seldom should we think of prayer;
Few, if any, come to Jesus,
Till reduced to self-despair.
Long we either slight or doubt Him,
But, when all the means we try
Prove we cannot do without Him,
Then at last to Him we cry.

A. T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about the prophet JONAH, and references, except where stated, are from the Book of Jonah. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 where applicable and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 50 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Where did God tell Jonah to go, and what was he to do? (1.2)
2. Jonah did not want to go; he ran away and sailed in a ship going from — to — . Fill in the missing words. (1.3)
3. God sent a fierce storm and the ship was “like to be broken.” Where was Jonah, and what did the shipmaster tell him to do? (1.5,6)
4. Jonah knew he was wrong and told the mariners to throw him into the sea. What happened, by which the men knew that Jonah’s God was the true God? (1.15)
5. How did God save Jonah from drowning? (1.17)
6. Jonah did not want to pray when in the ship; where was he when he had to pray? (2)
7. How was Jonah delivered from what he called “the belly of hell”? (2)
8. What message did Jonah deliver to the Ninevites and what was the effect of his preaching? (3)
9. What comparison did the Lord Jesus make between Himself and Jonah? (Matthew 12)
10. Why was Jonah angry when the men of Nineveh repented, and what did God use to show him his mistake? (4)

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. “How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”
2. “That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.”
3. “The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they

shall kill Him; and after that He is killed, He shall rise the third day.”

4. Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker.
5. Peter.
6. Ed. (Joshua 22.34)
7. Moses. (Acts 7.25)
8. The disciples thought that Jesus was referring to the fact that they had no bread with them, whereas Jesus was telling them to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16. 6-12)
9. Their latter end. (Deuteronomy 32.29)
10. Babel. The people were scattered across the face of the earth. (Genesis 11.5-9)

PEACE WITH GOD

“For He is our peace” (Ephesians 2.14).

Sons of peace redeemed by blood,
Raise your songs to Zion’s God;
Made from condemnation free,
Grace triumphant sing with me.

Calvary’s summit let us trace,
View the heights and depths of grace;

Count the purple drops, and say,
Thus my sins were borne away.

Now no more His wrath we dread,
He hath thus to Zion said,
“Since thy Surety paid thy score
I behold thy sins no more.”

Sunk, as in a shoreless flood,
Lost, as in a Saviour’s blood,
Zion, O! how blest art thou,
Justified from all things now!

Once, in vain, this peace we sought
From the law, but found it not;
Filled with sorrow, guilt and shame,
We at length to Calvary came.

Here we stood at peace with heaven,
Found the sweets of sins forgiven,
Wept as pardoned sinners do,
Felt the blood of sprinkling too.

Here we saw the curse removed,
Sin condemned, and sinners loved!
Oh! how sweet to feel the same,
Passing tribulation’s flame!

Will our God this peace reveal,
When our heart and flesh shall fail?
Then we’ll sing in Jordan’s flood,
Sweet’s the peace that’s sealed by blood.

John Kent, 1803

The Friendly Companion



The Tomb of Abraham Lincoln

“The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared ...”
(Luke 24.34)

April 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

The month of April is when the signs of spring really begin to appear. All of nature seems to be waking up from the long winter. Flowers and trees are budding forth, and the grass is starting to grow again. Generally people like the changing seasons. However as people get older, they often begin to dislike the winter-time because of the ice, snow, and bitter cold. Young people, on the other hand, look forward to snowy days, when they can build snowmen or go sledding. Perhaps you have a season of the year that you like best.

Besides the seasons, there are many other likes and dislikes that we all experience. While some are not necessarily wrong, others are very much so. Little do we realise how strongly our feelings and emotions are affected by the things we like or dislike.

Many of us have likes and dislikes for particular foods. You may have seen a little baby make a face or turn away his face when he dislikes a food. However, he eagerly opens his little mouth when he is fed the food he likes. Perhaps when your mother makes a meal you are not very fond of, you may say: "Oh, this again!" How that must grieve your mother after all the time and effort she has put into the preparation. Do you really feel thankful for such a provision?

Perhaps you find these preferences with other people, like your classmates. How easy it is to like one and dislike another! We may show great kindness to one that we like, but act unkindly toward another whom we dislike. We may be tempted to say something unkind to them or about them. The Lord Jesus told His disciples to love their enemies and to do good to those who hated them (Matthew 5.44). No one can do that without the grace of the Lord Jesus.

Sometimes people may even like or dislike a particular minister. It is very sad when we show undue preference for one of God's servants, while despising another. We remember hearing someone say that if people like a certain minister, they will go to great lengths to hear him. However, they will not

even cross the street to hear one they dislike. We may highly esteem a minister whom we like, but despise one whom we dislike. We may often pray for the minister we like, while completely forgetting about the minister we dislike. Each one of the Lord's servants is dear to Him, although they are given different gifts and abilities as they minister.

Our likes and dislikes may even influence how we read God's holy Word. It is so easy to read only those chapters or portions that we like, while we ignore those we dislike. We may dislike those chapters that reprove our ways, and thus neglect reading them. We may be tempted to think that some parts are not as important as others. But let us always remember that God esteems all His Word alike. Jehoiakim, one of the later kings of Judah, did not like the Word of the Lord which Jeremiah had been commanded to write. As one of his princes read the words on the roll, Jehoiakim cut them out with his penknife and threw them into the fire. We may not cut the Word of God with a knife, but if we ignore parts of it, we behave in the spirit of Jehoiakim. How different were the feelings of Job! He said: *"I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food"* (Job 23.12). David also expressed his love for the Word of God: *"How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"* (Psalm 119.103).

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

If you walk through a cemetery, you will see many tombstones of various sizes and shapes. Each tombstone bears a message. First, it conveys the solemn, though unwritten message that there is a grave beneath the tombstone. That should always be a very sobering thought to us. The Bible tells us that the grave is one of four things which never say, *"It is enough"* (Proverbs 30.15,16). Perhaps you could look up the other three things.

Another message that a tombstone bears is the name of the person who is buried there. That person once was full of life, having cares, activities, and troubles, but now these things are all finished. Again, it tells the date of birth and the date of death. Thus, the message is that there is: *"A time to be born, and a time to die"* (Ecclesiastes 3.2).

Last year we visited the tomb of President Abraham Lincoln. On a marble stone near his tomb was inscribed his occupation as an attorney, a Congressman, and of course, the President of the United States. He was buried in a building on a rising knoll, the highest part of the cemetery. No doubt it is a very fitting place for a man of renown, like Mr. Lincoln. His wife and three of his sons are also buried there. Mr. Lincoln had four sons; two of them died before him and one shortly after his death. What a message that spoke, telling us that death often comes to the young as well as to the old!

As we walked away from that building, we came across a very simple grave, with a plain tombstone, of a man who lived at nearly the same time as Mr. Lincoln. While only his name and dates were on the stone, I could not help but wonder what his accomplishments may have been. Perhaps he was known only by his family and neighbours, yet he was just as needful to them as Mr. Lincoln was to his family.

This leads us to think of a tomb where there was no tombstone to mark its occupant, to record the date of birth and death; a tomb that no longer holds its occupant. Of course, we are referring to the tomb where the sacred body of the Lord Jesus was laid. Pilate had given commandment to make it secure, by sealing the stone at the mouth of the sepulchre and setting watchmen to guard it. Yet on the third day, an angel from heaven was sent to roll back the stone. Inside the sepulchre, the risen Lord waited to COME FORTH as the mighty Victor over death and hell and sin.

What a message the open grave spoke on that resurrection morning! What a message it still speaks to us! It speaks of sinners justified, sin pardoned, and God reconciled. While

these are great and high things, perhaps hard to understand, it also speaks of hope, of a way to God, and acceptance with God. All the graves and tombstones of men cannot speak half as much as the tomb where Jesus lay and from which He arose.

A PRAYING PRESIDENT

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th President of the United States. He was an example of one who unselfishly served his country and honoured God. His great concern was to preserve the United States as one nation and to abolish slavery. The Civil War between the states of the North and the South was beginning when he took office. Abraham Lincoln relied upon Almighty God for strength and wisdom in fulfilling his duty as President during this most difficult time in the nation.

One day during the war, a minister said that he hoped “the Lord” was “on our side.” Mr. Lincoln replied, “I am not at all concerned about that, for I know that the Lord is always on the side of the right; but it is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord’s side.”

During his presidency, Mr. Lincoln often attended a weekly prayer meeting held at a church near the White House. He chose to sit alone in the pastor’s study with the door to the chapel ajar. He told the pastor that in this way he could pray without distraction and without anyone trying to impress him.

Shortly after the great victory at Gettysburg, Mr. Lincoln was in the hospital room of a wounded General. The General asked him whether he had been anxious about the battle. He gravely said, “No, I was not; some of my Cabinet and many others in Washington were, but I had no fears.” The General inquired how this was. After some hesitation, Mr. Lincoln replied: “Well, I will tell you how it was: ... When everybody seemed panic-stricken, and nobody could tell what was going to happen, oppressed by the gravity of our affairs, I went to my room one day, and I locked the door, and got down on my knees before Almighty God, and prayed to Him mightily for

victory at Gettysburg. I told Him that this was His war, and our cause His cause. ... And after that (I don't know how it was, and I can't explain it), soon a sweet comfort crept into my soul that God Almighty had taken the whole business into His own hands and that things would go all right at Gettysburg."

In July 1863, twelve days after the Battle of Gettysburg, Mr. Lincoln proclaimed a Day of Prayer. He said, "It is meet and right to recognise and confess the presence of the almighty Father and the power of His hand equally in these triumphs and in these sorrows ... I invite the people of the United States to render the homage due to the Divine Majesty for the wonderful things He has done in the nation's behalf and invoke the influence of His Holy Spirit to subdue the anger which has produced and so long sustained a needless and cruel rebellion."

Mr. Lincoln gave an address at the dedication of a new national cemetery at Gettysburg. He was deeply moved by the number of lives lost. His speech, known as the Gettysburg Address, stands as one of the most famous pieces of oratory in American history.

Perhaps Mr. Lincoln's best-known words on the subject of prayer reflect an awareness of his great responsibility and personal inadequacy: "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go."

On the day that news came of the surrender of General Lee from the South, a Cabinet meeting was being held. Neither the President nor any member was able, for a time, to give utterance to his feelings. At the suggestion of Mr. Lincoln, all dropped on their knees, and offered, in silence and in tears, their humble and heartfelt acknowledgments to the Almighty for the triumph He had granted to the national cause.

During the 49 months that Abraham Lincoln served as President of the United States, he made nine formal calls for the American public to fast and pray.

From Abraham Lincoln the Christian by W. J. Johnson

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**ABIJAH, KING OF JUDAH**

After Rehoboam died, his son Abijah became the next king of Judah. He reigned for only three years. During that time there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam, king of Israel.

Abijah stood upon a mountain and called out to Jeroboam and his army. He said that Israel had forsaken the Lord, cast out His priests, and worshipped golden calves. *“But as for us, the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him.”* Abijah told them not to fight against the Lord, for they would not prosper.

The army of Jeroboam was much larger than the army of Abijah. They surrounded Judah, so the battle was on every side. Then Judah cried unto the Lord, and the priests blew their trumpets. As the men of Judah gave a shout, God smote the army of Israel and they fled. *“The children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers.”*

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was there war between?
2. God smote the army of whom?
3. Whom did the children of Judah rely upon?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 74 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. Abijah.
2. All Israel.
3. Some good thing.

Contributed

*“God
Himself
is with us
for our
Captain...”*
2 Chronicles 13.12

*BIBLE LESSONS***THE END OF PAUL'S THIRD JOURNEY**

Following their tearful farewells, the elders from the church at Ephesus accompanied Paul and his companions up to the ship. How sad they must have felt, as they watched the ship slowly disappear from sight. After sailing among the islands along the coast of Asia, the ship went across the Mediterranean Sea toward their homeland of Judæa.

Arriving at the sea coast city of Tyre, the ship anchored for seven days. Paul and his company went ashore and found disciples who received them into their homes. The disciples at Tyre spoke by the Spirit of what would happen to Paul at Jerusalem, and they pleaded with him not to go. Although their warning was well intended, Paul would not listen, for he was determined to go up to Jerusalem.

At the end of seven days, the believers, along with their wives and children, accompanied Paul and his companions out of the city to the seashore. There they knelt down before God and prayed. How lovely to think of this company of God's people humbling themselves before Him and praying for each other as they parted!

Taking ship once again, they sailed down the coast to Ptolemais and stayed for one day with the brethren there.

The next day they came to Cæsarea and entered the house of Philip the evangelist. Philip was one of the first seven deacons and the first to bring the gospel to Samaria. You may remember that he also went into the desert to preach the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch. It must have been a joyful time, as Paul and Philip each told of the wondrous things God had done through the preaching of His Word.

Philip had four daughters who were filled with the Spirit and prophesied. What a blessed home in which to stay! The Bible tells us that Paul and his companions spent many days there. That happy season must have passed all too quickly.

One day a prophet from Jerusalem came to Philip's house. His name was Agabus. Nearly sixteen years before, he had

prophesied of a great famine that would come upon the world (Acts 11.28). This took place in the days of Claudius Caesar.

How strangely Agabus seemed to act! He took hold of the girdle (belt) of Paul's garment and bound his own hands and feet. The eyes of all in Philip's house were fastened on him. They did not need to wonder what it meant, for he began to prophesy: *"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."*

Once more, Paul was warned about what awaited him at Jerusalem. Those of Philip's house, along with his travelling companions, tried to reason with Paul and convince him not to go up to Jerusalem.

The brethren at Tyre could not prevail upon him; perhaps those of Philip's house would succeed. However, Paul answered: *"What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."*

Even after much pleading, they found that Paul was determined to go. At last they stopped trying and said: *"The will of the Lord be done."*

Paul departed for Jerusalem, along with his companions and some of the members of the church at Cæsarea. An old disciple from the island of Cyprus also came with them. His name was Mnason, and he had a house in Jerusalem where they could stay.

You can read about this in Acts chapter 21 verses 1 to 16.

QUESTIONS:

1. Into whose house did Paul enter at Cæsarea? What did the daughters of this man do?
2. Which prophet warned Paul of what the Jews would do?
3. What did Paul say he was ready to do for the name of Jesus?
4. What did Paul's friends say was to be done?
5. Who was the old disciple in whose house they would stay?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 74 for the address). Remember to

give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. "To feed the church of God."
2. "His own blood."
3. "To God, and to the Word of His grace."
4. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
5. "They all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him."



ALL WE LIKE SHEEP HAVE GONE ASTRAY

The following was related to me by one who is now with the Lord, a few years before he passed away, in the following language as near as memory serves:

As a young man, recently arrived from England, I was wandering one evening in the bush in Australia. Having lost my way, suddenly I saw a light. Making for it, I found myself at a large farm and asked permission of the farmer to pass the night under cover. Somewhat roughly, he said, "You can go into the barn if you like, but there is someone there already."

I was then totally ignorant of God and His grace, unconverted, a man of the world. Being in need of shelter and rest for the night, I thanked him and went into the barn. By the light of a lantern, I saw another man lying in a corner, coughing violently. Putting down my gun and shooting-bag, which were my only possessions, I went over to him. Sitting down by his side, I asked him if I could do anything for him.

Speaking with difficulty, he told me that he was an Englishman, and had been at the same university as I, but in early life, having disgraced his family, he had been sent out to the colonies. He had led a very sinful life for twenty-five years, and now he knew he was about to die. "Do you know anything about the hereafter?" he asked, anxious to find out what was going to become of him.

Utterly careless myself, I said I thought the Bible was the book he needed.

"Oh," said he, "the Bible; why, my mother put one in my box when I left home. I have never opened it yet. Will you go and get it out and bring it here?"

I went into another shed and got the Book and brought it to him.

"Now," he said, "where are we to turn?" We both confessed we did not know.

"Well, clap it together," he said, "and see where it opens." So I did, and the Book opened at Isaiah 53.

I began to read. *"He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."*

The dying man asked me, "Who is the He?"

I hazarded the reply, "Jesus Christ."

"Ah," he said, "go on."

I read slowly until I came to the words, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."*

"Stop," he said, "that's me, that's me, that's just what I have done all my life." After a little while he said, "Go on."

"And the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

"Ah," he said, "Jesus Christ," and then a minute or so after, "Read it again."

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

He lay back on the straw, and I quietly read on. Turning over the pages, I found some passages about Jesus Christ in the gospels. After some time he asked me to leave him, which I did, and I was soon fast asleep.

In the morning, the beams of the sun were making their way through the boards of the barn when I awoke. Going over to the place where my poor friend lay, I was struck by the change in him. His face seemed to have caught some of the sunbeams. He looked so happy and peaceful; no cough, but quite at rest.

I did not understand what had happened, but he said to me, *"The LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all";* Jesus

Christ is my Saviour.” He told me that in the night the Lord had come to him and showed him His hands and side, and now all was joy and peace. I listened, but thought he must be light-headed, because I saw no beauty in the One he was so occupied with now. The day or two that he lingered, he could not hear enough or talk enough of “Him.”

Shortly before he died, he said to me, “I want you to write on the fly-leaf of this Bible an account of your meeting with me here and reading Isaiah 53.6 and of ‘Him’ it speaks about, Jesus Christ, and how I died believing on Him as my Saviour. I want, if I can, to put my name to it, and I want you to put yours, and then pack it up and send it to my father in London.” He gave me his address.

I did as he requested, and soon in the rush of a godless life, I forgot the incident. Many years after, I was returning to London on furlough. Through God’s grace, I was now a converted man. Musing over my life in Australia, I thought about this occasion and wondered whether the Bible ever reached the old father. I decided to go and see him.

“Indeed I did,” he said. Getting to his feet with difficulty, he went over to his desk. He unlocked a drawer, produced the book, and sat down again.

“I well remember receiving it,” he said. “I was then a careless man of the world, without God and without hope. But in infinite mercy, on reading what you and my poor son pointed me to in Isaiah 53.6, the Lord opened my eyes to my sinful condition, and soon after to Him, Jesus Christ my Saviour. From that time to this, I have not ceased to praise Him.”

Thus, the Spirit of God graciously encircles the globe, overcomes all obstacles, brings to bear the particular verse of Scripture at the right time, gives understanding to the soul, and gives faith in Christ. May the readers of these lines be led by the same Spirit to know and confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Cheering Words 1977

THE BURDEN OF A SINNER

(Continued from page 63)

Following the advice of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, Christian turned aside to look for Mr. Legality, hoping to have his burden removed. Mr. Legality represents those who try to obtain salvation by reforming their lives and doing good works. The Law of God, pictured by Mount Sinai, brings fear and condemnation. Instead of relief, Christian feels his burden to be even heavier, for he is unable to keep the holy and just demands of the Law. He is brought to a standstill.

Evangelist came to meet him, asking, "What dost thou here, Christian? ... Did not I direct thee the way to the little wicket-gate? How is it that thou art so quickly turned aside? For thou art now out of the way."

Christian told Evangelist about meeting Mr. Wiseman and the advice he had given.

"He persuaded me that I might, in the village before me, find a man that could take off my burden. He said that he would show me a better way, and short, not so attended with difficulties as the way that you set me in; ... so I believed him, and turned out of that way into this, if haply I might be soon eased of my burden. But when I came to this place, and beheld things as they are, I stopped, for fear of danger: but I now know not what to do."

Then Evangelist told Christian of the false hopes for relief offered by Mr. Worldly Wiseman.

"There are three things in this man's counsel that thou must utterly abhor: his turning thee out of the way; his labouring to render the cross odious to thee; and his setting thy feet in that way that leadeth unto the administration of death. ... Legality is not able to set thee free from thy burden. No man was as yet ever rid of his burden by him; no, nor ever is like to be. Ye cannot be justified by the works of the law; for by the deeds of the law no man living can be rid of his burden."

Now Christian looked for nothing but death, and began to cry out lamentably; ... calling himself a thousand fools for

hearkening to the counsel of Mr. Worldly Wiseman. He asked, "Sir, ... is there any hope? May I now go back, and go up to the Wicket-gate? I am sorry I have hearkened to this man's counsel: but may my sin be forgiven?"

Evangelist comforted him, saying: "Thy sin is very great, for thou hast forsaken the way that is good, to tread in forbidden paths. Yet will the man at the gate receive thee, for he has good-will for men; only take heed that thou turn not aside again."

So Christian went on with haste, and in process of time he got up to the gate. Now over the gate there was written, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He knocked, therefore, more than once or twice. At last there came a grave person to the gate, named Good-will, who asked Who was there? and whence he came? and what he would have?

Christian answered, "Here is a poor burdened sinner. I come from the city of Destruction, but am going to Mount Zion, that I may be delivered from the wrath to come. I would, therefore, sir, know if you are willing to let me in."

"I am willing with all my heart," said he; and with that he opened the gate. When Christian was stepping in, the other gave him a pull.

Good-will seems to be the emblem of the compassionate love of God to sinners, in and through Jesus Christ. He "came from heaven to do the will of Him that sent Him," and "He will in no wise cast out any that come to Him." "He waits to be gracious," till sinners apply by earnest persevering prayer for His salvation. Christian asked Good-will the meaning of the pull that he gave him as he was entering.

"A little distance from this gate there is erected a strong castle, of which Beelzebub is the captain: from thence both he, and they that are with him, shoot arrows at those that come up to this gate, if haply they may die before they can enter in."

As sinners become more earnest in seeking after Christ and constant in attending the means of grace, Satan often opposes

them with even greater force. He attempts to discourage them and turn them aside.

Then Christian said, "I rejoice and tremble. ... But, oh! what a favour is this to me, that yet I am admitted entrance here."

Good-will said, "We make no objections against any, notwithstanding all that they have done before they come hither; they in no wise are cast out. Come a little way with me, and I will teach thee about the way thou must go. Look before thee; dost thou see this narrow way? That is the way thou must go. It was cast up by the patriarchs, prophets, Christ, and His apostles, and it is as straight as a rule can make it; this is the way thou must go. There are many ways ... crooked and wide: but thus thou mayest distinguish the right from the wrong, the right only being straight and narrow."

Christian asked Good-will if he could not help him off with his burden that was upon his back, for as yet he had not got rid thereof, nor could he by any means get it off without help.

Good-will replied, "As to thy burden, be content to bear it, until thou comest to the place of deliverance; for there it will fall from thy back of itself."

Christian began his journey and soon came to the house of the Interpreter, who showed him wonderful and profitable things. The Interpreter is an emblem of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, according to the Scripture, by means of reading, hearing, praying, and meditating, accompanied by daily experience and observation. Believers depend on this continual teaching.

Now the highway up which Christian was to go, was fenced on either side with a wall, and that wall was called Salvation. Up this way, therefore, did burdened Christian run, but not without great difficulty, because of the load on his back.

He ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending; and upon that place stood a cross, and a little below, in the bottom, a sepulchre. So I saw in my dream, that just as Christian came up with the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so

continued to do, till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in, and I saw it no more.

Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said, "He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." Then he stood still a while, to look and wonder, for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked, therefore, 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." So the first said to him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment; the third also set a mark on his forehead, and gave him a roll with a seal upon it, which he bid him look on as he ran, and that he should give it in at the celestial gate: so they went their way. Then Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing,

"Thus far did I come laden with my sin,
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
Till I came hither: What a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
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!"

Christian received deliverance from his burden of guilt and sin as he beheld the cross of Christ. By faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, peace and pardon were given. Former sins were buried, no more to be the cause of terror and distress. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved..." (Isaiah 45.22). "And 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).

*Extracts from **The Pilgrim's Progress**
with explanatory notes by Thomas Scott.*

SUBMISSION TO GOD'S WILL

A Sabbath school teacher was instructing his class on that petition of the Lord's Prayer: "*Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6.10). He said, "You have told me, my dear children, **what** is to be done – the will of God; and **where** it is to be done – on earth; and **how** it is to be done – as it is done in heaven. How do you think the angels and the happy spirits do the will of God in heaven, as they are to be our pattern?"

The first child replied: "They do it immediately."

The second child replied: "They do it diligently."

The third child answered: "They do it always."

The fourth: "They do it with all their hearts."

The fifth child said: "They do it all together."

There was a pause, and no other children appeared to have a further answer. After some time, a little girl arose and said: "Why, sir, they do it without asking any questions."

Happy world! Our Father who art in heaven, whose will is always wise and always good, Thy will be thus done on earth as it is done in heaven!

Arvine's Cyclopedia

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS (4)

The Shepherd and the sheep (1)

"This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which He spake unto them" (John 10.6).

As we have noticed before, the Lord Jesus, during His ministry on earth, always spoke very simply. He often used

everyday things that people easily understood, to set forth spiritual lessons, which He would then explain to His disciples afterwards.

The sight of a shepherd with his little flock of sheep following him would have been very common in biblical days. The shepherd knew all his sheep, and the sheep knew their shepherd. From this familiar sight, the Lord Jesus spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd and His people as His sheep.

There was always a very strong bond between the shepherd and his sheep. The shepherd cared for his sheep and looked after them day and night. We understand that when he took them out to feed in the pastures, he always kept them in his sight. If one became poorly or suffered a fall, he immediately went and tended to that sheep in need. If a sheep began to wander too far off, he used his sling and stone very skilfully to frighten it, and it would run back to the shepherd.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep” (verses 1 & 2). What is meant by the sheepfold? We believe this sets forth the church of God, the place where all His sheep will be gathered and kept safe. But then, there are the thieves and robbers. What is meant by these? *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy”* (verse 10). Satan, the devil, is the thief who is ever seeking to destroy the sheep of Christ. He has many agents who work for him. They attempt to get into the sheepfold by some other way, and they cause much grief. We are warned of those who are wolves in sheep’s clothing; those who profess to be sheep, but in reality are devouring wolves. We need to learn the sad lesson that not all who profess to be Christians are in fact real Christians.

It is a great mercy if we have been taught our need of the Lord Jesus Christ to save us from all our sins. If we have felt our need, then surely we will want to know Him as our Lord

and Saviour; our loving, gracious Shepherd. One of the clearest evidences is this, and it is so simple: *“and the sheep hear His voice.”*

There are two vital things here: first, the earnest, felt need of hearing His voice; and then the wonderful blessing of actually hearing His voice.

The Lord has promised: *“Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out”* (Ezekiel 34.11). No doubt, there were times when the shepherd returned home with his flock, only to find that one sheep was missing. As in the parable of the lost sheep, the shepherd would leave the “ninety and nine” to go and search for the lost sheep until he found it. But what of that lost sheep, now on its own, frightened, lonely, hungry, and in great danger? How it would cry out for the shepherd! It would only be comforted by the voice of the shepherd coming to save it. The shepherd would hear the voice of the sheep, and the sheep would hear the voice of the shepherd, and both would rejoice.

How much more so with the Lord Jesus and His purchased flock! Are you crying out to Him to come and save you? Do you long to hear His gracious voice? Is your prayer: *“Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation”* (Psalm 35.3)? Do you find there is no rest in your soul until you know Him as your Saviour? Is not His voice heard in the glorious gospel? It is one thing to know the Scriptures in your head, but quite another thing to receive them in your heart. If you have the privilege of attending a place of worship where the truth is preached, do you find yourself longing to hear the Lord speak to your soul through His Word? There are two types of people found in most congregations: those who want to hear the Lord’s gracious voice, and those who have no desire for it. May the Lord give each of you an ear to hear His voice and faith to receive it, love it and understand it.

“And leadeth them out.” If you are one of the Lord’s sheep, He will be leading you out of this dark world and its evil ways.

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6.24); "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6.17). He will also be leading you out of yourself. He will teach you to have no confidence in the flesh, that you can save yourself, or trust in your own righteousness to make you acceptable to God. Yet in leading you out from these things, the dear Lord Jesus will be drawing you unto Himself as your only hope and only plea.

Jesus, the gentle Shepherd, stands
And calls His sheep by name;
He leads them with His mighty hands,
And feeds each tender lamb.

Dear Jesus, may I hear Thy voice,
And learn to follow Thee.
O may Thy ways be all my choice,
To prove Thy choice of me.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about the OFFENCE OF THE TRUTH. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 9 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 74 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. When Jesus called Zaccheus (Luke 19.2-10) the people murmured. What did they say?
2. What had Jesus said to the man sick of the palsy, for which the scribes looked upon Him as a blasphemer? (Matthew 9.2)
3. There was murmuring because Jesus ate and drank with "publicans and sinners." What did Jesus reply? (Mark 2.16,17)
4. When the chief priests and scribes heard children saying "Hosanna to the Son of David, they were sore displeased." What did Jesus answer? (Matthew 21.15,16)
5. The chief priests and scribes mocked Jesus when on the cross.

What did they say? (Mark 15.31)

6. Which two Old Testament prophets had Jesus spoken of when all in the synagogue were “filled with wrath”? (Luke 4)
7. Following the parable of the unjust steward, the covetous Pharisees derided the Lord Jesus (Luke 16). Write out the answer of the Lord Jesus (one verse).
8. When Jesus healed a poor woman “bowed together”, the ruler of the synagogue was indignant (Luke 13). Why was he angry?
9. The Pharisees found fault with the disciples for eating without having first washed their hands. What did Jesus say in reply, quoting from the prophet Isaiah? (Mark 7)
10. On several occasions (see John 5.16-18; 10.30-33, Mark 14. 61-62; Matthew 26.63-66) Jesus was looked upon as a blasphemer and worthy of death. Who had He claimed to be?

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and cry against it because of their wickedness.
2. Joppa, Tarshish.
3. Jonah was asleep in the sides of the ship. The shipmaster told him to call upon his God.
4. The sea ceased from its raging when Jonah had been cast into the sea.
5. The Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.
6. Jonah was in the fish's belly when he prayed. (Jonah 2.1)
7. “The Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.” (Jonah 2.10)
8. Jonah “cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” The Ninevites believed God, proclaimed a fast, and repented of their wickedness. (Jonah 3.4,5)
9. “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:40)
10. Jonah was angry because the Ninevites had been spared, when he would have been glad to see them destroyed as enemies of Israel. God used a gourd to show Jonah how dependent he was on God's mercies too. (Jonah 4)

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST

Hosanna to the Prince of Light,
That clothed Himself in clay,
Entered the iron gates of death,
And tore the bars away.

Death is no more the king of dread,
Since our Immanuel rose;
He took the tyrant's sting away,
And spoiled our hellish foes.

See how the Conqueror mounts aloft,
And to His Father flies,
With scars of honour in His flesh
And triumph in His eyes.

There our exalted Saviour reigns,
And scatters blessings down;
Our Jesus fills the middle seat
Of the celestial throne.

Raise your devotion, mortal tongues,
To reach His blessed abode;
Sweet be the accents of your songs
To our incarnate God.

Bright angels, strike your loudest strings,
Your sweetest voices raise;
Let heaven and all created things
Sound our Immanuel's praise.

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs by Isaac Watts

The Friendly Companion



A Baltimore Oriole and its Nest

“Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.” (Psalm 84.3)

May 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

At this time of the year, we always look forward to the migrating birds that pass through our area. They often stop at the various bird-feeders we have set out for them. I wonder what kinds of birds migrate through the place where you live. No doubt, the friends in Australia see different birds in the Southern Hemisphere than we do in the Northern Hemisphere.

We love to see the beautiful colours of the grosbeaks, orioles, warblers, and others that suddenly appear each spring. Their lovely songs give us much pleasure.

These little creatures have some good lessons for us. First, they watch very carefully for enemies. If a cat from below, a hawk from above, or any human being comes too close, they are instantly ready to fly to a place of safety. The Lord Jesus warned His disciples to: *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation"* (Matthew 26.41). In Psalm 143 verse 9, David writes: *"I flee unto Thee to hide me."* If the Holy Spirit teaches us of the dangers that we are so prone to fall into, it will cause us to watch and pray lest we be overcome with evil.

Second, they find the daily food that is provided for them. Sometimes birds travel hundreds or even thousands of miles in their migrations; yet all along their journey, they find their necessary food. It is wonderful to consider the care and provision of the Lord for these tiny creatures. In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: *"Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them."* You may remember that the Lord taught His disciples to pray: *"Give us this day our daily bread."* The children of Israel proved the power of the Lord in supplying their daily food all through the long wilderness journey.

Third, they fly with their own kind. Although these birds arrive at nearly the same time each year, they are with others of the same variety. The grosbeaks do not fly with the orioles, or the buntings with the warblers. Perhaps you have heard the

expression: "Birds of a feather flock together." They surely do not mate with other varieties. That is a very good lesson for us. Do you seek the friendship of those who fear God, or do you prefer to be with those who love the pleasures of this world? When the disciples were released by the high priest and Jewish leaders, the Bible tells us: "*They went to their own company*" (Acts 4.23). Which company do you prefer to be with? When the Lord begins to work in the heart, a person wants to be with others who seek God and who walk in His ways. They desire to say with David: "*I am a companion of all them that fear Thee.*"

What very simple, yet important lessons the birds of the air teach us!

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

For the front cover this month we have chosen the beautiful male Baltimore oriole, along with its nest. The nests of most birds are similar in shape, looking like a bowl or a saucer. They may be built on a ledge, in the branches of a tree or bush, or sometimes right on the ground. The nest of the oriole is noticeably different. It looks like a little sack hanging from the branch of a tree. We marvel that the baby birds are able to get out.

Several years ago, a friend showed us a hummingbird nest that he had found. The hummingbird is one of the smallest birds in America. What a tiny nest it was, being only an inch and a half in diameter and height. Besides the size, we were really amazed by the softness of the inside of the nest.

On the opposite side of the scale, the osprey's nest may be four or five feet in diameter. Yet it stays in place high up on a pole or in a treetop. What marvellous instincts and skill the Lord has given to the birds, to make their various nests according to their needs!

Last summer in our garden, there were baby woodpeckers in the hollow of a dead tree; at the same time, there were baby

robins in a nearby bush, baby wrens in a birdhouse, and baby finches in a flower pot. During this time, there was a severe thunderstorm, with winds gusting forty-five to fifty miles per hour. Yet each of the little birds were safe in their nests. How wonderful that was! The nests appeared fragile to us, yet they could withstand all kinds of weather.

The Lord Jesus once remarked: "*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head*" (Matthew 8.20). All His creatures, great and small, have their homes or places of shelter. Yet the Lord Jesus, the Creator, had no place on this earth to lay His head.

THE EAGLE AND HER YOUNG

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings" (Deuteronomy 32.11).

A beautiful illustration of the above verse came to our attention when on a tour in Syria and Palestine. We were about twelve miles north of Damascus, winding along a very narrow path on the side of a beautiful ravine; rising a thousand feet above us were rugged rocks. Far above, on the other side of the gorge, were a few very large birds. Their strong, steady flight looked more like a swimming than a flying motion. We concluded that they were eagles. One attracted our attention, for it seemed to be flying apart from the rest. She was nearer the rocks than the others. Her head was slightly raised, as if looking both upward and onward, as she supported herself in the air. Two smaller birds were flying before her and slightly above her. They did not have the strong, steady flight of the larger birds; it soon became evident that they were eaglets. The mother, with her broad wings spread out, was teaching her two young ones to fly. Suddenly the large bird darted forward, and at the same time, the smaller ones dropped and disappeared. Soon the mother disappeared also and was hidden among the rocks.

J. J. Williams, The Little Gleaner 1939

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**ASA**

Asa became the next king of Judah after the short reign of his father Abijah. *“Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD.”* He took away the idols and commanded Judah to seek the Lord and obey His laws. There was peace in the land for many years.

Then a very great army from Ethiopia came against Judah. Asa cried unto the Lord his God, saying: *“LORD, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: ... for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude.”* So the Lord smote the Ethiopians, and they fled before Judah.

A prophet of the Lord came to meet Asa after the battle. He told Asa and all the people: *“The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you.”* When Asa heard these words, he took courage and repaired the altar of the Lord. All the people gathered at Jerusalem to worship. They sought the Lord *“with their whole desire; and He was found of them.”*

QUESTIONS:

1. Who became king of Judah after Abijah?
 2. What came against Judah from Ethiopia? (4 words)
 3. Who came to meet Asa after the battle? (5 words)
- Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 98 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.*

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Abijah and Jeroboam.
2. Israel.
3. The Lord God.

Contributed

*“... if ye
seek
Him, He
will be
found
of you.”*

2 Chronicles 15.2

BIBLE LESSONS**PAUL AT JERUSALEM**

Many changes had taken place in Jerusalem since Paul set out on his first missionary journey. Under great persecution, the church had grown considerably. Many of the apostles had either been put to death or left the city to bring the gospel to other regions. The Apostle James, the son of Alphaeus, was now the esteemed leader of the church at Jerusalem.

When Paul and his companions arrived at Jerusalem, the brethren received them with great joy. The next day Paul met with James and the elders of the church. He told them what God had done among the Gentiles in all the places he had gone preaching. When the leaders at Jerusalem heard his report, they glorified (praised) the Lord.

James and the elders reminded Paul that there were thousands of believers in Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost. Although these Jews believed in Jesus, they were still zealous of keeping the law. They had heard reports that Paul taught the Jews who lived among the Gentile believers that they were no longer required to keep the ceremonial laws, such as certain feasts and purifyings.

Four men among the believers at Jerusalem had taken a vow to purify themselves. The leaders urged Paul to go and purify himself with them. They reasoned that it would show the Jews that the reports they had heard about Paul were not true.

What grace Paul displayed in yielding to this request by James and the elders! He fully believed that all these ceremonial duties were finished with the death of Christ. Yet for the conscience of the weaker Jews, he subjected himself to them. He had once written to the believers at Corinth: *"And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; ... To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak"* (1 Corinthians 9.20,22).

When the seven days needed for purifying were over, Paul went into the temple to worship. As he entered, some

unbelieving Jews from Asia, mainly the city of Ephesus, recognised Paul. Being filled with enmity against him, they laid hands on Paul and cried out to the other Jews: *"Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place."* They further charged him with polluting the temple by bringing a Greek (Gentile) inside. Earlier in the week, they had seen Trophimus, an Ephesian, with Paul in the city. They assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

A very great company of people soon joined in, and they dragged Paul out of the temple. The Levites, who were the doorkeepers, quickly shut the doors so that Paul could not return for refuge.

What a scene took place outside! The Jews began to beat Paul with all their might, while others urged them on. They fully intended to kill him. No doubt, Paul thought back upon what he and others had done to Stephen many years before. Would his life end the same way?

Soon news of the uproar came to the chief captain of the Roman army. He came running down to the rioters with his soldiers. When the Jews saw the Roman soldiers, they stopped beating Paul for fear of being arrested and imprisoned for causing a disturbance.

You can read about this in Acts chapter 21 verses 17 to 32.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was the leader of the church at Jerusalem?
2. Why did Paul yield to the request of James and the elders? (7 words)
3. Why did Paul say that to the weak he became as weak? (6 words)
4. Whom did the unbelieving Jews think Paul had brought into the temple?
5. What did they do to Paul after dragging him out of the temple?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 98 for the addresses). Remember

to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Philip. Prophesied.
2. Agabus.
3. Die.
4. The will of the Lord.
5. Mnason.

A LITTLE BIRD USED BY GOD

God is still a living Saviour, who is found of them that seek Him and near them that call upon Him. He has a mighty host waiting for His command, just as in the day of Elijah. There has been no end to His wonders, even to this day.

It was this God of Elijah, who delivered a poor man out of his distress; not indeed by a raven, but by a little singing bird. The man was sitting early in the morning at the door of his house. His eyes were red with weeping, and his heart cried out to heaven. He was expecting an officer to come at any moment to arrest him because of a small debt he had been unable to pay. While sitting thus with a heavy heart, a little bird flew through the street. It was fluttering up and down, as if in distress. At length, quick as an arrow, it flew over the man's head into his cottage and perched on an empty cupboard. At the time, the poor man little imagined that the Lord had sent him the bird. He closed the door, caught the bird, and placed it in a cage. Immediately the little bird began to sing very sweetly. It seemed to the man as if it were the tune of a favourite hymn: "Fear thou not when darkness reigns." As he listened to it, he found the song helped to soothe and comfort his mind.

Suddenly someone knocked at his door. "Ah, it is the officer," thought the man, and he was afraid. But no, it was the servant of a respected lady in the town. The neighbours had

seen a little bird fly into his house, and he wished to know if it had been caught.

"O yes," answered the man, "and here it is." The little bird was soon carried away.

However, a few minutes later, the servant returned. "You have done my mistress a great service," he said. "She sets a high value upon that bird, which had escaped from her. She is very grateful to you and requests that you accept this small gift with her thanks."

The poor man received the gift thankfully. It proved to be the exact amount of money that he owed! And when at last the officer came, he said, "Here is the amount of the debt; now leave me in peace, for God has sent it me."

Adapted from Elijah the Tishbite by F.W. Krummacher

"IT COMES FROM ABOVE"

In the 1800s, a poor boy, called Little Peter, lived in France. He was an orphan and had no one to care for him. He went from door to door begging. He could sing very nicely, so people often gave him gifts. Little Peter had a quaint custom. Whenever something happened, he would say, "It comes from above." There was a special reason why he said this. When his father came near his end, he called his son and said, "My dear Peter, you will soon be alone in the world. And then, being so poor, many troubles will be your portion. But remember at all times, that all things come from above. That will make it easier for you to carry all your burdens." Little Peter could not understand at the time, but the words of his father made a deep impression upon him. He continually repeated them to himself: "It comes from above." When something was given to him, he always repeated the words of his father, "It comes from above."

When he became older, Little Peter began to understand the words of his father in a deeper sense. He was made wise, by the grace of God, to see that God rules the world and that

whatever happens, the hand of God's providence is in it: "It comes from above."

It was clearly seen in the life of Little Peter that holding fast to the doctrine of God's providence had not been unprofitable.

As he walked through a town one day, a tile was blown from one of the houses by a gust of wind. This came down heavily upon the shoulder of Little Peter and made him fall to the ground. The first words he spoke were: "It comes from above." The bystanders laughed at him. Naturally, it could not come from below. They did not understand what he really meant. A few moments later, a very strong gust of wind knocked down some houses further down the street. Many people were covered under the rubbish. Little Peter could see God's providence in this. The tile had indeed "come from above!" It had prevented him from walking on and being in the place where that great accident happened. What a great privilege it is when a person can look beyond the outward circumstances in his life and see the hand of God in all things! The father of Little Peter had given his son a wise lesson.

One day a gentleman asked Peter to bring a letter to another town. He urged him to go quickly, for much depended on the letter. Little Peter hurried through the fields. He had to jump over several ditches, but one ditch was too wide for him. He landed right in the middle and almost sank in the mud. As he stood on the side of the ditch, covered with mud, he found that the letter had been lost. He had to go back to the writer of the letter and tell him what had happened. The man was terribly angry, especially when Peter concluded his words with: "It all comes from above." He took a whip and chased him out of the room.

But the next day, the same gentleman stood by the hut of Little Peter. He was now very friendly and gave him a gift of money. He said, "It has been a great profit to me that the letter was lost. The circumstances have changed so much that it would have been a great loss for my business if things had gone as mentioned in my letter." Little Peter stared at the man in amazement. His only reply was: "It comes from above."

As he grew older, people continued to call him “Little Peter.” Many looked at him with wonder. It is not surprising that this young man was often the subject of their conversation.

On a certain day, a rich Englishman visited the town where Little Peter lived. He heard the story of Peter’s life and longed to meet him. He wanted to give something to the young man who had such a hard youth but could testify at all times of God’s wonderful hand in providence and resign himself to it with his whole heart. Peter entered the room where the Englishman was seated, wondering why he had been called. The man asked with a smile, “Well, Little Peter, perhaps you would like to know why I asked you to come to me?”

Peter’s only answer was, “It comes from above.”

This answer affected the Englishman greatly. He said, “Indeed, I believe this, too. I would like to take you to work for me and will take good care of you. Do you agree to this, and will you go with me to England?”

Again, Peter looked at him with surprise and did not know what to say, only: “It comes from above. God is so good to me. I will gladly go with you.”

The Englishman treated Peter as if he were his own son. Although he had no education before, now he was able to excel in all kinds of knowledge. In a short time, Peter became a helper to his kind friend. He even became a good businessman. Sometimes people still looked at him with surprise, for in every circumstance, his words were: “It comes from above.” At his death, the rich Englishman left a great sum of money to his friend, Peter. He became a great businessman in the city of Birmingham. However, at all times, he remembered that: “It comes from above.”

Is this also written above our life? Or do we behave as if it all comes from below?

Adapted from Religious Stories for Young and Old, Volume 1

THE FRENCH SOLDIER

In the year 1855, a French regiment of soldiers was waiting at Toulon, in the south of France, to sail for the Crimea. There was a colporteur, or Bible salesman, working in the port. He was an agent for the French Bible Society and had received permission to go about among the soldiers.

One day the Bible salesman was talking to a group of men in the barracks-yard, trying to convince them of their need of salvation, and to persuade them to buy his New Testaments. One young man, who had been listening with great attention, stepped forward and thanked the missionary for his friendly counsel. "You have convinced me that what you say is true," said the soldier, "and I only wish I could buy a Book for myself; but the fact is, I have no money for it." Deeply interested, the colporteur said that if he really wanted the Book, he must certainly have one, even if he had to pay for it himself. Selecting a New Testament from his case, he handed it to the enquirer.

"Aha!" said the soldier, bursting out with a loud laugh; "I have convinced you all right! I just did it to make a fool of you, and you see how easily I have done it!"

"Give me back the Book," said the colporteur sternly.

"Not I," said the man. "You gave it to me, and I intend to keep it. It will come in splendidly to light my pipe!" And with a mocking salute, he was turning away, when the missionary called after him, "Young man, take care what you are doing; *'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'* (Hebrews 10.31)."

The soldier took no notice, and the missionary packed up his books and walked away from the jeering group. Discouraged and sad at heart, he went away praying earnestly that the Lord would have mercy on the soul of the scoffer.

A few days later the regiment sailed for the Black Sea. The young soldier, a lively, intelligent man, remained completely careless of spiritual things. Page after page of the New Testament was torn out as he had threatened. But one night,

he was told that his battalion was to take the post of greatest danger in the next day's battle. For the first time, serious thoughts began to trouble him. Suddenly the words flashed into his mind: "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" "And supposing I should fall into His hands!" he thought with horror. All night he tossed and turned, haunted by an awful fear. At the first streak of light, he got the New Testament out of his sack. He was almost afraid to look into it, for he expected to see nothing but threats. Instead, these words met his eye: "*God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved*" (John 3.17). He turned the pages and saw the words: "*He that hath the Son hath life*" (1 John 5.12). He was especially struck by the words of Matthew 11 verse 28: "*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" He was pondering over them when the reveille sounded. All was bustle and activity. The New Testament went back into the haversack and the soldier went marching into battle. Before night, he was brought back to hospital, seriously wounded.

Many weeks of severe illness followed. Throughout that time, the Spirit of God was working in the soldier's heart, convincing him of his sin and of his need of the Saviour. At last, still very ill, he was sent back to his own home in a little village in the north of France. His family kept the local inn. It was evident that he had come home only to die; but the spiritual change that had taken place was apparent to all. He spent all his time studying his New Testament and imploring his mother and friends to listen to the voice of God. He warned them lest they should fall, unready as they were, "*into the hands of the living God.*" In six weeks the soldier died, full of faith and hope, trusting in his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On the day of the funeral, the colporteur reached this very village in the course of his labours. Entering the inn for refreshment and a night's lodging, he saw at once that something was wrong. A group of people in the dining room

were having a meal in complete silence, a contrast indeed to the usual lively chatter. The missionary passed through into the kitchen, where servants were working silently with sad faces. The hostess of the inn appeared to be in deep sorrow. The missionary spoke kindly to her, expressing his sympathy, and asking the cause of her grief. The poor woman thanked him for his kindness, and with tears streaming down her face, told him that her precious son had been buried that day.

"I have a book here," said the colporteur, "that I never open without finding something to comfort or help me. Listen to these words!" And opening his New Testament, he began to read here and there words of comfort. At the sight of the Book, the woman looked astonished; but the colporteur took no notice and went on reading.

"Wait a moment!" said the landlady eagerly, and she rushed out of the room, returning with her dead son's New Testament. "It's what he left me," she said, sobbing, "his most precious possession, and it's the same Book as yours."

The colporteur took up the Book, wondering why it was so strangely mutilated. On the inside cover was this inscription in large letters: "Received at Toulon on such a date, 1855. Despised at first, and badly used, but afterwards read, believed, and made the instrument of my salvation. J.L., Fusilier of the 4th Company of such and such a Regiment."

The whole scene rushed back to the mind of the missionary; that day in Toulon among the soldiers, when his hopes had been raised, only to be dashed immediately. He remembered the mocking words of the unbeliever who had deceived him. And now, as he listened to the mother's story, his heart was filled with praise and thanksgiving. How sad and depressed he had been, thinking all his work was a failure! Yet all the time, the Spirit of God was intending to make use of his warning. I expect he "thanked God, and took courage!"

Damaris

Adapted from The Book on the Window-sill and other Stories

A MESSAGE BY A STORK

Many years ago, a little boy named Conrad lived with his widowed mother in a village in Norway. One summer a stork came and built its nest on their housetop. They became very fond of this stork and it was like a pet. When Conrad whistled, the stork would come and eat from his hand. Year after year it returned to their home in the spring, and they would eagerly watch for it.

When Conrad grew up, he became a sailor and went to distant lands. One day, his ship was attacked by pirates near the coast of Africa. Conrad and the other sailors were put in chains and sold as slaves.

Months went by, and Conrad's mother did not hear from him. She watched, waited, and prayed for some word about her missing son. Finally, she gave up all hope of seeing him alive again. She supposed he must have been lost at sea. Her life held little interest, but for Conrad's sake she welcomed and fed the stork when it returned in the spring.

For Conrad, too, his life seemed without hope. He had to work hard as a slave under cruel conditions. There was no one to pity him or show kindness. He had no hope of being rescued.

But sometimes God opens a way when all hope is gone. Conrad was to prove this for himself. One day when he was working by himself in a lonely place, a stork came flying close by and circled around him. It brought back memories of home, his mother, and the stork that they fed.

He whistled, as he used to do at home when calling the stork. To his great surprise and joy, the stork came at once, as if to be fed. He lifted up his heart to God and tearfully gave thanks for the arrival of his pet. He fed the stork every day from his own small food rations.

Conrad felt sad when the time came for the bird to fly north again. He wondered if it would fly to his mother's home. Was the nest still there? Was his mother there to feed it? Suddenly a thought came to him. He managed to write a note on a scrap of paper, telling where he was and that he was being held as a

slave. He tied the paper firmly to the bird's leg and committed his message to God's care.

Spring came again to Norway, and the stork returned to its old nest at the home of the widow. She was happy to see it, for it always reminded her of her lost son. As she fed the stork, she saw the piece of paper tied to its leg and carefully removed it. When she found it was a message from her son, she was filled with joy and wonder!

News soon spread that Conrad was alive. The people said, "We must send and redeem Conrad." They asked the king for help, and a ship was sent to rescue Conrad from his slavery. He was returned to his mother and home with great rejoicing.

How much greater love was shown when the beloved Son of God was sent to redeem His people from the slavery of sin!

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1909

SPIRITUAL BEGINNINGS (1)

The following is taken from the obituary of Gladys May Gurney, a member of the church at Zoar, Ashwell. She passed away on April 23rd, 1988, aged 85.

Gladys Gurney was, throughout her life, manifest as one of "the King's daughters." She was brought up by her godly parents at Ebenezer Chapel, Luton, and in her early days the Lord began to work within her in some very precious ways. He gave her a special love to His people, His house and His Word. *"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"* (1 John 3.14). She was blessed with a real love to God's dear people. She loved the things they loved, and she loved to go to the prayer meetings to hear the godly saints pray. She used to say, "They ask for things I couldn't put into words."

In a time of trouble, the Lord spoke to her: *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me"* (John 14.1). That was a great help to her.

In the goodness of God, the Lord brought her and her husband together. Then in 1931 the Lord gave her dear

husband a job in Ashwell. First, she could not bear the thought of moving. She said, "To come from Luton, where there was a good congregation, and to come here, where there were only one or two who gathered in the vestry, was not my choice." But God made her willing, and the Lord used her and her husband. They laboured in prayer and in a practical way.

While she was at Luton, she had longed to be able to be baptized. She saw her husband venture. She was blessed, too, in Ashwell chapel. She said, "*This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven*" (Genesis 28.17).

Then one day she was in such concern over eternity. She prayed that the Lord would speak to her, and as the passage about Zacchaeus was read, the Lord spoke those words to her: "*This day is salvation come to this house*" (Luke 19.9). She was wonderfully confirmed in this in many ways, especially on hearing Mr. Kemp. He went right into her case, as if he knew all that she was exercised about.

She was baptized by Mr. Haddow on January 25th, 1936, and his text was Psalm 116. 12-14. She said that she feared the water would be cold, as it was a bitter cold night, but she did not feel it at all. The approbation came from heaven. The 735th hymn was made so precious to her, especially the last verse:

Nearer, nearer to Him clinging,
Let my helpless soul be found,
All my sorrows to Him bringing,
May His grace in me abound;
Happy moments!
With new covenant blessings crowned.

When she ventured to the Lord's table, she was so concerned because she felt to be such a needy sinner. Mr. Eayrs preached that day from a word that was sweetly applied to her: "*Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without?*" (Genesis 4.31). She felt so blessed. She said, "I was so blessed for a month, that I seemed to live above this world." But she said, "I still had to look after the

family and do the duties about the house, but the Lord in my heart lifted me above everything.”

Excerpted and slightly adapted from Gospel Standard 1990

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS (5)

The Shepherd and the Sheep (2)

“And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice” (John 10.6).

Every one of the Lord’s people has to live in this world. They are to be in the world, but not of the world (John 17.14-16). While they must live here in the world, the Lord’s people are given grace to live as *“strangers and pilgrims on the earth”* (Hebrews 11.13). They are journeying to *“a better country, that is, an heavenly”* (Hebrews 11.16). They desire to walk uprightly, in the fear of God.

This parable so clearly sets forth how the Lord leads His people as a shepherd leads his flock. He will lead them only where He sees it is best for them to go. If we have the tender fear of God in our hearts, we will desire to be led of the Lord and to go only where He leads us. This will concern every aspect of our lives. The Lord teaches His people to look to Him and wait upon Him alone in all the things that concern them. *“My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him”* (Psalm 62.5).

No doubt many of you children and young people are thinking about what career to pursue after you have finished school. *“Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”* (Acts 9.6) is a very good prayer. If you are praying that prayer in your heart, it suggests that the Lord has already gone before you and put into your heart a desire to know and be submissive to His will. The Lord may have given you a certain gift or ability, which is evident to yourself and others around you. This may cause your heart to incline towards a career where that gift may best

be used. Has not the Lord gone before you in giving you that gift or ability and in leading you in this way?

There are two things in particular that the Lord's people desire to do if they are being led of the Lord. First, they desire to watch the Lord's hand. *"Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God"* (Psalm 123.2). This is the eye of faith. It will watch the hand of the Lord to see if He opens a way or closes a way. In watching the Lord's hand, there is the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty in all things. If you meet with a disappointment and see a door clearly being shut, may you be helped to submit to the will of God and not try to force that door open. But also, may you see the Lord's hand in opening another door for you, perhaps in answer to prayer.

Second, they desire to hear His voice. Those blessed with living faith will desire to hear the voice of the Lord speaking to them. The Lord has given His Word, the Holy Bible, through which He speaks to His people. It is a great blessing to be given a desire to hear the Lord speaking through His Word. *"Speak, LORD; for Thy servant beareth"* (1 Samuel 3.9). One of the great favours with which the Lord blesses His people, is in discerning His voice through His Word. Sheep always recognise the voice of their own shepherd. If we feel that we do not yet discern the Lord's voice, may we be helped to pray for that right discernment and understanding. However, it is not with the natural hearing through our ears that the Lord's voice is heard; it is the hearing of faith, receiving His Word in our hearts. When the Holy Spirit applies the Word of God with power, there will be a gracious effect in the heart, wherein the Lord's voice will be heard.

We read concerning the church at Thessalonica: *"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received*

the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (1 Thessalonians 1.5,6). But we also read: "*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*" (1 Thessalonians 2.13). When the Holy Spirit applies the Word of God into the hearts of His people, they are brought to believe and follow the Lord, putting their trust in Him to lead them forth by the right way, in grace as well as in providence. What power attended the voice of the Lord Jesus when He first called His disciples! "*And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him*" (Matthew 9.9).

Sheep have an implicit trust in their own shepherd. The Lord will have His people trust in Him. Where it is felt the Lord is leading, directing, and going before us, may we be helped to follow Him.

Jesus, Shepherd of the sheep,
Thou Thy flock dost feed and keep;
Sweetest pasture dost prepare,
Watchest them with tender care.

Thee the sheep profess and own,
Thee they love, and Thee alone;
Thee they follow in the way
Strangers will they not obey.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about BROTHERS AND SISTERS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 98 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What were the names of the first two brothers mentioned in the Bible? (Genesis 4.1,2)
2. Which two brothers "struggled together" before they were born? (Genesis 25.22-26)
3. Who was hated by his brothers because of two dreams which he had had? (Genesis 37.5-11)
4. Jesus often visited two sisters. What were their names and of which of them was it said that she had "chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her"? (Luke 10.38-42)
5. Among the disciples of Jesus were two sets of brothers. Who were they? (Matthew 10.2)
6. What is "harder to be won than a strong city"? (Proverbs 18)
7. Who did Jesus say "is My brother, and My sister ..."? (Mark 3)
8. What was the solemn difference between the two brothers in question 2? (Malachi 1)
9. Jesus spoke a parable about two brothers. Why was the elder brother angry? (Luke 15)
10. The two sisters mentioned in question 4 had a brother. Where do we read that Jesus loved them all?

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Jesus had "gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner."
2. "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."
3. "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
4. "Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?"
5. "He saved others; Himself He cannot save."
6. Elias and Eliseus (Elijah and Elisha). (Luke 4.25-27)
7. "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16.15)
8. Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day. (Luke 13.14)
9. "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (Mark 7.6)
10. Jesus had said He was the Christ, the Son of God and equal with the Father.

GOD'S LOVING CARE

Who taught the little birds to sing
Their songs so glad and free?
Who taught them how to build their nests
Away up in the tree?
Who taught the busy little bees
To gather honey sweet,
And showed them how to store it up,
For boys and girls to eat?

Who made the golden buttercups,
And taught them how to grow?
Who kept them through the winter time
Down underneath the snow?
Who made the pretty daisies white?
And gave them hearts of gold?
Who told them in the summer time
Their petals to unfold?

Who made the sun so warm and bright
To shine through all the day?
Who makes it sink to rest at night,
And rise up in the day?
Who made the shining stars so bright,
And placed them in the sky?
Who keeps them twinkling all the night
Above our heads so high?

'Tis God, the heavenly Father good,
Who made and cares for all,
For birds, and bees, and shining stars;
He knows if one should fall.
And if He cares for little things,
And tells them what to do,
He surely loves His children more,
And watches o'er them too.

Young People's Hymnal 82

The Friendly Companion



Seed Drilling in North Lincolnshire

“Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him?” (Job 40.9)

June 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Do you know how the tenth commandment begins? The first four words are: *"Thou shalt not covet."* Then it lists certain things we are not to covet, such as our neighbour's house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, or ass. It concludes with an all-encompassing word: *"nor any thing that is thy neighbour's"* (Exodus 20.17).

Coveting is the response of our carnal hearts to things which our eyes have seen. It is to desire something we do not have with great eagerness and perhaps greed. We may be envious of one who possesses something that we wish to have. I remember hearing a man say that he coveted a certain tool that he saw advertised. He said, "I must have one of those," although, prior to seeing the advertisement, he did not even know that such a tool existed.

Perhaps you have a friend who owns something that has stirred up such powerful desires in your heart. Lust is a very close companion to covetousness. Paul wrote to the Romans: *"I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet"* (Romans 7.7). When Eve was tempted to look at the fruit of the tree which God had commanded them not to eat, she coveted it. She was soon drawn into the temptation by her lust.

James tells us in his Epistle that lust bringeth forth sin, and sin bringeth forth death (James 1.15). Achan had to confess his sin before all Israel: *"When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold ... then I coveted them, and took them"* (Joshua 7.21). He saw, he lusted, he took (the sin), which brought forth death, when all Israel stoned him.

David coveted the wife of Uriah when he lusted in his heart after her. He was not put to death as Achan was, for we are told: *"The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die."* However, David was also told that *"the sword shall never depart from thine house"* (2 Samuel 12.10,13). Thus, death was in his house for the rest of his days. In Psalm 119 verse 36,

David prayed: *"Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness."*

Although the word "covet" usually refers to a sinful act, yet there is also a good application. When Paul wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he told them to *"covet earnestly the best gifts"* (1 Corinthians 12.31). These gifts are the fruits of the Holy Ghost. Such gifts glorify God and benefit the church of God. Repentance is one of those gifts to covet earnestly. So, also, is the forgiveness of sin. A real spirit of prayer is a very good gift to covet. David prayed that his eyes might be opened to see wondrous things in God's Word. That is a good gift to covet.

How important is the word "earnestly"! Balaam coveted a good thing when he said: *"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"* (Numbers 23.10). However, in coveting this gift, Balaam lacked "earnestness." He wanted to die the death of the righteous, but he was not willing to live a righteous life. He did not want to live among the children of Israel, and he even gave advice that would cause them to sin against God.

May God help each of us to be very earnest in coveting the gifts He has for needy souls.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Have you ever thought of how many different places there are where people work? People work in shops, offices, factories, schools, stores, and many other places. They may work together with many others to achieve a desired result. The nature of their work may require them to be in a set place with designated hours.

Others, such as tradesmen or landscapers, may work at various sites, but they usually work during certain hours. Some people work out of vehicles, such as delivery men,

policemen, and mail carriers, but they also have a certain time period in which to do their work.

Perhaps you have not given it much thought, but your mother works right in your home. What important work she has in caring for you and teaching you! Washing clothes and preparing meals may not seem to be such glamorous work as other jobs which pay a high wage, but it is very necessary work. A mother is ready to attend to the needs of those who are in the home, both day and night.

The front cover photo this month shows a farmer at work in the field, sowing his crops. Later in the year, he hopes to work in the same field again to reap the grain. A farmer often works alone and is not so regulated by a clock. While he may not have to work with others, he has to work under many different weather conditions, sometimes very adverse ones.

The work of God is much greater than the work of man. He works in the hearts of sinners. It is called the work of grace. There never was a more adverse condition for Him to work in than the sinful heart of man. His work in the heart cannot be seen by the eye of man. He is not dependent upon the help of others, although He may use others. He works conviction of sin, so that a soul becomes guilty before Him. He works repentance, so that a soul begins to confess his sins. He works to create a hunger and thirst after righteousness, so that a soul longs for Him. He works faith, so that a soul believes upon Him. He works hope, so that a soul waits for Him. He works love, so that a soul follows after Him. We are told that He *"worketh all things after the counsel of His own will"* (Ephesians 1.11).

TEN STRINGS (Psalm 33.2)

A godly old man in his public prayer would sometimes say, "Lord, have I got it right? – ten strings – two eyes, two ears, two hands, two feet, a tongue, and a heart, to show forth the loving kindness of God."

Friendly Companion 1994

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**ASA TURNS FROM GOD**

Asa was king of Judah for forty-one years. Most of that time he served the Lord. Many people went out of Israel to live in Judah *“when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.”*

Baasha, the king of Israel, went to war against Judah. He built a place called Ramah to keep people from going to Asa.

In the past, Asa had asked God for help in fighting against enemies, but now he turned to the king of Syria. He sent gold and silver to the king of Syria, asking him to send armies against the cities of Israel. Baasha had to stop building Ramah to go and fight Syria.

A prophet came to reprove Asa for relying on the king of Syria and not on the Lord. He said that Asa had done foolishly, and from now on, he would have wars. Asa became angry with the prophet and put him in prison.

At the end of his life, Asa suffered from a great disease in his feet. Yet, he did not ask for help from the Lord but only turned to physicians.

QUESTIONS:

1. For how many years was Asa king of Judah?
 2. To whom did Asa send gold and silver? (4 words)
 3. What did Asa do to the prophet who reproved him?
- Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 122 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.*

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. Asa.
2. A very great army.
3. A prophet of the Lord.

*“For the eyes
of the Lord
run to and fro
throughout
the whole
earth . . .”*

2 Chronicles 16.9

BIBLE LESSONS**PAUL SPEAKS FROM THE STAIRS OF THE CASTLE**

The chief captain, whose name was Lysias, commanded Paul to be bound with chains, thinking he must be a dangerous man. He asked who he was and what he had done. With loud voices, the Jews shouted all at once, some saying one thing and some another. The chief captain could not tell what they were saying, so he commanded his soldiers to bring Paul into the castle.

Violently, the angry mob pressed upon them, trying to seize Paul away, so that the soldiers had to take Paul up on their shoulders and carry him. As they did so, the Jews cried out: *"Away with him."*

Inside the castle, Paul asked to have a word with the chief captain. He spoke in the Greek language, which so surprised the chief captain, that he asked Paul: *"Canst thou speak Greek?"* He thought Paul was an Egyptian, one who a short time before had led four thousand men who were murderers into the wilderness to rebel against the Roman rulers. Paul answered: *"I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, ... and I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people."*

The chief captain granted Paul his request. From the stairs, Paul waved his hand, signalling that he wished to speak. Soon the multitude became quiet, and Paul spoke in the Hebrew tongue: *"Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence."* When they heard him speak in the Hebrew tongue, a great hush came over the multitude. It was the language all the Jewish people knew. With words of great endearment and respect, he began by telling them of his nationality, a Jew; his place of birth, Tarsus in Cilicia; yet brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, who was a most esteemed teacher of the law. Paul told them he had been taught after the most perfect manner of the law, and he was as zealous toward God as each of them were at the present time.

By now, the whole multitude was attentive to what Paul was saying. He told them that he had been so enraged against those who followed or professed the name of Jesus, that he persecuted them, putting some to death and others in prison. He added that the high priest and all the council of their elders could give witness of the letters they had given him to go to Damascus and bring back all he found in the way of Jesus to Jerusalem to be punished.

With great humility, Paul told them that on his journey to Damascus, a bright light shone round about him, causing him to fall to the ground. He said that a voice had called unto him: *"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"* He had answered: *"Who art Thou, Lord?"* Then the Lord answered him again: *"I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."*

He told them that he had to be led by the hand into the city because the light had blinded him. Paul was careful to tell everything God had done, without adding to it or taking from it. He told how Ananias, who was respected by all the Jews, was sent by God to him, saying: *"Brother Saul, receive thy sight."* The same hour his sight had been restored and he looked up upon him.

Ananias had also said: *"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest ... be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."* He had commanded Saul to be baptized to show that his sins had been forgiven, and to call upon the name of the Lord.

Lastly, Paul told them how he had returned to Jerusalem and went into the temple to pray. As he prayed, the Lord appeared unto him again, saying: *"Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me ... Depart: for I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles."*

You can read about this in Acts chapter 21 verses 33 to 40 and Acts chapter 22.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did the chief captain command his soldiers to do to Paul?
2. What did the Jews cry out against Paul? (3 words)
3. With what four words did Paul begin his address?
4. What was Paul doing when the Lord appeared unto him again?
5. To whom did God say He would send Paul?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 122 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. James the son of Alphaeus.
2. For the conscience of the weaker Jews.
3. That I might gain the weak.
4. Trophimus (or a Greek or Gentile)
5. Beat him.

NOT YET

“Not yet,” said a little boy, as he was busy playing with his ball. “When I grow older, I will think about my soul.” The little boy grew to be a young man.

“Not yet,” said the young man. “I am now about to enter into trade. When I see my business prosper, then I will have more time than now.” Business did prosper.

“Not yet,” said the man of business. “My children must have my care. When they are settled in life, I shall be better able to attend to my soul.” He lived to be a grey-headed old man.

“Not yet,” still he cried. “I shall soon retire from trade, and then I shall have nothing else to do but read and pray.”

And so he died. He lived without God and died without hope. My reader, how is it with you?

Cheering Words 2009-2010

THE SAME TEXT

Mr. Herbert Dawson was the longest serving pastor of Union Chapel, Bethersden, in the county of Kent, England. He served as pastor from 1915 until his death in 1969. Herbert was a very able minister of the gospel and, as well as his large flock at Union Chapel, many others of the Lord's people loved his ministry.

He had two phrases which are still remembered by many of those who heard him preach. One was by way of emphasis, "Remember that," sometimes accompanied by a thump on the pulpit! Another was, "I am not fitting caps on," by which he meant that though he might be making a pointed remark, he was not aiming it at anyone personally. Nevertheless, he did expect you to wear the cap if it fitted!

He very rarely took the same text twice on the Lord's day. He used to say to fellow ministers asking for advice, "While the well, in a particular verse, is still pumping clear water, then don't be afraid to continue to preach from it," although that was rarely his own practice.

However, in the autumn of 1937, it was reported by members of the congregation that he preached on five consecutive Lord's days from Colossians 2 verse 6: "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.*" Knowing that he was a minister graciously endued with the Holy Spirit's unction, we feel sure that fresh matter was given on each occasion and that there was no "vain repetition."

At the close of the final sermon on this sacred and vital subject, he concluded with the following remark: "As I feel this word has been preached so many times for a particular case amongst us, I do feel that this person should by now have received the message that God intends." In other words, he meant, "If the cap does fit, then it should be worn!"

After the sermon, a lady went to Mr. Dawson and said that the word was for her. She had been deeply exercised about believer's baptism and had asked the Lord for her pastor to preach from that text. She was very tried, as she knew that her

sinful walk before being called by grace was known by the members, and she feared they would not receive her. She kept begging the Lord to constrain her pastor to preach again, and yet again, from the same text, until the close of the fifth Lord's day.

She was unanimously received into the church and remained an honourable member for many years, but she always remembered Colossians 2 verse 6.

G.D. Buss

THE INFIDEL'S SERMON

The evangelist, George Whitefield, travelled widely, preaching the gospel in England, Scotland, and America. There were many who opposed him, including an infidel or unbeliever named Thorpe. He and three of his friends made a wager or bet, and the prize would go to the one who could best imitate and ridicule Whitefield's preaching.

Each man was to open a Bible at random and preach a scoffing sermon from the first verse that presented itself. Thorpe's three competitors each had a turn. They spoke in a mocking, irreverent manner, to the great amusement of those who assembled to listen.

Then, stepping upon the table, Thorpe exclaimed with a laugh, "I shall beat you all." They gave him a Bible; and, by God's unsearchable providence, his eye fell first upon this very verse: "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*"

As he read the words, the sword of the Spirit pierced his soul. The very power of God gripped his mind and heart, and he preached as one who hardly realised what he was saying. Intending to mock, he could only fear and tremble. When Thorpe descended from the table, there was a profound silence among the company. Not one word was said about the wager.

Thorpe instantly left his friends and went alone to his room. After a time of deep distress, he came into the full light of the

gospel, and believed in Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He became a preacher of the grace of God that had met him, a sinner in his sins and on the way to ruin. God had revealed to him a Saviour whose precious blood could cleanse him and make him fit for the glory of God.

Reader, remember his text; it is true for you, as for all of us: *"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish"* (Luke 13.4).

Adapted from Cheering Words 1973

A SHEPHERD BOY LEARNS GREEK

John Brown, the Scottish minister who wrote the valuable commentary on the Bible, began life as a shepherd boy. While tending his cattle up on the bleak hills, he thought he would like to learn the languages of Latin and Greek, feeling they would be useful to him later on. He managed to obtain a few old books and began to learn. As time went on, he made good progress in his studies.

He then desired to have a Greek New Testament. He saved what little he could spare out of his wages, until he thought he had enough to buy one. One day the poor shepherd lad walked to Edinburgh, found a bookseller's shop, and went in. He asked for a Greek New Testament.

"What are you going to do with a Greek Testament?" asked the bookseller.

"Read it," was the short, prompt reply.

"Read it!" exclaimed the bookseller with a smile. "If ye'll read it, ye may have it for nothing."

Taking the treasure into his hands, he quietly read off a few verses, and gave the translation. The bookseller was amazed, and John Brown was allowed to carry off his prize in triumph.

By following this pathway of industrious study, Mr. Brown attained a good degree of useful knowledge. The grace of God sanctified his learning, so that he became a useful man; his writings are prized to this day. Although his efforts cost him much labour, the work that resulted has endured.

And, to look even higher, the grace of God in the heart is of an enduring nature. It cannot die. It is a living principle and must endure; for what God does is done for ever.

May it be your happy lot, dear little ones, and mine, to be found at last in Christ, and to hear His glorious voice welcome us to His home in heaven, to dwell with Him for ever.

Adapted from "Precious Things" by W. Wileman

THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY

Perhaps some of our young friends may wonder how one becomes a minister of the gospel. In his autobiography, John Kershaw mentions four very important parts of a call to the ministry. He experienced each of them in his own call to the ministry.

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 (Galatians 2.8).

Second, they are fitted and qualified for the work by the great Head of the church, who has ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and given (ministerial) gifts unto men (Ephesians 4.8).

Third, 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 (Matthew 28.20; Mark 16.20).

Fourth, 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 (1 Thessalonians 1.5).

In speaking of his own call to the ministry, and the exercises and conflicts he felt, John Kershaw mentions a gracious deliverance from a time of temptation and darkness of soul. He then continues:

From this time, the Spirit of the Lord God came upon me to preach the gospel, as a word of comfort to mourners in Zion. The grace of God that was given me constrained me earnestly to desire to be instrumental in His hands in preaching deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, as I had been for many months. I had such a love to the Lord, His precious truth and His in-gathering of God's elect that are scattered abroad upon the dark mountains of sin and iniquity, and for the peace and prosperity of Zion, that I was constrained to give myself up to Him with a firm and happy persuasion of His ability and willingness to keep what I had committed to His hands against that day ...

It was deeply impressed upon my mind that the many trials and difficulties I had been wading through, both in providence and grace, especially the soul troubles, and the comforts I had felt, were designed by the Lord, not only for my good but for the benefit of His church and people.

From this time, I felt more life, light and power in prayer and reading the Word of God than ever I had felt before. The Bible became my constant companion. My delight was in the law of the Lord, and in His Word did I meditate day and night. I had such a thirst for the Word of God that I took it with me to my looms and placed it in such a position that I could read as I worked. Thus, I was reading and praying over the Word of God from morning till evening ...

Truly I saw and felt myself to be less than the least of all saints, an obscure, illiterate, despised youth, in poverty and distress, and with such low, humble views and feelings of myself that I would have given up the thoughts of preaching, but the effectual working of the Spirit and power of God in my soul was such that I could not give it up ...

It appeared to me impossible that such a poor, polluted wretch as I, could ever be made useful as a minister of the gospel. So powerful was the conflict between the spirit of prayer that was poured down into my soul and the powerful temptations of Satan, the workings of unbelief and carnal

reasonings, that I felt, at times, as if my heart would break. My soul was so engaged with these things that I longed to be alone as much as possible. I was no company for anyone ... I wandered about in the woods, fields and byways, pondering matters over in my heart, weighing my motives, praying and beseeching the Lord to make known His mind and will unto me in this important affair ... The great question was, "Has the Lord designed me for the work of the ministry?"

The things that were revealed and shown to me at this time have been the groundwork of my ministry in all subsequent years; and God forbid that ever I should preach any other gospel but that which I received from Jesus Christ, by the powerful teaching and leading of the Holy Spirit. ...

John Kershaw began to watch and wait upon the Lord, to see if He would put an exercise into the hearts of others towards him concerning the ministry.

The following words lay with great weight upon my mind: "And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24.49). I told the Lord that He knew I did not want to go, if it were not His will, and that I would not without His sanction and approbation. With Moses, I said, "*If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence*" (Exodus 33.15). I was like a little child, begging of the Lord to do with me, for me, and by me as He saw would be most for His honour and glory, and the good of His church and people.

I was daily on my watchtower, watching the hand of the Lord, as a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God, to see whether He would put it into the hearts of my brethren to encourage me, that I might not, like Uzzah, put my hand to the ark unlawfully, which I was afraid of, had I spoken to any of them in such wise as to move them to it.

One day John Kershaw was sent on an errand to the home of one of the deacons. After some general conversation, he was asked whether he had thoughts about the ministry. The

deacon told him that the pastor and church members believed that the Lord designed him for the work of the ministry.

I enquired how it was that our minister and the church had these thoughts concerning me, seeing that I had not said a word on the subject to any person living.

“We have been watching,” he said, “the dealings of the Lord with you, both in providence and grace; and as my brother deacon said at the meeting, ‘When John opens his mouth amongst us, whether in prayer or conversation, there is a deep solemnity, a sweet savour; and life, light and power attend what he says; so that I feel satisfied the Lord designs him for the work of the ministry.’ Now, these have long been likewise my views and feeling concerning you.”

Whilst he was telling me these things, I was astonished to see the arm of the Lord so clearly revealed as a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God. Under these circumstances, I could not refrain from opening unto him my whole heart and soul ... I began where God began with me, touching the work of the ministry.

His pastor, John Warburton, was made acquainted with his exercises, and in due time he was asked to preach at a midweek service.

When the service was over, all appeared very serious and quiet. Not a word was said about the sermon in my hearing. It was agreed that I should preach again that next fortnight. Our minister previously told me that the principal evidence of a man being sent to preach the gospel was the power that attended the word spoken to the hearts of the people; but as nothing was said, I was left in the dark upon this point.

John Kershaw preached at a second midweek service and also on a third occasion when the pastor was away and the supply minister was unable to come because of a snowstorm.

When our minister returned ... I was called upon to preach what is called a trial sermon. Such sermons are mostly preached before the members only; but instead of this, I was

requested to take the evening service, and preach to the church and congregation.

After service, the church was called together, and I was requested to retire whilst they deliberated. When I was called back, our minister addressed me in a very solemn and affectionate manner, telling me that it was the unanimous opinion of the church that the Lord had called me to the work of the ministry, and I had the best wishes and prayers of the people that the Lord's presence might be with me, and a blessing rest on my labours. Also, that I was at liberty to go and preach the gospel whenever the Lord in His providence might open a door for me, having His promise to rest upon: *"And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matthew 28.20).

It was soon known among the churches ... that a young man had begun to preach at Rochdale, and doors began to be opened for me without any influence of mine.

John Kershaw (1792-1870)

MY FIRST SERMON

My first preaching service was a time of deep solemnity to me, and one incident remains vividly impressed upon my memory.

A young man named Frank had been among my hearers. He was about twenty-three years of age, strong, and well-built. Naturally speaking, he might have expected to live a long life; but this was his last service! Never again would he enter that place of worship.

On the following Thursday, while working in the coal mine, he met with an accident. It was so serious that the miners left their work and hurried to help him. With great care, those rough men lifted the wounded worker from under the tram where he had fallen and brought him to his home. I ran for a doctor as soon as we got to the top of the pit, and he came at once. With deep anxiety we waited for his report: "He may live

two hours! The poor fellow has broken his backbone. He cannot live but a short time."

On hearing this terrible news, I felt a burning sensation as though I were on fire. The perspiration streamed from me. The thought flashed through my mind: "You were the last preacher Frank heard. Were you faithful in delivering the gospel message? Did you speak plainly of God's remedy for sin? Remember, you will have to give an account at the bar of God for the service of last Sunday evening."

I was so anxious to be of service that I went in my miner's clothes to see Frank. The house was full of miners and other friends, and a crowd of sympathisers waited in the street. They all believed they were at the deathbed of the young man whom they loved. Knowing that wondrous Lamp that can shine brightest by a sick bed, I borrowed a Bible. Making my way to his side, I asked Frank if he would like me to read the Word of God and offer prayer, and he replied that he would.

I read the passages which have comforted so many departing souls from the 14th chapter of John, omitting the first verse. As I read those soothing words of Scripture, the silence of the room was broken only by the sobs of his friends. The feeling was intense, and after engaging in prayer, I left, promising to return a short time later.

To the wonder of many, God preserved Frank's life a little longer that he might learn truths which had been ignored in days of health and strength. I called upon him day after day, and my visits were not in vain.

Light came to the dying miner at the end of the first week, and he experienced the joy of sins forgiven. Though in a sad state physically, he lived for six weeks and then passed from the bed of pain to that country where the inhabitants shall never say, "I am sick."

From this incident, it became my desire to preach the gospel so the hearers might see plainly the way of salvation, and if in the Lord's sovereign will, might know His power to save.

Adapted from The Gospel Echo 1914 by W.H. John

PARABLES OF JESUS (6)**The Shepherd and the Sheep (3)**

“And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10.5)

Much harm and grief has come to the church of God down through the ages because of false teachers, those who preach another gospel. By nature, all men have very proud hearts and want others to look up to them and respect them. They may take different ways to achieve this, but they constantly seek a position of authority or try to be above others in one way or another. Very solemnly, there are some who take it upon themselves to be preachers and Bible teachers. The Apostle Peter warned of these: *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction”* (2 Peter 2.1)

Jeremiah was a prophet sent of God. *“Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations”* (Jeremiah 1.4,5). However, Jeremiah had to suffer much from the false prophets who constantly rejected what he said and prophesied. *“Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in My name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart”* (Jeremiah 14.13,14). Although Jeremiah suffered much, yet everything he prophesied came to pass, and the Lord always upheld him.

What wonderful grace was given to Elijah when he stood alone on Mount Carmel against four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, who were leading the children of Israel away

from the true God! We must always remember in reading this remarkable account that everything Elijah did was according to the word of the Lord. *"And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word"* (1 Kings 18.36). Elijah was seeking the honour and glory of God in bringing the people back to the one, true, living God.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus Himself warned against false prophets: *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits"* (Matthew 7.15,16). The Lord Jesus could see right through the sheep's clothing to the wolf inside. He also saw and discerned the fruits that they brought forth; fruits of self-righteousness, conceit, pride, ambition and the like. Where the Lord gives grace, His people will also be brought to discern these false prophets or strangers that are in our text.

In today's society, much is judged by the outward appearance and the approval of man. How easily we may be deceived with something that looks or sounds good. May the Lord grant much grace to discern that which is of God and that which is not. The false teachers, whom the Lord here calls "strangers," are strangers to the ways of God, strangers to the truth as it is in Jesus, and strangers to the way of life. They have never been truly taught of God themselves. But the voice of these "strangers" is often heard, for they want others to hear and follow them. Like the scribes in the days of the Lord Jesus, they may have an intellectual understanding of the Word of God and be very knowledgeable about certain doctrines. They often have a clever way with words, possess a natural gift of speaking, and are very persuasive in their arguments. Yet, where grace is given in the heart of a child of God, he is unable to profit and flees from such teaching.

We need to be very careful and prayerful in listening to those who instruct us in the things of God. One who is truly sent of God always desires that sinners may be led to the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, to the honour and glory of God. The minister, himself, will be greatly burdened lest he be found as one of these strangers, whose ministry is not in the power of the Holy Spirit.

May we each be found amongst the true sheep of Christ's fold! We will be made to feel much of our weakness and dependence, being surrounded by many dangers and troubled by many strangers; yet it is a great mercy to know that we have a Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep and leads them safely on in the way.

There is a little, lonely fold,
A flock the Shepherd keeps,
Through summer's heat and winter's cold,
With eye that never sleeps.

By evil beast, or burning sky,
Or damp of midnight air,
Not one in all that flock shall die,
Beneath that Shepherd's care.

For, if, unheeding or beguiled,
In danger's path they roam,
His pity follows through the wild,
And guards them safely home.

O am I one in this blest fold,
Or do I wander wide?
The Lord my heart can now behold,
I cannot from Him hide.

A. T. Pickett

He that has Christ cannot be poor, and he that lacks Him cannot be rich.

Cheering Words 1977

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about BEGINNINGS and ENDINGS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 122 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did God do "in the beginning"? (Genesis 1.1)
2. On which day did God rest, having finished the work in question 1? (Genesis 2.1-3)
3. Jesus said, "I am — and —, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." What are the missing words? What do they mean? — you may have to look in a dictionary. (Revelation 22.13)
4. What can no man find out? (Ecclesiastes 3.11)
5. What did God create on "the first day"? (Genesis 1.3-5)
6. In John 6, Jesus four times spoke of "the last day," and each time He spoke of what He will do. What will happen then?
7. What God begins, He always finishes. Complete the text, "He which hath begun ..." (Philippians 1)
8. Two priests died under God's solemn judgement, concerning whom God had said, "When I begin, I will also make an end." Who were they? (1 Samuel 2-4)
9. To which person in Luke 23 did Jesus give a promise implying that his end would be better than his beginning had been?
10. Find three verses in Isaiah where God declares Himself to be the first and the last.

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. Cain and Abel.
2. Esau and Jacob.
3. Joseph.
4. Martha and Mary. Mary had "chosen that good part ..."
5. Peter and Andrew were brothers, John and James were brothers.
6. "A brother offended." (Proverbs 18.19)
7. "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." (Mark 3.35)
8. God hated Esau and loved Jacob. (Malachi 1.2-3)

9. The elder brother was angry because his younger brother had come, who had wasted his father's inheritance; and his father had killed the fatted calf, because he had received him safe and sound. (Luke 15.27)
10. John 11.5.

“LORD, HELP ME”

“Lord, help me!” is a prayer will do
For those who know not where to go;
Who feel they have no strength at all,
And turn them to the silent wall
With, “Help me, Lord, for I am poor;
Distress has brought me to Thy door;
And mercy, Lord, is all my plea –
Oh, may Thy mercy come to me!
Lord, help; I know not how to speak;
I cannot stand, I am so weak;
But on Thy arm of power I rest;
Lord, help me, then I shall be blest!

Help me to preach, help me to pray;
Help me with words I have to say;
Help me to sing Thy lovely praise;
Help me to walk in wisdom's ways;
Help me to stand if others fall;
Help me to trust Thee, Lord, for all;
Help me to seek sufficient grace;
Help me to view Thy smiling face;
Help me to live, help me to die;
Help me on Jesus to rely;
Help me to love His precious name;
Help me in death to praise the same.

W.C.

Cheering Words 1992

The Friendly Companion



“... for God is in the generation of the righteous.”
(Psalm 14.5)

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

There is one thing that we all experience many times in our lives, and that is falling down. How often you fell down as a toddler learning to walk! There was really no danger of being hurt, since you did not have far to fall. Perhaps when you were a little older, you fell off the chair you were sitting on and were bruised. When you started to ride a bicycle, there was the danger of falling down; because of the speed and the hard pavement, you may have suffered severe scrapes and cuts.

Have you ever noticed how careful older people are when walking on ice or snow? They are afraid of falling and breaking an arm or a leg. Old Eli, the priest of God in Samuel's time, was sitting on a bench when news came that the ark of God had been taken by the Philistines. He was so distressed that he fell backwards, broke his neck, and died.

King Ahaziah fell down through a lattice or window in his house, which brought on a serious disease. He sent messengers to inquire of the god of Ekron whether he would recover. Because he went to ask an idol god, and not the true God of Israel, the Lord sent a message by the prophet Elijah that he would not recover of the disease but would surely die.

Besides a fall that causes harm to the body, there is another type of fall that we are prone to. That is the dreadful fall into sin, which hurts us even more than a physical fall.

In the life of godly David, we often read of his falling into sin. He once prayed: "*Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe*" (Psalm 119.117). How sure his steps would be while God held him up! He knew there were slippery paths of sin all around him. In Psalm 94.18 he wrote: "*When I said, My foot slippeth; Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.*" David proved, and so will you and I, that without the Lord's mercy, our feet will slip into paths of sin. When he was on the rooftop, he saw a woman washing herself and lusted exceedingly for her. If he had literally fallen from the rooftop to the ground below, it would not have done him more harm than falling into such a great

sin. It would have been good if David had remembered his prayer on a former occasion: *"Hold up my goings in Thy paths, that my footsteps slip not"* (Psalm 17.5). May the Lord teach us the need for this prayer and help us to pray it often.

In Psalm 73, Asaph said that wicked or ungodly men prospered in the world. They seemed to have everything. They did not have troubles, as other men had. Their path seemed so pleasant and easy. Asaph became envious of them, until he went into the sanctuary of God. Then he saw the end of that path and confessed: *"Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment!"* (Psalm 73.18,19). Asaph also realised how close he had come to the same end, for he wrote of himself: *"But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh [almost] slipped."*

May the Lord teach you that the paths of the world and of your sinful heart are slippery places. May He set your feet *"upon a rock"* (Jesus Christ) and establish your goings (Psalm 40.2).

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

What are your thoughts when you look at the front cover? You may say that it is a picture of a grandfather with his grandson. Is that all, though? Are there any scriptural texts that come to your mind? Ecclesiastes 1 verse 4 tells us: *"One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever."* Thus, from Adam's day down to the present time, each generation comes and goes. In the picture, the grandfather belongs to the generation that will soon be gone, while the generation of his grandchild is springing up.

Another text that may come to mind is from Psalm 37 verse 25, written by David: *"I have been young, and now am old."* It

may even be hard for you to imagine your grandparents being young like yourself. While you are growing and learning and getting stronger, they are becoming more forgetful and seem to be getting smaller and weaker. What a contrast between the generations.

Then we think of the word David wrote in Psalm 48 verse 13 regarding the place where God's temple was to be: "*Mark ye well her bulwarks* [places of defence], *consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.*" Do your grandparents ever tell you of some special times in the house of God? May God help you to listen, to consider, and to remember what they say. May God grant that you will have something to tell the generation that follows after you.

Do you know of the only place in the Bible where the word "grandmother" is found? It is in the second Epistle that Paul wrote to Timothy. Paul wrote to Timothy of the faith that was given him, which was found first in his grandmother and then in his mother. Paul tells us how that faith in his grandmother and in his mother worked. From his childhood days they taught him the Scriptures, which were, and still are, able to make one wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Now if you look at the front cover again, can you see what book the grandfather is reading to his grandchild? It is the Bible! It was not a picture book or a story book, but the Word of God. I wonder how many of our younger friends will have a memory of your grandfather or grandmother reading God's Word to you?

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE WICKED KINGS OF ISRAEL**

While Asa was king in Judah, many kings ruled over Israel. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam who made the golden calves, reigned for two years. He did evil just like his father.

Baasha slew him and ruled in Israel for twenty-four years. He also *“did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam.”* Thus, the Lord said that the house of Baasha would be destroyed like the house of Jeroboam. Elah, his son, reigned for two years and was slain by his servant Zimri. The people did not want Zimri to be king, and he reigned only seven days.

Omri, captain of the host, was made king of Israel, and he reigned for twelve years. He bought the hill Samaria, built a city on it, and used it for his palace. *“Omri ... did worse than all that were before him.”*

After Omri died, his son Ahab became the next king. *“Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.”* He took Jezebel to be his wife and worshipped Baal.

QUESTIONS:

1. Baasha did evil and walked in the way of whom?
2. Which hill did Omri buy and use for his palace?
3. Whom did Ahab take to be his wife?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 146 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. Forty-one.
2. The king of Syria.
3. Put him in prison.

*“And he
did evil in
the sight
of the
LORD . . .”*

I Kings 15.34

BIBLE LESSONS**PAUL IN THE CASTLE**

As Paul spoke from the castle stairs, the Jews quietly listened with a measure of respect until he said the word "Gentiles." Their hatred of the Gentiles was so great that they then became enraged. Some of them took off their outer garments and cast them on the ground. Others threw handfuls of dust into the air.

Just moments before, the people were straining their ears to hear the apostle tell of his conversion, but now the scene had turned into that of an unruly mob. Loud voices shouted: *"Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live."* Oh what prejudice was in their hearts against the Gentiles! One word of the tongue "... *setteth on fire the course of nature*" (James 3.6). What a lesson for us!

The chief captain commanded his soldiers to bring Paul into the castle. Because Paul had spoken to the Jews in the Hebrew language, the chief captain and soldiers did not understand what he said to the people. The chief captain commanded Paul to be bound and scourged (whipped) until he learned what had riled the multitude into such a frenzy.

As they bound Paul with cruel instruments of torture, he said to the centurion who stood by to oversee: *"Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?"* When he heard Paul's question, the centurion was afraid. He quickly went to the chief captain and warned him that Paul was a Roman citizen. It was not lawful to bind a Roman without a hearing and certainly not lawful to scourge or torture him.

The chief captain rushed into the room where Paul was held and said: *"Tell me, art thou a Roman?"*

Paul answered, "Yea." The chief captain was amazed, and he wondered how Paul could be a Jew and also a Roman citizen.

The chief captain said to Paul: *"With a great sum obtained I this freedom."* Roman citizenship was a highly coveted thing in those days; thus, many people paid a great price to obtain it.

The Apostle Paul answered the chief captain: *"But I was free born."* The city of Tarsus was a free city in the Roman empire. Anyone born in such a city was counted a Roman citizen. Paul's Roman citizenship proved to be a great benefit for him.

The chief captain and the other soldiers quickly departed from Paul. They were afraid they would be charged with binding a Roman citizen who had not been tried before a Roman judge.

What were they to do with Paul? They still did not know the crime for which the Jews were accusing him. The chief captain commanded the high priests and their council to appear before him.

All those on the council glared with indignation at Paul as he was brought before them. Likewise, Paul earnestly looked at each of them and said: *"Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."* Ananias the high priest burned with anger against Paul and commanded those who stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

Paul's spirit was stirred as he answered Ananias: *"God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?"*

You can read about this in Acts chapter 22 verses 22 to 30 and Acts chapter 23 verses 1 to 3.

QUESTIONS:

1. What word riled the Jews into such a rage?
2. How did Paul say he obtained his Roman citizenship?
(5 words)
3. What was the name of the high priest?
4. What did he command those standing by Paul to do?
5. What did Paul say God would do to him?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 146 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. Bring him into the castle (or bind him with chains).
2. "Away with him."
3. Men, brethren, and fathers.
4. Praying.
5. To the Gentiles.

ANSWERED PRAYER

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Psalm 50.15).

While driving home from work recently, I received a phone call from a desperate customer. He told me that a live safety system that we had installed was no longer working. This is a system that protects the people within a building from a fire.

Not knowing how to solve the problem myself, I told him that I would contact the manufacturer to see what could be done. Sadly, the manufacturer could not provide help, as they had no one available to come out on short notice. Still, the customer insisted that someone must come out to the building the next morning as a matter of urgency. If that was not done, he threatened that the residents in the building would have to be evacuated, and our company would have to pay the accommodation bill for evacuating the residents.

Not knowing what else to do, I reluctantly agreed to come out in the morning. I prayed to the Lord that He would grant the wisdom and help needed, as I simply did not know how to get the system working again. However, with God all things are possible.

In the morning I went to the building and found several important people waiting for me, in anticipation of me getting the system to work again. How my heart went up to the Lord in prayer that He would help me, and very wonderfully He did! Despite having very limited knowledge, I was able to get the system working by the end of the day. The manufacturer said

that I was extremely “lucky” that the system was restored to working order. However, this certainly was not “luck.”

In this day and age when God is so often forgotten, it was wonderful to experience His help in a time of great need. He still hears and answers prayer. He is *“a very present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46.1).

Contributed

STOLEN SHEEP

There was once a poor woman who had lovingly cared for thirteen pet lambs. She gave each lamb a different name. They would follow her about everywhere and come at her call like children. One night, all thirteen lambs were lost. They just seemed to disappear, and she could find no clue as to where they might be. At last, her suspicion fell upon a wealthy neighbouring farmer. She immediately went and told him about her loss. He denied knowing anything about the missing sheep and stated that all his sheep were marked. But the woman was not satisfied with his answer and called for a policeman. Together they went to the farmer, who still said that he had no sheep in his possession but his own. After a little examination, some of the sheep seemed to have been marked more recently than the rest. The woman requested the farmer to gather the sheep together. As soon as they were all closed in the barn, she called out the name of each of her sheep. To the astonishment of the farmer and policeman, seven of the missing sheep came out of the flock directly to where the woman stood. As a result, the farmer was tried and found guilty. He had to pay a penalty, and the woman recovered her lost sheep.

The above incident strikingly illustrates the passage of Scripture: *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me”* (John 10.27). It is also a picture of what man is by nature: lost, strayed, seduced, and led captive by the devil at his will. They have the mark of *“the prince of the power of*

the air" (Ephesians 2.2) stamped upon them, being "*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*" (2 Timothy 3.4).

Such is the sad and sorrowful condition of every person born into this world. "*All we like sheep have gone astray*" (Isaiah 53.6). Nevertheless, "*the Lord knoweth them that are His*" (2 Timothy 2.19), and "*He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out*" (John 10.3).

But the reader may say, "How am I to know I am one of Christ's sheep?" I would answer that question by putting another. Do you know yourself to be a lost, ruined sinner? If so, then the Lord Jesus calls you by name. He says: "*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*" (Mark 2.17). The Lord Jesus, "*the Good Shepherd*," laid down His life for His sheep when He died on the cross. They answer His call, as Zacchaeus did when the Lord Jesus called him by name, saying, "*Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down*" (Luke 19.5). Zacchaeus "*made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully*," thus proving himself to be a sheep.

Adapted from *The Little Gleaner* 1889

THE OLD MINE

Long ago, there was a small mining village in the middle of Europe. Some of the mines were in use, but others were not. There were many houses that were built directly over the shafts of the old mines. In one of these houses lived a widow woman with her little girl, Gretchen, who was seven years of age.

"Gretchen," said her mother one day, "go down to the cellar and fill this jug for me."

It was a bright summer's day, and Gretchen did not want to be in the dark cellar for long, so she sprang quickly down the steps. The next moment, her mother heard a terrible cry!

Seizing a light, she hurried down the steps and found that a plank in the floor had given way. Her precious little daughter had disappeared into the dark depths of the shaft! The poor mother was trembling so much that she could scarcely stand.

Somehow, she got out of the house and called for help. Some of the neighbours, reaping in the fields, heard her cries of anguish and came hurrying to the house. As they gazed in horror down the dreadful hole, they were amazed to hear the voice of the little girl, "O help me! Quick! Quick!"

Her clothing had caught in a hook fixed in the side of the shaft for the ladders, and now she was hanging from the hook. The people above, especially the poor mother, were in despair. They heard poor little Gretchen's cries, but did not know how to do anything to help her. More neighbours were gathering every moment, but nobody knew what to do.

At last an old miner came hurrying up. He immediately began to make the opening larger. Then he set up a windlass and bucket beside the shaft. He was as quick as he could be, but it all took some time, and you can imagine how the mother felt. Some of the people were praying aloud in their agony. The voice of little Gretchen could be heard repeating verses of hymns and prayers as she hung in dreadful peril.

Amidst all the confusion of the scene, the old miner scarcely spoke a word until all his preparations were complete. Then, as he got into the bucket, he poured out his soul in prayer. He reminded his "gracious Father in heaven" that He had preserved him hitherto through all the dangers of a miner's life, and now he asked for the protection of His almighty power. "Strengthen my old hands," he said, "that I may be able to rescue this little one from the dark mine and give her back to her sorrowing mother. Yes, I am sure that Thou wilt grant me this joy in my old days. Thy will be done."

With these words the brave old man began his dangerous descent. Little Gretchen had all this time been clinging to the jug without thinking about it. When she saw the gleam of light approaching, she raised up her hands towards it, and the jug crashed down into the abyss. That sound subdued the watchers above to a deathlike silence; and so they waited.

Soon the old miner was near enough for Gretchen actually to see him, and he called out words of comfort and cheer. But

the shaft grew so narrow that he feared that he might touch the child with his bucket and loosen her from the hook's hold. He signalled to the helpers above to stop unwinding his bucket. Then he let down a loop of rope to the little girl. She grabbed it and reached up towards the bucket. Just as she got hold of the edge of the bucket with both hands, the hook which had held her till that moment broke off! But the old man had the strength to pull her up beside him. He gave a joyful shout, "Thank God, all you above! I have her safe!"

When the mother heard the old man's call, she fell down weeping on the ground, unable to believe it possible that her little girl was saved. But she saw the light coming nearer and nearer, and when she saw her living child, her joy was almost unbearable. The good miner's face was beaming with thankfulness as he put little Gretchen into her mother's arms. What thanksgiving there must have been! The widow often said afterwards that she could never forget "that blessed moment." It was that day of terror, which strengthened and confirmed her faith in God as her Father.

There have been some people in all ages who have known what it is to be in the depths of despair, because they were shut up in the "*horrible pit*" of sin and guilt. Darkness closed them in on every side; they looked for some to take pity, and there was none. But there was One on high who knew their plight. He came "*down from the shining gates of heaven.*" His own arm brought salvation to them; "*He brought [them] up also out of an horrible pit, ... and set [their] feet upon a rock*" (Psalm 40.2). Is it any wonder that there was a new song in their mouth, even praise unto their God?

There is nobody who can rescue sinners from the pit of sin but the Lord Jesus. He knows that they can do nothing to help themselves, any more than Gretchen could when she hung in the dark mine. She could do nothing but cry for help; the old miner had to do it all. And Jesus does it all! You can never save your soul by reading the Bible, saying your prayers, or trying to be good. None of your efforts are of any use at all.

The Lord Jesus is the beginning and end of salvation to all who believe on Him; He never refuses to save the poor, helpless sinners who look to Him. It is for such people that He came to die, bearing the penalty of their sin in His own body on the tree.

Andrews's Prayer and other Stories by Damaris

OUT OF THE DEPTHS – A DREAM OF A RING

In his autobiography, John Newton tells about a remarkable warning he received in a dream. It made a very strong impression upon him for several days, but eventually it was forgotten. Years later the dream was brought back to his mind with even greater meaning.

The scene was the harbour of Venice, where we had lately been. I thought it was night and my watch upon the dock. As I was walking back and forth by myself, someone brought me a ring and charged me to keep it carefully. He assured me that while I preserved that ring I should be happy and successful, but if I lost or parted with it, I must expect nothing but trouble and misery. I accepted the ring and the terms willingly, not in the least doubting my own ability to preserve it, and I was highly satisfied to have my happiness in my own keeping.

Then a second person came to me and observed the ring on my finger. He asked some questions about it, and I readily told him of its valuable ability to bring happiness. He expressed surprise at my weakness in expecting such effects from a ring. He reasoned with me for some time, and at length he urged me to throw the ring away. At first, I was shocked at the proposal, but his suggestions prevailed. I began to reason and doubt, and at last plucked it off my finger and dropped the ring over the side of the ship into the water. At the same instant, a terrible fire burst out from a range of the mountains, a part of the Alps which appeared at some distance behind the city of Venice. I saw the hills as distinctly as if I was awake, and they were all in flames.

Too late, I realised my folly. My tempter, with an air of triumph, informed me that all the mercy of God in reserve for me was comprised in that ring, which I had wilfully thrown away. I understood that I must now go with him to the burning mountains, and that all the flames I saw were kindled on my account. I trembled and was in a great agony, but my dream continued. As I stood self-condemned, without plea or hope, suddenly a third person, or the same who brought the ring at first (I am not certain which), came to me and demanded the cause of my grief. I told him plainly, confessing that I had ruined myself wilfully and deserved no pity. He blamed my rashness and asked if I would be wiser if I had my ring back again. I could hardly answer, for I thought it was gone beyond recall. Indeed, I had not time to answer before I saw this unexpected friend go down under the water, just in the spot where I had dropped the ring. He soon returned, bringing it with him.

The moment he came on board, the flames in the mountains were extinguished, and my seducer left me. Then was the prey taken from the hand of the mighty, and the lawful captive delivered (Isaiah 49.24). My fears were at an end, and with joy and gratitude I approached my kind deliverer to receive my ring again. But he refused to return it, saying: "If you should be entrusted with this ring again, you would very soon bring yourself into the same distress. You are not able to keep it, but I will preserve it for you. Whenever it is needful, I will produce it in your behalf."

I awoke in a state of mind not easy to be described. I could hardly eat or sleep or transact my necessary business for two or three days. But the impression soon wore off, and I totally forgot it. It hardly occurred to my mind again till several years afterward.

A time came when I found myself in circumstances very nearly resembling those suggested by this extraordinary dream, when I stood helpless and hopeless upon the brink of an awful eternity. Had the eyes of my mind been then opened, I should

have seen my great enemy, who had seduced me wilfully to renounce and cast away my religious professions and to involve myself in complicated crimes. I should probably have seen him pleased with my agonies and waiting for permission to seize and bear away my soul to his place of torment.

I should, perhaps, have seen likewise, that Jesus, whom I had persecuted and defied, rebuking the adversary, challenging me for His own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, and saying, *"Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom"* (Job 33.24).

However, though I saw not these things, I found the benefit; I obtained mercy. The Lord answered for me in the day of my distress; and blessed be His name, He who restored the ring (or what was signified by it) promises to keep it. O what an unspeakable comfort this is, that I am not in my own keeping! *"The Lord is my Shepherd"* (Psalm 23.1). I have been enabled to trust my all into His hands, and *"I know whom I have believed"* (2 Timothy 1.12). Satan still desires to have me, that he might sift me as wheat, but my Saviour has prayed for me, that my faith may not fail. Here is my security and power, a bulwark against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. But for this, many a time and often, I should have ruined myself since my first deliverance. I should fall and stumble and perish still, after all that the Lord has done for me, if His faithfulness were not engaged in my behalf, to be my Sun and Shield, even unto death. *"Bless the Lord, O my soul"* (Psalm 103.1).

Adapted from *Out of the Depths* by John Newton

RICH, BUT POOR

A friend of mine in America went to see Jacob Strong, a very wealthy farmer, during the war. He went to ask him for money to help the soldiers. After dinner, he was taken up to a room on the top of his house. Mr. Strong said, "Look over yonder. There is no finer land in the Mississippi valley, and it is all

mine. I came out west a poor boy, and I have earned all this property by my own energy and effort."

Then he took him to another view from the cupola, and he pointed out farms for thirty miles around, with large herds of cattle and sheep grazing. Mr. Strong said, "Those are all mine."

And then he showed him farm after farm, all stocked and improved, and he said, "Those farms are all mine."

Then my friend said, "Well, what have you got up there?"

And the man's countenance fell. He knew what my friend meant, but he said, "Where?"

My friend said, "What have you got in heaven?"

He replied, "I have got nothing there."

My friend exclaimed, "You have spent all your time and energy in accumulating this wealth, but you will die a beggar and enter eternity a pauper if no great change by grace comes to your heart and life."

Four months from that time, Jacob Strong died as he had lived. He had lived without Christ, and he died without Christ. What a vivid example of the Redeemer's words: *"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* (Mark 8.36)

Christian Stories for Children

AN UNBELIEVER CONVERTED BY GOD'S WORD

"Is not My Word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23.29).

A certain missionary went about reading the Scriptures to those who were sick or poor. He came to a home which had previously been closed to him. Finding the door open, he decided to enter the house. The neighbours saw him standing at the door, and they all pleaded with him not to go inside. "Your life is in danger," they said. "The man in there is dying, and he threatens to kill anyone who tries to read or speak to him of the Bible."

Another said, "He curses the very name of God, and he says there is no God and no heaven or hell."

"You ask me not to go?" said the Scripture reader. "Why, if he is dying and in such a state, it is to him I must go, and go without delay. Do not fear for me. He is with me who has all hearts in His power, and I take with me the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

On a miserable bed in one corner of the room lay the dying man. His once athletic form was evidently much weakened with disease, but collecting his strength, he turned at the entrance of the missionary. He at once perceived the purpose of his visit and fixed on him a look of hatred and scorn. He cursed and swore with all his might, saying that he would get up, even if he died in the attempt, and take the life of anyone who read to him out of that accursed Book. He also declared that he did not believe in the existence of a God.

The Scripture reader stood at some distance and read two or three verses from the Book of Life. He was preparing to pray, but the sick man vowed that if he did so, he would strike him with a large knife which lay beside him. Yet the man of God prayed earnestly in a few words, and no effort was made to carry out the threats.

The missionary visited the home every day to read the Scriptures, with much the same result. Yet, in faith, he committed his way to Him who can work and none can hinder.

One night, on leaving the sick man, he thought his manner seemed a little softened. To his great astonishment, the next morning he was summoned in haste to the death-bed scene. There lay the once-hardened man; but oh! how changed! Old things had passed away, and all had become new. He stretched out his hands to the Scripture reader, while he told him that all night he had been praying to the Lord Jesus, who had given him His free pardon, and blotted out all his sins. Such joy and thankfulness were depicted on his countenance, and words of praise and thanksgiving on his lips, that all present could only look on in amazement, and exclaim, "*What hath God wrought!*" (Numbers 23.23)

Such a glorious death-bed scene the missionary said he had never witnessed, and to the latest hour of his life he should never cease to bless God for it. His heart seemed too full for utterance as he related it. The Word had indeed been made as a hammer, to break the rock in pieces.

Little Gleaner 1939

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS (6)

Humility

“And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them ...” (Luke 14.7).

The Lord God Almighty deals with His chosen people in a special way, not the way that He deals with the world in general. If we are amongst His favoured people, we will want to know something of the Lord's special dealings with us personally. These dealings will always have an effect. If the Lord teaches us, then something will be learned; if the Lord chastens us, then something will be felt. This can be seen in the lives of the Lord's people as recorded in Holy Scripture: *“Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated”* (Romans 9.13). Jacob had trouble after trouble in his life, with so many trials of his faith and discoveries of his deceitfulness and folly. Why was this so? Jacob, being one of the Lord's chosen people, must be constantly humbled under the mighty hand of God. Again, we see this in the life of the Apostle Paul, another chosen vessel of mercy: *“For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake”* (Acts 9.16). Indeed, Paul suffered many, many trials, as we read in 2 Corinthians 11 verses 23 to 33.

One of the most precious fruits of the Spirit to be found in a child of God is humility; but false humility is one of the most corrupt fruits of the flesh to be found in any religious person. The Lord Jesus Christ set the perfect example of true, godly humility: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to*

be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2.5-8). It is astonishing to behold the great condescension of the Lord Jesus! He came down from the heights of glory to this sin-cursed earth as a real man. There are some people who struggle to believe that the Lord Jesus came that low to save His people from their sins. Yet we read: *"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"* (Hebrews 2.17).

Unlike the Lord Jesus, who is full of grace, we all have proud, deceitful hearts which rebel against God's authority. Only God, by His mighty hand, can bring us down in humility and submission to His will: *"Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty band of God, that He may exalt you in due time"* (1 Peter 5.5,6). The Lord's people, just like Jacob and Paul, will know much of the mighty hand of God in their lives to humble them and to keep them humble.

In the parable before us, the Lord Jesus speaks of those who were invited to a wedding feast. He saw how they chose out the chief rooms, where they would be in a higher position than others, and perhaps be looked up to and admired. They would proudly look down on those in the lower rooms. Pride always seeks a position above others. We like people to think well of us, and we do not like it when people look down upon us and despise us. That hurts our pride!

"When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room" (Luke 14.8,9). How humiliating and crushing to our pride it is when we are

brought down from our lofty positions!

In 2 Corinthians 12 the Apostle Paul relates a vision he had of heaven. If left to himself, he might have become very proud, but he says: *"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure"* (verses 6 & 7). We see how the Lord humbled the Apostle Paul and brought him right down, for twice he says of himself: *"lest I should be exalted above measure."*

In Psalm 73 we read of the psalmist Asaph struggling with the fact that the wicked appeared to be prospering on every side and in every way. They became proud and self-conceited, while he was struggling with all the troubles and difficulties in his life, as well as being *"chastened every morning."* It seemed so unfair that the ungodly should prosper, while he, who tried to serve God, should have so much adversity and pain. But then he went into the sanctuary of God, and he understood their eternal end. How solemn! *"Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast bolden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory"* (Psalm 73.23,24).

Although the pathway of a child of God is one of trials and troubles, he will learn his need of being humbled. By God-given grace, he will choose the lowest rooms, but with the blessed prospect of being, at the end of his life, told to *"go up higher"* into heaven.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about GODLY MEN ACTING WRONGLY. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 146 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Jesus set a little child in the midst of His disciples to teach them a lesson. What had they been arguing about? (Luke 9.46)
2. What was the name of the woman whose action turned back David when he was intent on taking revenge? (1 Samuel 25.32,33)
3. "Nevertheless even him did outlandish [foreign] women cause to sin" (Nehemiah 13.26). To whom did this refer?
4. For what two things which Jehoshaphat had done did the prophet Jehu reprove him? (2 Chronicles 19.2)
5. Who did the Apostle Paul withstand, "because he was to be blamed"? (Galatians 2.11)
6. David was afraid of Saul, and took the sword of Goliath and fled to Achish, king of Gath. What did he do when this caused even more trouble? (1 Samuel 21)
7. What did King Uzziah do, for which he was smitten with leprosy? (2 Chronicles 26)
8. What did Moses do for which God would not allow him to enter into the Promised Land? (Numbers 20)
9. David put the ark of God on a new cart to bring it to Jerusalem, and God showed His solemn displeasure. What was not done according to God's commandment? (1 Chronicles 13,15)
10. Of which king of Israel was it written, "God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart"?

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."
2. The seventh day.
3. Alpha and Omega, which are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.
4. "The work that God maketh from the beginning to the end."
5. Light.
6. The resurrection of the dead. (John 6.39,40,44,54)
7. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1.6)
8. Hophni and Phineas, the sons of Eli. (1 Samuel 2.34, 3.12, 4.11)
9. The dying thief. (Luke 23.39-43)
10. Isaiah 41.4, 44.6, 48.12.

THOU KNOWEST

"Lord, Thou knowest all things" (John 21.17).

"Lord, Thou knowest," is my prayer
In the midst of every care:
Thou dost know, and this alone
Can I bring before Thy throne.

"Lord, Thou knowest," is my stay
When I know not how to pray:
Thou alone canst help afford
In the darkest night, O Lord.

Better far than human love,
Is the knowledge that above,
Stronger than ten thousand foes,
Reigns a Saviour, One who knows.

"Lord, Thou knowest," blessed thought:
Often has it comfort brought.
When unable e'en to cry,
Jesus knows, and draweth nigh.

"Lord, Thou knowest," from my heart,
When I cannot speak, will start.
And since Thou dost all things know,
Thou at length the way will show.

*Hilda M. Haynes
Cheering Words 1992*

The

Friendly Companion



Glass Beach, Fort Bragg, California, USA

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” (Revelation 2.17)

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Have you ever heard the expression: “He is very secretive”? It means that such a person is not very quick to speak about himself. He is content to stay in the background. Other people may not be as reserved or shy, but they still like to have a secret. Thus we read about secret friends, secret writings, secret places and secret words.

The word “secret” implies something that is known only by one person, or at most by just a few. It is not made public. Nathaniel had a secret place under the fig tree where he went to pray. The Lord Jesus told him that He had seen him there before Philip called him. I wonder if you have a secret place where you go to pray. If so, the Lord surely sees you too.

David and Jonathan had a secret known by just the two of them. Jonathan had agreed to prove whether his father was really determined to kill David. At the end of three days, David was to hide by the stone Ezel, which means “that sheweth the way.” Jonathan would also come with a little lad, as if to practise shooting arrows, which the lad would be sent to fetch. When Jonathan shot the arrows, if he called out to the lad, “*Behold the arrows are on this side of thee,*” David would know that Saul meant to do him no harm. However, if he called out: “*Is not the arrow beyond thee? ... Make speed, haste, stay not,*” then David would know that his life was in danger. The Bible tells us that the lad knew not the matter; only David and Jonathan knew the secret (1 Samuel 20).

In Psalm 90 verse 8, Moses tells us that God sees “*our secret sins*” in the light of His countenance. These are heart sins, which none of our companions can see, and the light of the sun never shines on them. Yet God’s all-seeing eyes behold them. This made David pray in Psalm 19 verse 12: “*Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.*” When God the Holy Spirit shines into the hearts of poor sinners, they see how many secret sins they have.

Did you know that God has a secret place? In Psalm 91 verse 1 we read: “*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the*

Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

God told Moses that this secret place was a hiding place. It was close by Him. He also told Moses that He (God) would put Moses in it. He does the same for all those who seek Him with all their heart. Satan, their great enemy, cannot enter there. May the Lord in His mercy put each of you dear young friends in this secret place.

David wrote in Psalm 25 verse 14: *"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant."* The secret place and the secret of His covenant is in the Person of the Lord Jesus. It is the mystery of fellowship which was hid in God from the beginning of the world. What heavenly blessings of mercy, pardon, love and grace, along with many more, are shown to the poor and needy to whom God shows His secret place.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The photo on the front cover shows a pile of sparkling jewels of many different colours. Perhaps you have seen a special ring or necklace with a stone that looks like these. The stones in jewellery are cut and polished from minerals found in the ground.

But the jewels in this photo are not from minerals. They are piled up on a beach near Fort Bragg, California, in the United States. The beach is called "Glass Beach," and it is known for the beautiful collection of coloured stones that covers the entire beach. The stones are actually "sea glass," pieces of glass that have been tumbled and ground by the waves of the ocean.

Why does this particular beach have so much sea glass? The answer may surprise you. It used to be a dump! From 1906 to 1967, all sorts of rubbish was dumped over the cliff adjoining the beach. Bottles, batteries, appliances, and even cars were tossed over the cliff into the ocean.

Eventually, the dump was closed. Much of the rubbish was washed away or was removed. However, the glass and pottery remained. Over time, the ocean waves polished the bits of glass into beautiful jewels. Old tail lights and apothecary bottles are now referred to as “ruby reds” and “sapphire gems.”

Visitors come to admire the rainbow of colours on the beach. The sea glass is highly coveted. Many visitors take pieces home with them, despite being asked not to remove the glass. There is even danger of the beach losing its beauty due to so much of the glass being removed.

No one would have thought that this pile of rubbish would turn into a pile of jewels. Visitors marvel at the power of the ocean to produce such a remarkable change. Yet this is only a dim reflection of the Lord’s powerful work in His people. Like the rubbish in the dump, the Lord’s people are born polluted and defiled by sin, “*cast out in the open field*” (Ezekiel 16.5). But the Lord Jesus forgives their sins and washes them clean. Their many trials are like the waves of the ocean, and at times they may feel distressed and overwhelmed, saying to the Lord, “*All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me*” (Psalm 42.7). Yet those trials sanctify His people and bring them closer to Him, just like the waves polish the bits of glass and make them beautiful. In the end, all of the Lord’s people will be counted among His precious jewels: “*And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him*” (Malachi 3.17).

Contributed

As the painter intermixes bright colours with dark shadows, so the wise God mixes mercy with judgement.

What is there in all this world that can afford a poor sinner one single draught of “real” joy? Where can a man find a place to hide his guilty head but in the “ROCK OF AGES”?

Gathered Gems

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE PROPHET ELIJAH**

While the wicked king Ahab ruled over Israel, the Lord raised up a great prophet named Elijah. He was sent to tell Ahab, *"As the LORD God of Israel liveth, ... there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."*

What a great judgment it was! Every green thing in the land began to dry up, and soon there was not much food to eat. Did Ahab think upon his evil ways and ask God to send rain? No! Ahab became angry with Elijah. He tried to find him, but the Lord had told Elijah to hide by the brook Cherith. He drank of the brook, and ravens brought bread and meat to Elijah every morning and every evening.

After there had been no rain for a while, the brook Cherith dried up. Then the Lord told Elijah to go to a city of Zidon to dwell, and a widow woman would provide food for him. *"So he arose and went ..."* Zidon was the land that wicked Jezebel had come from.

QUESTIONS:

1. Elijah told Ahab there would not be - - - . (3 words)
2. By which brook was Elijah told to hide?
3. Who brought bread and meat to Elijah?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 170 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. Jeroboam.
2. Samaria.
3. Jezebel.

Contributed

*“I have
commanded
the ravens
to feed thee
there.”*

1 Kings 17.4

BIBLE LESSONS**PAUL BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE JEWS**

What a difficult place Paul was in! When they appeared before the Roman captain, the chief priests and all the council of the Jews accused Paul of great evils. Paul soon realised that the Jews before him were divided in their beliefs about the resurrection. Part of them were Sadducees, who did not believe there was a resurrection and did not believe in angels or spirits. The other part were Pharisees, who firmly believed in all of those things. Paul knew how strongly each side felt in their beliefs.

With well-chosen words, Paul made use of the enmity they had toward each other. He cried out, *"I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."*

What a scene unfolded! The chief men of the Pharisees stood up, saying, *"We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God."*

The Sadducees strongly disagreed. To them, Paul was a deceiver and thus a dangerous man. They tried to take hold of Paul and beat him, while the Pharisees tried to pull him away. Since Paul was a Roman citizen, the chief captain felt his first responsibility was to protect Paul. He commanded his soldiers to go down and take Paul away by force to bring him back into the castle.

When Paul lay down in the castle that night, he had a Visitor. It was not the chief captain or one of his soldiers. It was the Lord Himself, who came and stood by Paul, saying: *"Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."* How this must have encouraged Paul! For some time, it had been his desire to visit Rome (the capital of the Roman Empire) to preach the gospel there.

The thoughts of men are very different from the thoughts of God. The next day, over forty Jews conspired together and bound themselves with a solemn oath that they would not eat

or drink till they had killed Paul. Quickly they went to the chief priests and elders to obtain their help. What a wicked plot they schemed! The high priests were to ask the chief captain to bring Paul down the next day under the pretence that they wanted to question him further; while he was on the way down, they would lie in wait to attack and kill him. The chief priests and their council agreed to this murderous plot. They all forgot that God was watching!

God had so decreed that a young man (perhaps a teenage boy) should overhear the Jews talking of their evil plan. This young man was the son of Paul's sister. He must get word to his uncle without delay! However, it would require him to enter the Roman castle where Paul was kept. No doubt, he went with many fears, but he must persevere, as his uncle's life was in danger. How thankful he must have been when he was allowed to see Paul and tell him what the Jews intended to do.

Paul quickly called for one of the centurions and asked him to bring his nephew to the chief captain. It is wonderful to see how God was ordering everything from the beginning to the end. You may remember that the centurion and chief captain were still afraid that Paul might report them for binding him without a trial; thus they were anxious to be in Paul's favour. The centurion brought Paul's nephew to the chief captain, saying, "*Paul the prisoner ... prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.*"

You can read about this in Acts chapter 23 verses 1 to 16.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who did not believe in the resurrection?
2. What did Paul say that he was called in question for?
(7 words)
3. Who visited Paul in the night?
4. Where did he say that Paul must bear witness?
5. Whose son warned Paul of the murderous plot against him?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 170 for the addresses). Remember

to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Gentiles. | 4. Smite him on the mouth. |
| 2. "But I was free born." | 5. Smite him. |
| 3. Ananias. | |

HIDDEN TREASURE

The Lord's jewels upon this earth often seem to be an afflicted and poor people. They must work hard for their daily provisions, and their lives are often filled with troubles. Yet they are heirs to a hidden treasure, the riches of God.

Some years ago, an old Christian was carrying a heavy load on a very hot day. While he paused to rest for a few minutes, a friend came along and greeted him. Just then, a splendid carriage rolled past, in which a rich and proud man was riding.

"Now what do you think of God's providence?" asked the friend. "You know that is a wicked man, but he is wealthy and prospers. You serve the Lord and trust His providence, but get little more than bread and water. How can you explain this?"

The aged saint, with great earnestness, replied, "Add heaven to it! Add heaven to it, and then?" This dear old man knew something of the hidden riches that he would receive, through free grace and the intercession of a precious Christ.

Poor and afflicted, Lord, are Thine,
Among the great unfit to shine;
But, though the world may think it strange,
They would not with the world exchange.

Poor and afflicted, but ere long,
They'll join the bright, celestial throng;
Their sufferings then will reach a close,
And heaven afford them sweet repose.

Adapted from Christian Stories for Children

SHEEP AND GOATS

On a recent visit to a cattle market in East Sussex with my grandchildren, we watched the trucks unloading the animals into pens to be sold. On this occasion there were cows, young calves, two large bulls, and numerous sheep. Having no knowledge of farming, this was an interesting experience for us, particularly when the animals were being sold by the auctioneer.

However, my attention was drawn to two goats that were in a pen with some sheep. How they came to be there and whether they were eventually sold, I do not know – but there they were.

In His earthly ministry, Jesus often used illustrations and parables referring to sheep and goats when speaking to the people, many of whom were no doubt simple farming folk.

This gave me some solemn thoughts. Here were some goats among the sheep. With just a quick glance at the pen in which they were placed, you would hardly notice the difference. They looked so similar to sheep, but these were definitely goats; and however closely they resembled sheep, they were goats and always had been since they were born. Likewise, the sheep in the pen had always been sheep since they were born.

But my thoughts went like this. Here were some goats among the sheep, but at some point they must be separated from the sheep. They could never have been sold in the market as sheep, although so similar in appearance; they must be dealt with as goats.

How solemn to have the appearance of being a sheep, and even be in the same “pen” as the sheep, but never to be an actual sheep. We can spend time with the Lord’s people, attend chapel services regularly, and be favoured with godly parents or friends, appearing to be a sheep; but all the while be just a “goat” in the same “pen” as the sheep.

You may be much tried as to whether you are a “sheep” or a “goat” – particularly if you look back, as some of us do, over our lives with much shame at some of the things we have done.

But there is a sweet hymn in Gadsby's, number 76, which may be an encouragement to some seeking soul who is being taught by the Holy Spirit. In verse 2 the last line reads: "As far from God as sheep can run." I have often thought of this, that sheep are so silly and, like us, they can quickly follow other sheep into a wrong way or place. But the Shepherd (God) will only let the sheep (His people) go so far. He is always watching over His sheep, even when they are straying away from the Shepherd. But in His great lovingkindness and mercy (which we can never really understand), they will, and must, be returned to the fold at the appointed time.

What a mercy if at "the appointed time" you can sweetly feel the language expressed in verse 6 – to know that "call by grace." The silly sheep do not deserve to be brought back to the fold. But the Good Shepherd in sovereign love and mercy does bring His sheep back!

He saw me ruined in the fall,
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;
He saved me from my lost estate;
His loving-kindness, O how great!

Another thing I noticed was that all the sheep had a mark on their backs. Those with a mark were placed together in pens with sheep with similar coloured markings. But I did not see any mark on the backs of the goats.

The Lord's people (sheep) very often cannot see things clearly and certainly can never see the "mark on their own back." But in God's sovereign electing love they have been "marked," chosen in eternity past, and at the appointed time they will be separated from the goats that are at present together with them in the same "pen" – this world.

Fixed was the vast eternal deep
Between the goats and chosen sheep;
Nor can a union e'er take place
'Twixt heirs of wrath and heirs of grace.

Many of you will remember the late Mr. Clement Wood of Croydon. He often used to refer to the mark on the sheep's back. The sheep, the Lord's chosen people, will be found in heaven at last, despite all their wanderings here below. But solemnly, the goats – even though they looked like sheep – will “go ... *into everlasting punishment*” (see Matthew 25:31-46 & John 10:1-18).

What an unspeakable mercy to be included with the sheep spoken of in John 10:27-29.

There is a period known to God
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,
Turn to the fold, and enter in.

At peace with hell, with God at war,
In sin's dark maze they wander far,
Indulge their lust, and still go on
As far from God as sheep can run.

But see how heaven's indulgent care
Attends their wanderings here and there;
Still hard at heel, where'er they stray,
With pricking thorns to hedge their way.

When wisdom calls, they stop their ear,
And headlong urge the mad career;
Judgments nor mercies e'er can sway
Their roving feet to wisdom's way.

Glory to God, they ne'er shall rove
Beyond the limits of His love;
Fenced with Jehovah's shalls and wills,
Firm as the everlasting hills.

The appointed time rolls on apace,
Not to propose but call by grace;
To change the heart, renew the will,
And turn the feet to Zion's hill.

Contributed

THE APPOINTED TIME

James Stirling was the son of godly parents, and in his youth, he felt some religious impressions. However, when he changed from the life of a moorland shepherd to become a shoemaker in Paisley, he became a drunkard, and he remained one for many years.

Returning home one evening from the public house, where he had spent the whole day, he found his sorrowful Christian wife reading a chapter in the Bible to the children, as she always did before putting them to bed. He slunk past them, but he recognised the solemn passage as the parable of the sheep and the goats in the 25th chapter of Matthew: *"And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ...Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal"* (verses 32, 33, 41, 46).

In his own words, he related the following account: "Our youngest boy was then about four years old, and he was laying with his head in his mother's lap. Just when she had read these awful words, he looked up earnestly into her face, and asked: 'Will father be a goat then, mother?'"

It was God's appointed time. The question smote him to the heart. He immediately and finally renounced drinking and cast himself on the mercy of God in Christ. He lived the rest of a long life as a true and earnest Christian man. More than that, he was used to rescue a multitude of others from the slavery of drunkenness and sin.

Adapted from Cheering Words 1994

THE RUSSIAN TAILOR

More than a hundred years ago, in the old city of St. Petersburg in Russia, lived an English clergyman who watched over the spiritual welfare of British Protestants. A member of his congregation said to him one day, "If you ever need a tailor, I wish you would employ a Russian I know. He belongs to the Orthodox Church, I believe, but he has lived in England, and speaks English well. I can thoroughly recommend him."

Some months later, the chaplain received a good piece of Yorkshire cloth as a present from a friend who had just returned from England. Remembering the advice he had been given, Mr. Hood (as I will call him) sent the material to the Russian tailor, asking him to make an overcoat. In a few days it was finished, and the tailor brought it to the house himself. The chaplain was busy with someone else at that moment, and he asked the tailor to sit down, giving him a booklet to look at while he was waiting.

In a few minutes, Mr. Hood opened the parcel and approved the coat. He went out to the tailor in the hall to pay the bill. "I hope you're pleased with the coat, sir?" said the man.

"Yes! I like it very much; how do you like my book?"

"Oh! I don't trouble myself with books."

"Don't you?" said the chaplain. "Perhaps you don't trouble about your soul either!"

"My soul!" said the tailor. "If you mean I ought to become religious, it would be completely impossible in my business. How could I go to church on a Sunday? That's my busiest day. I pay all my thirty workmen on Sunday and receive most of the money owing to me on that day."

"But this is very sad," said Mr. Hood. "Don't you believe there is a God?"

"God!" said the tailor. "Nobody has ever seen God. You can let me know if anybody ever does. Good evening, sir!"

It was some time before the chaplain saw the old tailor again. Then, at the funeral of the man who had recommended him, Mr. Hood noticed the old man among the congregation.

He took for a text the words, “[*They*] took up the body and buried it, and went and told Jesus” (Matthew 14.12). He noticed that the old Russian was weeping; perhaps for grief at the loss of a friend? But next Sunday he was at church for the ordinary service, and he began to attend regularly. Mr. Hood was afraid to speak to him directly, lest he should take alarm and stay away; but he kept a careful watch for him and heard that he had bought an English Bible. Now the tailor began to attend the weekday Bible readings, his face alight with interest and pleasure; but he always slipped out quickly as if he did not want to be spoken to.

One evening, Mrs. Hood came to her husband in the study, and said, “Darling, there’s a Russian man wanting to speak to you; I rather think it’s that tailor.” Mr. Hood went out at once, and found the tailor, carrying a parcel.

“Just a little business call, sir,” said the man apologetically. “One of your hearers ordered a new coat for you, and this is it. I hope you won’t be angry!”

“I don’t usually get angry with anybody,” said Mr. Hood laughingly, “certainly not with someone who gives me a new coat! Who can it be?”

“Oh! I mustn’t tell you that,” said the tailor.

“Is he young?”

“No, he’s not young!”

“Is he old?”

“Yes, he’s an old man with white hair,” said the tailor. “I’m not telling *you* who it is, but I don’t mind telling Mrs. Hood, if you’ll just go away.”

So, Mrs. Hood went out to the door with the tailor and came back laughing to announce him as the giver.

A few days later the chaplain found the tailor, and after thanking him warmly for the coat, asked him why he had done such a thing.

“Why, sir,” said the Russian eagerly, “I should never have thought of giving you the coat if God had not changed my heart!”

Of course, Mr. Hood was deeply interested, and they had a heartwarming talk about the things of God. The tailor was full of anxiety for the welfare of his workmen; would the chaplain advise him to give them copies of the Scriptures? Mr. Hood heartily agreed and undertook to procure whatever copies the tailor wanted.

The Russian went home, and calling together all his workmen, found out which of them could read. Then he asked Mr. Hood to supply them with New Testaments, in Russian and Swedish and Finnish and German, according to the needs of the men. The master soon got all his workers reading the Scriptures, insisting that the few who could not read at all should be taught by the readers!

Now Sunday became indeed a day of rest and worship. How the tailor rejoiced in the opportunities for worship and fellowship! Not one of the workers objected to the new arrangements; they saw how eager their chief was to benefit them. Every evening he called the men together, all with their New Testaments. The master would choose a chapter, and all would read the same sweet verse out, each in his own language! Then the tailor expounded the verse in Russian which they all understood.

The chaplain was much impressed with the tailor's boundless delight in the Word of God. He was always finding new treasures in his reading, and he frequently called on Mr. Hood to tell him of some new discovery.

"Did you ever hear anything so delightful before?" he would say joyously. Once when Mr. Hood was speaking at a children's gathering, he quoted the hymn:

Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain,

and recommended them to learn the whole of it.

A few days later the old tailor called on the chaplain. "I have learned the hymn."

"What hymn?" asked Mr. Hood.

“Why, the one you told the young ones to learn. Shall I repeat it?” He began courageously and went easily through the first two verses, but his voice faltered in the third, and in the fourth he was so moved that he could scarcely get through:

My soul looks back to see
The burdens Thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree
And hopes her guilt was there.

The chaplain's tears were hardly restrained when he saw the old man weeping with such holy joy!

Andrew's Prayer and other Stories by Damaris

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

What is the exact meaning of the word *disciple*? It means properly a learner, one who is under a teacher, whose submissive and devoted pupil he has become, and from whom he receives continual instruction. Thus, a disciple of Christ is one who is admitted by the Lord Jesus into His school, and who He Himself condescends personally to instruct, and who therefore learns of Him to be meek and lowly of heart.

A disciple of Jesus is one who sits meekly at the Redeemer's feet, receiving into his heart the gracious words which fall from His lips. This was Mary's happy posture, whom the Lord commended for choosing the better part (Luke 10.42). Such is also the posture of all the saints of God, according to the ancient declaration: “*Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand; and they sat down at Thy feet, every one shall receive of Thy words*” (Deuteronomy 33.3).

But a true and sincere disciple not only listens to his master's instructions, but also acts as he bids. So, a disciple of Jesus is one who treasures up the words of Christ in his heart, ponders over the precious promises, and delights in His glorious Person, love and blood. A disciple of Jesus is one who bears some reflection of the image of his heavenly Master; he carries it about with him wherever he goes, that men may take

knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus (Acts 4.13). And as when Moses came down from the mount, his face shone from the reflection of the heavenly glory which had streamed upon his countenance, so does the true disciple shine before men with some sparkles of the glory of the Son of God. To have some of these divine features stamped upon the heart, lip and life, is to be a disciple of Jesus. To be much with Jesus is to be made like unto Jesus; to sit at Jesus' feet is to drink in Jesus' words; to lean upon Jesus' breast is to feel the warm heart of Jesus pulsating with love, and to feel this pulsation causes the heart of the disciple to beat in tender and affectionate unison; to look up to Jesus, is to see a face more marred than the sons of men, yet a face beaming with heavenly beauty, dignity and glory.

To be a disciple, then, of Jesus is to copy His example, to do the things pleasing in His sight, and to avoid the things which He abhors. To be a disciple of Jesus, is to be meek as He was; separate from the world as He was; living a life of communion with God, as He lived when He walked here below.

To take a worm of the earth and make him a disciple of Jesus is the greatest privilege God can bestow upon man. To select an obstinate, ungodly, perverse rebel, and place him in the school of Christ and at the feet of Jesus, is the highest favour God can bestow upon any child of the dust. How unsurpassingly great must be that kindness whereby the Lord condescends to bestow His grace on an alien and an enemy, and to soften and meeken him by His Spirit, and thus cause him to grow up into the image and likeness of His own dear Son. What are earthly honours and titles when compared with the favour thus conferred upon those whose foundation is in the dust? Compared with this high privilege, all earthly honours, stars and garters, titles and robes, sink into utter insignificance.

J.C. Philpot

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES**THE PARABLES OF JESUS (5)****Forgiveness**

“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents” (Matthew 18.23,24).

We are all sinners before a just and holy God. Some are brought deeply to feel and grieve over this. But there is no relief merely in knowing we have sinned; many have gone no further than this and died in despair. We need to know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour from sin. One of the greatest blessings of God is to be made a true seeker after Christ and to know His forgiving mercy.

Yet even those who know this forgiveness are still sinners, able to fall under temptation. We all need to be taught how unworthy we are of God's blessings, and we need to seek grace to show that same tender, forgiving spirit towards others. The Lord Jesus spoke this parable to emphasise the inconsistency of an unforgiving spirit in the life of a true disciple, and to warn that where there is a persistent lack of a forgiving spirit toward others, there is no evidence of the forgiveness of our own sins.

In the parable before us, the Lord speaks of Himself as *“a certain king.”* One of his servants was brought before him. He was overwhelmed with debt, owing the king a very large amount of money. Having nothing to pay the debt, he was to be sold with everything he had, until payment was made. The servant fell down before the king, begging him to have patience, and promising that he would repay all. The king had compassion upon this servant and, being very merciful, forgave him all the debt. We can imagine what a great relief it was to this servant, who had been spared his deserved punishment and set free.

However, this same servant then found another fellow servant who owed him a small amount of money and, very unkindly, demanded of him that he should repay him

immediately. The fellow servant begged him to have patience with him, and he would repay all, just as the first servant had begged of the king earlier. But the first servant would not have patience. Showing no compassion or pity, he had his fellow servant cast into prison.

When the king heard of this, the first servant was brought again before him. He said unto him, "*O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desirest me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?*" (verses 32,33). The king then sentenced him to the tormentors until his debt was paid.

What teaching there is here for all of us! Do we desire for God to have mercy upon us and forgive us all the great debt of our sins that we owe through breaking His Holy Law and commandments, a debt that we have absolutely no hope of ever repaying ourselves? If we are truly convicted of our sins, we will feel to be guilty sinners before Almighty God, with our innumerable sins deserving the punishment of eternal death. We will feel that we can in no wise do anything to repay what we owe, but only fall down before God and implore His rich mercy.

How unjust of that servant, who had been pardoned his great debt, then to go out and deal so cruelly with his fellow servant, who owed him a relatively small debt! Can we not understand the anger of the king against that unkind servant? Now, if we desire God to be merciful unto us, how should we treat those who may do wrong toward us? Do we seek revenge and try to punish them for what they have done, or do we seek to forgive them as we hope God has forgiven us?

Remember the words the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "*And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us*" (Luke 11.4). I am sure we all know what it is to be hurt or upset by someone else's unkindness. It is in our fallen nature to want to get revenge somehow. When Esau realised what his brother Jacob had done in stealing the blessing, he wanted to get revenge by killing him. When David was treated badly by Nabal, he contemplated revenge, but God

mercifully sent Abigail to turn him from his purpose. If we think of what the Lord Jesus suffered to procure the pardon of His people's sins, how much more then should a forgiving spirit be found in us, if we have any hope that our sins have been pardoned.

When Joseph was struggling in the Egyptian prison, he must often have thought of his brethren and how they had been instrumental in causing all of his present sufferings. We wonder if, at times, his heart must have risen up against them with thoughts of what he would like to do to them. However, when Joseph was delivered out of prison and began to understand the purposes of God, he was brought to forgive his brethren all the wrong they had done unto him. After their father Jacob died, the brethren of Joseph really feared that Joseph would get his revenge upon them. Yet we read, "*And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them*" (Genesis 50.19-21). Joseph had learned that vengeance belongs to God alone. May we each be given that same grace to forgive those who sin against us.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about GOOD BEGINNINGS BUT BAD ENDINGS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 170 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. King Joash reigned well under the godly influence of the high priest. What was the high priest's name? (2 Chronicles 24.2)
2. What did Joash and the princes of Judah do after the high priest died? (2 Chronicles 24.17,18)

3. "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee" and "God is with thee" (1 Samuel 10.6,7). Of which king was this spoken?
4. Later we read of this king, "An evil spirit from the Lord troubled him." Who came to calm the king by playing on a harp? (1 Samuel 16.14-23)
5. At his end the king was "sore distressed." What reasons did he give? (1 Samuel 28.15)
6. Who is twice mentioned among the fellow-labourers of the Apostle Paul, but then forsook him "having loved this present world"? (Colossians 4, Philemon, 2 Timothy 4)
7. Who was one of the apostles of the Lord Jesus and went about preaching, but afterwards betrayed Him? (Matthew 10; 26)
8. Who was King David's counsellor, but afterwards conspired against him and died tragically? (2 Samuel 15; 17)
9. Who was the man who believed and was baptized, but to whom Peter afterwards said, "Thy heart is not right in the sight of God"? (Acts 8)
10. Of the people mentioned in these questions, sadly, three killed themselves. Who were they?

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. The disciples had been reasoning which of them should be the greatest.
 2. Abigail.
 3. Solomon.
 4. Jehoshaphat had "helped the ungodly" and "loved them that hate the Lord."
 5. Peter.
 6. David "feigned himself mad." (1 Samuel 21.9-15)
 7. Uzziah went into the temple to burn incense, which only the priests were allowed to do. (2 Chronicles 26.16-20)
 8. Moses smote the rock instead of speaking to it as God commanded. (Numbers 20.7-13)
 9. The ark should have been carried by the Levites. (1 Chronicles 15.2)
 10. Hezekiah. (2 Chronicles 32.31)
-

A SECRET PLACE

There is a safe and secret place
Beneath the wings divine,
Reserved for all the heirs of grace;
O, be that refuge mine!

The least and feeblest there may hide
Uninjured and unawed;
While thousands fall on every side,
He rests secure in God.

The angels watch him on his way,
And aid with friendly arm;
And Satan, roaring for his prey,
May hate, but cannot harm.

He feeds in pastures large and fair
Of love and truth divine:
O child of God, O glory's heir,
How rich a lot is thine!

A hand almighty to defend,
An ear for every call,
An honoured life, a peaceful end,
And heaven to crown it all!

Young Peoples Hymnal 329

The Friendly Companion



A Replica of Noah's Ark in Kentucky, USA

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen
as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark ..."
(Hebrews 11.7)

September 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

By G.D. Buss

Dear Children and Young People,

I wonder how many of you have a penknife or pocket knife? When we were young, this was a prized possession of many young people, and with its various blades, it had many uses. For example: wood could be carved, corkscrews on bottles could be opened, pencils could be sharpened. But of course, it is possible to misuse a tool like this. Much care needs to be taken, so there is no danger to others. In our day, more than one penknife was confiscated at school because it was used for a wrong purpose by its owner.

In the prophecy of Jeremiah chapter 36, we read of a king named Jehoiakim, who used his penknife for a wrong purpose. It was winter, and a fire was burning in the hearth. His advisers were reading to him from a scroll. The tidings in the scroll were not what the king wanted to hear. The Lord had told His prophet Jeremiah to write that the kingdom of Judah would be overthrown by the Chaldeans, because the nation of Judah had forsaken God and His ways. What did Jehoiakim do when he heard the prophecy? Instead of acknowledging it as God's Word and repenting of the sins which had brought God's anger, he took his penknife, cut out the pages that offended him, and threw them into the fire, thinking that the message was destroyed. How foolish he was! The Bible tells us that neither the king nor his men were afraid, either of the solemn warnings or of the king's rebellion. But God had seen. God told Jeremiah to rewrite the prophecy, and even more warnings were added to it, all of which came to pass when the Chaldeans overthrew Jerusalem.

There are lessons for each of us in this sad incident. First, to cut anything out of God's Word, especially those parts which tell us of our sins and need of repentance, is a very solemn sin of which God will take notice. He says in another place: "*Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation*" (Hebrews 3.8). Second, despite man's unbelief and distaste for His

Word, God will still fulfil it. Jesus said, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away”* (Matthew 24.35). God will not change His Word to suit man’s sin. It is man who needs to change, not God. It is the work of His Holy Spirit to produce this change in His children. Third, may we be given the courage of Jeremiah. Despite being imprisoned, he would not compromise God’s Word; he faithfully proclaimed it, even though it was not popular. He would have said, *“Let God be true, but every man a liar”* (Romans 3.4).

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Did you recognise the picture on the front cover? Perhaps many, if not all of you, knew that it is the replica of Noah’s ark. It is located in the state of Kentucky in the United States. Friends who have gone to see it have stood in awe of its height, length and width. It must be an impressive sight!

Once inside, they were amazed at the many compartments: where the animals could be kept, where the food was stored and the waste collected, and where Noah and his family lived.

While listening to these friends tell of what impressed them, it was evident that each saw things from a different perspective. Although hundreds of thousands of people visit this replica of the ark each year, we cannot but wonder how many see nothing more than the great multitude who lived in Noah’s day saw. They did not see the ark as a place of safety, a hiding place in the day of God’s anger.

The Bible mentions four things about the ark, apart from the measurements. First, it was to be made of gopher wood. The construction of the ark would require a tremendous amount of this wood. God, in His mercy, had gone before Noah in this, for gopher wood grew in abundance near the place where Noah lived. It was near at hand! Also, this wood was considered indestructible. It could not be destroyed in the day of God’s wrath.

The second thing that God commanded Noah to do, was to pitch the ark within and without; we might say to seal or caulk

it on both sides. A double security. What a vast amount of water it must keep out of the ark! This pitch, in other places of the Bible, is called “atonement” or “reconciliation.” That is what Jesus has done for His church by bearing their sins and suffering for them (the outside pitch) and the Holy Spirit applying it to their heart (the inside pitch).

The third thing that God commanded Noah to make was a window (a light). It must have been a dim light at best, especially when the “*windows of heaven were opened*” and the rain poured down upon the earth for forty days and nights in God’s judgment upon the earth. How useful the window would be after the rain had stopped. After many months, Noah opened the window and sent forth a raven and a dove to see if the waters were abated from off the ground. The dove soon returned to him because there was no place it could rest. After seven days, he sent forth the dove again. The dove returned to the window in the evening with an olive leaf in her mouth. Then Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. Seven days later, he sent forth the dove again, but the dove did not return to him.

The last thing that Noah was commanded to make was a door in the side of the ark. Of what use could the ark be without a *door*? A door grants entrance into something. Every creature (man or beast) that entered into the door of the ark was spared in the dreadful day of judgment. What safety and security were provided for those who entered the door! Long after the ark had served its purpose for Noah, the Lord Jesus said, “*I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved*” (John 10.9).

It will be a great mercy if we are brought to see by faith all that the ark represented.

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE BARREL OF MEAL AND CRUSE OF OIL**

When Elijah came to the gate of Zarephath, a city in Sidon, the widow woman was there gathering sticks. Elijah asked her to bring him a drink of water and a little piece of bread.

The widow woman was very poor. She had only a handful of meal and a little oil left. She was preparing a last meal for herself and her son, and then they would have no more food. Elijah asked her to make a little cake for him first and to bring it to him. Then she should make one for herself and her son. He said, "*Fear not; ... For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.*"

The woman did as Elijah told her, and there was just enough food for each of them. Every day there was a little more meal in the barrel and a little more oil in the vessel, "*according to the word of the LORD.*" They ate of the meal and oil for a full year.

QUESTIONS:

1. How much meal did the widow have left? (2 words)
2. What did the Lord say would not waste? (4 words)
3. What would not fail? (4 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 194 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. Dew nor rain.
2. Cherith.
3. Ravens.

Contributed

*“And the
barrel of meal
wasted not,
neither did the
cruse of oil
fail.”*

I Kings 17.16

BIBLE LESSONS**PAUL TAKEN TO CAESAREA**

What an intimidating experience it must have been for Paul's nephew to be brought before the chief captain! The chief captain took his hand and led him into a private place, asking, "*What is that thou hast to tell me?*" He told the chief captain that the Jews, under the pretence of questioning Paul more thoroughly, would ask for him to be brought down to their council. Paul's nephew told the chief captain that over forty Jews would be lying in wait to seize Paul and kill him.

Upon hearing this, the chief captain sent Paul's nephew away, warning him, "*See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.*" It would be a great temptation for one so young to tell about meeting all alone with the chief captain. How careful he had to be lest any word of it should slip out!

The chief captain felt the only way to ensure Paul's safety was secretly to hurry him out of Jerusalem. He asked two centurions to provide armour and weapons for two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea. They were to be accompanied by seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen. They were also commanded to provide a beast for Paul to ride on.

At the third hour of the night (9 pm), the gates of the castle were opened, and four hundred and seventy military men, with Paul in their midst, began their journey to Caesarea. It was a distance of nearly seventy-five miles. They journeyed through the night, arriving at the city of Antipatris the next morning. Being forty miles from Jerusalem, they believed that Paul was now safe; the two hundred soldiers and two hundred spearmen returned to Jerusalem, leaving Paul in the care of the seventy horsemen. What care God had provided for Paul at this time!

The chief captain, whose name was Claudius Lysias, wrote a letter to the Roman governor, Felix, informing him of all that had taken place and how the Jews were determined to kill

Paul. He was very faithful in telling Felix that he believed Paul was innocent of the charges the Jews had brought against him.

Later that day, the horsemen gave the chief captain's letter to Felix and presented Paul to him. When Felix knew that Paul was a citizen of his jurisdiction, he commanded that he should be kept safely in Herod's judgment hall.

How disappointed the Jews were when they learned that their plan to kill Paul had been found out! We wonder what happened to those men who had taken the solemn oath not to eat anything until they had slain Paul. What an important lesson it is for us not to take an oath carelessly or in a sinful passion!

The Jews were told that the governor, Felix, would hear the case in five days. The inconvenience of having to go to Caesarea did not hinder the Jews. Ananias the high priest, along with the elders of the people, obtained the help of a very gifted orator named Tertullus. No doubt, he was very skilled in the Latin language, by which he could impress the governor.

Felix sat on his judgment seat, with a great host of Jews gathered on one side, bringing accusations against the Apostle Paul. On the other side was Paul by himself. He later wrote to the believers in Rome: *"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

You can read about this in Acts chapter 23 verses 19 to 35 and chapter 24 verses 1 to 10.

QUESTIONS:

1. How many soldiers were sent to protect Paul? How many spearmen? How many horsemen?
2. What time of the night were they to leave?
3. To whom was Paul sent?
4. From whom did Ananias and the elders obtain help?
5. What great question did Paul ask after saying, "If God be for us"?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 194 for the addresses). Remember

to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. The Sadducees.
 2. The hope and resurrection of the dead.
 3. The Lord.
 4. Rome.
 5. Paul's sister.
-

"SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME"

The substance of an address to the Drayton Gardens Sunday School Chelsea, by Mr. Henry Popham, reprinted in pamphlet form by Farncombe and Son from The Friendly Companion, and then sent to us by a lady of 91, who says she is sorry no date is given but it is many years since she heard her late Pastor, Mr. H. Popham, relate this true story. – Editor, L.R. Broome

Some years ago, my wife and I, in the providence of God, were in charge of a cottage-home for poor, homeless boys. One day a little boy was brought to us, a poor little fellow who had been found on a doorstep in the West End of London. He never knew either his father or mother. I need not tell you that our hearts beat fast in sympathy to the poor little outcast, and we gladly took him into our "family."

As Harry grew up, we found he was a very weakly one, and we feared that his early neglect would result in consumption (tuberculosis), which it ultimately did. We often noticed that instead of running about with the other boys, he would get into a corner of the playroom, apparently liking to be alone, and seeming to have nothing in common with the others.

One day he said to my wife, "I wish you would let me call you mother. Will you?"

She answered, "Of course I will, Harry."

"And do you think Mr. Popham will let me call him father?"

"I am sure he will," was the reply; and from that time there was a deep affection between Harry and ourselves. He would often sit and read to his "mother," and many a word was spoken on those occasions which bore fruit very early.

Now it came to pass – and you children think about it – one day Harry said to me, "Father, I'm such a sinner!"

Being particularly concerned about him on account of the serious nature of his disease, and desirous to know more, I said, "Why Harry, what do you know about sin? You have never played roughly with the boys; you have never cheated at their games; you have not bullied other boys; you have done nothing of that kind."

He quietly and soberly replied, "I know I have not done the things you mention. I have not been able to do them. But I have sometimes been very angry in my heart against God because I could not do as the others do." And Harry went on to tell me of his shame and sorrow on account of *heart sins*.

I felt and said to myself, "This is the teaching of the Holy Ghost in the lad's heart."

For a long time we had looked after Harry's temporal wants, but now my wife and I were all anxiety and concern about his soul. We knew that he could not long be with us, so we listened carefully to every word he spoke and watched his every movement. He would often say, "O how great a sinner I am! Do you think God can have mercy on a wicked boy like me?" He wept and sorrowed deeply before the Lord, and I have felt that Harry's deep repentance was one of the most genuine marks of his call by grace. At times when the Bible was read to him, he would make comments: "Jesus *did* take great interest in children. He did bless *them*. And will He not bless *me* – a sinner like me?" In all he read and saw of Jesus Christ's pity, mercy and grace to the poor and the lost, he sought for a personal knowledge of the same. He wanted to know Jesus Christ in His power to forgive sins.

He told me one day that his sins felt so heavy, he could bear the weight of them no longer. He went upstairs to his room,

and there he cried to the Lord for mercy; and with great simplicity and sincerity he explained how Jesus Christ had taken all his sins away and cast them behind His back. He then quietly repeated the first verse of the hymn, saying, "That is what He said to me."

When mothers of Salem
Their children brought to Jesus,
The stern disciples drove them back,
And bade them depart;
But Jesus saw them ere they fled,
And sweetly smiled and kindly said,
"Suffer the children to come unto Me."

Once he said to my wife, "Jesus Christ came to His own, and they received Him not. My own father and mother cared nothing for me, but Jesus cares for me and takes me as His own." More than once he said that his heart was full of gratitude to the Lord for giving him a "father" and "mother" in ourselves. He used to say, "He has given me a home with you, but only for a *very little while*." He showed much kindness to those about him, and with great earnestness and tenderness he would speak to them about death.

The disease was making rapid progress, and it was clear to us that the end was not far away. He showed great patience in his affliction, and several times he expressed himself as quietly resting on Jesus Christ. "Yes," he said one day, in answer to a question, "I believe my sins are all forgiven. I am washed in Jesus' blood."

The last Sunday he spent on earth will never be forgotten. He spoke most sweetly of his hope through the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. With many expressions of love to us, he said that he had a greater longing to be with Jesus than ever. The last night of his life, I sat with him. He slept peacefully for some time, his life fast ebbing away. Once he awoke and said, "Father don't you see them? They are the angels waiting to take me home." After this he fell asleep, and for a time, it seemed he would pass away and awake in heaven. But once

more he awoke and said, "Father, there is the King, the King; Jesus Christ has come! Do let me go father, do let me go!" With these words on his lips, his hands outstretched, and a look of intense longing in his eyes, Harry sank back on his pillow and fell asleep in Jesus at the age of 13.

O, my dear children, think of this dear little fellow; fatherless, motherless, and homeless. Yet the Lord undertook and managed all things for him in this life, and, through Jesus Christ, had special regard for him in a way of grace. How great a mercy it is to know what sin is by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and then to know what Jesus Christ is in His power to save! Blessed Jesus Christ; how free and sovereign is that grace of Thine that comes even to children; the poorest, the lost, and the outcast!

Friendly Companion 1968

NURSE IT FOR ME

A Christian mother named Mrs. Norton had a little daughter born to her. She already had three sons, and she had long wanted a daughter. It was a day of gladness, not only to the mother, but to all the family, when this little girl was born. Her mother cared for her with the greatest affection. For a while everything went on pleasantly in this family.

But, at length, the mother began to feel very uneasy about her child. There was a great difference between her and the other children in their infancy. She never smiled or took any notice of her mother or the rest of the family. In her anxiety, Mrs. Norton consulted their family doctor about it. He examined the little one very carefully. As he did so, his face grew very sad. Finally, with his eyes full of tears, he said: "My dear, I am very sorry for what I have to tell you, but your child is mentally handicapped."

At first, she came near sinking under the weight of it all. But soon she got over this; and notwithstanding the trouble, she always had a calm, cheerful, happy look.

One day a friend said to her: “Mrs. Norton, how is it possible for you to be so happy and cheerful, when you have such a heavy burden of sorrow to bear? Will you please tell me the secret of it?”

“That I will gladly,” said Mrs. Norton. “This is the greatest affliction I ever had to bear. At first, I thought it would break my heart. I never expected to have another happy feeling as long as I lived. But as I woke from sleep one morning, soon after this trouble came, I heard sounding in my ears like a voice from heaven, the words which Pharaoh’s daughter spoke to the mother of Moses, when she put in her care the child which had been taken from the ark of bulrushes: *‘Take this child ... and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages’* (Exodus 2.9). I knew it was my Father in heaven who was speaking those precious words to me; and it made a wonderful change in my thoughts and feelings towards my poor child. It lightened my burden and gave me all the help I have needed in bearing it. Since then I have never felt sad or sorrowful about this matter. I say to myself, ‘The child is God’s. He knows what is best for it. All I have to do is to nurse it well.’ The thought that I am doing this for God makes it a pleasure and delight to me. That is the secret of my being so cheerful and happy.”

How wonderfully God helped that Christian mother to bear her burden!

Cheering Words 1990

“AND HE DIED”

In the providence of God, a wicked man one day strolled into a church where the 5th chapter of Genesis was being read. This chapter contains a long list of names, and again and again: “*and he died.*” Enos was 905, “*and he died*”; Seth 912, “*and he died*”; Methuselah 969, “*and he died*”.

The Holy Ghost powerfully used this to convince him that he must die; and then eternity! This brought him to flee to Christ for refuge.

Gathered Gems

JEWISH CUSTOMS

Edward Samuel was born in Poland in 1812 and brought up as a strict Jew. At the age of sixteen, he fled from Poland to avoid being compelled to serve as a soldier. In the providence of God, he was led to England, where he was brought to know Jesus as the true Messiah and eventually became a preacher of the gospel. In his autobiography, Edward Samuel writes of many interesting Jewish customs associated with his early years.

I have a perfect recollection of my maternal grandfather. He held the rank of Rabbi over twenty or thirty thousand Jews and was a learned student in the rabbinical writings and traditions. Among other details of his official duty was that of a judge of things ceremonially clean or unclean, and to him was referred the decision as to alleged violations of the Sabbath. The Jews also referred to him many civil questions as to frauds or debts. He was so respected by the magistrates, that if contending Jews and Gentiles had a dispute, they were accustomed to give authority to my grandfather, leaving the matter for his opinion and decision. His study was near the synagogue, and there he spent most of his time.

One incident connected with my boyish history remains strongly impressed upon my memory. It concerns my conscientious grandfather. His residence was fifteen miles from my parents, and I went to visit him. I proceeded to his study, which was a walk of about ten minutes from his private dwelling. He had not been at home during the previous night, which caused no uneasiness, for it was his custom to spend three nights each week in solitary retirement. It was early in the morning when I went to have, according to custom, his hands laid upon my head and to receive his blessing. Instantly I perceived there was something the matter with his nose. I asked him what happened, and he told me that he had fallen asleep over the candle while reading and burned his nose and set his cap on fire. Such was the zeal of my dear grandfather that he fasted two days in every week and every other day

during one whole month in the year. On the Day of Atonement, which is a fast day, he used to deliver an oration to the congregation, clad entirely in white, wearing no shoes – not leaving the synagogue the whole day. His oration was so affecting that the whole congregation was in tears. I remember once witnessing it and, although only a child not more than eleven years of age, was equally affected with the rest.

On the day before Atonement, the most respectable families used to bring their children to my grandfather that he might bless them. His custom was to visit our house once a year and spend a week, including one Sabbath, and to preach on that day. Every day during his stay, the Jews used to bring their little children that he might lay his hands on their heads and bless them. In this manner I understand the words of Christ, *“Suffer little children ... to come unto Me”* (Matthew 19.14). Not to sprinkle, nor baptize, but to bless them.

My grandfather on my father's side was also very religious. Every day he used to sit in a house close to the synagogue, built for that purpose, where the learned Jews met together for the study of the Talmud and to ask each other questions. I am inclined to think that where we read of Christ meeting with the doctors, hearing and asking them questions, the allusion is to the same kind of place.

It was a custom among the respectable Jews in my country, at the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles, to invite a number of poor Jews out of the hospital to celebrate those festivals with them. On the day of preparation for the Passover, my mother asked one of those poor Jews to go to the garden and dig up horseradish for bitter herbs to eat with the paschal lamb. I was delighted at not having to go to school and also with it being the Passover. On that day the Jews clear out all the leaven (bread with yeast) from their dwellings. Generally, two persons were engaged. One had a lighted wax candle, and the master of the house had a wooden spoon in the one hand and a quill in the other, searching every corner for leaven crumbs. Previous to that, they put small pieces of bread in various parts

of the house, which were gathered up with the spoon and quill. Then they tied them up carefully in a piece of clean white cloth and kindled a fire purposely to burn the leavened bread, spoon, and quill together. The reason the fire was kindled purposely is that it was not to be used for anything else. It was very pleasing to me as a boy to see my dear father search for the leaven. The Apostle Paul speaks of "leaven" of a different nature, the "*leaven of malice and wickedness*" (1 Corinthians 5.8). This leaven, the Spirit of God only can remove. Little thought I then what the paschal lamb and the bitter herbs shadowed forth! Blessed be God for an experimental knowledge of both! Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, explains the meaning: "*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us*" (verse 7), and the herbs are the sufferings for the profession of Christ. "*All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*" (2 Timothy 3.12); "*If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together*" (Romans 8.17).

I was educated from a child in the Mishna and Talmud, and also read the Old Testament. At nine years of age, I had daily to learn three or four pages of the Talmud, which consists of questions and answers of the various Rabbis. At my grandfather's annual visit, he always examined us boys to ascertain what progress we had made through the year. Once he told my father that I should become a Rabbi. My father expressed his pleasure at the thought. But God had something better in store for me. He has raised me to a higher dignity than that. He has made me a king and priest unto the living God and put me among His family, although unworthy of the least of His mercies. O the depth of the riches of His divine grace!

When Nicholas became the Emperor of Russia, he issued a law compelling Jews to serve in the army and navy. This law was a terror to all the Jews in his dominions. The reason was that they must eat and drink those things which were prohibited by the law of God to them as a nation, break the

Sabbath day, violate other festivals, and indeed deny their whole religion. They would rather die, or even follow their children to the grave, than see them turn from their religion. I witnessed at various times, when these young men were sent away, the cries and lamentations of their parents and relations were most distressing and almost heart-rending. I remember on one occasion being so affected that I fainted away. They rend their garments on these occasions as if mourning for the dead.

Knowing that sooner or later it must come to our turn, my grandfather advised that I and a younger brother should quit the country and go to Prussia. As there were no passports allowed, we left in the middle of the night. It was a night much to be remembered by me: my grandfather and grandmother, father and mother, brothers and sister, all weeping. My grandfather, who was seventy years of age, with a long white beard, placed his hands on our heads and, with tears trickling from his eyes, pronounced a blessing. Some of the words I have not forgotten, although so many years since. The words were these: "May the God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob bless and preserve you, protect and defend you from all harm, keep you in His fear, help you to study His laws, strengthen you to obey Him, nor suffer you to forsake Him." The last words were these: "If you forsake the Lord, He will forsake you; but, if you cleave to Him, He will cleave to you." They then kissed us all affectionately, wishing us the presence of the Lord, and bade us farewell.

Extracts from Samuel of Sleaford, The Converted Jew

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS (10)

The Mustard Seed

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of

all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (Matthew 13.31,32).

There are many things in nature which have very small beginnings and yet become very large. The English oak tree, which can grow to a great size and whose wood is so strong and durable, begins as a tiny acorn. In Yellowstone National Park, USA, there is a small lake from which two streams run. One leads to the Missouri River and eventually runs into the Atlantic Ocean. The other leads to the Snake River and eventually runs into the Pacific Ocean.

The parable in the text above is proverbial, meaning that it should not be understood that the mustard seed is literally the smallest of all seeds in the world. The Lord Jesus spoke of a very tiny seed that many of His hearers were familiar with. Two things, though, are very important. First, that the seed is alive; and second, that given the right conditions, it will grow.

The kingdom of heaven is made up of the living family of God. Each member possesses this seed of living faith; faith being one of the principal graces, along with love and hope. *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him"* (Hebrews 11.6). Faith is found in the heart of every child of God, causing them to come unto God and diligently to seek after Him. One very clear evidence of this is prayer. The Holy Spirit indites prayer in the heart of a believer. When God creates a new heart within His people, they will cry out to Him in prayer. They will feel to be totally helpless and need the Lord to do everything for them. They will have a real spiritual hunger. They will have a deep sense that unless their needs are met, they must perish. Their one great need is for God's mercy, and they will be led to seek for this mercy in and through the Lord Jesus. The Lord's people are unable to give themselves faith, but it is received as a gift. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith;*

and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2.8).

Almost all of the Lord’s people feel that their faith is so small; at times they question whether they have any faith at all. They beg of the Lord to give them true, living faith, the faith of God’s elect. They want faith to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as the Saviour of the world, but as their own Saviour. God often proves the reality of that faith, by giving His people trials that only He can deliver them from.

Then there is growth. Anything that is dead does not grow. *“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever” (2 Peter 3.18).* Where there is the true grace of God in the heart, there will be living faith; and living faith will seek after the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. At first, the knowledge of the Lord Jesus may be very small; yet a soul that is alive will have an appetite and grow. *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2.2,3).* A newborn baby is so small, yet it cries out in hunger for milk. So, the newborn child of God needs to be fed. He needs to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. *“That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death” (Philippians 3.10).*

Every plant has roots. They go down into the ground to draw out the nutrients, and they also provide stability for the plant above. The Lord’s people also develop roots. They are taught to search the Word of God, to draw forth from the sacred Scriptures. *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught” (Colossians 2.6,7).*

The very early Christian church in the New Testament was so small that it was despised by many around. They thought that it would all come to nothing. However, the Pharisee

named Gamaliel gave this counsel to the other Jews. He reminded them that two sects of recent times began, continued for a while, and then came to nothing; but then he added: "*If... this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God*" (Acts 5.38,39). Truly the Christian church is of God. For years and years, men have tried to prevent the growth of the true Christian church of God, but all in vain. However small His church may appear on earth, nothing can prevent God from working in the hearts of His people. We are living in days when there appear to be few who are truly converted and added unto the church below, but the church in heaven above is still growing. May it be our mercy to be blessed with living faith and numbered amongst the true church of God.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about BALAAM. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 194 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Balak, king of the Moabites, was afraid of the children of Israel and sent princes to Balaam to ask him to come and curse Israel. What did God first say to Balaam? (Numbers 22.12)
2. Later Balak sent more princes to persuade him to come. What did God say to Balaam the second time? (Numbers 22.20)
3. Balaam went with the princes, but God was angry and sent an angel to withstand (resist) him. Why? (Numbers 22.32)
4. What animal did God use in a miraculous way to rebuke Balaam? (Numbers 22.28-30)
5. By this solemn rebuke, God made Balaam to know that he was not permitted to say what Balak wanted him to. What was he

- permitted to speak? (Number 22.35,38)
6. Balaam spoke some precious truths against his own will. What gracious desire did he express at the end of the first occasion he met with Balak, a desire never fulfilled? (Numbers 23)
 7. Balaam could not curse Israel, but soon God's anger was manifested against them. What was the cause? (Numbers 25)
 8. How do we know that Balaam was the instigator of this sin? (Numbers 31)
 9. Thinking back to question 6, how did Balaam die? (Numbers 31)
 10. Three times Balaam is mentioned in the New Testament as a perverse rebel against God. Write down the references.

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. Jehoiada.
2. "They left the house of the Lord God of their fathers and served groves and idols."
3. Saul.
4. David.
5. Saul said, "The Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, not by dreams."
6. Demas (Colossians 4.14; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4.10).
7. Judas Iscariot (Matthew 10.2-4; 26.14-16).
8. Ahithophel (2 Samuel 15.12,31; 17.23).
9. Simon, the sorcerer (Acts 8. 13,20,21).
10. Saul (1 Samuel 31.4), Judas Iscariot (Acts 1. 16-18), Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17.23).

SWEET CONSIDERATIONS

And is my name enrolled on high,
In God's eternal book?
Then Jesus Christ did for me die,
And all my sorrows took.

Am I a chosen son of God,
A legal heir of bliss?
Then Jesus shed for me His blood,
And I'm for ever His.

Am I a sheep in Jesus fold,
Watched by the Shepherd's care?
Then me the lion cannot hold,
Nor has he power to tear.

Am I a trophy of the blood
Which Christ on Calvary shed?
I'll bathe me in that precious flood,
To sin be ever dead.

Am I a sparkling jewel, bright?
A dazzling, brilliant gem?
The Saviour's garment is my right,
O let me touch the hem!

Am I the bride of Jesus Christ?
Am I the Saviour's love?
Then He shall ever reign the highest
In me His spotless dove.

A. Wilcockson

The Friendly Companion



The CN Tower in Toronto, Canada

“...they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” (Hebrews 11.38)

October 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

How many people do you know? What a strange question! Yet, the number of people you know depends on how old you are, how large your family is, how many people attend the place where you worship, whether you live in the city or in the country, and the size of your school.

There are many people whom we know by name, yet we know very little else about them. Thus, the very word “know” has a wide range of meaning.

Again, there are people whom we know because of the position they hold or because of what they have done. Those of you who live in the Netherlands or in the United Kingdom would know your King or Queen if you should happen to see him or her; yet he or she would not know you.

Many years ago, one of our ministers was standing on a cliff, looking over a bay along the Atlantic coast of England. He heard someone behind him say, “It is a lovely view.” As the minister turned around, he said, “That sounds like the Prime Minister.” To his surprise, it was indeed the Prime Minister of England. Although this minister was very well known by our churches in England and many others besides, he was unknown to the Prime Minister.

No matter how many people we know, the one thing needful is to know God and to be known by Him. There are many who boast that they know God, but they never do His will in obeying His commands. God will say to them, “*I never knew you: depart from Me*” (Matthew 7.23).

The Bible tells us that even the devil spoke on one occasion: “*I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God*” (Mark 1.24). How sad if we have no more knowledge of God than the devil! Moses knew that God was a holy God, a sin-hating God, a God who is a consuming fire; yet Moses also KNEW that He was a gracious, long-suffering, and forgiving God. David KNEW that God heard and answered prayer. Job KNEW that God could “*do every thing*” (Job 41.2). Jonah KNEW that “*salvation is of the LORD*” (Jonah 2.9).

While the people of God want to know Him in such ways, they are also very anxious to know that He KNOWS them. When Nathanael came to Jesus at the bidding of Philip, Jesus said to him: *"Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile"* (John 1.47). Nathanael was overcome with wonder and asked Jesus, *"Whence knowest Thou me?"* (verse 48). How wonderful it must have been to learn that the Lord knew him before Philip came and said they had found Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus declared: *"I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine"* (John 10.14). He knows their needs, fears, sorrows, desires, and all the things that concern them. As sheep know the voice of their shepherd, so the people of God know His voice.

David was brought to realise how perfectly (completely) the Lord knew him. In Psalm 139 he wrote: *"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, ... and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, Thou knowest it altogether. ... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."*

May the Lord in His mercy grant to each of us that we may truly KNOW God and be KNOWN by God.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Like the CN Tower on the cover, great towers have been built in many cities of the world. They are an impressive sight, with their immense height and varied architectural designs. What a wonderful view they provide from the top! What great strength they must have to endure the most adverse weather conditions! Although so strong and beautiful, they are still earthly towers and can quickly be brought down. The twin towers in New York City proved that in 2001 when they were destroyed by terrorists and thousands of lives were lost.

Since the days of Noah, men have endeavoured to make a name for themselves by setting up great monuments and

towers. No doubt you remember the first attempt by men to build a tower. Their aim was to build a tower whose top would reach unto heaven. The plain of Shinar where they began to build must have been a most suitable place for such a tower. The Bible tells us: *"And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower"* (Genesis 11.5). The Lord came down for more than just to see the tower; He would put a stop to it. How quickly the work was ended and the people were scattered! The Lord confounded their language so that they could not understand one another's speech.

Not all towers are literal ones that can be seen with the eyes. There are also figurative towers that men endeavour to build, such as worldly possessions, great estates, earthly riches, and world-wide fame. The Lord still looks upon such towers, and without His blessing, they are towers of Babel or confusion.

How much better if we are brought to know the tower that David speaks of in Psalm 61 verse 3: *"For Thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy."* Another time David declared of the Lord: *"He is ... my high tower, ... the tower of salvation"* (2 Samuel 22.3,51).

Solomon tells us in Proverbs 18 verse 10: *"The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe"*. The name of Jesus, who saves His people from their sins, is their strong tower. God Himself is their strong tower. He is true, faithful, merciful, gracious, and good. God is LOVE, LIGHT and LIFE. What a high tower He is in each of these!

Habakkuk lived in a most difficult and troublesome time. It was a day of great judgments; yet he had a tower, where he fled to watch and see what God would say unto him. Still today, those who are taught of God long to stand upon their tower, Jesus Christ, and wait to hear what God will say to them.

Better the world be offended with me than God! The utmost it can take from me is life.

Martin Luther

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE WIDOW'S SON RESTORED**

Elijah stayed with the widow woman and her son for many months. One day the little boy became so sick that he died. How distressed his poor mother was! She thought she was being punished for her sins.

Taking the boy out of her arms, Elijah carried him up into the loft where he lived, and gently laid him upon his own bed. Then he cried unto the Lord, saying: "*O LORD my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again.*" Never before had one who was dead come back to life. Yet, Elijah believed that his God was able to restore the little boy. The Lord heard the prayer of Elijah. The soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.

Then Elijah brought him back to his mother, saying, "*See, thy son liveth.*" How happy the widow woman was! Now she knew that Elijah was indeed a man of God, and the words that he spoke were true.

QUESTIONS:

1. What happened to the son of the widow woman?
 2. What did Elijah pray might come into him again?
 3. Now the widow knew that Elijah was — ? (4 words)
- Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 218 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.*

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. A handful.
2. The barrel of meal.
3. The cruse of oil.

Contributed

*“And the
LORD heard
the voice
of
Elijah.”
1 Kings 17.22*

BIBLE LESSONS**PAUL ACCUSED BEFORE FELIX**

What accusations could the Jews bring against the Apostle Paul? He had written to the believers in Rome: *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"* (Romans 12.18). Surely, he had endeavoured to do that himself. However, Paul's adversaries brought charges against him concerning the law of his God, just as the accusers of the prophet Daniel had done many years before.

The great orator Tertullus told Felix that Paul was a *"pestilent"* man, meaning he was to be abhorred like a vile plague. He added that Paul was *"a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world."* The Romans were very suspicious of seditions or uprisings against their authority. He also charged Paul with being a ringleader of a sect called the Nazarenes, and he claimed that Paul went about to profane their temple. As Tertullus brought forth these charges, Ananias and the Jews agreed that they were true. Such charges would surely convince Felix that Paul was a dangerous man.

Paul must have felt his spirit stirred after hearing such false charges. Perhaps you have been accused of doing or saying something which you did not do. We cannot help but wonder if Paul took some comfort in remembering that the Jews had brought false charges against the Lord Jesus. There is nothing that the Lord's people are called to pass through, that He has not already passed through Himself.

When Tertullus had finished, Felix motioned to Paul that he was at liberty to defend himself. Paul told Felix that his accusers could not prove any of the things they had spoken. He added that it had been only twelve days since he went up to Jerusalem: the first day was spent journeying to Jerusalem; on the second day he was with James and the elders; the third day he purified himself in the temple; on the fourth and fifth days he was kept in the castle of the chief captain, Claudius Lysias; the sixth day he was brought to Felix, and he had been with

him for the last five days. Thus, it was not possible that he had profaned the temple as his accusers had said.

Paul told them that his purpose in coming to the temple was to bring alms and offerings. With great boldness, Paul confessed that, *“after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”*

Paul concluded his address by saying: *“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man.”* Paul knew there was no law that would forbid any man from teaching about the resurrection from the dead.

Felix, having been a judge for many years over the Jews, knew very well that everything Paul had said was true. The Bible tells us that he had perfect knowledge of such things. Surely, he would set Paul at liberty. But what a disappointment! He told Paul that he was going to defer the judgment until the chief captain, Lysias, came down and they could hear from him everything about this case.

Perhaps he was afraid that the Jews would create an uproar if he set Paul free. He commanded a centurion to watch over Paul and to allow his friends to visit him and provide for his needs.

You can read about this in Acts chapter 24 verses 1 to 23.

QUESTIONS:

1. Tertullus charged Paul with being a ringleader of which sect?
2. What was Paul's purpose in coming to the temple? (5 words)
3. What did Paul say he had hope toward God for? (9 words)
4. What did Paul exercise himself in? (13 words)
5. What kind of knowledge did Felix have of the Jews?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 218 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Two hundred soldiers. Two hundred spearmen. Seventy horsemen.
2. The third hour (or 9 pm).
3. Felix.
4. Tertullus.
5. Who can be against us?



AFTER MANY DAYS

When a young Scotsman named Mackay left home for college, his mother gave him a Bible. She wrote both his name and hers on the inside, along with a Bible verse.

This young Scotsman became a physician, having been a brilliant student in the medical school he had attended. In time he became head of the largest hospital in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was highly successful both in medicine and surgery. However, he was also a prominent unbeliever and elected president of a society of atheists in the capital of Scotland. He lived an immoral and unrestrained life of excess and evil.

One day a man was brought into his hospital who had been severely injured. As Dr. Mackay looked at the pitifully crushed body, he was amazed to note the peace and radiance on the victim's face. The terribly wounded man asked this question of the surgeon: "Just what is my condition? I want to know the truth."

The doctor answered honestly, "You have, at the most, but three hours of life."

The brightness on the face of the one who would soon be in eternity did not dim at the news. He asked, "Will you please send at once to my landlady, and request her to send me the book?"

"What book?" questioned Mackay.

"Oh, just ask her for the book. She will know," said the dying man.

The doctor arranged for it to be brought, and he went to see other patients in the great hospital. But some words the dying man had said came repeatedly into his mind; they were, "I am ready; I am going to be with the Lord Jesus Christ."

A few hours later, Dr. Mackay was back in the ward where the injured man had been taken. The doctor asked the nurse in charge about him, and she replied, "He died just a few minutes ago."

The doctor asked another question, "Did he get the book in time?"

"Yes, not long before he passed away," was the answer.

"It was his bank book, wasn't it?" further questioned the medical man.

"No. He died with it under his pillow. It is still there; go and look at it."

The physician stood beside the bed; he reached under the pillow and drew out a Bible. Of itself, it opened at the flyleaf. There in his mother's handwriting was her name, his own, and a Scripture verse! It was the very Book he had received from her years ago, as he was leaving for college. Long ago he had sold it, among other possessions, to obtain money for more liquor.

Overwhelmed by tremendous memories, he hurried down to his private office, fell on his knees, and prayed to God for mercy on his soul. His petition was heard, and his blind eyes were opened. Old things passed away, and he was made a new

creature in Christ Jesus. And eventually, W. P. Mackay, the atheist physician, became a minister of God.

Adapted from Cheering Words 1977

A CUP OF WATER

Two ladies of high social status walked through the streets of Paris to their home on the 24th August, 1572. Their names were Mrs. Lacroix and Mrs. Howard.

Mrs. Howard was English and was lodged by Mrs. Lacroix. They both belonged to "the new Protestant faith," although there was a great difference between them.

Mrs. Howard had become a Protestant out of deep convictions of heart. Mrs. Lacroix had become a Protestant because of political calculations and a desire to oppose the government.

It was very busy in Paris in those days. There was a royal wedding at hand; many Huguenot leaders had come to attend the marriage of Henry of Navarre, a Protestant prince, to Margaret, the sister of the king.

When those respectable ladies in their costly raiment walked through the streets, Mrs. Howard stopped suddenly.

She saw a sentinel who was troubled with intense thirst; he could do nothing to quench his thirst, since he was not allowed to leave his post.

"What are you going to do, Cecilia?" asked Mrs. Lacroix. She was offended when her friend turned to the soldier. "Do not talk with such a common soldier! You throw away your prestige."

Mrs. Howard, however, was not concerned about such an offence; the soldier told her that he had been seriously ill and was fainting with thirst.

She did not hesitate, but ran to an adjacent house and brought a cup of fresh water to the thirsty man.

The soldier, who was a Roman Catholic, felt completely refreshed; thankfulness shone in his eyes.

There was general hatred against those of the Protestant faith by the Roman Catholics in authority. However, many Huguenots lived in Paris, and many others had come for the wedding. They could not have suspected that the queen and her advisors had secretly made a terrible plan to kill them.

"Are you English?" the soldier asked. He had suspected it, considering her pronunciation of the French language, and she confirmed it. "You are a Protestant?" he asked next.

Mrs. Howard did not deny it. Then the soldier wanted to know the street and the house where she lodged, and he was only satisfied after she told him.

Mrs. Lacroix, who was waiting at a distance, was inwardly burning with indignation. She said that Cecilia had been very careless to speak like that to a Roman Catholic soldier and to let him know that she was a Protestant.

Mrs. Howard answered very little to this: there was a possibility that she had not been careful enough. Coming home, she withdrew herself early to her room. She committed all into the hands of her heavenly Father. She knew that He would never leave nor forsake her.

Thus, the night came which is written in blood. It is called the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Suddenly war cries were heard, and rifle fire crackled through the streets. The houses of the Huguenots were entered, and a terrible massacre began.

Mrs. Howard had risen and dressed herself at once; she awoke the whole family, and they waited with trembling and great fear, as the events began to unfold.

They did not have to wait very long; the door was kicked open, and sharp weapons glittered in the light of the torches. Soldiers with their insignia on their sleeves, called out, "Where are the Huguenots?"

Mrs. Howard bravely stepped forward, and said very calmly, "I am really the only true Huguenot here!"

"Then you have signed your death sentence!" shouted the soldiers. But before the deadly steel struck her, something

extraordinary happened. A soldier pushed to the front; it was the sentinel of yesterday afternoon.

"This woman is my booty [property taken in battle]!" he said. "Remember, companions!"

His companions seemed to think that was fair, for they let him go with Mrs. Howard, the Huguenot woman.

"Do not fear, lady!" said the soldier. "Keep very quiet, and I will bring you to safety; I do not forget the mercy you showed me!"

He quickly walked on with her until he came to a narrow street in a low quarter. Then the soldier brought her into the home of his mother, telling her about the experience of the previous day.

The good-natured, plain woman agreed perfectly with the kind deed of her son in saving Mrs. Howard. She hid her through the terrible Bartholomew's night and until the intense persecution was past. Then they found an opportunity to take her to Calais, where she could cross over to England.

The Lord Jesus said, "*For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name ... verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward*" (Mark 9.41). In the wonderful providence of God, Mrs. Howard was moved to have compassion on the thirsty soldier; not because he was a believer, but simply to a suffering, human being in need. Then the Lord constrained the soldier to spare her life in return for her kindness to him.

Who would have thought that a cup of water would have been so greatly rewarded!

Adapted from Religious Stories for Young and Old, Volume 2

ENGLAND'S INDEBTEDNESS TO THE HUGUENOTS

Before the 14th century, the people of England worked mainly in agricultural occupations. There were very few skilled trades and industries. For example, most clothing had to be imported from other countries, because even though the wool used to make it was from England, it had to be shipped to

Flanders, France, and Germany to be dyed and manufactured. To remedy this, several successive kings of England, starting with Edward III, invited foreign craftsmen to come over into England. Some did, but there were many advantages to staying in their own countries, so they did not emigrate in large numbers.

In the early part of the 16th century, the Reformation under Luther took place, causing a complete revolution in religious opinions throughout Europe. Among those most closely linked with the Reformed faith were the people of the Netherlands and the Huguenots, or Protestants, of France.

The people of the Netherlands were under the dominion of Spain at that time. The king of Spain, Philip II, hated the Reformed faith and was determined to use any means possible to stamp it out among his subjects in the Netherlands. He sent a vast army under the command of the Duke of Alba to accomplish his design. Many fell victim to the cruelty of their persecutors, counting the Word of God and the privileges of the gospel much more precious than life. However, others prepared to leave the country, and with the previous invitations from England still extended, they fled there for asylum, where they were readily welcomed.

In France, somewhat similar scenes had taken place against the Huguenots, culminating at length in the terrible massacre of St. Bartholomew in August 1572. Worn out by continued persecution and desiring liberty of conscience in the worship of God, the Huguenots joined the refugees from the Netherlands, seeking refuge in England, then under the reign of Elizabeth. Here they settled in large numbers throughout the land, especially in the south.

Having settled down, the refugees began to pursue the callings which they had followed in their own country. Among them were cloth-makers from Antwerp and Bruges, lace-makers from Valenciennes, cambric-makers from Cambray, glass-workers from Paris, weavers from Meaux, merchants and tradesmen from Rouen, and shipwrights from Dieppe and

Havre. Some, too, were millers, potters, smiths, brewers and hat-makers. Other industries brought to England by these men included the dyeing of fabrics, the manufacture of felts, the making of brass plates for culinary utensils, the manufacture of tapestry, the art of printing wallpapers, and the striping and flowering of silks and damasks; as well as skilled work in metals and the making of cutlery, jewellery, and mathematical instruments. They also revived gardening, with many of the grounds at Wandsworth, Battersea, and Bermondsey owing their origin to Flemish refugees.

In 1621, when a census was taken of the city of London, there were found to be 10,000 of the refugees in that city alone, carrying on 121 different trades. All of these were trades and industries which, prior to the coming of the foreign Protestants, were practically unknown in England.

The industries introduced in this way soon lifted England high among the nations, with the general results of abundant employment, cheap food, and great prosperity throughout what had been an impoverished kingdom at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign; "these blessings from God," Bishop Parkhurst declaring, "having happened by reason of the godly exiles who were so kindly harboured there."

Thus, we see England's indebtedness, under God, to the Protestant refugees from France and the Netherlands. There was never a reason to regret admitting them to this country. Honest and God-fearing, they proved to be peaceful and law-abiding citizens. They had come to England in order that they might have liberty of conscience and freedom to worship God according to the teaching of His Word; and having this privilege granted them, they were quite content. Wherever they went, they formed themselves into churches, having their own ministers to break unto them the bread of life, and instruct them in the mysteries of the gospel.

B.A.W, Friendly Companion 1904 [adapted]

A PRECIOUS BRAMBLE BUSH

A law was passed in France in 1598 that granted French Protestants (called Huguenots) freedom from persecution. This is referred to as the Edict of Nantes. However, in the year 1685, the law was revoked, and the Huguenots were once again persecuted, as the government tried to force them to convert to Roman Catholicism. Although they were forbidden by law to leave France, many of them did escape to other countries.

Two men, an old man and a young one, were walking in a quaint, old-fashioned garden, enjoying the morning air and the beauty of their surroundings. They were uncle and nephew.

The older man was the son of a French Protestant refugee. Although born in England, he kept up many of the habits and customs of his fatherland; his nephew, having mingled in English school life and business, had scarcely anything left of French origin, except his name and a certain courtesy of manner that was inherited.

"I do like this old garden, uncle," he exclaimed, as they sauntered along. "It seems almost a bit out of an old world, and you keep it in such beautiful order."

"Ah, I love it. It was my father's planning, and everywhere in it I seem to recognise a touch of his hands. He used to say it carried him back to his dear France, so I keep it just as he left it."

"There is one thing I cannot understand," said the nephew, as he stood in front of a circular piece of stonework in which a bramble was growing luxuriantly. "Why do you keep this bramble here, trimmed and tended as though it were the most precious thing in the garden?"

"Ah!" replied the old man. "That is just what it is – the most precious thing in all the garden."

"That bramble was brought from our dear France by my mother and planted there. When the edict was revoked by the king, my father could not believe that the old days of persecution were to be revived. He thought the world had

grown wiser. But it had not. Terrible stories began to come in day by day of suffering and oppression, and even of death. Your grandfather was a brave Christian, who could have died for his faith, but your grandmother, whom he had just married, was a tender, gentle little woman, who trembled lest she should be false to her Saviour, whom she dearly loved; and they determined to flee from the country for her sake. Already he had made considerable provision by sending his money out of the land, and now secretly he made his arrangements to escape. Suddenly he received notice from a friend that a warrant was out for his arrest. Not a moment was to be lost! In an hour or two, at the most, the dear old home would be searched and themselves dragged to prison. Hurriedly they got away in disguise, accompanied by an old and faithful servant. The pursuit after them was eager, but my dear mother, who had been tenderly brought up and could not endure the fatigue of so rapid and rough a journey, could go no farther. And where could she be taken? The homes of our people were broken up. Many, for the love of God, would have helped them, but they could not even help themselves; others were in prison, others fugitives as they were.

“My father was at his wits’ end. He stood for a moment in agony, and he lifted up his heart to our good God and Father for direction and help. In a moment, he made up his mind that he would go into the wood at the side of the road and hide behind a great bramble that he saw sending its streamers down to the ground. There they lay resting until their pursuers came up. They were so near the road they could hear them talking as they passed.

“‘Ought we not to have taken that other road?’ said one of them, drawing his rein as they rode up. ‘If they are on this, we should have overtaken them before now.’ ‘No, no!’ answered his companion, ‘we shall have them directly. We know they are in front of us. If they had only known it, the other road is the clearest, though; but they are always fools’ – and the man laughed. The other man pulled up his horse, and turning,

looked full at the clump of trees behind which they were hidden. 'I wish,' he said, 'that they were in that clump, and I would soon settle them'; and pulling out his pistol, he fired it into the midst. Laughing, he turned around and they all rode away.

"The bullet grazed my father's arm, but he never moved a muscle until they were gone, nor did any of them. Then they kneeled down and thanked the good Lord for His protection and care. Surely, God hid them. They were 'in the secret place of the most High,' and were abiding 'under the shadow of the Almighty' (Psalm 91.1). When they came out, my mother found that a piece of the bramble had been cut off by the man's bullet, and picking it up, she brought it away with her as a memorial of God's mercy. They turned back to take the other road, which they found vastly more clear, and at last got safely across the frontier. And when they settled down here, that bramble, which had been carefully preserved, was planted in that place.

"You will not wonder now when I say it is the most precious thing in this dear old place, and that we guard it as one of our choice treasures."

Friendly Companion 1904

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS (11)

The Wicked Husbandmen

"Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country" (Matthew 21.33).

In this parable, the Lord Jesus was speaking, in the first place, to the unbelieving Jews that were gathered around Him. Even they perceived this: *"And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard His parables, they perceived that He spake of them"* (verse 45). They are set forth as the wicked

husbandmen to whom the vineyard was loaned, with the expectation that they would gather the fruits for the owner. Yet, they despised the servants of the householder when they were sent to receive the fruits of the vineyard. Eventually, they killed the son, who was the heir, that they might seize the inheritance. We would understand that God the Father is the Householder, the prophets being the servants, and the Lord Jesus the Son and Heir.

So often in the Old Testament, the children of Israel rejected the prophets of God and their prophecies. We think of Elijah, Jeremiah, and Amos, to name a few. Elijah said, *"For the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away"* (1 Kings 19.10).

The children of Israel were the most highly-favoured and privileged people upon the whole earth. The Lord God gave them His holy law, the promised land, the lives of their enemies, and the supply of every need. They had the Word of God, the prophets who declared the Word of God, and the tabernacle. Later, they had the temple and all that it meant. The Lord chose them and provided for them, with the command that they must worship Him alone. Very sadly, and extremely solemnly, we know from the Scriptures that they did not continue to serve God, but they turned from Him and rebelled.

But does not the Lord speak to us also in this parable? What great privileges we have in our day! One of them is the Bible, the Word of God. Have you ever considered that your Bible is God's Word? Through this Book God speaks to all mankind, but especially those who profess to be His people. Are we like those wicked husbandmen who completely cast away the Word of God and take no notice of His teaching and warnings?

In His mercy, God permits needy, helpless sinners to draw near unto Him in prayer; to seek His mercy, the forgiveness of

all their sins, and grace to help in every need. Have you ever considered what a great privilege this is? Can you imagine what it would be like if we could not have access unto God in prayer? The wicked husbandmen did not want to have any communication with the householder; those whose hearts are set upon the world have no desire to hear the Word of God or to pray.

Most of us have a place where we can meet together to worship God and be found under the preaching of the gospel. This is a great privilege, but we may be left to take it for granted or despise it. Do you value the opportunity to attend services in the Lord's house? David said, *"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD"* (Psalm 122.1). Do you feel glad, or are the services of His house wearisome to you?

"And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it" (verse 35). The Lord still sends His servants to preach the gospel and to set forth the Lord Jesus (His Son) as the one and only Saviour. The purpose of preaching is that spiritual fruit might be brought forth to glorify God. We read of these fruits in Galatians 5 verse 22 and 23: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."* May the Lord grant us a right understanding of these fruits and, by His grace, enable us to bring them forth. *"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them"* (Matthew 7.20).

Really, all the wicked husbandmen wanted was the inheritance. The Pharisees and scribes wanted to take all the honour unto themselves, and as sinners, we also seek honour for ourselves. May the Lord teach us that all the things we have in this life belong to Him. He is our Maker and Creator, and all that we have is given by Him. He has a right to remove them at any time, whether they be possessions, families, health, abilities, or so on. Solemnly, we must answer to Him for what we do with those things He has given. Have we been humbled

before Him in true repentance? Do we seek grace to bring forth fruits to His honour and glory?

When the householder in the parable sent his son, he said, *"They will reverence my son"* (verse 37). The unbelieving Jews, along with the majority of the Gentiles, showed absolutely no reverence to the Lord Jesus. When the fear of God is in the heart, it will produce a gracious reverence to the Lord. *"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him"* (Psalm 89.7). One of the saddest things we often witness in these days is the lack of reverence to the Lord. Error often starts with something so very small; God's Word is clear that *"a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"* (1 Corinthians 5.6). God's work in the heart will humble a person and bring him to worship at His feet. There may be an outward appearance of being religious, but where this humble, reverential fear is lacking, the desires of the heart are still upon worldly things. Such persons never stir up a holy jealousy in others for the things of God. God does not overlook anything that is contrary to His Word or that despises Him. *"When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto Him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons"* (verses 40, 41).

May grace be given us to bring forth fruits acceptable unto Him.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about CAVES. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 218 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Who fled from Sodom, then was afraid to dwell in Zoar, and finally lived in a cave in the mountain? (Genesis 19.29,30)
2. Abraham bought a cave from Ephron the Hittite. What was the name of the cave and what did he want it for? (Genesis 23.9)
3. Who hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah? (Joshua 10.16-23)
4. What was the name of the cave David hid in when fleeing from King Saul? (1 Samuel 22.1)
5. In the times of the judges, why did the children of Israel make dens in mountains, caves and strongholds? (Judges 6.2)
6. King Saul once went into a cave where David and his men were hiding. What did David do to Saul? (1 Samuel 24)
7. Who hid a hundred of the Lord's prophets "by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water"? (1 Kings 18)
8. A prophet of the Lord ran away and lodged in a cave. What question did God ask him twice while there? (1 Kings 19)
9. Which people were buried in the cave mentioned in question 2? (Genesis 49 & 50)
10. In the New Testament, who was buried in a cave with a stone across the entrance?

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed."
2. "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do."
3. Balaam's way "was perverse."
4. An ass.
5. Balaam was only permitted to speak the word that God put into his mouth.
6. "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." (Numbers 23.10)
7. Israel began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab and to worship Moabitish idols.
8. "These [women] caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor." (Numbers 31.16)
9. Balaam died in battle against the children of Israel. (Numbers 31.8)
10. 2 Peter 2.15; Jude 11; Revelation 2.14.

THIS I KNOW

I do not know what next may come
Across my pilgrim way,
I do not know tomorrow's road
Nor see beyond today.
BUT THIS I KNOW – My Saviour knows
The path I cannot see,
And I can trust His wounded hand
To guide and care for me.

I do not know what may befall
Of sunshine or of rain,
I do not know what may be mine
Of pleasure or of pain.
BUT THIS I KNOW – My Saviour knows,
And whatsoe'er it be,
Still I can trust His love to give
What will be best for me.

I do not know what still awaits
Or what the morrow brings,
But with the glad salute of faith
I hail its opening wings!
FOR THIS I KNOW – That in my Lord
Shall all my needs be met,
And I can trust the heart of Him
Who has not failed me yet.

E. Margaret Clarkson

The Friendly Companion



Thiepval War Memorial, France

“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.” (Romans 7.23)

November 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Perhaps many of you have memorised the first Psalm, which has been called “the Psalm of two ways.” These two ways are: “*the way of the righteous*” and “*the way of the ungodly*.” The way of the righteous is from above, while the way of the ungodly is from beneath.

We are all in the way of the ungodly by nature. “*We have turned every one to his own way*” (Isaiah 53.6). It is a way that leads away from God. The Book of Proverbs tells us that it is the “*way of transgressors*” (Proverbs 13.15). Sadly, it is a way that our sinful hearts love.

The way of sin is the way of the stubborn. After the death of Joshua and the godly leaders who outlived him, the children of Israel often turned from the way of God. The Lord then allowed various nations to rise up and afflict His people. When they cried unto the Lord, He kindly raised up judges to deliver them. I wonder how many of these judges you can name? The Bible tells us that when the judge was dead, the people corrupted themselves by following other gods (idols) and bowing down to them. They would not turn from their own doings, nor from their stubborn ways.

If someone is reprov'd for doing wrong and still continues in it, we would say they are being very stubborn. Or if we try to move an object out of the way, and it does not budge, we call it a stubborn thing. David found he had a very stubborn sin. In Psalm 119 verse 29, he prayed: “*Remove from me the way of lying; and grant me Thy law graciously*.” Many times he had to pray about this sin. Again, in Psalm 120 verse 2, he prayed: “*Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue*.”

The way of sin is sometimes called “*the way of a fool*” (Proverbs 10.15) or “*the way of the heathen*” (Jeremiah 10.2). The Lord Jesus called it the broad way “*that leadeth to destruction*” (Matthew 7.13). Peter tells us that all who forsake the right way, follow “*the way of Balaam ... who loved the wages of unrighteousness*” (2 Peter 2.15). All of these are the ways of the ungodly.

The way of the righteous is LIFE. The Bible tells us: "*There is none righteous, no, not one*" (Romans 3.10). Yet, Jesus answers for His people: "... *their righteousness is of Me, saith the LORD*" (Isaiah 54.17). Thus, the way of the righteous is in the Lord Jesus. He said of Himself: "*I AM THE WAY*" (John 14.6). Isaiah prophesied of Jesus when he wrote: "*And AN HIGHWAY shall be there, and A WAY, and it shall be called THE WAY of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon ... but the redeemed shall walk there*" (Isaiah 35.8,9).

What a HIGHWAY the righteous have to go in! It is a HIGHWAY because it leads to eternal life. Do you remember David's prayer in Psalm 139? "*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*"

While it is "*the way of the righteous,*" those whom the Lord teaches in this way are sinners. The righteous are those who learn of Him. Thus it is written: "*He is in the way of life that keepeth instruction: but he that refuseth reproof [instruction] erreth*" (Proverbs 10.17). The Lord's people often have to pray that He will teach them the way of His commandments.

It is also a HIGHWAY, because it is the way of TRUTH. When the Lord Jesus told His disciples that He was "*THE WAY,*" He also told them that He was "*THE TRUTH*" and "*THE LIFE*" (John 14.6). He is also "*THE WAY OF PEACE*" (Luke 1.79) and a "*LIVING WAY*" (Hebrews 10.20).

The way of the ungodly leads to DARKNESS, while the way of the righteous leads to LIGHT. May the Lord help you to understand the solemn difference between these two ways.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

There is no condition so low but may have hope, and none so high as to be out of the reach of fear. *The Sower 1882*

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The photo on the front cover is of the Franco-British memorial of World War I in Thiepval, northern France. It is said to be the highest British war memorial in the world. The names of over 72,200 missing soldiers of the First World War are engraved in the stone pillars.

This month marks the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. Every nation involved in the war has memorials to mark certain events or remarkable feats performed by soldiers; yet, today we hardly notice these memorials. The trials, sorrows and sacrifices which millions of people endured during those war years (1914-1918) are forgotten. Anyone from that time period, who is still living today, would only have been an infant or very young child when the war ended.

Some of our older friends may remember certain accounts that their parents or grandparents told them. Today, any knowledge of that war must be obtained by reading books of history or the records and journals of those who lived at the time.

The events which caused such a conflict to begin and continue for four years might seem very small when looked at separately. Yet, one event working upon another is all that was necessary for confrontation. In various nations at the time, there was unrest, greed, or leaders who were aspiring to increase their dominion.

The rulers of Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United Kingdom, all had their own reasons and aims for entering the great conflict. All, no doubt, thought they had justifiable grounds to commit their countries to war.

We wonder if any of them had thoughts like Abraham Lincoln had during the Civil War between the States just fifty years before. On September 30th, 1862, Mr. Lincoln wrote in his personal meditations: "The will of God prevails; in great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present

Civil War, it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party; and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are the best adaptation to effect His purpose."

When the peace treaties were signed at the end of World War I, it was thought by the nations involved that they had secured peace, so the world would never again see such a horrible conflict. Yet, a short twenty years later, the nations of the world were involved in a conflict that, in many respects, would dwarf the First World War. All the memorials which men set up cannot prevent future wars or secure lasting peace. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that there would always be wars and rumours of wars.

There is another warfare in the world that goes on between Christ and Satan, good and evil. This warfare will also continue until the end of time. Yet, for the church of God, the Lord gave Isaiah a prophecy for His people: "*that her warfare is accomplished (finished)*" (Isaiah 40.2). Thus, it was said for each of His people: "*the Lord is his [Jacob's] memorial*" (Hosea 12.5). He is their deliverer, their victory, and thus He is their PEACE.

A TIMELY PRAYER

A boiler exploded in a mill in the winter of 1873, with very serious consequences; several people were killed and many more injured. The wife of one of the men working at the mill was busy in her home, which was nearby. At the time of the explosion, she suddenly felt an unusually strong desire to pray and went down upon her knees. Almost immediately, a large piece of the boiler came crashing into the room where she was. If she had not kneeled down to pray, it would have hit her head; but because she immediately followed the urge to pray, her life was spared. Someone commented, "Surely He may be called the best Shield, who can protect the lives of His people in such wonderful ways as this."

Adapted from *The Young People's Magazine*

A CHILD'S TRUST IN GOD

One afternoon, a little girl about nine years of age went to drive some stray calves back to the farm where she lived. Her home was in the state of Colorado in the United States, at a time when there was still much wild, unsettled land. At last she found the calves in a far-off place. As she was trying to drive them home, she went astray and lost her way in the forest.

Eventually night came on, a chilly November night. Not knowing where she was, the little girl just kept walking slowly onward. At last, in the providence of God, she reached another farmer's house. It was a long distance from her own home, but there she was safe.

The little girl was asked many questions about how she got safely through the night. In answer to these questions, she said, "The wolves came close behind me and even seemed to snap at my heels; but I remembered how my mother had taught me always to pray to God for protection when I was in danger. I did so pray, and then I knew that the wolves couldn't hurt me, because God wouldn't let them."

How sweet was that little girl's faith in the protection of the Good Shepherd, who watches over His sheep and protects them from harm.

Trust God's wisdom thee to guide,
Trust His goodness to provide;
Trust His saving love and power,
Trust Him every day and hour;
Trust Him as the only Light,
Trust Him in the darkest night;
Trust in sickness, trust in health,
Trust in poverty and wealth;
Trust in joy and trust in grief,
Trust His promise for relief;
Trust in living, dying, too,
Trust Him all thy journey through!

Adapted from *Bible Animals* by Richard Newton

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE LORD ANSWERS BY FIRE**

There had been no rain for more than three years. The Lord told Elijah to go and meet King Ahab, and then He would send rain. Elijah asked Ahab to gather all the people of Israel and the prophets of Baal unto mount Carmel.

Elijah said to the people, *“How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.”* He told them to make a sacrifice unto Baal, and he would sacrifice unto the Lord; *“and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God.”*

The prophets of Baal prepared their sacrifice first. They called on the name of Baal all day long, but *“there was no voice, nor any that answered.”* Then Elijah prepared his sacrifice. He told them to pour water over it, until the water ran around the altar and filled a trench about it. Then Elijah prayed unto the Lord, and He sent down fire. It burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and even the water in the trench. When the people saw it, they said, *“The LORD, He is the God.”*

QUESTIONS:

1. To whom did the people make a sacrifice?
2. What did they pour over Elijah's sacrifice?
3. What did the Lord send down?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. He died.
2. His soul.
3. A man of God.

*“Then the
fire of
the LORD
fell . . .”*

1 Kings 18.38

BIBLE LESSONS**PAUL PREACHES TO FELIX AND DRUSILLA**

Paul was not the only one disappointed with the decision of Felix to keep him in prison. The Jews returned to Jerusalem in a rage. They had felt sure that Felix would release Paul, so they could put him to death.

After some days had passed, Paul was brought out of prison. He must have wondered if he was going to be set free at last. Felix had returned to Caesarea and sent for Paul. With Felix was his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess.

However, it was not to set Paul free that Felix had called for him, but rather to hear more about the things Paul had spoken of when the Jews were accusing him. It had caused Felix such anxiety, that he wished to hear more *“concerning the faith in Christ.”*

Paul began to tell him of righteousness; righteousness which was needed by Felix and those who judged others. They ought to judge fairly and not by bribes. Surely, he would also have told Felix that a righteousness was needed by every man in order to appear before God. He would have told how man had lost his righteousness by sinning against God. Especially, Paul would have told of the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ, through which men are justified before God.

Paul also spoke of temperance, which means to practice control over one's passions and sensual desires. Secular historians tell us that Felix and Drusilla were living in an immoral relationship, and Paul would have faithfully reproved them.

Next, Paul told them of the judgment to come. As a Roman governor, Felix had passed judgment upon many people, often very unjustly. Now he heard that he, along with all men, would be judged by God; He would judge all men by His holy law. Being a Jew, Drusilla would have known the law of God. Their consciences bore witness to all that Paul said.

The Bible tells us that *“as he [Paul] reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled.”* Felix told Paul to *“Go thy way for this time [for now]; when I*

have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Satan would make sure that he never had a convenient season; whether through business, pursuit of pleasure, or cares of life, there would never be a convenient season. While he knew that everything Paul had said was true, he could not give up his sinful passions. Nor did he ask Paul what he should do.

How many, like Felix, hear the warnings of God's servants and believe them to be true, yet never turn from their ways, confessing their sins! Felix may have trembled, yet his heart was not broken before God. He showed the real desire of his heart, for the Bible says: *"He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him."*

The Bible also tells us that *"he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him."* If he had any fear of being warned further by Paul, the power of covetousness was far stronger. He kept suggesting to Paul that if he paid him money, he would be set free. He knew that Paul was innocent, yet in the hope of getting money, he detained him.

Paul did not yield to the temptation; to do so would encourage Felix in his sinful practices. More importantly, it would mean obtaining his freedom by unlawful means.

For two more years, Felix left Paul in prison to please the Jewish leaders.

You can read about this in Acts chapter 24 verses 24 to 27.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who were Paul's hearers when he was brought out of prison?
2. Of what three things did Paul reason with them?
3. What did it make Felix do? (1 word)
4. When did Felix say he would call for Paul? (6 words)
5. For how many years was Paul left in prison?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. The Nazarenes.
2. To bring alms and offerings.
3. That there shall be a resurrection of the dead.
4. To have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man.
5. Perfect knowledge.

THE WAY

Eastern customs and habits often teach us much about Bible truths. In the countries of the East, at least in former times, no one seemed to be in a hurry. If you stopped to ask the way to go somewhere, instead of giving you full directions, the Eastern man would turn right around from where he was going and say, "I am the way; follow me." And he would safely guide you all the way to your destination.

There is a very beautiful parallel in the Scriptures. When a sinner seeks to know the way to God, there is an eternal Guide, even our Lord Jesus Christ who says, "*I am the Way*" (John 14.6). He tells His disciples, "*Follow Me*" (Matthew 4.19). He left His heavenly home, where myriads of angels with veiled faces worship Him, to show poor sinners the only safe and right way. Through Him alone may be found salvation, peace and pardon. The way to God is marked out with the blood of the Son of God. It is a way of eternal safety. "*The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*" (Isaiah 35.8).

Adapted from *Old Corners Turned Out* by Mercie Boorne

A TRUE STORY – SAYING GRACE

In the town of St. Albans in England, a poor widow once lived with her little son Charlie. The cottage in which they lived, along with the orchard around it, belonged to a certain duke. The widow earned her living by keeping a few fowls and from the fruit of the orchard.

One day Charlie found his mother in tears when he returned home from school. She told him that she had received notice that they must leave their home. This would be a terrible hardship to them, for they were very poor, and they had nowhere else they could go to live. Charlie tried to comfort his mother by telling her that he would go and see the duke and get permission to stay living there. The mother told him that it would be useless to attempt this, for one so young would never be allowed into the duke's presence.

Without his mother knowing, Charlie decided to try, and he set off for the mansion of the duke. When he arrived, the butler asked him why he had come. Charlie said that he could only speak to the duke himself. The butler insisted that the duke would not see one so young. However, Charlie continued to plead with the butler, until he finally consented to tell the duke that he had come to see him. To the butler's surprise, the duke agreed to see Charlie.

The butler gave strict instructions as to his behaviour. Charlie was told to say (or address the duke as) "Your Grace" two or three times during the interview. When he was admitted to see the duke, Charlie did as the butler had requested; he said, "For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful." He thought that he was supposed to say grace, as before meals.

The duke kindly asked him, "Well, my little man, what brings you here?"

"If you please, Mr. Duke," Charlie replied, "my mother is crying because mother and I, and the little chickens, have to be turned out of our home."

The duke said that he knew nothing of the matter, and he would make enquiries. He also said that Charlie and his mother might remain in the cottage and always live there.

Charlie then said, "For what we have received, may the Lord make us truly thankful, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

The duke then rang the bell. He told the butler to give the boy some food, for he must be very hungry, because he had said grace twice. The butler then explained to his master that he had told the boy how to behave and to say "Your Grace" two or three times.

Charlie returned home and told his mother the good news. The poor widow was overjoyed at the duke's kindness and also with the good conduct of her dear little son. It is needless to say that the duke faithfully carried out his promise to Charlie.

The little boy had evidently been taught to acknowledge the Lord at meal times. Although he misunderstood the instruction of the butler to address the duke as "Your Grace," God honoured him by rewarding his effort, in his mother's behalf, with success. Children who honour God and their parents will surely reap a reward, *"for them that honour Me I will honour..."* (1 Samuel 2.30).

The Little Gleaner 1909

THE CHEMIST'S DELIVERANCE

One evening, an open-air meeting was being held by Christian workers in one of the streets of Bristol. They were suddenly interrupted by a man who contradicted the truths that were being spoken. In a loud, rude voice, he denied the existence of God, the divine authority of the Bible, and proclaimed that it was utterly useless to pray. Having thus spoken, he went away in a rage.

This man was a chemist (pharmacist) by profession, whose job was to dispense medicine. Upon reaching home, he angrily ordered the shop-boy to put up the shutters and be off. The boy did as he was told, and the master retired to his room.

After some time, a ring was heard at the door, and the chemist himself opened it in a very ill temper. Before him stood a little girl, whom he gruffly ordered to go away and not to trouble him when his shop was shut. The child expressed her sorrow for the interruption but urgently pleaded for some medicine for her mother, who was very ill. Unable to resist her importunity, the chemist gave her the medicine, but he warned her never to come again on such an errand.

Returning to his room, still much agitated, he took up the newspaper and resumed his reading. Suddenly, it came into his mind that he had made two grievous mistakes. He had accidentally put into the medicine a most powerful poison, and he had neglected to copy the prescription into his dispensing book. He was greatly distressed! He reflected that because of his angry passion, in a very brief time, he would probably cause the death of a human being. There was no remedy. The child was an utter stranger; he did not even know in what direction she had gone. His neglect in copying the prescription would subject him to punishment, even if he should escape the charge of homicide. Thoughts of ruin, added to remorse for his carelessness, almost drove him to madness. He was perfectly helpless. In his extremity, he cast himself at once upon his knees. In anguish, he sought the help of God, whose existence he had denied only an hour before.

While he was praying, another ring was heard at the door. He thought, "The officers of justice are already after me!" But it was not so. At the entrance stood the same little girl who had come a short time before. She was crying bitterly because she had fallen down, broken the bottle, and spilled the medicine. She begged the chemist to forgive her and to renew the remedy for her mother's sickness. However, there was no need for fear or sorrow, for she was warmly welcomed. After she had been properly served, this man, no longer a sceptic, fell upon his knees again. He thanked the Lord with all his heart. He desired the God who had heard and answered his prayer in the hour of need to be his Portion and Guide from

that time forward. *"Whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered"* (Joel 2.32).

Adapted from *The Gospel Echo* 1914

THE TEST

In one of his sermons, Ralph Erskine gave the following illustration. When a dog is following two men, as long as they are walking together, it is hard to tell which is the owner. However, when they come to a parting in the road and each man goes a different way, then you will know which is the dog's master. So, at times you and the world may go hand in hand. While a man has the world and a religious profession, we cannot tell which is the man's master, God or the world. But wait until the man comes to a parting in the road; God calls him this way, the world calls him that way. Well, if God is his master, he will follow religion and let the world go; but if the world is his master, then he will follow the world and the lust thereof, and let God and conscience and religion go.

The Gospel Echo 1915

SANCTIFICATION

As the questions this month are about sanctification, we are including the explanation Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom gave in the book Bible Doctrines Simply Explained. It is a subject often mentioned in the Bible, yet one that we may be troubled about or unsure what it really means. While there may be different applications of the term, we should always remember that it is what God works in the heart and life of His people. (Editor)

We often read in the paper about people being sent to prison. Perhaps they have been stealing, or it may even be that they have killed someone. The sad thing is that when they come out of prison, they are no better, no different from what

they were before. How often we read of a person committing some crime the very day he was set free from prison!

Now when God forgives a person, it is not like that. When God forgives, He makes that person different. From now on, his life is completely changed.

The most wicked man in the Bible was the Old Testament king, Manasseh. But one day God began to deal with him; he was in great trouble, and he asked God to forgive him. And God did. But from that moment Manasseh's life was different. He stopped doing the bad things he had done and started doing the opposite.

The Bible calls this *sanctification*. Manasseh was not only forgiven, but God sanctified him. Every person God saves from going to hell He sanctifies. If a judge forgives someone, he cannot sanctify him; but what men cannot do, what the law cannot do, God does.

To sanctify something really means to set it apart for some holy use. In the tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament, cups and basins were "sanctified"; they were set apart to be used *only* in the services, they were not to be used for ordinary things. God set apart His people before they were born, but when they are born again, they are actually sanctified – made holy in heart and conduct.

The little children's hymn says: "He died to make us good" – that is sanctification. The grace that saves also sanctifies.

Many girls and boys mix up justification and sanctification; so do many older people. If we are God's people,

Justification

is outside us
is perfect
counts us holy
is our standing
saves us from sin's guilt

Sanctification

is within us
is not perfect
makes us holy
is our experience
saves us from sin's power

We need the work of the Lord Jesus for us (justification) and the work of the Holy Spirit in us (sanctification).

If God's people are saved, they must be sanctified. This is what people notice -- even ungodly people. They do not read the Bible; they cannot understand some of the doctrines of the Bible; but they do understand when a wicked man begins to behave differently; when a drunken man becomes sober; when a man who has ill-treated his wife becomes kind; when a foul-mouthed man stops swearing; when a dishonest man becomes honest.

Even if people have not been outwardly wicked, yet still there will be a difference. A little servant girl was once asked if she could prove that her life had been changed, that grace had made a difference. She thought a moment, and then said, "Yes. Up until recently I used to clean everywhere beautifully if it was where people could see; but now the places no one can see are cleaned just as well."

Sanctification is part of God's work in preparing His people for heaven. If you took a fish out of the sea to a most beautiful meadow, it could not live. If you plunged an eagle into the depths of a beautiful lake, it must die. It would be out of its element. So, an unsanctified person could not be happy in heaven.

We read once of a very poor, ignorant man who inherited a mansion with horse and carriage, beautiful grounds, servants, and untold wealth. (He was a very distant relation, though the next of kin.) But the poor man was miserable. His behaviour was so uncouth that in the end, everyone was laughing at him. He had the mansion and the inheritance, but his manners and his nature were unchanged. He was out of his element. Yes, "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people."

Years ago, all Scottish children had to learn their catechism (which they knew as well as their multiplication tables). Every little Scottish girl or boy could answer the question: "What is sanctification? -- Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of

God, and are enabled ... to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness."

But no-one is perfect while still on earth. There are still the remains of sin in us, and Satan tempts us. So life will be a battle, a hard battle. There are two different natures inside the Christian (like a dog and a cat in one cage). But through God's grace the Christian will win at last -- through Christ.

To any girl or boy who feels what it is to struggle and fight, the advice of Scripture is:

Be much in prayer.

Look to Jesus for help.

Depend only on Him.

Distrust your own strength; seek His strength.

Avoid bad places, bad company.

Realise that Satan, the world, and the flesh are stronger than you.

Seek to be kept, daily, hourly.

Pray for grace to stand.

Cling to Christ.

Most of you have heard of John Newton, once a slave dealer and a blasphemer, later called by God's grace and made a minister. John Newton once said: "I am not what I want to be. I am not what I ought to be. I am not what one day I shall be. BUT I AM NOT WHAT I ONCE WAS."

From *Bible Doctrines Simply Explained* by B.A. Ramsbottom

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE PARABLES OF JESUS (12)

TARES AND WHEAT

"Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when

the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also” (Matthew 13.24-26).

As we have noticed before, much of the teaching of the Lord Jesus was very discriminating. That is, He was very clear about the difference between those who, by His grace, were indeed among His chosen people, and those who were left to perish in their sins, although they claimed to be His people. He would often warn about those who claimed to be something that they were not. Then, as now, there were many who were not true believers, although they appeared to be so to the undiscerning eye.

In this parable, the Lord Jesus is speaking of the similarity between the wheat and the tares. The tares may look very much like wheat, especially in the early days when they are beginning to grow. It is only when the ears of corn develop that the difference becomes clear. The vital difference with the tares is the lack of fruit. No grain is produced, so the tares are completely unprofitable to the farmer and fit only to be cast out and destroyed. In a similar way in our own country, wild oats are often found in fields of wheat, but they are looked upon as weeds and can be difficult to eradicate.

We are told that an enemy planted these tares in the field; yet, in the wisdom of the farmer, both were allowed to grow together until the harvest, when there would be a final separation. By the time that the difference between the wheat and the tares was evident, their roots would be so interwoven, that any attempt to pull up the tares would pull up the wheat with them.

There are many lessons for us in this parable. We are all living in the field of this world. No doubt, many reading this piece have an outward profession of Christianity, shown by attending the public worship of God, reading the Bible, and acknowledging the ways of God in their lives. The Lord Jesus is speaking here of all those who profess to be believers and to love Him. Many professed to be His disciples when He was here on earth; they followed Him for a while, but the time

came when *“many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him”* (John 6.66). How many have made a great outward show of religion! They have professed to be converted; they endured for a time, but eventually they were shown up for what they really were. The Apostle Paul warned about some of these when he wrote to Timothy: *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* He goes on to speak of one of them: *“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica”* (2 Timothy 4.3,4 & 10). It is a very solemn thought that as the enemy planted those tares amongst the wheat, so Satan plants unbelievers amongst the people of God. *“These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots”* (Jude 12).

Should it not be a deep concern to each of us, as to where we stand? The Lord Jesus said on another occasion concerning the Pharisees, *“Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up”* (Matthew 15.13). Are we plants of the heavenly Father’s planting? What an awful thing it will be if we are found to be false Christians – tares! That is one of the greatest fears of many real Christians. Those who are of the heavenly Father’s planting long to know that they are not tares. So often, they fear that they are not bringing forth any fruit to the honour and glory of God. May we not be left to think that just because we go to chapel, have God-fearing parents, and hear the Bible read, we shall go to heaven when we die. Even the Apostle Paul, who was blessed with a very clear conversion and whose ministry was greatly used of God, was, at times, deeply concerned about his eternal state. *“Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway”* (1 Corinthians 9.27).

In Acts 20, the Apostle Paul warned the Ephesian church that: *"grievous wolves [shall] enter in among you, not sparing the flock"* (verse 29). There have been many chapels and churches where the enemy has managed to plant his tares; eventually these have grown in number and power, taken over the place, and completely destroyed what was once a sound place of worship. May it be a deep concern to each of us personally as to where we stand, for one day there will be a solemn separation between the tares and the wheat.

"Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matthew 13.30). The harvest will be the end of the world. That time is fast approaching. God will know exactly who are the tares and who are the wheat. No one will ever deceive God. *"The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear"* (Matthew 13.41-43).

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about SANCTIFICATION. To sanctify means to set apart, or to cleanse and purify, for a holy purpose. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 8 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What is the first thing we read of in the Bible which God sanctified? (Genesis 2.3)
2. Which of the ten commandments reiterates this? (Exodus 20.8)

3. When God appeared to the children of Israel and came down upon Mount Sinai, Moses was commanded to “sanctify” the people. What were they told to do? (Exodus 19.10,14)
4. Hezekiah commanded the Levites to sanctify themselves and the house of Lord. What had they to do, and how long did it take? (2 Chronicles 29.5,17)
5. How did the Lord Jesus describe Himself in John 10.36?
6. The Lord Jesus is made “sanctification” to His people (1 Corinthians 1.30). In what ways does He sanctify them? (Hebrews 10.10; 13.12)
7. In what other ways are God’s people said to be sanctified? (John 17.17,19; Acts 26.18; 1 Corinthians 1.2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Jude 1)
8. To whom was it said, “Ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel”? What did God say would happen as a result? (Numbers 20)
9. “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.” (Hebrews 2). Who is “he that sanctifieth” and who are “they who are sanctified”?
10. Many of the things associated with the worship of God by the children of Israel in the wilderness were to be sanctified. Write down the things you can find mentioned in Exodus 29.

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. Lot.
2. Abram wanted the cave of Machpelah to bury his wife Sarah when she died.
3. Five kings – the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon.
4. Adullam.
5. The children of Israel were hiding from the Midianites who came up to destroy the land.
6. David cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe. (1 Samuel 24.3-7)
7. Obadiah. (1 Kings 18.4)
8. “What doest thou here Elijah?” (1 Kings 19.9,13)
9. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Leah. (Genesis 49.31; 50.13)
10. Lazarus. (John 11.38)

THY WAY

“Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me: for Thou art the God of my salvation; on Thee do I wait all the day” (Psalm 25.5).

Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it leads
Right onward to Thy rest.

I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might;
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine, so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else I must surely stray.

Not mine, not mine the choice
In things both great and small;
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My Wisdom and my All.

Young People's Hymnal 123

The Friendly Companion



Roe River, Great Falls, Montana, United States of America

“Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2.2).
“And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the
writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE
JEWS” (John 19.19).

December 2018

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

As we write this message, the state in which we live is being gripped by the unfolding story of a thirteen-year-old girl, whose parents were found murdered in their home. Since that day, the girl has been missing, and authorities fear that she has been abducted and is in great danger.

Thousands of people have responded to the request of police for volunteers to search the fields and woods around her home. However, they have not yet found any sign of the missing girl. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has moved her to the top of its list of missing persons. The police have followed thousands of tips sent to their office, but so far, all have turned up nothing.

This very sad event of lives destroyed and turned upside down presents a picture of mankind since the day that sin entered the world. What destruction has come upon all men, and what danger all are in!

The Lord Jesus said that He came *“to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19.10). While volunteers have sought for the young girl without knowing where she might be, the Lord knows where all whom He seeks are to be found. He knows that they are in danger of His Father’s wrath and the condemnation of the law. He will not fail to find them and deliver them.

This well-known hymn verse has been a comfort to many of those whom the Lord Jesus has found:

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

While there remains great uncertainty regarding the outcome of the young girl, there is no uncertainty regarding those whom the Lord seeks.

Before the Lord saves them from danger, He will make them feel and know their danger. By the Holy Spirit’s

teaching, they will be made to cry for mercy. What a paradox it becomes! It seems as if all the seeking is on their part. Their prayers, searching of the Scriptures, attending the means of grace, and reading of the experiences of His people, are some of the ways in which they seek Him. All the while, they fear they shall never find Him. But the Lord declares: *"I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away"* (Ezekiel 34.16).

There are many things that limit and hinder those who are searching for the young girl, even with the assistance of the police. However, nothing can hinder the Lord in seeking for lost souls. May the Lord manifest that He has sought and found each of you.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The front cover photo this month is of the Roe River in the city of Great Falls, Montana. It is not far from Choteau, where one of our chapels is located and Mr. M. Pickett is the pastor.

This river is unique for a few reasons. First, it is recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records as the shortest river in the world. The Roe River competes with the D River in Oregon for the title of shortest river. They have both been measured on different occasions, with lengths varying from 58 feet to 200 feet. The length of the Roe River is smaller than the width of the Nile, the Amazon, or the Yangtze River, the three largest rivers in the world.

Second, the Roe River issues entirely from the Giant Springs, which is the largest freshwater spring in the United States. It flows into the Missouri River, which runs nearby. The source of other rivers is from rainfall, melting ice and snow, springs, small rills and brooks, meeting together to create wider and deeper channels, which then make up the tributaries that form a river system. The waters of Giant Springs originate from the Little Belt Mountains, which are part

of the Rocky Mountain range. Although these mountains are less than one hundred miles away, it takes the water nearly twenty-six years to reach the Giant Springs.

Third, the Roe River is also unique in its constancy of volume and temperature. Each day, 156 million gallons of crystal-clear water flow from the spring into the Missouri River. It has a constant temperature of 54 degrees, even during the bitter cold winter months.

When preaching at Choteau through the years, we have always enjoyed it when friends from the chapel have taken us to the Giant Springs. It is an impressive sight to see such a great volume of water springing out of the earth, with a force that cannot be stopped.

It reminds us of the words of Jesus: *“He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive”* (John 7.38,39). It also reminds us of *“the river of God,”* whose streams *“make glad the city of God”* (Psalm 46.4). On earth, the streams supply the rivers. During the times when snow melts and in the rainy seasons, the waters in those streams flow rapidly; however, in seasons of drought, they hardly flow at all. The streams that flow to *“the city of God [His church]”* are supplied by *“the river of God, which is full of water”* (Psalm 65.9). From His river, like the Giant Springs, there is a constant and abundant supply.

LAIID IN A MANGER

Now, dear children, do you know why the Lord Jesus Christ was found in a manger? It was to teach us a lesson – to show us that there is not a place on earth too lowly, too poor, too unpleasant for the Saviour to come. There is no sinner’s heart too evil, too miserable, too vile for the Redeemer to enter and dwell there. *“This Man receiveth sinners”* (Luke 15.2).

Old Corners Turned Out by Mercie Boorne

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE LORD SENDS RAIN**

Elijah told Ahab to go and eat, for much rain was coming. Then Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel. He cast himself upon the ground and put his face between his knees.

The Lord had promised to send rain, but there was no sign of it yet. Elijah told his servant to go and look toward the sea. The servant came back and said, "*There is nothing.*" Elijah told the servant to go and look again, but there was nothing. Six times the servant went to look, and there was no sign of rain. How Elijah must have prayed! The seventh time, the servant said, "*There ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's band.*"

The little cloud was a sign to Elijah. Soon the heavens were black with clouds and wind, and "*there was a great rain.*" Ahab quickly rode home in his chariot. The Lord gave special strength to Elijah. He ran before Ahab to the gate of the city.

QUESTIONS:

1. Elijah told his servant to look toward what? (2 words)
2. What did the servant say when he returned? (3 words)
3. What did he see the seventh time? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 266 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Baal.
2. Water.
3. Fire.

*“Behold,
there ariseth
a little cloud
out of the sea,
like a man’s
hand.”*

1 Kings 18.44

BIBLE LESSONS**PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR**

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul wrote: *"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."* Perhaps Paul encouraged himself by remembering that when Joseph was in prison in Egypt, he was forgotten by Pharaoh's butler for two years.

However, at the end of two years, Felix was removed from office, and a new governor was appointed in his place, whose name was Porcius Festus. Three days after he arrived in Caesarea, Festus went up to Jerusalem. He met with the high priest and Jewish leaders, who informed him about Paul. They asked Festus to send for him, so they could examine him. Of course, their real intention was to have men lay in wait and kill Paul on the way there.

Festus told the Jews that in a few days he would return to Caesarea, and they could go with him and bring their accusations against Paul. Once more, Paul was brought out of prison to appear before the Jews. They accused Paul of very grievous wrongs against their law and the temple, but they could not prove anything. Festus, sitting on the judgment seat, really wanted to please the Jews and deliver Paul to them. However, he was in a difficult position, for he could not condemn a Roman citizen on false charges. Quickly he thought of a way out. Festus asked Paul if he would be willing to go up to Jerusalem to be judged.

Being a Roman citizen, Paul said that he would appeal to the judgment seat of Caesar. When a Roman made such a request, only Caesar himself could pass judgment upon him. Festus answered: *"Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go."*

Shortly after these events, Festus received very distinguished visitors. King Agrippa and his sister Bernice came to salute him in his new position as governor. During their stay, Festus told them about Paul, whom Felix had left as a prisoner. He also said that the Jews had asked him to put

Paul to death. He informed Agrippa that when the elders of the Jews had come to Caesarea, he had brought Paul before them. They did not bring such charges as he had expected, but rather they debated about their religious superstitions, especially of one named Jesus. Festus told Agrippa that the Jewish rulers had insisted that Jesus was dead, but Paul, with great fervency, said that He was alive. Festus acknowledged that he had great doubts about such questions. Thus, he had asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be judged there, but Paul had appealed to Caesar.

King Agrippa told Festus that he would like to hear Paul himself. What a scene took place the following day in the judgment seat of Caesarea! King Agrippa and Bernice entered with great pomp, along with the chief captains and principal men of the city.

As Paul was brought in, Festus called out: *“King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the ... Jews have dealt with me, ... crying that he ought not to live any longer.”* Festus added that Paul had done nothing worthy of death but had appealed to Caesar. Therefore, he had brought Paul to be examined before them, so that he might have something to write about him to Caesar. *“For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not ... signify [write] the crimes laid against him.”*

You can read about this in Acts chapter 24 verse 27 and chapter 25.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Paul write in his letter to the Philippians? (12 words)
2. Who was appointed governor in place of Felix?
3. Whom did Paul appeal to be judged before?
4. Who were the two distinguished visitors?
5. What did the Jews insist about Jesus? What did Paul maintain?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 266 for the addresses). Remember

to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Felix and Drusilla.
2. Righteousness, temperance, and judgment.
3. Tremble.
4. "When I have a convenient season."
5. Two years.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

I had a very strict upbringing in the Church of England. We went to church morning and evening on the Lord's day and to Sunday school in the afternoon. At the age of 13, I had a very special blessing in the Church of England; I often feel that a work of grace was begun in my heart at that time, for a wonderful sense of peace was given.

During the Second World War, when most of the men were sent away to fight, I joined the women's land army. I was posted to a place where I worked on a dairy farm. It was here that I met my future husband, and we were eventually married in 1950. He had been brought up to attend chapel services but no longer did so. After some time, I told him that I felt uneasy that we were not attending a place of worship on the Lord's day. There was a little chapel nearby that I could easily walk to, so I told my husband that I was going to that chapel tonight. It was the very chapel that he had been brought up to attend. I had a cold at the time, and my husband told me that they would not want me to come there with a cold. He thought that would be the end of the matter. But the next Lord's day evening, I said to him, "I am going to chapel." That really made him feel ashamed, and he ended up coming along with me. We continued to attend from that time on, eventually attending morning and afternoon services also. At first, I found it very strange at the chapel; the services were completely different from those at the Church of England.

As time went on, we had many difficult trials, but the pastor and his wife were so kind to us. Gradually the Lord began to work in both of our hearts, but neither of us spoke to the other on spiritual things.

Eventually, in the providence of God, my husband became the head stockman on a large estate, and we had to make a move. We began to attend the local Strict Baptist chapel, and the Lord began to deepen the work in my heart. I was in the woodshed one morning, and these words were breathed into my heart: *"That He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live"* (Deuteronomy 8.3). With a sense of wonder, I thought, "Perhaps the Lord really does have a favour towards me!"

One old minister who preached at the chapel often spoke of the Scottish highland maid and how a minister told her to pray: "Show me myself," and the Lord did so. She was brought to feel her great need as a poor sinner before a holy God. On a later visit, the minister told the maid to pray: "Lord, show me Thyself." She was then given a view of Christ as her precious Saviour. This account was so special to me! I believe the Lord taught me in a similar way, for I deeply felt my need of the Lord's inward teaching, and in due time, Christ was made very precious to my soul.

Eventually I became very burdened about the ordinances of the Lord's house, particularly believer's baptism. One Lord's day morning, we were late for chapel, and they were already singing the first hymn when we arrived. These words were being sung, and they entered powerfully into my heart: "If you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all." Finally, I ventured forward, and my husband did also, in a completely separate way from myself. We had both been praying that we might go forward and be baptized together, which the Lord graciously brought to pass.

Contributed

FIERY COALS

It was Old Year's evening. Farmer Jansen had looked over his bills, and then he had gone to town to pay his debts. The Lord had wonderfully provided him with all the money that he needed to pay them off.

It was dark when he returned home. The farmer was in a thankful frame of mind. As the year came to an end, he could write, "*Ebenezer, ... Hitherto hath the LORD helped us*" (1 Samuel 7.12). He had seen the hand of the Lord helping him through sicknesses and adversities, and the harvest had exceeded expectations. Just a short time before, the future had looked so dark, but the Lord had led him and blessed him, along with his wife and children.

It was a clear evening, and as the farmer reached his farmyard, the moon was shining brightly. His attention was suddenly drawn to a shadow that seemed to slip inside the workroom. Or was he mistaken? The outside door of the workroom was seldom used, and it was usually bolted in the evening. Therefore, the farmer was surprised that it had appeared to be opened.

He now reached the door. Putting his hand on the latch, he swung the door open. The moonlight shone inside through the small panes of the window. Mr. Jansen's sharp eyes searched the room, and there, against a beam, stood Joris!

Joris was a poor man who had been without work all winter. The farmer knew him very well. That same afternoon he had come to the farm asking for work, but Mr. Jansen had no work to give him, and Joris had left again.

"Joris!" said Mr. Jansen, "What about that empty bag under your arm?"

The labourer did not answer; trembling, he stood before his judge, and he looked sideways to see if there was a way to escape.

"Did you unbolt the door of the workroom this afternoon?" questioned the farmer.

"Yes, sir," Joris answered. He had sought the farmer in the workroom that afternoon, and while Mr. Jansen was not looking, he had unlocked the outside door so that he could steal in the evening.

The farmer understood it all, and he said, "Joris, the prayer of Agur should certainly be our prayer: *'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me'* (Proverbs 30.8); for if we become poor, then we run into the danger of stealing and the name of our God shall be dishonoured."

The labourer was silent for a moment; his throat seemed paralyzed. Then, with quivering lips, he said, "We are so dreadfully poor, Mr. Jansen! My children are suffering from hunger this evening!"

It sounded like an accusation in the ears of the farmer, for on that same day, he had an abundance. "Come with me into the house," he said briefly. Joris wanted to come on behind, hoping that he could somehow escape. But the farmer said, "You go first!"

The table was covered with good food when both men entered the room. Mrs. Jansen and the children looked very much surprised when the farmer came into the room with poor Joris. But now the farmer said, "Sit down, Joris, and I hope that it will taste good to you!"

So Joris drew himself to the table. The farmer prayed to God and asked His blessing upon the food. Everyone was in a cheerful mood at the table, and the heart of the farmer was melted and deeply humbled, beholding so many mercies with which the Lord had encompassed him.

When they had finished their supper, the farmer said, "Come along with me to the garret, Joris. Where is your bag?" The labourer had thrown the bag down in the workroom. He got the bag, and together they went to the loft.

The farmer opened the bag and put a large ham into it, besides some sausages. "You shall have a happy Old Year's evening, Joris!" declared the farmer.

But this was too much for the poor man; the tears came into his eyes, and he burst out in sobs.

The farmer was moved with compassion. "It is cold," he said, "come back with a wheelbarrow, and we will give you some coal also!"

Thus, Joris had a glad Old Year's evening; there was joy in his family. And the farmer also had a good evening, for he had communicated of what the Lord had so richly given to him! *"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; ... for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee"* (Proverbs 25.21,22).

Adapted from *The Banner of Truth* 1973

NO CARES, NO PRAYERS

The following account is taken from the 1965 Friendly Companion. The writer describes herself as "a poor woman."

Nothing astonishes me more than to find how much I can talk to God about my troubles and trials, but how little I have got to say to Him about my soul. You know I do not call myself a spiritual person; I do not feel I am a praying woman. This is the word that suits me: *"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"* (Jeremiah 8.20). I have plenty of cares, plenty of sorrows, plenty of sin, but nothing of Christ. O how I want a sight of Him, to loosen my glued heart from all this earthly care and fill me with thoughts of Christ!

Lately, I have begun to think that the Lord has no mercy in store for me. Year after year slips by, and nothing seems to increase with me but trouble; and then I say to myself, "Will God hear my prayer, such a poor, earthly-minded thing as I am? Will He help me out of this difficulty?" Oh, at such times, how I wish I was a praying woman! What would I give to feel I had a Father I could run to, a God and Father in Christ, and go to Him as His child with my grief! However, I am still obliged to go to Him, though I do not feel I am a child. There is a little

storehouse yonder where we keep wood and apples and a few things we sell, and I run there as a sort of hiding-place when trouble presses hard. I cannot call it prayer, you know; but I often talk to God in my poor way about what I feel. Last week I began to think it was no use my doing that, for God gave me no answer for body or soul; but something happened just after that which has encouraged me.

It is only a providence I am going to tell you about, but the thought came to my mind: "I have got an answer in providence; perhaps God may go on to show me His grace, hear me about my soul, give me Christ, and make me happy." Because of my poor husband's habits, we have lost our family business and are waiting for it to be sold, and we have very little money. My oldest son got a job in a livery stable some time ago, and I provided his meals. At first, I used to pay a boy weekly to carry him his dinner every day, but after a while, I could not afford that, so I took it myself. And then, as our business failed and we only lived upon a few outstanding debts, my boy's dinner became poorer and poorer and less and less, until I used to feel ashamed to carry him such a little bit, though I often went without myself to give him even that.

Last Thursday, things came to the worst. I had no food in the house, nor a penny to buy any, and we had lost our credit altogether. I felt terrible as the time drew on for my poor boy to have his dinner, such as it was. I thought of him working hard from morning to night without a bit of food, and my heart sank within me. I had no remedy but God, and I flew to my little spot where I had found relief in times past in telling my trouble to the Lord. Even if I got no answer, here at least I could cry without my family seeing me, and I pleaded in my simple way for my child. I asked God to pity my hungry boy, even if He had no pity in His heart for me. It seemed as though I must be heard and would take no denial this time, for it was a very urgent case. When I got off my knees, I felt better; but directly it came to my mind: "Ah, you never prayed so earnestly as this for your soul. If you sought first the kingdom

of God and His righteousness, all other things would be added unto you. But you do not, so God will never hear you, and you have no claim on Him. You can plead hard for your hungry boy, but if your soul troubles were of the right kind, how much harder would you wrestle after Christ!" O how true I felt all this to be! I had nothing to answer.

About an hour later, my little daughter came to me and said: "Mother, we have some tea in the house and a bit of bread; you had better come and let us have our tea now; it is getting late." "No, my child," said I, "you can have what there is; but I cannot eat anything. My boy is hungry, and the only comfort I have is to feel hungry like him. I will finish the washing, and you can have the tea." And so I went on with my washing and continued till it was quite dusk.

Just as I was finishing, a knock came on the door. It was a pouring wet evening, and I wondered who it could be. I opened the door and saw the horse carriage driver. "Missus," he said, "do you have a son working at the livery stables in town?" "Yes," I replied; and I trembled all over to think what was coming. "Oh," he said, "I have just stopped by to tell you that Mr. Smith of the Park is looking for someone like your boy to see after a pony carriage, and to be an indoor servant as well. He must go there tomorrow by ten o'clock, and I hope he will have the job. Good night!"

It was all said so quickly, I did not know if I had heard him right. I flew back to my little spot, and there I begged earnestly of the Lord to appear for the help of my poor child. This looked so like something good for me, that I felt constrained to go and tell what I had just heard to my poor, old, godly father, who lives a little down the road. I said, "Do now, father, speak a word for me to the Lord about my boy. I know God will hear you, even if He does not listen to me."

Well, when the poor lad came home weak and worn, he had not tasted a bit of food all day, and he had been working very hard. But he soon revived when I told him the good news. I said, "You had better not say anything to your master;

perhaps if he is offended, that will be worse still.” “No, mother,” he said, “I will tell him everything. He is a kind-hearted man and would be glad to help me. I know he guesses our circumstances are difficult, and I am sure he will not be angry at my trying to better myself.”

Next morning my boy was up early and off to his place. As ten o'clock drew near, I began to feel very anxious. I was in no richer state as to food than the day before, and I trembled to think of a second day without a dinner for my poor boy; so I was driven to my little spot for a refuge, to plead with God to be his Friend. I said in my plain way, “He has no one to speak for him, no one to help him; but Thou canst plead for him, and it will be all right.” At about one o'clock, I saw a butcher's boy at our door with some meat. This had been a very unusual sight lately at our house, so that I did not think it could be for us. I went to the door, and the lad handed it in, and said that my husband bid him tell me to cook it for dinner, as he had gotten a debt paid back unexpectedly. The boy turned to go, but stepping back, he said: “Oh, I forgot! Your master told me to say that your son had gotten the job, and he was to go there this evening.”

What I did with the meat, or where I put it, I cannot tell; but I flew to my little spot to thank God for His mercy. A sweet feeling of encouragement came over me, that although this was an answer to prayer about an earthly thing, God would not stop here, for He meant to give me spiritual prayer for spiritual things and would surely answer. But all at once it came to my mind, “God did not hear you at all; He heard your godly father. It was his prayer that prevailed. He never listened to you.” And so the blessing seemed dashed to pieces, though every now and then a feeling comes over me, “Surely He did make me cry, and surely He did hear my prayer.” But I keep on saying: “Lord, this is not enough; I want to know Thee, I want to love Thee. O do not put me off with the things of this life!”

[Since the above was written, the Lord has appeared in a way of grace to this poor woman and given her the desire of her heart, the knowledge and enjoyment of a precious Christ.]

Adapted from the 1965 *Friendly Companion*

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE WISE MEN

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem” (Matthew 2.1).

Much has been said about these wise men from the east. We are not told that there were three of them, nor are we told that they were kings or astrologers. What we are told, is that they were wise. They were blessed with wisdom. It was God who made these men wise and by the Holy Spirit gave them to understand that the King of the Jews had been born. Let us remember that they left their native land and travelled a long distance (we are not told that they came on camels). They came for the purpose of worshipping the King of the Jews and had with them gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Although they were blessed with faith to believe the revelation of God, they did make an awful mistake that had terrible consequences. Believing that He was the King of the Jews, they wrongly assumed that He would be born in the royal city of Jerusalem. At some point they must have taken their eyes off the star that was leading them and set towards Jerusalem instead of Bethlehem, where the star would have led them. *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”* (Proverbs 3.5). These wise men leaned unto their own understanding. That is very easy for us to do also, when things appear to be right. May the Lord help us to look to Him alone and trust completely in Him at all times. *“And He led them forth by the right way”* (Psalm 107.7).

There must have been something notable about these men, because at Jerusalem their enquiry came to the notice of King Herod. If they had only been common travellers, not much notice would have been taken of them. However, King Herod and many others were troubled about the words of the wise men. *"When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born"* (verses 3,4). What follows next is so exceedingly solemn! The chief priests and the scribes not only knew the answer to the king's question, but they were also able to quote the very Scriptures that prophesied of it. Before them were these wise men who had come all the way from the east to see and worship the King of the Jews, the promised Messiah, Christ the Saviour; yet despite all of this, they never made any attempt to go with the wise men to Bethlehem. They did not believe that the Word of God had come to pass. They did not have a need like the wise men had been given; the Holy Spirit was drawing them after the Lord Jesus. Although they did not know how to find Him, yet being led by the Spirit, they did find Him. That is the only way that any of the Lord's people find Christ.

How many have known the Scriptures in the letter, have been to chapel all their lives, attended Sabbath School, had God-fearing parents, understood many doctrines set forth in the Scriptures, and yet, despite all of this, have never felt any need to go to Christ! How is it with you?

It appears that King Herod believed what the wise men said was true; but with such evil intentions, he sought to destroy Christ. He thought that only he would be the king of the land and no one else.

"When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (verses 9,10). Even though they had made a terrible mistake, God, in His

merciful kindness, had not taken away the guiding star. It was still there, and it led them directly to Christ, just as the Scriptures said, in Bethlehem. When the Lord works in the hearts of His people, He will bring them to His sacred Word, granting them the teaching of the Holy Spirit in the right understanding of the Scriptures, that will guide them directly to Christ.

“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him” (verse 11). Here we notice the faith they were blessed with, to come to Christ and to worship Him. They did not stumble at His smallness, or at His lowly state, nor did they bow down and worship Mary. That would have been idolatry. They fell down and worshipped Christ, who was yet a little baby, but was *“God ... manifest in the flesh”* (1 Timothy 3.16).

May the Lord in mercy reveal to us what He sees in our hearts and deliver us from those “idols” we may be tempted to cleave to, such as worldly entertainments and sports, mobile phones, the latest trends or fashions, vain religions, and especially that great idol we all have – self.

“And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh” (verse 11). When they first set out on their journey, they would have sought for special gifts to bring to the King of the Jews. Surely it must have been God who showed the wise men what gifts they were to bring. There was something very significant in the gifts the wise men presented unto Christ. Gold, acknowledging Christ to be King; frankincense, acknowledging Him to be the great High Priest; and myrrh, acknowledging Him to be the sacrificial Lamb, who, in dying, would save His people from all their sins. What wonderful faith was given to those wise men. Surely, they were made wise unto salvation.

“And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way” (verse 12). This is the only time we read that

God actually spoke to the wise men. No doubt, they returned home rejoicing that they had seen the promised Messiah.

What a wonderful thing it would be if we also were made wise unto salvation, taught our need of Christ, and by faith, would venture to Him.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about JUSTIFICATION, but because this can be a difficult concept, we have interspersed the questions with explanations about what the Bible means. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 7 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 266 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

To justify a person is to demonstrate or declare that he or she is without fault and blameless, and the Bible uses the words “justify” or “justification” in various ways. Let us consider some of them.

Firstly, it can simply mean that a person is actually guiltless and has done no wrong. *“If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.”* (Deuteronomy 25.1). Even today, if a person in a court of law can be proved to be innocent and to have done nothing wrong, he is said to be “justified.”

1. Which godly man prayed in 1 Kings 8.32 that God would condemn the wicked and justify the righteous? (see 1 Kings 8.12)
2. In Proverbs 17.15, which two kinds of people are said to be an “abomination to the Lord”?

In Luke 7.29 we have an occasion where people *“justified God,”* which means that they acknowledged that God was just and right in all His dealings. *“And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of*

John.” Sometimes you may hear some of the Lord’s people talk like this when they have sinned and God has brought something into their lives, perhaps some trouble, to show them where they have been wrong; they have had to “justify God” in the correction.

3. Write out Psalm 51.4 where David justifies God and condemns himself for his sin.

Sometimes we use the expression “self-justification,” which is almost always used in a bad sense. This is when a person has done wrong and tries to excuse himself or tries to prove that he actually has not been wrong after all, even when he has. The Bible speaks of self-justification too.

4. Who did Jesus condemn because they justified themselves before men? (Luke 16.15)
5. We read of a lawyer “willing to justify himself.” What question did he ask the Lord Jesus? (Luke 10.29)

We have all sinned against God, and God will hold us to account for breaking His holy law. The Bible asks the question, “*How should man be just with God?*” (Job 9.2). The law we have broken can never justify us; it cannot say we are right; it can only condemn us for our sin. Neither can anything we do, any of our works, ever undo what we have done wrong. But the Lord Jesus came down to this earth to die for His people, to pay the penalty which the law demands, so that they can be set free. It is in this context that the Bible most often speaks of justification. God justifies sinners; that is, He declares them to be just, not because they themselves are righteous, but because the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is counted as theirs. This is often called “justification by faith,” because those who believe in the Lord Jesus, who trust in Him, who look to Him and His mercy alone, God accounts as just – God justifies them; God has forgiven their sin.

6. Look at Galatians 2.16. Write out what believers are *not* justified by, and then what they *are* justified by.
7. The Lord Jesus spoke of two men, one of whom “went down to his house justified rather than the other.” What did he pray for? (Luke 18)

One thing which has confused people is that in some places the Bible emphasises that justification is not of our works, yet in others that we are justified by our works. The difference is simply that we cannot ever be justified by anything we do, but if we are made true believers and are “justified by faith,” then that faith will be made evident by our works.

8. Compare Romans 4.2-5 where Abraham is said to be justified not by works but by faith, and James 2.21-24 where Abraham is said to be justified by works. Which scripture from Genesis is referred to in both cases?

In the instances in the question above, Paul is speaking of Abraham being justified by God through his faith, and James is speaking of Abraham's actions in offering up Isaac demonstrating the reality of his faith. In other words, if a person claims to believe in the Lord Jesus and to be justified by God on account of his faith, the proof of the reality of his faith will be seen in a life consistent with that faith, a life lived humbly according to God's Word, otherwise his faith is empty and valueless.

9. Write out a verse in Paul's sermon at Antioch which says who are justified and how, and on what ground we cannot be justified. (Acts 13)
10. Find two verses which emphasise that God's people are justified “by His grace,” that is, that justification is a free and undeserved gift of God.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. The seventh day.
2. “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”
3. Wash their clothes.
4. “Carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.” Eight days.
5. “Him, whom the Father hath sanctified.”
6. “Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.” “Jesus ..., that He might sanctify the people with His own blood.”
7. “Sanctified through the truth,” “Sanctified by faith that is in Me,” “Sanctified in Christ Jesus,” “Sanctification of the Spirit,” “Sanctified by God the Father.”
8. Moses and Aaron; they would not be allowed to enter the promised land. (Numbers 20.12)

9. Jesus and His people (called His sons and His brethren). (Hebrews 2.9-11)
 10. The breast of the wave offering, and the shoulder of the heave offering (Exodus 29.27), "those things wherewith the atonement was made" (33), the altar (37), the tabernacle of the congregation (43), Aaron and his sons (44).
-

WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING?

We went to Bethlehem,
But found the Babe was gone,
The manger empty and alone.
 "And whither has He fled?"
 "To Calvary," they said,
 "To suffer in our stead."

We went to Calvary,
But found the Sufferer gone,
The place all dark and lone.
 "Whither?" we asked.
 "Into the heavens," they said,
 "Up to the throne,
 For us to intercede."

So then to heaven we'll go;
The Babe is not below.

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)
Gospel Standard 1986

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OUR MAGAZINES

We would humbly acknowledge the mercy of God in providing for us through another year. Each month, it is like "casting bread upon the waters," praying that the Lord will bless some portion to a needy soul. If indeed there has been any good done, it must be the Lord's doing.

With sincere thanks, we acknowledge the faithful help of many: the friend who writes the Bible Study for the Older Ones, another friend who prepares the questions each month, the friend who receives the answers, those who have contributed pieces, our proof-readers, and the friend who prepares the magazine for the printers. We greatly value your help, guidance, suggestions, and prayerful concern.

We understand that, except for UK subscribers, the price of the magazine will remain the same as in the past year. Knowing that the cost of everything, including paper, printing, and postage, is increasing, we would thank the trustees for their commitment to keeping the cost as low as possible.

Brethren, pray for us.

G.L.TenBroeke