

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

THE WORLD'S SIN AND HELPLESSNESS

God have mercy upon us if we have been heedless or careless about immortal souls! The tragedy of the human soul is a real thing, and it is all around us. *We cannot shirk our Christian responsibility to the unsaved.* Do we want to? If we realise the solemnity of the days in which we live, we shall never rest until the Lord sends us forth to work for Him.

Last night I had a dream, or rather more than a dream. I seemed to be standing by the seashore, and I heard a voice say, "*The mighty deluge is coming.*" I knew it was a voice speaking of coming judgment. The heavens were darkening, and I looked to see alarm in human hearts, but no — the children played upon the seashore, and men and women passed to and fro careless and unheeding. There was no fleeing from the wrath to come. And one great thought possessed me then. I cried, "Who shall warn these people of the wrath to come?" I thought of the mighty voices of the past that had sounded out God's warnings to a sinful and unheeding world through all the ages. I heard Abraham's pleading prayer; I thought of Elijah's fearless fervour, and Isaiah's prophetic fire, and Jeremiah's weeping eyes, and David's poetic inspiration, and of Daniel "greatly beloved," who spake the doom of kings. I heard the voice speaking in the wilderness, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

I followed the footsteps of my blessed Lord "who went about doing good." I am moved beyond expression as I see His tears shed for the sins and sorrows of the race He came to save . . . His eyes from Olivet beheld the city Jerusalem that He loved. He "wept over it," but those tears were the outcome of His soul's lament. He wept "over the city." He wept over a nation also.

HEYMAN WREFORD (1923)

THE THOUGHT OF DRAWING NEAR TO GOD

(Continued)

“*Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you*”
(James iv.8)

In a world of insincerity, where pretence of truth is cloaked in many words, the living Word of God speaks with clarity and simplicity. By contrast with the devious paths of men it is like the highway, of which Isaiah speaks, where wayfaring men, though fools, cannot fail to see the way. The things of the earth, of the home, and of the fields are used as symbols for exposition. The great Mind of the Infinite descends to draw man near to his God. Even when, in thought and act, man failed in that planted garden where God had walked with him as friend, the same Hand that planted was the Hand that killed the innocent animal of His creation that man might know His provision for the way back to Himself.

James does not write with apostolic authority to an assembly of believers—a church, in a settled place, but to twelve tribes without tribal gathering scattered abroad as the outcome of their own departure from God. Yet he would draw them near—for individually they may come and, in coming, find the family circle once again. But they must draw near in reality, leaving all pretence, and enduring even the derision of their brethren of the same race who were content to claim in name what they did not possess in truth. For to them, as to us, this “drawing near” is not in words or outward acts. It is the response that arises from an awareness of need. It involves an energy equal to our appreciation of that need. The riverside at Philippi (Acts xvi.) is important, in the mind of the Spirit, for no other reason than it was “where prayer was wont to be *made*.” The thought of *energy* in petition—in drawing near—is significant. They did not meet merely to “say prayers.”

The terse expressions used by James carry a depth of mean-

ing all too easily unobserved. He wrote to a mixed as well as a scattered company. There were those among them content with that surface approach of temporary religious fervour which drew from the divine discernment of the Son of Man the sad verdict, "This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me" (Matthew xv.)

The energy of drawing near to God is the subject of divine record in a multitude of cases. It is surely not without significance that Matthew turns from portraying religious hypocrisy to that genuine energy of approach to the Sent One of God which we find in the middle of chapter xv.: "Jesus went thence and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David." The contrast presented by the Spirit of God is intense. The scene moves from one of hollow pretence to the vital energy of faith, which turns not aside from barriers of nation and religion, but presses on until the purpose is achieved—the prize possessed. Mark presents the events in the same sequence (Mark vii.). The Lord Jesus turns from tradition and counterfeit: "And from thence He arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon" (verse 24).

The woman comes from very far away—both nationally and spiritually. Mark writes of her as a Phenician-Syrian. The earliest authentic records of her race show that, from the dawn of history, the Phenicians were a great maritime and commercial people. According to Herodotus they taught the Greeks their "letters." Three conquerors had overrun their land. They had become a subject people. About the time of which Mark writes the subdivision of their country by Hadrian had brought about the description Phenician-Syrian.

The mind of Jesus must have surveyed the centuries as He arose to make His way "into the borders of Tyre and Sidon." The woman, daughter of an alien race, descendant of a long line of idol worshippers, was drawing near in her distress—and, unknown to those about Him, Jesus went to meet her. Israel and Tyre had known many years of association. The

servants of Hiram, king of Tyre, had brought Israel the products of far off lands. From him came his carpenters and masons; cedar trees and stone were made available to Solomon to "build an house unto the name of the Lord" (I Kings v.5). Later, from that land, came the princess that Ahab married. Jezebel was a Phenician. In the mind of Jesus, the past, with all its sad record of idolatry, was not dimmed. The murder of His prophets—the tainting of His chosen people—were events clearer than those of man's yesterday which fast faded into forgetfulness. Yet He goes to meet the woman from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, for she turned from the futile resources of her pagan land, and had taken those first steps in drawing near to the only true God.

It may have been thought that Jesus sought respite, from the animosity of religionism that menaced Him, when He left for the borders of Tyre and Sidon. The sources of His refreshment were not obvious to others—they were "meat that ye know not of" (John iv. 32). How often He sought refreshment in the response of those who believed—despite distance of race and disability of environment! When the nine left Him, in haste for family rehabilitation, there remained only one—and he a Samaritan—at His feet (Luke xvii.16). Here, by the confines of Tyre and Sidon, He would find refreshment—and that from a Gentile woman's faith.

One pauses to make inward enquiry as to what refreshment He knows in *our* day, when faith is called to endure, and only true remembrance of Him leads to worship!

So the Gentile woman came—and never knew her coming was foreknown. But, to draw *near* to God is not to make mere application. The reality of energy is tested—"He answered her not a word." It is the silence of Christ—how many true hearts have known it! It does not only follow perfunctory prayer. At times it waits the better hour of blessing and, again, to faith, His words have promise of later understanding—"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know—hereafter" (John xiii.7). There is not only correction, there is the strengthening of experience in the silence of Christ. Are we indeed in such deep realisation of helpless need that we will

follow Him with our petition, while those, seemingly near to Him, say "Send her away; for she crieth after us" (verse 23)? When He seems, by His silence, farther away, do we follow after?

The demon world, in which she lived, had grasped her daughter—does it not continue to do so? The approach has changed, but the evil intent remains. She is aware of a great peril, but she believes Him "Son of David," and declares His true title. It is the language of faith, though the gulf between them is deep and wide. Her very declaration proclaims it—for, to draw near is too self-revealing for pretence. As He tells those with Him, He is sent only to lost Israel. He waits her reaction to the closing of the door of her human hope. But faith is not held by doors. There is a worshipper at His feet, and who may know His inner joy at the persistence of her faith! She came of a people that had founded Carthage and colonised in Africa and in Europe, but neither ancestry nor civilisation avail against Satanic power. Her cry, "Lord help *ME*," expressed worship of the only One in whom was power to help. So now He speaks to her direct, for, in all that she did there could be heard, as it were, the cry of Jacob in his night of apprehension, "I will not let Thee go, except thou bless me" (Genesis xxxii.26). The children's food is not given to the "little dogs," though they may be their pets indeed. But she does not pretend to be "at the table:" she will go underneath, for grace, overflowing, will provide the overspill of crumbs and gladly will she partake of them.

"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It was His royal giving—not the crumbs of careless spilling—the very bread of life. The grace, limitless, overflowing to the one from "afar off," but "made nigh" through faith in Himself.

It was His assessment of her faith. He used no idle words. It had surmounted each progressive obstacle. The reality of its energy was, to the Son of David, sweet antidote to the weariness of the Son of Man.

How very precious, could we but feel our own faith assessed by Him so highly!

EDWARD T. WOOD

DISCIPLESHIP

(Continued)

“Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand, to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke xiv.31-33).

In the parable preceding this, we saw (“Words of Help”—January, 1966) that the Lord invited His hearers to consider what *they* would do, so that they might understand *His* action. But here He could not use quite this method, because none of His hearers had experience of commanding an army. So he speaks in a more general way of such a situation, as in the words quoted above. “What king, going to make war,” He says.

There is no difficulty for us to find Him speak of Himself as a king, and none either, in the thought of warfare. In another place He had spoken of Satan as like a strong man armed keeping his goods in peace until a stronger came and despoiled him (Luke xi.21, 22). But we may easily find great difficulty in His next words, unless we remember that His purpose was (as we saw in the preceding parable) to help His hearers understand His own ways. He sought to show why He must refuse to accept many of those in the crowds following Him, as His disciples. Thus He puts the question, How will a king act before going to war against greatly superior numbers?

This then, is the feature of the warfare in which He was engaged to which He draws our attention in this parable. Unless we see this clearly, and hold to it tenaciously, we shall be led to the impossible conclusion that the Lord compared Himself to a king who considered making peace with His adversary!

Or, if anyone thinks that He puts the would-be disciple into

the part of the king, we see that we get an equally impossible interpretation, namely that He was advising those who were not prepared for His conditions of discipleship, themselves to make peace with sin and Satan!

No, such self-condemning interpretations show that we are on the wrong track—we have fallen into the error, so easy in interpreting the parables, of trying to use all the details. We must find the main point of the comparison, and keep it in view throughout.

Considering the parable in this light, we can see that we are not meant *here* to think of His own mighty power and wisdom, nor of the mighty hosts of angels who will accompany Him when He comes forth from heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords. Then indeed, no adversaries however numerous will be able to withstand Him.

But in the present parable He is speaking rather of the warfare that was to be waged, on earth, through His disciples in His name. Discipleship was His theme. Faced by greatly superior forces, a king could not hope to win the battle unless he could rely on the utter devotion of his soldiers to his person, and his cause. His men would certainly be defeated unless they fought because they loved and trusted their king.

Thus Jesus sought to impress on His hearers that, if they contemplated following His standard, they must be prepared to find themselves always outnumbered. Did any think of following Him because just then it seemed a popular thing to do? He warns them that they would soon find matters just the reverse of this.

The question was then, could He rely on them under those conditions? Thus He showed why He must refuse, as unfitted for the conflict in which He was engaged, all who were not prepared to give up everything for Him. "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

We find something similar to this, though not exactly parallel, in the story of Gideon (Judges vii.). Gideon was faced by an innumerable host of Midianites, but, under God's guidance, he sought to weed out of his army all who were likely to be untrustworthy. First he sent home those who were fearful and afraid. Then, bringing them down to the river to drink, he sent back all who lay down at full length to drink, as not being sufficiently alert and self-denying for the conflict. With the mere three hundred men left God said He would save Israel.

We ought to note that in saying "whosoever be he of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple," the Lord Jesus was not demanding special moral qualities of His disciples. He is the Saviour of sinners, and calls the weary and heavy laden to Him; but He does demand our entire yielding of ourselves to Him, that His will might be fulfilled in us. All other loyalties must give way to this one, as a soldier has to render unqualified obedience.

Men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who had an honoured place in Israel, held back at first from declaring themselves as His disciples; but when He had been crucified, they realised that all must be sacrificed if they were to be true to Him in whom they had come to believe. Consequently they came forward then, if only to bury His body with loving care. They were taking up the cross and following Him, though all their acquaintances were against Him. As it was said, "Have any of the Pharisees or chief rulers believed on Him?"

Although the above interpretation of His parable is in accord with His frequent manner of speaking, calling on His hearers to consider their own reactions that they might understand *His* ways, yet some persons may feel a difficulty because they are so accustomed, and rightly so, to think of His power as invincible. Yet it must be conceded that the cause of Christ often flags and fails to make progress—surely not because His power is lacking, but because of His people's failure, in faith and devotion to His name.

It is vital to see that, though we can only accomplish anything through His power and grace working in us, yet His

work in this world is committed to our responsibility. And it is of the responsibility of disciples that the Lord is speaking in these two parables.

Shall we then ask ourselves, have we really forsaken everything for Him? Are we ready to obey His will, though we find opposition or even persecution from others? Do we seek to carry out what we learn from the scriptures to be pleasing to God, even though we have to give up previously held opinions or positions? Above all, is it our supreme purpose to honour His name above all in this world, where men will seek to put others on a level with Him, or to deny the authority of His word?

SALT

The Lord winds up this section of His discourse with a brief word about salt. "Salt is good, but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is fit neither for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Salt is a preservative, but its use as a symbol in scripture may be understood from its frequent connection with a covenant. God's covenant with Aaron to give him the priesthood (Numbers xviii. 19), and His covenant with David to give him and his sons the kingdom over Israel (II Chronicles xiii. 5), are both referred to as "a covenant of salt," that is, evidently, a specially binding and lasting covenant. Again, God commanded His people never to omit "the salt of the covenant of thy God" from the meat offering.

The symbol was doubtless based on an ancient custom—it was unthinkable to betray a man with whom one had "eaten salt." Hence it becomes a symbol of fidelity—fidelity as the preservative principle in our relationships with one another.

Looked at in this light, we may see the force of the Lord's saying, "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?" If that which is the very principle of faithfulness fails, there is no remedy. Such salt was useless anywhere—it could only harm the land (Deuteronomy xxix. 23), and it could not even help to rot down the dunghill, but men cast it out.

The meaning just here is plain: without fidelity, a disciple

was worse than useless. How much harm has been done to the Master's cause by unfaithful followers! And when He says "men cast it out," we must remember He is explaining His own ways. His stern warning to Laodicea comes to mind: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot (like the savourless salt) I will spue thee out of My mouth" (Revelation iii. 16).

When He has taken His believing people to Himself, the worthless professors left here will be rejected utterly by Him. Meanwhile let us search our own hearts, lest any unfaithfulness creep into *our* ways. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

IS THERE ANY HOPE OF REVIVAL?

(Remarks on Romans xii.)

(Continued)

The apostle goes on to bring out what is a necessary accompaniment to this truth: "Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." You know that certain substances, if put into a vessel, will conform to the shape of the vessel. That danger threatens us. The besetting sin of the day should be guarded against, lest the pressure of it on us in our daily lives should fashion us into the same shape. Here we are exhorted not to conform to the world. We have the word of God, by which we can see what He wants, and by which we should be governed.

Besides the exhortation not to be conformed to the world, there is something additional. God deals with our hearts and consciences, and says, "But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Here is the Christian walking according to the new nature and in the power of the Spirit. He not only knows from the word of God, but he is able to prove, what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Let us now briefly look over the rest of the chapter. This

chapter falls into two parts: the first two verses deal with what God would have us to be before Him; the rest of the chapter deals with what we should be to one another and to the world. The apostle begins with the assembly: this is the only place where it is mentioned at length in the Epistle. He brings out our responsibility: in great service or in little, in the highest form of ministry or in the lowest, responsibility covers every member of the assembly.

Our responsibility flows from this: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (verses 4, 5). These verses tell us how we should think of one another: we are exhorted not to quarrel, not to be unforgiving, but as members one of another to walk together. Not as individuals, though God has blessed and does bless us individually; but as believers there are feelings and sympathies which can only find exercise in God's assembly.

In verses 6-8 the apostle refers to gifts. From the highest gift of all he comes down to little things, and in all we should exercise mercy one to another. Whatever God has called us to, let us occupy ourselves in it, not to the exclusion of everything else, but to do it in true devotedness of heart to Christ.

Then come a number of exhortations. The washing of water by the word, as most of us know, is practical. It is for our cleansing on our way: it is the exercise of conscience by means of the word of God. This chapter brings this out plainly. Let us ask ourselves, Do I rejoice with those who rejoice? Do I weep with those who weep? It is a word for the exercise of conscience and self-judgment.

In verse 9 the apostle says, "Let love be without dissimulation," or without pretence. How do we know love? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." He gave Himself for us. Love then is holy and divine: it is more than idle good-nature among Christians. It may be that we do not like to grieve a certain saint of God and so make pretence of love and pass over that which should exercise us. That is not love; it is mere avoidance of conscience. Let your love be sincere, says

the apostle, and he proceeds to warn against evil and exhort to that which is good. It is remarkable how these thoughts are brought together. "Let your love be sincere. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good."

We now come to verse 16. "Be of the same mind one toward another." This is the true Christian spirit. The next clause is a faulty translation, as scholars have shown. It should read, "Not minding high things, but going along with the lowly." A rich man may be amiable, but that may be because he feels his superiority over you and is willing to bring himself down to your level. Christianity destroys that sort of thing.

It is beautiful to see in the list of things mentioned here and in any part of scripture where the writer exhorts to that which is good, that it is true in the Lord Jesus Himself. How beautifully is the answer found in Him in His life! "Present your bodies a living sacrifice," says the apostle. Christ hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Ephesians v. 2). "Set not your mind on high things, but go along with the lowly," says the apostle. Who went along with the lowly as He, the One Who sought the company of the poor, vile sinners? When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously (I Peter ii. 23).

We read in the Psalms, "Then I restored that which I took not away" (Psalm lxi. 4). I am persuaded that this verse refers to the Lord's conduct towards men rather than on the cross. The Lord restored to man what He did not take away, He who was so full of grace and compassion. How did men answer Him? "By what authority doest Thou these things?" they said.

The chapter closes with these words: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (verse 21). There is no exhortation in the whole of the word of God more needful than this, because it is not natural in dealing with one another. It is here not moral evil, of course, but that which grieves, fancied or real. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." You may say, "So few people love me: everyone seems to treat

me coldly." Let me ask you, What is the cause of this? Is it not because there is so little love in you, in me? You know the old illustration of the pump which, because it has been so long out of use, runs dry. You pour a little water into it and you get it back a hundredfold, a thousandfold. Then pour love into one another, and you will not be disappointed at the return. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

What is the effect in our souls of these exhortations? Does it not humble us when we think how little we come up to them? God has given them to us to search our hearts. What Christians we should be if all these things were true of us! But let us take comfort and encouragement in the thought that all strength is found in Him. Occupation with Him, dwelling on His love and grace, brings strength in the midst of weakness.

G. F. COX

(Reprinted from THE BIBLE MONTHLY—February 1928)

NOTE ON MARK V. 43

The small company of beholders was amazed with a great amazement at this miracle. Giving life to the dead was a climax to the mighty miracles and wonders and signs wrought by Jesus. The public raising of the widow's son probably preceded this case in point of time, and with it constituted the two witnessing works of this kind in Galilee, the third of these miracles being performed at Bethany in Judea.

The Lord charged them (presumably those present in the room where the damsel was) that no one should know this. The injunction seems to be in the sense that they were not to set themselves to spread the news of the miracle. It could not imply that the raising of the child was to remain a secret; for the fact that the dead daughter of a public personage such as Jairus had come back to life could scarcely be hidden.

A similar injunction laid on the disciples by the Lord on another occasion is recorded in this Gospel, and in that case the context throws some light upon the reason for this prohibition. After the Transfiguration, speaking to the same three

witnesses, the Lord "charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, save when the Son of man should have risen from the dead" (Mark ix. 9). This restriction was removed after His own resurrection, for He said to them, "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). Accordingly at Pentecost Peter testified in Jerusalem to the Jews of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you" (Acts ii. 22). In like manner Peter testified to Cornelius of the same wonderful works (Acts x. 38).

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit the apostles had not learned the secondary value which miracles have in the dealings of God with men, as compared with the moral and spiritual power of the word of the gospel. The Lord had to rebuke the exhilaration of the Seventy because they found themselves able to work miracles (Luke x. 17-20). Here He restrained their natural impulse to spread the news of this marvellous work of His.

W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from THE BIBLE TREASURY—June, 1913)

TOMORROW

The anxiety that dreads an evil thing on the morrow is nothing but unbelief. When the morrow comes the evil may not be there; if it comes God will be there. He may allow us to taste what it is to indulge our own wills, but if our souls are subject to Him how often the dreaded evil never appears!

When the heart bows to the will of God about some sorrow that we dread, how often the sorrow is taken away, and the Lord meets us with unexpected kindness and goodness.

He is able to make even the sorrow to be all blessing. Whatever be His will, it is good. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

As intimated in our December last issue, the articles on the Second Coming of Christ by Mr. Edward T. Wood, which appeared serially in WORDS OF HELP some time ago, are being reproduced as a separate booklet. This will be available shortly at the price of 1/- per copy, obtainable from the Publishers of this Magazine.

Much has been written during the past hundred years on the subject of Christ's coming again. Should this not be a matter for thanksgiving? And as the time for the fulfilment of the Lord's promise draws inevitably nearer, may we not rejoice in any fresh presentation of this truth which will quicken the expectation of His people, and stir them anew to the welcoming cry: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Familiarity has often proved to be the grave of vital truths of Scripture. We feel sure this new booklet will prove of comfort and reviving power to all who will read it thoughtfully, and heed its message. We commend it warmly to all our readers.

(Continued from inside back cover)

was supreme in command. This divine Voice emanated from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth, and was audible to His terrified disciples.

What a revelation was thus made to the followers of Jesus! What a Master was theirs! What a One to love and follow, to reverence and adore—but not to doubt!

W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from THE BIBLE TREASURY—June, 1912)

THE THOUGHT OF DRAWING NEAR TO GOD

(James iv. 8)

(Continued)

IT IS WELL not to lose the beauty as well as the comfort of God's reception of those who "draw near" to Him. The beauty is, of course, spiritually discerned, for the manner of His reception displays so many glories of His character. The comfort is for all who, with steps however slow or hesitant, make approach to Him in simple faith. In the divine record of these human movements there is a wide portrayal of human kind. The character of the one who comes is shown in the manner of the coming—there is no prescribed formality of approach. The crucified thief gasps out his reasoned appeal, though, like Bartimaeus in his blind disability, he cannot move a limb toward his object. A leper draws as near as law allows, and cries from the distance of his tainted condition, while a dying child draws the ruler of the synagogue to the dust at the feet of Jesus.

If, with reverent hands, and, aided by the Spirit of Truth, we draw aside the curtain of the ages, and live awhile with those who, in their own dangerous days, drew near to God, we shall find the same beauties and draw the same unfailing comfort. Was it not a king who wrote, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" . . . "this poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm xxxiv. 4 and 6)? Did not a degraded woman in a threatened city declare, "The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and in the earth beneath" (Joshua ii. 11). "And she bound the scarlet line in the window" (verse 21). So, in her way, she moved in faith's unison with the purpose of God. From those in power to those without strength, we may move in humble wonder at the varieties of approach, and take comfort that the gracious reaction of our God is always in accord with the need and character of one who draws near to Him.

Let us consider more closely the approach of one who had come to the end of earth's resources. Her attempt at silent interposition came after twelve weary years of hope's frustration. The ruler of the synagogue restrains his impatience at delay, for Jesus is going with him to his daughter whom death has claimed at the twelfth year of her age. Here, at the confluence of two needs, the childlike faith of the woman with an issue of blood is enhanced by comparison with the human anxiety of Jairus whose need for Jesus' presence alone would, to him, suffice, while flickering life lingered in his child.

She "had spent all her living upon physicians" (Luke viii. 43), and her physician resources had failed—there remained only all her dying. Life, for her, was ebbing fast. Yet, with her last strength, she draws near.

Furtively she had left her house. Pronounced as "unclean" by the ecclesiastics of her day she was virtually a prisoner there. The iron gates of ostracism closed her in. It was surely no accidental happening that drew Jesus near to that entombed life! No path of HIS was ever one of chance direction. From far away He heard a man cry, among tombs, in one fleeting moment of sanity, and said to His fishermen friends "let us GO over unto the other side of the lake" (Luke viii. 22).

Mark tells us she "came in the press behind." It was no easy path—her drawing near! Frail as a fallen leaf before the wind, she was no match for the crowd that pressed. Yet, she is there, "in the press behind." She must have been borne on by that wave of surging humanity that had no purpose such as her own. Is there no unseen strength, for genuine faith, that links it with Omnipotence, to find that even the waves of human turbulence obey to carry it into the calm of His presence? She makes no cry. She knows no stereotyped phrases of high-sounding holiness. "If I may but touch His clothes I shall be whole!" This is her inward cry—her source of courage to meet the "if" of her frailty. So she finds herself "in the press behind." And the crowd pressed—as it presses today—in curiosity or criticism, in selfish quest of the unusual, in sightseeing that only sees the temporary scene. But NEVER did even feeblest approach find

barriers unsurmountable in drawing near to the Presence of God in Christ. Her reaching fingers touched His garment—she had drawn near indeed!

She would have stolen away, maybe, with a secret vow in her grateful heart to return thanks for this manifest answer to her act of faith. The astounding outcome of that trembling touch upon a garment, which scores of the careless pressed and jostled, had well nigh overcome her. To be aware of that perfection of “newness of life” which flowed from the Author Himself must have flooded her very soul with a sense of overflowing beneficence beyond comprehension.

But James, the inspired writer, proceeds from admonition to promise. To exhort his readers to “draw near to God” would, in itself, have shown them a duty, but the promise that follows abounds in grace, which is the undeserved outpouring of the mercy of God—“He WILL draw nigh to you” (James iv. 8).

Thus, in accord with the divine character, Jesus turns in the press and, looking upon the one whose touch, among all that throng, alone made contact of living faith, He “drew near” to her—“He looked round about to see her that had done this thing” (Mark v.). His immediate response—swift as the outflow of power from Himself—fulfilled the promise.

There is a nearness which is not of our arranging. No human ingenuity of organised approach can bring it into being. No ceremony, however inspiring, may procure it. It is the drawing near of the Divine Person Himself, faithful to His own undertaking, and responding to faith’s drawing near.

She was, at once, aware of it. The contact of her frailty brought far more than the stay of death’s final grasp upon her life. She had come into a nearness which no pressing crowd could know—and she feared and trembled in humility before Him. The soul’s experience of the look direct, the word of enquiry that seeks answer already foreknown, may vary, as do all human reactions, but it marks a parting of life’s way, and transforms weary disillusion into worship.

So a great silence stilled the discords of the crowd and movement ceased while the Voice, that would shortly call a child from death, spoke the question, “Who touched me?” It

was enquiry, but not from the need to know. There was a welcome in it for the one who heard. His questions, like His answers, have fulness of purpose and depth of divine kindness far removed from the interrogations of men. To know Him as a means of healing is blessed indeed, but to know Him as a Person is to come to the Great Source of soul well-being—present and eternal. The woman's voice from the dust of the highway at His feet was now the only voice—"She told Him all the truth" (Mark v. 33), and who can estimate the far-reaching influence of her testimony to His power! The thrill of His personal assurance became her own lasting experience. Never would she doubt the permanence of her healing—"Thy faith hath healed thee; go in peace, and be well of thy scourge."

Thus the welcome to draw near—and the blessing proclaimed—while the ruler of the synagogue heard and beheld the outcome of FAITH. All accorded with the divine plan, for the test was, even now, applied to this man who stood for the synagogue emblem of nationalism. The messengers from his house seek to interrupt the hearing of the words of Jesus as the woman rises from her worship and the Satanic power of death proclaims its victory, "Thy daughter is dead." We may think of that father, upon the brink of hopelessness. Jesus was his last Resource—but so was Jesus the only Hope left to the woman! She stood, graceful and free, in testimony to a "newness of life" that brought a beauty better than in her long past youth. What of his own house—where death had claimed his child? The "Teacher need not now be troubled"—indeed, it does not seem to have been popular in the synagogue that He should have been approached at all! The eyes of the One, already rejected, look into his own—he, too, knew that look direct—and reassurance is *immediate*, "Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark v. 36).

To the house, where He will call her back to life and speak the endearing word, with which her mother used to call her—to the house, where they will laugh at Him, deriding His words of life in the presence of death, Jesus moves in full accord with the Father's purpose. How good to call to mind the many who drew near to Him in deep reality—whose faith drew from Him

that outflow of untainted good which remained their lasting assurance of His love! By differing paths they had drawn near to Him—but the way always led to Him, for, as they came, HE “DREW NIGH” TO THEM.

EDWARD T. WOOD

OBADIAH AND ELIJAH

“NOW OBADIAH FEARED the Lord greatly” (1 Kings xviii. 3), and moreover he had feared Him from his youth. The fear of God had led him to great lengths in the service of the people of God, for he had even braved Jezebel’s displeasure to save a hundred of the Lord’s prophets. He is therefore unquestionably a God-fearing man.

The word “fear” in the story is one meaning reverence, the very highest character of this class of emotion. It was deep reverential regard which Obadiah had for the Lord God of Israel.

Yet when introduced to us on the page of inspiration we find him occupying a position hardly consistent with a profession of being a God-fearing man. He is the governor of king Ahab’s house—a man who did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all that were before him. How came this about?

Circumstances then, as ever, were difficult for faithful, godly souls, the whole kingdom being given over to what was a special abomination to God. Idolatry, which dethrones God, degrades His creatures, and destroys communication between Himself and them, had eaten its way into the very heart of the nation, and things were all wrong with the people of God.

Obadiah’s anomalous position—a man who feared Jehovah greatly, yet was governor of Ahab’s house—illustrates this.

It has been said that history is chiefly biography; we may add that the true life of man is to be understood by the lives of men, and the Spirit of God gives many opportunities for this study. The twin marvel of the Holy Scriptures is that they are at once

a revelation of God and a perfect mirror of man. The portraits are true photographs, pictures written by light, and revealing the features of the hearts of men, and what appears inexplicable in the case of Obadiah may be explained by reference to one's own heart. For there are God-fearing men even today, whose piety none would question, and yet somehow find it possible to accommodate themselves to the current spiritual corruptions of Christendom. They sigh and groan at times over the evident departure of the professing church from the New Testament order, but yet cannot find themselves called to take a definite stand against the prevailing evil.

Modernism, Ritualism, Spiritualism are being tampered with within the bounds of nominally orthodox Christian communities, and godly people sigh and cry because of these abominations, as Obadiah in the comparative security and comfort of Ahab's house doubtless secretly mourned over the condition of things in Israel.

Obadiah meets Elijah; both fear the Lord greatly, but while one could compromise with Ahab to his own personal advantage, the other could only condemn and confound the idolatrous king by his testimony to the Lord God of Israel.

Obadiah appears very uneasy at the encounter with Elijah; perchance he feels that Elijah takes too bold a stand under present difficult circumstances; that he goes too far for the comfort of a God-fearing man like himself. At once he speaks out just what is in his heart, and, in effect, says: Was it not told you what I did? Ahab will slay me, and not only my position, but my very life will be endangered. I know the Spirit of the Lord takes special care of you, but what about me?

It is fairly clear from the narrative that Obadiah's compromise with evil, and complacency at the balancing of his spiritual accounts by his hospitality to the prophets of the Lord, coupled with the comfort of the palace during the period of widespread privation, had begotten a craven spirit of cowardly self-regard. Compromise with evil, complacency of mind with oneself, and a measure of worldly comfort and respect are as potent as ever today to produce a craven cowardice of spirit which has no witness for God in the world, no testimony to His present

activities of grace, and no protest against the appalling evils of current Christendom.

Elijah is present in quite another light here; he stands before Jehovah, in the secret of His mind, and the security of His hand. There is no trace of fear in this part of the story, but abundant evidence of love for God and His people in spite of their disgraceful condition and conduct.

They may wander distractedly and with double minds after idols, but it is Elijah's joy to bear witness to the One true God—the Lord God of Israel, the then full revelation of deity.

The people of God may revolt and divide themselves. Elijah recognises and owns the unity of Israel, repairs the altar of Jehovah, and offers his sacrifice upon an altar of twelve stones, witnessing thereby to the oneness of the people of God in the sight of the Lord.

The people of God may generally acquiesce in the abounding evil in the land, but Elijah bears clear and uncompromising testimony against it in the very presence of Ahab himself, its chief promoter.

So he is presented as bearing a witness for God to the unity of God's people and against the prevailing corruption. Hence at that day the real testimony to God was bound up, so to say, with the man Elijah; and the fear of Obadiah upon meeting him, and the blustering manner of Ahab, alike bore witness to the power of the truth through the personality of the prophet.

Thus even in that dark hour of Israel's disgraceful declension there was a clear witness borne to God. There were some hidden ones truly who had not denied Jehovah as Lord, and there was at least one, Elijah, who had also kept His word.

If one were a God-fearing man in Israel at that period the question of being found in the company of Elijah would surely be raised sooner or later, for this testimony was one that separated from what God abominated, even though tolerated by so many of His people.

The testimony of God is maintained today, as then. Now the witness is to the reality of the true God known in Christian privilege as the Father who seeks worshippers in spirit and in truth, judging according to every man's work; secondly, to the

actual unity of the church of God, the body of Christ, and the obligation to gather for worship and fellowship solely on that ground, owning no name as centre but the name of the Lord Jesus, depending upon Him by the Spirit through the word for everything for worship, walk and work; finally, the testimony for God must of necessity be a witness against evil, however venerable from antiquity, or however alluring from novelty.

No compromise with evil in doctrine, practice or association; no complacency as to any imaginary attainments in the path of devotedness; no hankering for the comfort and regard of the world; none of these things belong to the testimony of our Lord in this day, but as to Timothy at Ephesus the apostle could write, so the Spirit by that same inspired written word speaks today: "For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but suffer evil along with the glad tidings" (2 Timothy i. 7, 8, New Trans.).

W. G. TURNER

(Reprinted from THE BIBLE MONTHLY—May, 1924)

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Chapter iv. 1-54

(Testimony in Samaria and Galilee)

THIS CHAPTER RECORDS the second of the Lord's personal interviews, which form a characteristic feature in the Gospel of John. On this occasion, a Samaritan woman is interviewed by Him, and in the course of His conversation wonderful truths connected with Christian worship are revealed.

(1) iv. 1-3: *Introduction to the Chapter*

In these opening verses we find the Lord leaving Judea for Galilee because of the jealousy of the Pharisees who had heard that He baptised more disciples than John. It is interesting to note that the Lord Jesus did not Himself baptise with water but His disciples. Their baptism was a preparation for the coming of Messiah. The Lord knew, and was even then experiencing, the early stages of His rejection by the people.

(2) iv. 4-26: *The Lord's interview with the woman*

The incident in Samaria indicates a well-marked division in the Gospel. The grace and love of the Lord Jesus are no longer to be restricted within the limits of Judaism. Verse 42 is a key to the theme of the chapter; the men of Samaria declared that "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

The Lord turned from privileged Judea to hated and despised Samaria. "He must needs go through Samaria" (verse 4). The disciples did not understand and were surprised at the Lord talking to the woman (verse 27). Ordinarily, a Jew would have made a detour to avoid Samaria, the racial hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans being very strong (verse 9). The latter were frequently cursed in the Jewish synagogues. A deep-rooted aversion existed from the days when the land was peopled by Gentiles after the ten tribes were taken into captivity by the king of Assyria (2 Kings xvii. 24).

It is worthy of note that the Lord timed His journey in order to meet a woman of Samaria rather than a man, for the women of that time were in a truly pitiful plight, being for the most part denied all rights and any status, and being regarded as mere chattels of men. Perhaps we may infer from this that this woman, although a great sinner, had been sinned against even more than she had sinned. The Saviour came for the sinful and despised. Subsequently, we find women ministering to the Lord, remaining at the cross when the disciples had fled, and appearing at the sepulchre on the resurrection morning. In the apostles' time, women shared in the work of the gospel (Philippians iv. 3). The beginning of such relief and blessing for women may have been in the Lord's interview with this Samaritan outcast.

There is a beautiful testimony to the perfect humanity of our blessed Lord in the allusion to His weariness, as He sat on the well (verse 6).

In the method used by the Lord to reach this woman's heart we see the supreme skill of the Great Physician dealing with the case. He who created the human heart knows every avenue through which to approach it. In matchless wisdom the Lord did not first appeal to the woman's conscience. By a simple

request for the smallest of favours, "Give me to drink," He claims her confidence. Then He interests her mind (verse 10), and, finally, when He has allayed all cause for alarm, He appeals to her conscience by vividly recalling her lurid past (verses 17, 18). He does not, as we might expect, bring before her the truth of the new birth, as He did with Nicodemus. On the other hand, He reveals to this comparatively ignorant woman, rather than to the "man of the Pharisees," the deep truths of Christian worship.

Further, there is no mention of penitence or confession. The soul is shown her need of some lasting satisfaction for the deep desire of her heart, which all her sinful indulgence in the past had failed to give her. The Lord opens her eyes to see that endless satisfaction may be obtained as a gift from God Who is a Giver. In contrast with the water of the well from which she had drunk and drunk again, the Lord spoke of the fountain God implants within, which unceasingly springs up into everlasting life. Strangers to the Lord Jesus have an inward thirst which cannot be quenched with the external excitements of the world. Believers receive God's gift of the Spirit to dwell within them and to fill them evermore with joy and peace through the believing knowledge of Christ.

Why do many Christians having within them the well of water springing up into everlasting life, still hanker after the pleasures of this world? It is not because the well has dried up and disappeared, but they are not drinking from that well. Many a flowing river might be used to generate power if the engineer would only harness it. He neglects his opportunity, yet the river flows on just the same.

The Lord then touches the woman's conscience, and she stands before Him as a convicted sinner, yet with no apparent desire to escape from Him. No; He has won her confidence, and she remains to hear His further words.

It is remarkable that she should proceed to take up the question of worship. But the most unlikely people may have religious difficulties if we could only look within them.

The Lord then shows the woman that worship is no longer a question of place or locality. It arises from being brought into

spiritual relation with God as the Father. In order to worship God it is needful to have the refreshing of the ever-springing fountain; the well of water given to the believer causes his heart to rise up and bless the Giver. The Samaritans had a worship which was a rival to that of the Jews in Jerusalem. But it was valueless because unauthorised by God. Jerusalem was the place where God had set His name, and salvation was of the Jews.

Yet even the Jewish ritual, though originally prescribed of God, was no longer pleasing to Him. Worship was no longer restricted to Jerusalem or Samaria, or to any place: "The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (verse 23).

Ceremonial worship was set aside for worship in spirit and in truth. The change was based upon God's own nature, for "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (verse 24).

At this juncture, the Saviour reveals Himself as the Messiah (verse 26), and as the woman believed that Jesus was the Christ, she was begotten of God (1 John iv. 2), and had learned what it was to be a true worshipper of God.

(3) iv. 27-30: *The woman invites others to see Jesus*

Instinctively she begins to serve by going to the city to tell of the wonderful Saviour she has found. From the heart full of worship to God and of love to Christ, service will flow spontaneously.

(4) iv. 31-38: *The Lord and His disciples*

While the woman is thus engaged in the service which flows from a satisfied heart, the Lord unveils to the disciples the secrets of His own joy: it was meat to Him to do the will of God. But there was more. The incident of the Samaritan woman had been an earnest to the Lord of those "other sheep," which were ever before His eyes. He beheld a widening horizon, and the fields of the world crying for a reaper. And so He adds, "and to finish His work." The need of the Gentile, just as that of the upright Pharisee (cf. iii. 14), pointed Him to the cross. Fully surrendered to do the will of Him Who sent Him, on the eve of Calvary, the Lord Jesus could say to His Father, "I have

finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (xvii. 4). When all was over He confirmed the great fact in the ears of men, saying from the cross, "It is finished."

The disciples too were to experience the joys of harvest-time. Did they not remember these words (verses 36-38) when Samaria received the gospel? (Acts viii. 1-17).

(5) iv. 39-42: *Those who believed in Samaria*

God honoured the simple witness of the woman, who said, "He told me all that ever I did." Many believed, confessing however, that their faith rested not upon the woman's word, but the Lord's, Whom they confessed to be the Saviour of the world. At their desire, the Lord remained there two days.

(6) iv. 43-54: *The healing of the courtier's son*

The incident at the end illustrates how blessing follows trust in the Lord's word. The nobleman, courtier of Capernaum, who came to Cana saying that his son was dying, returned believing the word of the Lord that his son lived, and found it true. The Lord arrested the ebbing life of the son because of the father's faith which was no idle curiosity to witness signs and wonders.

(To be continued, D.V.)

JESUS IN THE STORM

(Note on Mark iv. 35-41)

THIS MIRACLE IS one of the few which were wrought in the presence of the disciples only, most being public occurrences. But this case was for the especial benefit of the apostles, and in the record of it we are permitted to observe three things concerning our Lord:

- (1) The Man sleeping
- (2) God commanding
- (3) The creature obeying

(1) The incident is remarkable by the fact that there is, beside this, no other specific reference in the Gospels to the sleep of Jesus. That the Lord did take rest is without doubt implied in such passages as Mark i. 35; but here the homeless Son of man, who Himself said He had not where to lay His

head, is set before us asleep in an open boat during a raging tempest.

True manhood was there, and, moreover, the Man of perfect trust who, even in these singular circumstances of peril, exemplified the words of the Psalmist, "In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; for thou, Lord, alone makest me to dwell in safety" (Psalm iv. 8). As a man whose mind was stayed on Jehovah, He slept the sleep of absolute confidence in God, and was in this respect a contrast both with Jonah sleeping in guilty shame, and with the disciples sleeping for sorrow in the garden of Gethsemane.

(2) But while on the one hand we see the weariness of the Servant of Jehovah after the toils of the day, on the other we witness His instant readiness at a call for aid to serve yet more. And, again, we behold a further wonder: not only was the servant of Jehovah in the boat, but Jehovah Himself was there. For He who spoke with such authority to the winds and the waves was indubitably God; and the One who spoke thus was He who slept and awaked at the cry of distress. This was indeed the God of Israel, for as the Psalmist said, none but Jehovah is "mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea" (Psalm xciii. 4). It was a great revelation. And, no doubt, in after years, as the disciples recalled the thrilling experiences of this night, as they looked again in memory from the tossing billows to the face of the placid Sleeper, from the fury of the creature to the repose of the Creator, they recalled also the later words of the Lord: "That in Me ye may have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John xvi. 33).

(3) Here also was the rare spectacle of the inanimate creature obeying the voice of its Creator (John i. 3). Such obedience is of course observable continually in the operation of what are known as the laws of nature, though these phenomena, by reason of their regular repetition from age to age, have diminished in wonder to the majority. But the sudden stilling of this storm was unmistakable evidence that there was a voice which was heard above the roar of the wind and the waves, and which

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

continued from Inside Back Cover

If the Jews would not receive His own testimony, there were other witnesses:

(1) **JOHN THE BAPTIST** (verses 32-35). The people of Judea had flocked to the wilderness to hear the greatest of prophets whose testimony not only shone with the light of revelation, but burnt its way into their consciences and demanded repentance. John bore witness to the truth, and proclaimed Jesus to be the Lamb of God.

(2) **THE SON'S OWN WORKS** (verse 36). When John's voice had been silenced, the marvellous signs which Jesus performed day by day carried on the testimony to His Person. Who but the Son of the Father could display such grace and power as had been shown even in the healing of the impotent man?

(3) **THE FATHER** (verses 37, 38). As Jesus came up out of the waters of baptism, the Father's voice was heard from heaven acknowledging as His Beloved Son the One Who had clothed Himself with humility in order to fulfil all righteousness.

(4) **THE SCRIPTURES** (verses 39-47). Read so diligently in the synagogues every sabbath day, the Scriptures bore their witness to Him. But the Jews neither believed nor understood the Scriptures, neither did they know the power of God.

The Old Testament in itself did not contain more than the promise of eternal life. Its function was to point on to Christ Who of His own power and will can bestow it. And when the Jews rejected Him of Whom the Scriptures spoke, they were condemned by the very Scriptures that they treasured.

Their habit of self-exaltation and of seeking honour from one another prevented them from believing and honouring One Who had come, not in His own name, but in the name of the Father. Taken up with their petty vanities and religious formalities, they knew not their standing before God, nor their need of Him Who could have given them eternal life had they but been willing to come to Him.

(To be continued, D.V.)

CHRIST AND RECONCILIATION

(Notes from an address on Colossians 1)

After saying things about believers, the apostle has some remarkable things to say about the Lord Jesus Christ (from verse 15). He tells us what He is, and what He has done, and he tells us what our Lord Jesus has become.

THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

The Lord Jesus came down into this world. He took His place in the creation, and what then? Here He was the image of the invisible God. We are not told that He was in the likeness of God, for He was God. But we do read He was "made in the likeness of men."

God did to man what He never did to any angel. He put him in the place of government over the works of His hand. An angel is only a servant sent forth to serve those who shall inherit salvation. But though He was put below the place of angels, the Lord Jesus was the image of the invisible God, the One upon Whom man could look and learn what God is in all that He spoke, whether it was righteousness or grace that He brought before them in all His wonderful compassion, that compassion that would not send the people away hungry, lest they should faint by the way. We see Him weeping by the grave of Lazarus in all His grace. We see the manifestation before the eyes of God and man of what God is. He is "the image of the invisible God." And then, more than that; coming into this creation, what could He be but the Firstborn of it all? "Firstborn" is the place of pre-eminence which the Lord Jesus must have as His personal right, always and everywhere.

THE FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION

You remember that God, when He sent Moses to Pharaoh, said, "Israel is My firstborn" (Exodus iv. 22). Israel was not one of the first nations but one of the last. Peoples were established over the face of the earth long before Israel became a nation at all, but God said, "Israel is . . . My first-

born.” This was the place of priority that Israel had in the sight of God; and the Lord Jesus coming into creation, what could He be but the Firstborn?

The apostle gives us the reason for this precedence. The Lord Jesus was the Creator, for all things were created by Him, “visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” Here we have the Lord Jesus brought before us as the Creator of the universe. It was created by Him; and not only that, it was created for Him. It was for Him that God worked. The whole universe — not only this little earth — but the whole universe was created for the glory of the Lord Jesus. He is the One Who is before the universe, and by Him the universe goes on and holds together.

THE HEAD OF THE BODY

Next, we have what the Lord Jesus became. He had His own glory from all eternity, because of what He is in Himself. He had His glory too as Creator. But now we have what He has become, what was not true of Him eternally: “He is the Head of the body, the church” (verse 18).

This Headship shows what God thinks of the church. We may have our own little thoughts of the church, but this is the grand connection into which God brings it. After speaking of the glory of Christ, in that everything owes its existence to Him, He is said to be the Head, and the church is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. There would be that lacking to His glory if He had not the church. He is the Head of the body, the church, and He is in this relationship because He died and rose again.

He is “the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” Just as He had the pre-eminence in creation, so now He has it in the new creation; He is the Firstborn from the dead. This is a new state of things altogether. His grave closed the old order of

things, and now there is a new order of things in which Christ is all in all, the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead, "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence."

THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD

The 19th verse in the A.V. brings before us what is absolutely incredible: "for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." God cannot make God. God could only be God because of what He is in Himself. It is impossible for God to confer Godhead. Godhead must be eternal, and the fulness must belong to the Deity because of what He is. You know that the word "Father," which is in italics, should not be there at all. What Scripture does say is this, "in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell" (New Tr.). All the fulness of Deity was pleased to dwell in the Son.

It is not the Father simply, nor is it the Son alone, nor the Holy Spirit only, but the whole fulness of the Godhead was dwelling in Him. In Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell, "and, having made peace through the blood of His cross"—that is, Christ's cross—"by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven" (verse 20).

We might read carelessly and think the passage was speaking of God the Father or the Son, but it is of all the fulness of Deity that the apostle speaks. The Lord Jesus was not only a Man in whom the Spirit of God dwelt. This was true of Him surely, but the truth was very much more than that. The Spirit of God dwells in us; but the Lord Jesus was the One in Whom all the fulness of the Deity dwelt. Hence we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit brought in as acting towards us for our reconciliation.

He "made peace." It is not merely that Christ made peace by the blood of His cross. This is true, but not all the truth. "Having made peace by the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." There is reconciliation also, as well as peace.

THE RECONCILIATION OF THE UNIVERSE

Now reconciliation is not simply putting an end to enmity. It is the bringing back of everything into its proper order, according to the mind of God. Sin has come into the world, and brought in disaster and ruin; and the Lord Jesus, when He rises up from His Father's throne, will begin the work of restoration, and He will not rest until He has brought everything that is in disorder into perfect order according to the mind of God; and so the Lord Jesus will reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.

The governmental reconciliation is not going on now. The enemies of the Lord Jesus are not being put under His feet. This waits the time of the power of the Lord Jesus, and it will then continue until the great white throne judgment. Then there will be no more government. There will be no sin left, no wickedness, nothing to govern or to keep down. When the Lord Jesus has accomplished all this work of reconciliation His last act as Son of man will be an act of subjection—He gives up the kingdom to His Father (I Corinthians xv. 24-28). Then God will rest; everything will be ordered according to God's mind; the fulfilment of His will by the Son all heads up in this complete reconciliation.

THE RECONCILIATION OF BELIEVERS

But that is not all. God has anticipated in us what He is going to do with the universe. He has not yet reconciled the universe, but He has reconciled us. We were alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works, but now we have been reconciled. A Christian is a man who has not to wait for God to perform publicly what He has spoken in His word. God has taken us up, and He has already accomplished in us what He is yet going to accomplish in the world generally. He has reconciled us, and we are—at any rate, there is in us—a new creation (II Corinthians v. 17); though the time is a long way distant when God will make all things new (Revelation xxi. 5).

HOLY, UNBLAMEABLE, UNREPROVEABLE

“In the body of His flesh through death to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.” We are not yet that, but that is how the Lord Jesus will present us in the day that is coming. But we ought now to be the children of God “blameless and harmless . . . without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation” (Philippians ii. 15). This is God’s mind that here in this world we should be His children without reproach among men.

We have to own how far short we come of this standard. Perhaps we think it is a great deal to expect from us, and that we could never be without rebuke. But it is God’s standard; and He never lowers it to meet us. If God does not lower His standard, neither must we. We are to measure ourselves by the word of God and learn that in us dwells no good thing. The source of all strength and holiness is to be occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ.

If I want to be harmless and without rebuke in this world, where can I find anyone to answer to that but the Lord Jesus? And how unlike Him I am! But He will give the needed strength to follow Him and be like Him. Strength does not come by trying to walk up to a standard, like those under the law. Strength can only come to us when we have an object before us in whom there is power, and Christ is the Object Whom God has set before us: “beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, (we) are changed into the same image from glory to glory” (II Corinthians iii. 18).

Still, in spite of present weakness and failures, we have before us here what the Lord Jesus will shortly accomplish with regard to us. He will watch over us and care for us until that day when He will present us as holy and unblameable and unproveable in the sight of God.

GROUNDING AND SETTLED

Then, we find, there is a condition attached to this presentation: “If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled.” There is no condition attached to our present salvation. God

acts freely towards us, according to what He is in His grace, and blesses us fully. But supposing I profess to be a Christian, what is the proof of my being real? What is the proof that I am not like those spoken of in Matthew xiii., who received the word with joy, but soon withered away? There is one proof—that we “continue in the faith grounded and settled.” The true believer not only starts right, but continues right, though he will meet things to grieve over and lead him to judge himself.

The apostle says, “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.” Pray that this may be so with all of us. May all the difficulties and all that tries us only lead us to go on steadfastly in the Lord Jesus, Who never forgets us, Whose grace and love we can never exhaust, and Who gives us all the strength we need right on to the journey’s end.

G. F. COX

THE TEACHER’S PRAYER FOR THE TAUGHT

(Continued)

THE FULNESS OF GOD

“That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” The fulness was in Christ. It dwells in Him. All that God was and is He was and is, for He was God. In the fulfilment to us of the apostle’s requests, we too may be filled with all the fulness of God. These are great words. They are words that we need inscribed upon our hearts, along with the prayer we have here, often repeated by us that we might be divinely strengthened in the inner man for such experience.

ABOVE ALL WE ASK OR THINK

The apostle expresses this thought in the conclusion of these verses. We sometimes think perhaps of verse 20 as though it were solely an encouragement for us in our general

prayers, a thought founded upon a slight perversion of the text, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think." But the phrase is not as it is sometimes erroneously quoted, "above all that we *can* ask or think." Hence the statement has not a strict application to the whole of our prayer-meetings. It contains, of course, the assurance of Omnipotent resource, which is always an encouragement to needy saints.

But of what is the apostle especially speaking? Is not his phrase in direct connection with the subject of this particular prayer? Paul felt that the task of imparting these themes was a great one; he felt that the subject was so unlimited in scope that he bowed his knees humbly before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for aid, and in result he took comfort in the thought that there was One who was able to do exceeding abundantly above all that he was asking or thinking. And he has asked a great deal. To ask that "according to the riches of Christ's glory they might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," was not this a great request on their behalf? But the apostle says, The One to whom I appeal is able to do not only what I am asking for you, what I am able to think, but He is able to do exceeding abundantly above it.

And surely, we too, as well as the Ephesian saints, need to have our hearts enlarged in this respect. When we come with our various prayers, we come to One whose power is utterly beyond our conception. And is not the reason why our prayers often fail in accomplishment because we have not realised whom we have been addressing? We know that one condition of success is that we must believe that we shall have the things for which we plead. But searching our hearts, we sometimes find deep down that we are wondering whether we shall be answered. And going still further in our analysis we discover that we have mistrusted the almighty power and love of Him whom we do trust. Although we should fear to put the doubt into words, there is the feeling that perhaps we are asking something that He cannot grant. Let faith

grow within us, and it will grow in proportion as we have Christ the glorified before us in our prayers, and the Father too who could do all abundantly above what the apostle asked or thought.

THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US

The clause—"according to the power that worketh in us"—shows us another phase of the subject upon the apostle's mind in this prayer. There was a power not of themselves available to work within them. It is well to be clear that there is a divine power that works in the hearts of believers as well as a divine power that works apart from them. God in heaven is for us, and if God is for us, who can be against us? This is the operation of His wisdom and energy outside of ourselves. But we ought not to overlook the power that works within us. For instance, we read elsewhere that God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

It is a comfort to reflect, as we consider our own weakness, that the Holy Spirit by His directing and controlling energy is fashioning our character and actions for that ultimate position which lies beyond us in accordance with God's appointment in the day of His purpose.

This work is altogether distinct from the work of propitiation which is necessarily outside of us as to time and sphere of action. The atoning work of Christ at Calvary is complete, and nothing can be added to His sacrifice. His blood of eternal efficacy was once shed at the set time, and we, in consequence, stand justified by faith before our God. But the Spirit of God is now actively at work in us. Day by day, He, the great Architect, is busy with us, forming us for the place assigned to us in that holy temple which is growing up to completion as God's habitation, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner-stone. When the headstone is added, the whole building shall be revealed in flawless beauty, a wonder to Israel and the nations at large. Then in glory each living stone will be fitted to the place for which it was modelled in the great temple of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb,

to shed the lustre of Christ's glory upon the millennial world beneath.

Thus God has a purpose for each called saint in connection with the church of Christ when the day of His glory comes. We know that the church today lies dishonoured in the mire of worldly profession. It is not one body manifestly and expressively, and never will be such in this world. But it will be so seen and recognised when God's purpose is accomplished, and Christ is known to all men as the Head over all things to the church, His body. In that day also will be manifested what the Spirit of God is now doing in fitting it for that great consummation.

I think an assurance of this kind should cheer and encourage us in our outlook upon the depressing condition of Christendom at present. God will reconstruct where man can only mar further, not mend. Imagine that by some great council or convention, the divisions and sections of believers were unified by the force of human influence or power of government and organisation. What a hotch-potch the whole thing would be, when compared with apostolic teaching. Can man by reunion make the beautiful thing that was seen for one brief while at Pentecost? No, the oneness of the church is wrought not by might nor by power, but by the Holy Spirit.

Nevertheless, the fact of the church's unity remains. The Lord amid the wildest confusion knows them that are His, and the members of Christ are united with Him the Head, and nothing can sever living links in His body. Moreover, that unity, invisible today, will shine forth by and by when the Lord comes to present the church to Himself. Then, there will be a church in glory without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Who could bring about such a glorious consummation save the Lord Jesus Christ by His Spirit?

GOD'S GREAT PURPOSE

We ought to make sure that we understand this great purpose of God before we set ourselves to find what our

testimony in church matters should be. If we follow our own ideas on the subject, we may land ourselves in great error. In this Epistle we have God's ideal; and what He means to do He will accomplish in His own time. Let us desire to know the truth in all its fulness now. If we have such a desire there is One who is ready to teach us and to give us the knowledge of the will of God.

The dominating object of God throughout the succeeding cycles of time is expressed in the final verse: "unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." Paul not only looks up to the exalted Christ in His present heavenly glory, but he looks onward and sees in the ages to come in the sphere of heavenly glory the church, not Israel nor the Gentiles, who will have their fitting and allotted place upon the earth. Throughout the ages, world without end, the church will be the vehicle of glory to God.

There should even at present be a measure of that glory seen in the church. But how quickly the glory of unity faded after Pentecost, never to return. Where is it to be found today? God looking down sees the wretched and divided condition of His church. And there are some children of the Father, taught by the scriptures, who see the same thing. Indeed, any honest minded man might see the ruin and its effects, but those taught of God see the original purpose, and know its future final accomplishment.

W. J. HOCKING

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STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

V. Chapter v. 1-47 (TESTIMONY IN JERUSALEM)

This chapter records a visit by the Lord Jesus to Jerusalem at a feast of the Jews. There He performed a miracle of healing which led to an attack upon Him by the Jews because it was done on the sabbath and because He spoke

of working in unison with His Father. Their persecution drew from the Lord a witness to His glory, which is followed by a reference to the independent witnesses which corroborated His words.

This chapter has two principal divisions: (1) the account of the sign wrought at the pool of Bethesda (verses 1-15); and (2) the consequent persecution of the Lord by the Jews, and the revelation of Himself as the Source of Life, confirmed by witnesses (verses 16-47).

(1) v. 1-15: The Healing of the Impotent Man

The miracle was wrought in the midst of a crowd of sick persons gathered at the pool of Bethesda and awaiting the moving of the water. The Lord selected probably the worst case there, for the man to whom He spoke had been in his helpless state for 38 years.

The distressing sight at the pool was striking evidence of the sinful condition of the people of God. Moses had promised them immunity from the diseases of Egypt if they were obedient to the law of God (Deuteronomy vii. 15). But they were disobedient, and the disease at Bethesda was a penalty, though not unmingled by mercy.

The impotent man appears to set forth "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh." But what he was unable to do for himself, the Lord was able to do for him (cp. Romans viii. 3, 4).

The man's faith is not mentioned, but as he obeyed the Lord's word, he must have believed Him. The miracle showed the Lord's power and willingness to heal and bless in the midst of man's ruin and helplessness.

The man's actions after he was healed (verses 14, 15) give rise to some suspicion, but there are not sufficient grounds for thinking he betrayed the Lord to the Jews maliciously, however inexcusable his thoughtlessness. He was emphatic that the One Who made him whole bade him carry his bed on the sabbath.

**(2) v. 16-47: The persecution of Jesus by the Jews, and
His witness concerning Himself as the Life-giver,
with other witnesses too**

The act of healing brought the Lord into conflict with the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Engrossed in formal observance of the sabbath, they failed to recognise the Lord of the sabbath, even when He showed such a sign of His authority in their city. Nor would they set aside their scruples to rejoice in such a manifestation of divine power and mercy which brought immediate relief to a wretched sufferer of 38 long years.

In reply to their hostility, because He had healed on the sabbath, the Lord said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (verse 17). Neither the Father nor the Son could rest while sin was working out deadly ruin and misery for mankind. The Son came to display and to finish the Father's work. And the motive behind this divine labour is the eternal love of both Father and Son.

Unlike the more subtle opposers of the truth in our day, the Jews accepted the full and incontrovertible implication of the Lord's word, and made this claim to equality with God the subject of a fresh and more serious accusation and attack (verse 18).

The Lord then gave a statement of His oneness with the Father. The Son, He says in effect, did not exercise His own will apart from the Father: nor did the Son omit to carry out anything that the Father's will appointed (verse 19). And the deep affection of Father for Son ensured that communion wherein all the Father's secrets were shared by the Son. The healing of the impotent man was a manifestation of the Father's working, but the Lord promised yet greater works that the Jews might wonder—not believe; they were too far hardened in heart to receive any testimony (verses 19, 20).

The Lord then unfolds (verses 21, 22) how His oneness with the Father is displayed both in quickening dead souls and executing judgment. The Lord demonstrated His power

of raising the dead, notably in bringing Lazarus from the grave (John xi.).

But if the Jews would not acknowledge His Person, and receive through His word the eternal life they vainly sought under the law, they would be compelled to acknowledge Him in the day of judgment. For "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (verse 22). Now or hereafter every knee must bow, and every tongue confess Him as Lord.

The power to quicken and the authority to judge are alike committed to the Son for the express purpose that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (verse 23). How unavailing, therefore, for the Jews to acknowledge God the Father if they rejected God the Son!

Verse 24 shows that by hearing the Son's word and believing on the Father Who sent the Son man is receiving immunity from coming judgment and passes from death unto life.

In verses 25-27 we learn that the hour of receiving life through hearing the voice of the Son of God extends to this present time.

Verses 28-29 speak of the resurrection of the body, which is yet to take place. The two resurrections are not simultaneous, as we learn especially from the Book of Revelation, but are separated by at least the thousand years of the Lord's millennial reign. The "first" resurrection will take place before He sits on the throne to rule in peace, and is for believers only. The second is the final resurrection, when the unbelieving will stand before the great white throne to receive their utter condemnation (Revelation xx. 5-15).

WITNESSES TO CHRIST

Being the Son of God the Lord was a competent witness of Himself as the Life-giver and Judge (verses 30, 31). He sought no glory for Himself, but only to do the will of the Father Who sent Him. In this He displayed the character of a true servant, taking His place as Son of man to obey.

continued on Inside Front Cover

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

INTELLECTUAL DIFFICULTIES

Many young people have intellectual difficulties, and say they find things in the Bible which should not be there if it is the word of God — things which do not square with their ideas of divine inspiration. Have they forgotten that man is fallen, mind and all? We are defiled by sin in our natural minds, and are consequently not the best judges of what the word of God ought to be. We need to seek His gracious teaching, or we shall never have the knowledge of Him. He has promised, "They shall all be taught of God" (John vi.45), and unless we are taught of Him, shall we not deservedly wander in darkness? And again, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John vii.17).

All those who want *first* to be intellectually convinced overlook their own deep need as sinners, and do not get any farther. Those, however, who read the scriptures feeling that need will certainly find the words of Jesus in John vii.17 true. They will find the witness God has given of His Son is all-convincing. They will put their trust in Him, and go on from faith to obedience. With a profound rest of conscience through the precious blood of Christ, and a divinely regulated liberty, following His steps, what happiness will be theirs! As they grow in grace, they will see more and more how altogether worthy the word of God is of Him Who gave it, and when at length they arrive at the end of their pilgrimage, then there will be no power, on earth or in hell, which can move their affection and trust.

THEO. DAVIS

(Continued from inside back cover)

find there was animosity on both sides; and there would have been a Samaritan church and a Jewish church had God not guarded the unity by sending the apostles from Jerusalem to Samaria (Acts viii.14).

(From the ministry of J. A. Taylor, of Worthing)

THE THOUGHT OF DRAWING NEAR TO GOD

(James iv.8)

(Continued)

Drawing near from world resources (Ruth i)

A consideration of this subject cannot be without effect in self-examination. There would be no need to draw near if we had not drawn away! The powerful influences upon our faculties are too often calculated to impinge upon our loyalty to the One who died that we might "abide" in Him—here, as well as hereafter. When He said to His own "Abide in Me, and I in you" (John xv.4), He invited a nearness too little known to any man since Enoch walked with God. Some have drifted far. The note of invitation reaches them but faintly—muted by distance—nearly silenced by world discords. Others are not so far away—but they are not near. The Satanic "devices" of which we are not to be "ignorant" (2 Corinthians ii.11), continue to suggest, as Pharaoh did to Moses "I will let you go . . . only ye shall not go very far away" (Exodus viii.28). Let the believer be beguiled from that secure nearness to Christ, and he becomes vulnerable to many subtle devices, all calculated to increase the distance.

It is an impetus to worship to contemplate the patience as well as the grace of God that calls His people back from paths of disillusionment. The road of return was never closed to His wayward people of the past despite their idol worship, and when He sent His Son among them, it was with a Father's welcome to return. Jesus had come to His OWN things—His title to them could be found, humanly speaking, in a covenant made with Abraham, in Ur of the Chaldees, in the early dawn of history. But His sad pronouncement disclosed their condition: "O Jerusalem . . . that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew xxiii.37,38).

His voice must have expressed the sorrow accumulated from centuries of a people's failure. Departure and return—distance and nearness—foreigners and fellow-citizens—these among so many similar expressions used by the Spirit of God show His complete awareness of human instability linked triumphantly with the outcome of His own munificent grace.

The land of Moab was not so very far away. But it was eastward of the Salt Sea, and one had to turn one's back on little Beth-lehem—unimportant among the cities of Judah, yet named as fruitful in fertility (Ephratha)—“The House of Bread.” The book of Ruth opens to us the doors of homes there. It is a page from the intimate domestic history of the Bethlehemites. We may read their names, observe their customs—so strange to us—and, in the later revelation, from the same divine Source, behold the very springs of those events which have flowed through an arid world, onward to “the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1.10).

“Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons” (Ruth i.1). The “House of bread” had become the House of famine, and four souls fled from the discipline of God. They were well known in that small place, and sad eyes must have watched them go. The husband, Elimelech (“God is King”), and Naomi (“Pleasant”) his wife, with their two sons, sought sanctuary in the world resources of Moab.

Moab was not an unfriendly neighbour to Judah at this time. Unlike the brother tribe of Ammon, they had had a history more settled and peaceful. It is worthy of notice that Israel had been directed not to distress nor to contend with Moab (Deuteronomy ii.9). The land which remained to them after the Ammonite invasion was south of the Arnon—better translated “The *field* of Moab” (Ruth i.1). There Elimelech and his family would avoid the strictures of famine, and, it

would seem, they had sufficient means to do so. But while the people of God in Beth-lehem suffered and, doubtless, took their place in repentance and waiting, death reigned amid the fertile plenty of the "Field of Moab."

"And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab . . . and they dwelled there about ten years" (Ruth i.3,4). The two sons come of age, but they make no election to return to Beth-lehem-Judah. The world influence grows, and the widow mother is aware of the shared affection of her sons. The movement of events is described to us with a certain sadness—and a significant emphasis. "And Mahlon and Chilion died also" (verse 5), and the Spirit of God adds "Both of them"—and, to bring still nearer to us the sense of loss, He writes the total of this gathered grief, "And the woman was left of her two sons AND her husband." The façade of security in the world condition is exposed. The shadow of disillusionment has led up to the substance of sorrow. One leaves behind the true and precious things when moving toward Moab, and it will become impossible to live there and retain those characteristics associated with a name that proclaims "God is King."

The opening verses of the book of Ruth sound the sorrow notes of life. There are only five of them, but they are set in that minor key which should carry to one's conscience the outcome of departure from God. The closing notes are those of mourning—and the Holy Spirit Himself lingers in sympathy with the suffering Naomi, "left of her two sons and her husband" (verse 5). Then, suddenly, as though with relief, the second movement of this symphony opens with the music of RETURN. "Then she AROSE, with her daughters-in-law, that she might RETURN from the country of Moab" (verse 6). The widowed Naomi began to DRAW NEAR TO GOD.

As we read it, in our day, with centuries intervening, may we not pause on the way to hear One telling publicans and sinners the history of a younger son who, stooping by the swine troughs of his Moab, said "I will ARISE—and go to

my father"? There is no moment of time in the affairs of men when the way of RETURN has been closed.

It was no mere impulse, or wave of homesickness that drew her. If one reads carefully, with thoughtful emphasis, the record gathers beauty as it goes, "For she had heard *in the country of Moab*"—where the wings of grace had flown to reach her—"how that the LORD had visited *HIS* people in giving them bread" (verse 6). There is no record of famine in Moab where she dwelt—but there was no divine Hand in ministry there—only the bread of Moab! "The bread that perisheth" is no food for the soul. So, the whisper of promise and the distinction between the people of Moab and those whom the Lord had visited—"His people," these, in God's shepherd care called her and she turned her face homeward to Beth-lehem. Prepared to go, in poverty, alone, she sought no companion. The overflow of grace that carried her on brought Ruth to cleave to her.

The journey back is not open to fleshly effort. A more sure energy is needed—it is the energy of faith. The call homeward may reach us in a far off land, but it is FAITH that answers it. No reaction of formality or mere outward protestation of *wishing* to return will bring us to that Beth-lehem where God has visited His people to bless them with bread. It is a DRAWING NEAR TO GOD from the world condition—it is always a movement in repentance. There was deep pathos in the voice of Naomi as she declared her true condition and laid bare her poverty before the weeping women who stood at the dividing of ways beside her. There was also the stark reality of emptiness—she had NOTHING—and she realised it and confessed it, to the full. Thus—though with empty hands—she went, and she took no circuitous route. The word itself conveys the directness of her approach: "So they two went UNTIL THEY CAME to Beth-lehem" (verse 19).

There can be no doubt but that Naomi had faced the test that would confront her on reaching the little town. The travellers' approach—seen from a distance—the amazed

recognition that "moved" the excited people—the oft repeated question "Is this Naomi?"—all mentally foreseen. As the scene unfolded in fact, she bowed in that submission which precedes blessing, acknowledging that the Beth-lehem likeness fades among the dwellings of Moab. "Call me not Naomi"—she will not screen the past! Here, amid the bitterness of loss, is the sweetness of the Spirit's purpose. The LORD had dealt with her, showing her He could not sustain her where His Name was not honoured. He had "dealt with" her, in His own gracious way of providing love, bringing her back again "empty" of the falsity of the Moab world, and ready, thus, for His infilling of incomparable blessing.

We too may draw near—with empty hands. The act of coming is, in itself, confession of departure. No offering, no undertaking, may buy this nearness—only coming. And, when we come, even from far away, He spreads before us the bounty of His giving and touches our hearts again by the outflow of His grace.

The first part of this precious history closes with harvest time. His rich provision has been ripening for the poor who have returned: "So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess . . . with her . . . and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of the barley harvest" (Ruth i.22). It was food for the humble—the beasts of burden partook of it. "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara . . . I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty." Ruth gleaned for them both, as by right of the poor, but the path of the humble leads ever nearer to the great Lord of the Harvest. For the wheat harvest follows the barley harvest with far spreading joy of fulfilment. "Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife" (Ruth iv.10).

The words of Boaz, so prophetic of a great future for Israel through the death of Christ, must awake in us, also, the sweet memory of Paul's reminding to the Ephesian church "Ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians ii.13). So does the joy of

the wheat harvest continue in a fruitfulness unknown in distant Moab as, amid rejoicing, the son of that glad union is laid in the bosom of Naomi. "And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed be the LORD which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. And he shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age, for thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him. And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it. And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David" (Ruth iv.14-17).

Shall not we, too, rejoice in the fruition of that royal line as we behold Him who is "the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star" (Revelation xxii.16)?

EDWARD T. WOOD

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

VI. Chapter vi.1-71

(Testimony in Galilee)

LIKE SOME other chapters of John, this one opens with an incident illustrating the subsequent discourse of the Lord. He satisfied the natural hunger of the people by the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and then revealed Himself as the Manna from heaven for their spiritual need.

The subjects of chapters v. and vi. are connected, but distinct. Chapter v. sets forth man's helplessness and dependence upon the Lord for blessing and even for the desire for blessing. The Son is revealed as the Giver of a life by which man is raised above the plane of divine judgment. He is the Son of God acting in power and grace. For testimony to Himself He appeals to John the Baptist, to His own works, to the Father and to the scriptures.

In Chapter vi. He is shown to be the Son of man in grace, the Object and Food of faith, the Sustenance of the life He

has given. Accordingly, man must eat of this Bread. This man is responsible himself to do, while in chapter v. it is rather the power of God in operation and faith in the power of Christ, than action on man's part.

There is a similar connection between chapters iii. and iv. In chapter iii. Nicodemus needed to be born from above to receive the new life, while to the Samaritan woman in chapter iv. the Lord spoke of the living water for refreshment to the new life.

The feeding of the five thousand displayed the glory of the Son as the Creator God, and is a beautiful and fitting preface to a chapter going on to speak of the Bread of God as come down from heaven. The glory of the Lord is first seen, as it was when the Israelites first received the manna (Exodus xvi.7,10).

(1) vi.1-14: *A Sign on the Land*

Before His miracle the Lord raised the question of a supply of bread for the multitude in order to test the faith of His disciples. Philip began to make calculations of quantity and cost. Andrew, with a more practical mind, found a lad with five loaves and two fishes, but felt the inadequacy to satisfy the hunger of so many. How then could bread be provided for all? It seemed that only God could supply the need. So the annual miracle of harvest was compressed into a moment of time that all might eat and be filled (verses 1-14).

The effect upon the people was that they recognised Jesus to be the Prophet Who was to come into the world (verse 14). But their thoughts of Him were unworthy. Seeing no underlying meaning in the miracle, and feeling no need of spiritual food for their souls, they were impressed only by the readiness with which their temporal need was met. They reasoned that the man who could give them plenty of food so easily was most suitable to be their King. The natural thought of man was selfish in that day as in our own!

(2) vi.15-21: *A Sign on the Sea*

The Lord departed into a mountain to be alone, while His disciples entered their boat to return to Capernaum. On the

sea a storm arose. In the darkness, fear possessed their hearts. The Lord was teaching them that His presence made all the difference to His own. "It is I" should allay all their fears. They depended upon Him for everything. Then to their surprise, when He came to them, "immediately the ship was at the land whither they went" (verses 15-21).

It is instructive to notice that while the desire of the crowd to enthrone Him drove the Lord away (verse 15), the need of His disciples brought Him to them (verse 19). The need of man is always an occasion for the activity of the Lord.

(3) vi.22-59: *The Discourse in the Synagogue*

In the verses that follow we hear two voices, as well as the Lord's. There are the questions of the people and the murmurings of the unbelieving Jews. But the more unbelief grew, the sweeter the truth and grace from the lips of our Lord. The next day, the people came to the Lord Who was now on the other side of the lake. They sought Him, not because they were impressed by the signs, but because they had eaten of the loaves (verses 22-24).

Verses 25-27 express man's need of spiritual food. The people sought the Lord because they had been filled with natural food (verse 26). But the Lord did not seek such popularity, and He testified faithfully to the need of their hearts for the food which "endureth unto everlasting life." This food He, the Son of man, would give them (verse 27); Him, He said, "hath God the Father sealed."

The Lord spoke as the Prophet they had owned Him to be, and told them of spiritual things. They needed to learn that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew iv.4). Such words were of greater value than loaves and fishes. He was thus seeking, as in chapter iv., to arouse an interest in spiritual things.

Verses 28-34 disclose the truth that the Father has given the true bread from heaven to meet man's need. This man can only secure by faith. Faith in His Son is the "work"

which is accepted with God (verse 29), and is man's proper answer to the love of God. God was not pleased by sacrifices and ordinances. Faith in Christ eclipsed every other duty. Verses 30, 36 and 40 show the link between sight and faith.

The Lord tested the people, who asked for a further sign that they might believe the Lord as their fathers had believed Moses, who, they affirmed, gave them manna in the wilderness (verses 30, 31). The Lord, however, declared that God gave Israel the bread from heaven. And as God gave bread of old He was now giving them the true Bread from heaven, Who had come down out of heaven to give life to the world (verses 32, 33).

It is clear in verse 34 that the people did not grasp the spiritual meaning of the Lord's words any more than Nicodemus or the woman of Samaria had done.

In verses 35-40 the Lord Jesus plainly declared Himself to be the bread from heaven "I am the Bread of Life," He said. He was there before their eyes, and they should have fallen at His feet in worship. He had come down to satisfy man's spiritual nature and to be the object of man's faith, the food of his new life.

Verse 35 shows clearly that "coming" and "believing" are allied terms. We must be continually coming to the Lord to be sustained by the bread of life, and constantly believing in Him to be refreshed.

In spite of all, however, the Lord said to the people (verse 36), "Ye have seen Me, and believe not." It was a terrible indictment, declaring the irretrievable failure of the Jews to receive the Sent One of God.

But had the Lord then come in vain? His eyes were upon His Father. If the crowd would not come, all that the Father had given to the Son should come to Him. Nor would the Lord cast out one of them, because He had come down to do the Father's will, and of all given to Him He would not lose any.

The Son had taken the lowly place of doing the Father's will whatever it might be. Verses 39 and 40 set forth that will

in two different ways, both of which lead to the blessing of the believer. The "last day" refers to the close of the present dispensation, ending in the first resurrection.

In verses 41-51 the Lord leads on to the truth that the bread He gives is His flesh.

The Jews had the privilege of knowing God and His will, and their murmurings are answered more sternly than the words of the people. The Lord reminded them that the prophets had written of the teaching God would give. Had they learned of the Father they would have come to Him (verse 45). Coming to Him as needy ones He would have given them a life which death and the grave could never touch (verses 46-50). But they believed neither the prophets nor the Lord's own words.

He told them next of His own death which would be for the life of the world (verse 51). Himself the Living Bread, the bread He would give was His flesh, and there was no life for the world apart from the living faith that feeds upon Him.

This statement aroused still further opposition among the Jews, and the Lord emphasised that there is no life apart from eating His flesh and drinking His blood (verses 52-58). Man must acknowledge not only the Son incarnate, but take to himself by faith the two most evident signs of His death.

There is no connection between the truth taught here by the Lord and the breaking of bread instituted by Him immediately before His departure. The eating of the Lord's flesh and the drinking of His blood are spiritual truths (see verse 63), and the words are not to be understood literally.

(4) vi.60-71: *The Effect of the Discourse*

From verses 60-65 we learn that not only the people in the synagogue, but even some of the Lord's disciples turned away from the wonderful truth they had heard. But the Lord told them more. He Who had come down from heaven would ascend up where He was before (verse 62). This was the death-blow to all the hopes of those who were looking for temporal blessing only.

Seeing that many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him, the Lord said to the twelve: "Will ye

also go away?" (verses 66-71). His own answered as His own always do: "To whom shall we go?" One who had found all that he needed in the Lord Jesus Himself answered for all the others, except the traitor, Judas Iscariot.

(To be continued, D.V.)

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON ACTS VI.1-6

"But in those days the disciples multiplying in number, there arose a murmuring of the Hellenists against the Hebrews because their widows were overlooked in the daily ministrations" (verse 1, New Tr.).

WE NOTICE that the first shadow fell on the young assembly by the sad failure of Ananias and Sapphira, deceived by the devil (Acts v.1-11). We have Satan's name introduced there. The name means "adversary," to God and to man, and wherever God is working in grace, the devil is always working against it. Satan's name does not appear in chapter vi., but we know who is at the back of the evil work of sowing discord in assemblies.

Beyond the five thousand previously mentioned (chapter iv.4), the number of the disciples had multiplied greatly; and now there arises this murmuring. There was jealousy and conflicting interests; and the complaining widows *may* have been neglected. There is human nature here.

Often in the New Testament "Greek" means Gentile; but "Grecian" is quite different in meaning to "Greek." It means Jews who spoke the Greek language. Proselytes had been brought into the church (vi.5), but not Gentiles, till Cornelius (Acts x.). It is generally understood the Hebrews thought themselves superior in piety and religious standing to the Hellenists, or Grecians. Paul at one time would have boasted of being a "Hebrew of the Hebrews."

The sowing of discord among brethren is one of the things God hates (Proverbs vi.19), and the great foe of Christ was behind the discord in the church at Jerusalem. But God graciously overruled it. The trouble was dealt with wisely.

"And the twelve, having called the multitude of the disciples unto (them), said, It is not right that we, leaving the

word of God, should serve tables" (verse 2).

This one verse would prove they were right in choosing Matthias, if we had no other. I mention this because there are people who think Paul was the one chosen of God to make up the twelve, but here we have the twelve named before Paul is brought into the history of the Acts.

"Look out therefore, brethren, from among yourselves seven men, well reported of, full of (the) (Holy) Spirit and wisdom, whom we will establish over this business" (verse 3).

"Full of the Holy Ghost" would be characteristic of their general state; that is, they were not filled for a short time only but habitually. Further, they must be of honest report, and be full of wisdom. Such was the character necessary in order that they might be qualified to fill this office.

The principle of this service is useful as a guide to us now. The men that do the financial business of the assembly ought to have the full confidence of the brethren. It is laid down that we must "walk honestly towards them that are without" (I Thessalonians iv.12). These seven men were chosen by the saints to act for them, and the principle that governed them applies still that if a brother or brethren have to do with the money of the assembly, they should possess the confidence of those for whom they act. All the saints are interested in the use and distribution of the funds, all having contributed to the service.

The saints in Jerusalem were instructed to look out seven men, and to see they had the qualifications mentioned. Evidently it would require tact and heavenly wisdom on their part to satisfy all when there was such a multitude. But it will be seen that the church did not *appoint* the seven. In order to effect a valid appointment, according to the instructions given to Timothy and Titus, it would need either apostles or persons delegated by them to establish the office. We cannot have formally appointed elders now because we have none to appoint them; but, thank God, we have those in the church who do the work of elders.

"but we will give ourselves up to prayer and the ministry of the word" (verse 4).

We have had already a striking testimony to the value of united prayer, and now the apostles say, "we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." Prayer comes first, expressive of dependence upon God. This is an order we may well lay to heart. We receive not, because we ask not. If we had larger expectations it would be more for our good individually; and God also loves that the saints should look to Him as an assembly.

"Ministry of the word." What dependence upon God is necessary to minister it aright; to give not simply the scripture, but the right word at the right time! God knows the heart and condition and need of all the saints, and if ministry is of the Holy Spirit, you then have the benefit of the perfect knowledge of the Holy Spirit, because all the word of God is inspired by Him, and all is before Him always.

"And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and (the) Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch" (verse 5).

These names mentioned here are Greek names; at the same time we have to admit that many of the Jews had Greek names, but it is fair to believe that most, if not all, of the seven were from the Grecians; and therefore such a choice was quite a triumph of grace. The Grecians murmured, and when the men to distribute alms were chosen the preference apparently was given to the class that murmured.

"whom they set before the apostles; and, having prayed, they laid their hands on them" (verse 6).

The chosen ones were brought to the apostles, and there was prayer again. The prayer itself is not given, but we can quite understand that they would pray for wisdom and guidance in this special service.

Sometimes the laying on of hands would mean fellowship; sometimes the bestowal of a distinct gift. Those at Samaria believed and were baptised, but did not receive the distinctive gift of this dispensation—the Holy Spirit—till the apostles laid their hands on them (Acts viii.17). The Jews did not until baptised (Acts ii.38).

The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, and we
(continued inside front cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

Probably for the first time in the history of this Magazine (now extending over 50 years), the whole of one issue is being devoted to the consideration of a single sentence. At least, so it may appear. But, of course, many other scriptures come under review, and more still could have been referred to had space permitted.

The subject matter divides itself naturally into nine sections, each of which may be read as a short individual piece. What we are offering our readers is in fact an abridgement of nine articles which appeared in **THE BIBLE MONTHLY** at intervals during 1921-1923. It is thought that bringing these together in one issue of **WORDS OF HELP** will help to concentrate attention on the very important theme of Galatians v.22, 23.

As many of our readers will have good reason to remember from their own experience of his teaching, W. J. Hocking was a lucid expositor, and his definitions of the words used to set forth the fruit of the Spirit will be found particularly helpful.

We trust that those who look for greater variety in each issue of **WORDS OF HELP** will bear with the degree of departure on this occasion from our normal practice.

Note by W.K. on Galatians v.23:

. . . But all these are the fruits of *the Spirit*; and he adds, "against such there is no law." When did law ever produce these? So the law will never condemn those who walk in these things; as he says to the Roman saints, chapter xiii., speaking of governors and rulers, "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good." So here, "against such there is no law." If you are producing these fruits of the Spirit, there is no condemnation against them.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

(Galatians v. 22, 23)

There are nine graces of the Spirit enumerated here as forming the constituent parts of the fruit of His unhindered energy in the believer.

I LOVE

Love is an essential quality in the character of the child of God. The commandment which the apostles had from the Lord Jesus was that "he who loveth God love his brother also." Moreover, the apostle declares its divine origin, for he says, "love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." John also indicates the motive of Christian love: "We love, because He first loved us," that is, we love not God only, but also one another, because He first loved us (I John iv.19-21).

Love, therefore, in active exercise in the life of a believer is twofold in its direction: (1) we love God and (2) we love those who, like ourselves, are begotten of God.

This double exercise of love operates simultaneously in a person. As we love God, so we love man. Indeed, the apostle John is emphatic that unless there is the love of the seen, the claim to love the Unseen cannot be substantiated: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John iv.20).

The child of God loves, not because he is commanded to do so, but because it is a function of the new nature to do so. And the motive to love is supplied to us by the great revelation of the infinite love of God towards us—a never-changing fact outside of ourselves altogether. "We love, because He first loved us." And the supply of the will and the power for the exercise of this love is the act of the Holy Spirit within us.

In another Epistle we read of the large place that practical love fills in the conduct of the believer. The apostle writes to the saints in Rome: "Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the

law . . . Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: love therefore is the fulfilment of the law" (Romans xiii. 8-10, R.V.). And again, "The whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians v.14).

It is in connexion with this latter quotation that the apostle shows that this quality, so important to Christian life, is not a work of the flesh but a fruit of the Spirit. Love must spring out of a pure heart in order to be acceptable to God, and love of this character cannot be a product of the flesh. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God and not love toward Him, and its works are contrary to love—hatred and variance, wrath and strife.

While, however, the flesh or the natural man cannot produce this love by self-effort, the Spirit produces it, and He produces it in the heart and ways not as an incipient desire, but as a matured fruit. The sphere of the Spirit's action for this purpose is within us. He operates in our hearts. We read that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given unto us (Romans v.5).

Our responsibility to possess love as a fruit of the Spirit lies in the maintenance of a right principle of walk. We are to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh . . . A simple submission to the Spirit within us, who leads our hearts into the true knowledge of the word and will of God and who directs the eye to Christ, is the sure mode whereby true and heavenly love will be brought to fruition in our lives.

II. THE OIL OF JOY

Joy is an inward condition of heart and soul, and is true only for individual experience. We can rejoice *with* those who rejoice, but not *for* them. Some person or some circumstances entirely apart from ourselves may awaken a sense of joy within us, but the vivid sensation of gratification must be our own inward experience. It is the heart of us that rejoices. And as the heart knows its own bitterness, so no stranger inter-meddles with its joy (Proverbs xiv.10). No one can take from us the joy that Christ gives.

It is good for us to remember that in a world of tribulation

such as ours, it is possible that by a divine alchemy our sorrow may be turned into joy. At the bidding of a heavenly Stranger among us whom the world knows not, the tears of our pain become the good wine to cheer our hearts.

The fruit of the presence of the Spirit within us is joy. We learn that it is the blessed office of the Holy Spirit to beget and to sustain by His silent activities in the hearts where He dwells a pervading sense of the purest joy, which is altogether independent of worldly or natural causes. The gift is bestowed in full measure. The vessels are filled by Him to the brim. Hence it is written of the disciples in the early days of the church that they were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost (Acts xiii.52).

Joy in its best sense, as distinguished from gladness and mirth, is of divine origin, and in scripture is attributed to God Himself. The joy of the Creator is His divine gratification with the excellence of the work of His hands. When the foundations of the earth were laid, the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy (Job xxxviii.7). There is joy too in the heart of God the Saviour when the sinner repents and is reclaimed from sin, misery and death (Luke xv.). In that joy, the reconciled prodigal is permitted to share.

But under the law not much was revealed concerning the joy God would provide for the sons of men in exchange for the travail and tears sin brought into the world. Typically, however, there were fore-shadowings of the better things to come. Oil and wine, figures respectively of the Spirit and of joy, were prescribed under certain conditions. For instance, when the children of Israel reached the promised land, they were to offer oil and wine with their burnt offerings to the Lord (Numbers xv.). It is significant that oil and wine were to be associated on these occasions.

While there is little in the earliest books of the Bible bearing directly on the subject of joy, the prophets record frequent visions full of growing anticipations of the coming joys of the millennial kingdom. Then the desert even shall rejoice with joy and singing, and the ransomed of the Lord shall

return and come to Zion with songs and with everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah xxxv.1,10; li.11; lxi.7).

The fruit of the Spirit shed forth at Pentecost is joy. The joy is heavenly in nature and origin, and the indwelling action of the Spirit is to fill the heart with the joy of the Lord. We may take to ourselves the language of the Psalmist: "Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over" (Psalm xxiii.5).

III. THE HOME OF PEACE

Before speaking of the fruit of the Spirit, the apostle says that "the works of the flesh are *manifest*." They cannot be hid; they lie upon rather than under the surface of a man's conduct. Hate, enmity, malice, and the like are loudly assertive, and obtrude themselves upon the notice of all, forming a strong contrast with the quietness and reticence of spiritual action.

The works of the flesh disturb the peace of the Spirit. They arise from the restlessness and agitations of man's nature, which cast up mire and dirt. Those who practise self-indulgence will never know the way of peace, for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked (Isaiah lvii.20,21; Romans iii.17).

The apostle says further that those in whom the works of the flesh are found shall not inherit the kingdom of God, and they are excluded because peace is one of the essential features of that kingdom, as we read in another Epistle, "The kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans xiv.17).

We must at any cost have this peace therefore. And the peace must be the fruit of the Spirit. Anything else will be but a counterfeit. While the flesh is lusting within a man, the Spirit lusts against the flesh, so that he may not do the things he would. So long as the flesh works, the Spirit, unless He is grieved, resists (Ephesians iv.30). The result is conflict;

but if the flesh is quiescent and the Spirit has His way, the result is peace—His own fair fruit.

What then are our great hindrances? Selfish desires, inward indulgence, a restless dissatisfied will. These create internal conflict which is opposed to the peace of the Spirit. Hence we have the warnings: "Beloved, I beseech you as sojourners and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul"; "Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your pleasures that war in your members? Ye lust and have not; ye kill and covet and cannot obtain; ye fight and war" (1 Peter ii.11; James iv.2,R.V.).

The Lord said to His disciples, "My peace I give unto you"; "These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye may have peace" (John xiv.27; xvi.33). Those who received that peace were those who could say, "The will of the Lord be done" (Acts xxi.14), as He had said, "Not My will, but Thine be done."

IV. LONGSUFFERING (SERENITY OF TEMPER)

Longsuffering is the quality of mind and soul that can endure unflinchingly and uncomplainingly the many burdens of Christian life. Like other fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians, longsuffering is in contrast with the works of the law. The law of righteousness permitted the exaction of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But the Lord Jesus was meek and lowly of heart, and His followers are instructed to act differently. The blow on the right cheek of the Spirit-led believer will rouse no animosity against the striker. The habitual serenity of heart of such a one is so far from being ruffled by the outrage that the other cheek is prepared to receive a repetition of the injury. This longsuffering, unresisting spirit was perfect in Him who was the lamb dumb before His shearers, 'Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again: when He suffered He threatened not' (1 Peter ii.23). And every disciple is called to be as his Master.

The law, not the Spirit of Christ, spoke in Abishai when Shimei cursed David as he fled from Jerusalem. Abishai

said, "Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head." But it was the spirit of longsuffering on the part of the fugitive king that caused him to reply to the fierce warrior, . . . "let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day" (2 Samuel xvi.9-12).

Longsuffering is the self-control that prevents a Christian man from being hurried by his own natural emotions into fiery speech and revengeful action. Only it is the gentle activity of the new nature, rather than the stern repression of the old. It is the opposite of that frequent besetment known as a "short temper." Indeed longsuffering might be described as the possession of a long temper. Paul was perhaps longsuffering towards Alexander the coppersmith who did him much evil, but certainly not so towards Ananias the high priest (2 Timothy iv.14; Acts xxiii.2-5).

The "short temper" like a "short crust" crumbles in a moment. But longsuffering is like the finely-tempered steel blade which can be bent double without snapping. Only to gain that temper the steel had to be brought from the glowing furnace and quenched in water. So longsuffering is acquired as we pass through the extremes of experience in prosperity and adversity (2 Corinthians vi.4-10). Both songs and tears will serve us for this purpose.

Longsuffering is characteristic of the church period. The term is applied to the present forbearance of God with a sinful world which refuses the overtures of His grace as well as to His slowness in the execution of summary judgment, as in the days of Noah (Romans ii.4; ix.22; 2 Peter iii.9, 15).

Longsuffering will enable us to stand the various tests to which we are subjected daily. Evil speaking, painful illness, provoking friends, family jars, false brethren, and the myriad vexations which come upon us are all easy to endure when we have the mind of Christ and when we live in the Spirit. "Love suffereth long, and is kind" (I Corinthians xiii. 4, R.V.).

V. KINDNESS (THE SWEET LOOKS OF GRACE)

Stephen was a man full of the Holy Spirit, and when he was brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin as an offender because of his testimony for Christ, it is recorded of him that all those sitting in the council, fastening their eyes upon him, "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts vi.15). In that council the works of the flesh became manifest, but none, enemies though they were, could deny that there was an air of heavenliness about Stephen.

As Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost, that divine Indweller wrought in him unhinderedly His goodly fruits, and not the least conspicuous of these was "kindness," the fifth grace enumerated in the lovely cluster found in Galatians v.22. As his eyes saw the glory of God and the Lord Jesus standing on the right hand of God, so the "law of kindness" was in his tongue until his last utterance. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," was his final testimony delivered in the very face of his murderers. All hatred, wrath, and strife were excluded from Stephen's heart, and were replaced by the kindness of forgiveness and intercession. Such was the attractive feature resulting from the Spirit's operation in a man in whom He had full sway.

It will not escape observation that the word, "gentleness," in the A.V. of Galatians v.22 has been replaced by "kindness" in the Revised and other Versions. The latter word expresses more correctly the truth embodied in the doctrine of the text. Gentleness is opposed to harshness and violence, while kindness is in the word or action that brings relief and pleasure; and the latter is the turn of thought here.

Kindness, like many other human expressions, has had its meaning enriched and ennobled by its use in Holy Scripture. Therein the kindness of *God* is revealed. It is the term applied to the present dealings of God in grace. The current day of grace is the one in which "the kindness and love of God our Saviour" has appeared (Titus iii.4).

Kindness is therefore expressive of the winsome aspect of God's grace towards a world lying in the wicked one. Its very announcement is a joyful sound, good tidings of great

joy. And this attractive feature of grace in Christ and the gospel is also produced by the Spirit in those in whom He works by love (I Corinthians xiii.4). This kindness was a characteristic of the apostles (2 Corinthians vi.6).

If we allow ourselves to be led of the Spirit, we shall ever be looking out for opportunities of doing good to the suffering and the sorrowful and the sinful. The love of the Spirit always turns a smiling face both to the church and to the world.

The kindness of the Spirit contrives to do good to the crotchety brother who is like a hedgehog, irritating with his sharp spines all who touch him. There is also a gracious smile and a pleasant word for the stern sister in whom the sugar of grace seems to have turned into the vinegar of discontent.

The kindness of the Spirit is always ready to give the soft answer which turns away wrath, rather than the bitter word which stirs up anger and strife.

VI. GOODNESS (BEING GOOD AS WELL AS DOING GOOD)

When a believer examines himself in the searching light of the word of God, he is compelled to admit with sorrow that in him, that is, in his flesh, there dwells no good (Romans vii.18). Neither is there power in any of us to produce holiness or any of the fruits peculiar to eternal life. Some are utterly depressed by this discovery, as they may well be, and cry out, "Who will show us any good?" (Psalm iv.6), and again, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans vii.24).

It is wholesome for us to learn that nothing within will bear divine scrutiny. If then I lack the power to be good and to do good, is there no power to produce goodness within me? The reply is found in our verse: "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . goodness." The office of the Holy Spirit is to produce within us what we lack by nature—goodness.

We have an instance of the production of this fruit by the Spirit in Barnabas, of whom we read that he was a good man

and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith (Acts xi.24). But this fruit should be found in all believers and not in single individuals only.

Goodness is a quality of that nature within us which is begotten of the Spirit of God. Where that quality of goodness exists, its activities will yield those "good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians ii.10).

Do I wish to know what is goodness? The Holy Spirit directs my attention constantly to Christ, the One in whom God's goodness was displayed in an evil world, and moreover, the One in whom that goodness is now seen radiant in glory at God's right hand. This attitude of contemplation and aspiration on our part leads to the formation of that mind in us which was in Christ Jesus, the mind which is merciful, kind, gracious, considerate, compassionate, and beneficent.

This goodness expresses itself in good thoughts and good actions, and repels all that is evil. It is, moreover, the nature of this fruit of the Spirit that it does not tire or exhaust itself in doing good, even though it finds itself isolated and opposed for being good. It nevertheless patiently continues in good doing, and seeks to "fulfil every desire of goodness" (2 Thessalonians i.11—see also I Thessalonians v.15).

Goodness and good doing are powerful in breaking down the barriers of hatred and prejudice among men and in winning love and esteem. For the "good man some would even dare to die."

VII. FAITH (SOUL-SIGHT)

Fading from the ken of the watchers on Mount Olivet until a cloud received the Lord out of their sight, the Master was, though they knew it not, still with them. Soon the power of inward sight would be bestowed and developed by the Holy Spirit, and they would then behold Him whom the world could not behold, because faith sees where the world is blind.

"I will not leave you orphans," the Lord said, "I will come to you" (John xiv. 18). But He said this after He had promised that He would give them another Comforter, the

Holy Spirit. "Believe also in Me," was another of the Lord's parting messages, showing the necessity of faith, the fruit of that Spirit, in order to realize His presence in the coming days.

This time of ours is an intensely practical one. Surely we long to know the Lord in a more intimate way than we have done. We feel ready to adopt those words of the Greeks of old who said to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Then we are instantly rebuked, for we hear a voice behind us, saying, "Loved one," and as we turn ourselves like Mary in the garden (John xx.14-16), we find we have not to seek to see Him for He is standing beside us. Then we remember again His beautiful words, "Lo, I am with you all the days, and all the day long," as those words have been paraphrased (Matthew xxviii.20).

Thus we have the Lord's faithful promise to be continuously with us, and we have the Holy Spirit abiding with us. What then is required that we may apprehend that Presence? We need to be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inward man that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith (Ephesians iii.16,17).

It is not, however, faith for the forgiveness of sins, nor the faith that removes mountains, but the faith that is soul-sight. It is the faith that sees the Lord Jesus ever near, walking it may be upon the raging waves around us; and we know that the One we see is the Lord, and not a spirit come to terrify us.

Faith of this sort, which gives the consciousness of the personal presence of the Lord is not intellectual, but emotional: it is the "faith that worketh by love." The believer's love can only rest in the presence of God and Christ. And what love seeks more than all, faith finds.

We must hold fast to what is now our portion to enjoy by faith. Here in the murky wilderness we should know the Lord as One who is with us. We may feel His strong arm, we may hear His words of wisdom and love, we may catch gleams of the myriad glories that beam from the face of our Beloved. We can only do this by the soul-sight that the Spirit gives through faith.

VIII. THE SPIRIT OF MEEKNESS

The Proverbs (viii.14-36) unfold the omnipotence and omniscience of Wisdom, but it is in the Gospels that the "meekness of Wisdom" stands revealed. It was the day when our Lord lifted up His eyes to heaven, turning away from the wise and prudent among men who were disowning Him, to the Father, who alone knew the Son, saying, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight." It was on this occasion, when giving His loving invitation to the labouring and heavy laden ones, that He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew xi.29).

This meekness was in Him conjoined with immeasurable power, and was therefore an unapproachable moral glory seen only in the Son. He had just declared, "All things are delivered Me of My Father." Yet in the fulness of this possession the adorable Christ as the self-revealer, said before His Father and all men, "I am meek and lowly in heart." The wisest and best of men could never attain to such knowledge.

The Lord Jesus was filled with the Spirit without measure, and meekness was perfectly displayed in Him; so meekness is included in the Eshcol cluster of the fruit of the Spirit in those that are Christ's.

John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit come down upon the Lord at Jordan in the form of a gentle dove, and when the Anointed of Jehovah went up to His own city He went up according to the words of the prophecy, "Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Matthew xxi.5). In the city of David, we see Zion's King crowned with meekness: "Being reviled He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him which judgeth righteously."

Oh, the meekness of Christ before Annas and Caiaphas, before Herod and Pontius Pilate, before soldiery and rabble, before men and God! "I entreat you," said the apostle, "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ." The memory of it excites our wonder and our worship. But when the exhortation comes, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in

Christ Jesus," how helpless and hopeless we feel, until we read again, "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . meekness."

Ah, then, the Holy Spirit is the Agent. He is the power whereby Christ lives in us. When the word says, "Let this mind be in you," we are to *let* it be there. There is an energy that would produce meekness in us if we let it work. The result will then be the Spirit's fruit,—meekness. We shall then have "the spirit of meekness," as the apostle calls it (I Corinthians iv.21; Galatians vi.1).

Meekness is a quality of man's inner nature, better expressed in demeanour, perhaps, than in words. It is unresisting; it is a forgiving temperament, and it is unruffled by personal injuries and provocations. Meekness is not natural to us, nor inherited by us. It is developed within us by the exercise of faith, and becomes a habit of mind and spirit into which the believer is moulded as he progresses in spiritual life.

As we obediently take the yoke of Christ upon us we become meek and lowly in heart, for the two that walk together become like-minded.

Meekness must be put on as a garment (Colossians iii.12). It must be worn as an ornament which in the sight of God is of great price (I Peter iii.4). It is to be pursued as an object of Christian ambition (I Timothy vi.11), attainable only as a sequel to love and patience. Meekness must be exhibited to all men, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the forward (Titus iii.2).

IX. TEMPERANCE (SELF-CONTROL)

The final virtue of the nine named is self-control, which perhaps expresses the meaning to our modern ears better than "temperance." It is self or flesh that opposes the will of God, lusting against the Spirit (Galatians v.17), that we may do the things *we* wish. Thus self needs to be controlled before Christ lives in us (Galatians ii.20).

But where the Spirit rules, self is subdued, and God's will becomes the dominating factor of our lives, and we say, "Not my will, but Thine, be done in my heart as in heaven."

Why did the Galatians turn back to the law of Moses as

the rule for their Christian conduct? What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ now accomplished in the believer by the power of His Spirit. And the concluding product of His energy is expressed as His internal rule. The inward man is under His holy governance, and consequently where sinful disorder prevailed heavenly order now ensues.

It was the Holy Spirit who at the beginning brooded over the chaotic waste (Genesis i.2). It was He who garnished the new man with heavenly graces, crowning the cluster with a subject mind in perfect accord with the will of God.

The perfectly balanced mind—the mind of Christ—was exemplified in Paul, the faithful servant of the Lord, in whom the Holy Spirit wrought an habitually subject will. In him there was an absence of chafing and fretting in the midst of untoward circumstances, and a quiet acceptance of all forms of adversity as God's wise ordering. We gather this from what the imprisoned saint wrote to the Philippians: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Philippians iv.11,12).

The same fruit was discernible in the Lord Jesus, who in the moment when the rejection of His service was before Him said, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matthew xi.26). There were no inequalities in such a character: it was the "fine flour" of the meal offering, most holy to Jehovah.

The virtue of self-control forms a fitting conclusion to the series of the nine. It is true that none of them is independent of the others, and each exercises its separate and perfecting influence upon the rest. Love, for instance, which heads the list, is only at its prime when found in association with joy, peace, etc., and how could true joy and peace be found in a loveless heart? But self-control, the inward rule of the Spirit, is the setting in which all the rest are placed. All are thereby displayed in symmetrical arrangement, and blend into this unity of spiritual character, which is described by the apostle as the fruit (not the fruits) of the Spirit.

W. J. HOCKING

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from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LIV

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

GOD FOR US

(Note on Romans viii. 31)

Joshua asked in doubt, "Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries? (Joshua v.13). Need we doubt whether God be for us? He foreknew us, He fore-ordained us, He called us, He justified us, and in our daily sorrow and tears and conflict He is "for us" — for us who "love God and are the called according to His purpose." We can, therefore, boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews xiii.6).

But there is yet further proof that God is "for us;" He delivered up His own Son "for us." Delivering up "for us" His own true Son is supreme evidence of the incomparable quality of God's love. In the words, "spared not," or "withheld not," there seems to be an allusion to Abraham who offered up his beloved son, Isaac; twice it is said of him that he did not withhold his son, his only son (Genesis xxii.12,16).

God's gift of His own Son is the measure of His giving, and with that gracious gift all things are included. "All things are yours," said the apostle (I Corinthians iii.22), and in his own experience, he said again, "I have all things and abound" (Philippians iv.18). So "all things," all events and circumstances, form an army of well-trained servants, working together for our good, under divine superintendence.

Could it be otherwise? the apostle asks. If God delivered up His own Son Who made all things, *how* shall He not *also* with Him grant us all things? It is an affront to the all-giving God to imagine that He will withhold any good thing from those that walk uprightly (Psalm lxxxiv.11). Extracted

The Editor would be grateful to hear from anyone who possesses volumes of **The Bible Monthly** for the years 1943/4 and 1945/6.

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XXXVII.

*Who is this King of Glory . . .
 . . . the LORD mighty in battle* (Psalm xxiv.8)

WHILE THE SPIRIT of God led writers of Old Testament times to give expression to things far beyond their immediate circumstances and understanding, much of what was written, particularly in the Psalms, arose out of events in their own lives. From the seed of personal experience there is made to grow, by divine inspiration, a tree of fulfilment with branches extending to every sphere in which Christ will be preeminent.

The contrast between Saul, the king of human choice, and David, the man after God's own heart, was never more evident than on the day when the Philistines joined battle with Israel in the valley of Elah. For forty days the challenge of the giant had met with no response from the ranks of the Israelite army. Saul and his men were dismayed and greatly afraid. No one was prepared to accept the terms of Goliath's proposition.

But one appeared on the scene whose faith in God begat within him the courage for which the situation called, and in the name of the God of the armies of Israel, whom Goliath had defied, he went forth to win the apparently unequal contest. On that day, in the sight of all Israel, David proved himself to be "mighty in battle," and thereby demonstrated his fitness to become successor to the throne. "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," sang the women of Israel as they danced with joy and instruments of musick. The glory of the great victory over the Philistines belonged to David, and to David alone (on the human side, of course).

In Psalm xxiv., however, the Holy Spirit is foretelling the return of a greater than David, even God's anointed King. Psalm ii. had declared Jehovah's decree, "yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" enquires Psalm xxiv. The answer is: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

Then follows preparation for the acclaiming of the Victor: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Once again the enquiry is made, "Who is this King of glory?" and the answer rings out in unmistakable tones, "The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle."

The Holy Spirit leaves us in no doubt as to the one to whom this refers. Who but the lowly Son of Man on earth possessed clean hands, and the pure heart, that qualifies for ascent into the hill of Zion? Who but Jesus could be the King of glory? But if He is this, must He not have earned that place by mightiness in battle? Did He in fact do this?

The life of Jesus was one long victory in a world where sin had been dominant over all mankind. And his death was supremely a triumph. But let us recall three battles fought and won before He went to Calvary.

First, His encounter with Satan in the wilderness: thrice the devil challenged Him, and thrice the devil was defeated (Matthew iv.). Taking Jesus to the top of a very high mountain, the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, saying "all these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." The kingdoms of the world were already destined to belong to Jesus (Psalm ii.8), but the road to possession of them led by way of Calvary. The devil's proposal amounted to the suggestion that He should take a short cut. Just fall down and worship me, Satan demands, and you shall have them *now*, instead of having to suffer first, with the subsequent glory to be waited for.

But the true King of glory proved Himself to be superior to His foe. Not for a moment would he deviate from His allegiance to His God and Father. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and *Him* only shalt thou serve" was the unyielding reply. And the devil could find no answer to that thrust of the divine sword!

In the wilderness Satan appeared openly. Later he appeared under the guise of a friend. Matthew xvi. records Simon Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And the Lord confirmed his faith by assuring him that

what he had said was not a mere conclusion of his own reasoning, but the most positive revelation of the Father to him.

Then what a change! From that time forth Jesus warned His disciples of the death at the hands of the Jews that was coming to Him, whereupon Peter took it upon himself to rebuke his Master: "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." We might have considered this as nothing more than the kindly thought of a friend. The Lord Jesus judged otherwise. He was conscious of an attack by Satan. So He said sternly, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

Once again we see One mighty in battle, strong to repel every attempt to deflect Him from the pathway of God's will, savouring the accomplishment of the divine purpose rather than the enjoyment of human sympathy.

Lastly, let us enter with unshod feet the sacred precincts of Gethsemane. What see we here? Another battle ground?

Only a few minutes remained before He is delivered into the hands of wicked men; only a few hours before the storm of Calvary would burst about our Saviour's head in all its fury. He had comforted His own in the upper room: now surely He should have the comfort of others for Himself. But, in the words of the psalmist again, "I looked . . . for comforters, but I found none." There, alone, the full horror of what was before Him weighed heavily upon His soul, as He cried, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."

Jesus had said before leaving the upper room, "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." Was this his coming? Was this one final attempt by Satan to stop the achievement of that which he knew full well would seal his own doom? And was the attempt being made at a moment when man, in his loneliness, might well be thought to be at his weakest? Be that as it may, the battle is again joined, and again won, for Jesus concluded His prayer to His Father with the triumphant words: "Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

The Lord mighty in battle indeed! There was not the small-

est chink in His armour. His steadfastness of purpose held firmly until all was accomplished. Then, having triumphed over all, He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high to wait in patience for His enemies to become His footstool.

Who is this King of Glory? The LORD mighty in battle. He is the King of Glory.

King of glory, set on high
Girt with strength and majesty,
We Thy holy name confess;
Thee with adoration bless.

(R. C. Chapman)

E. A. Pettman

THOUGHTS ON THE TRANSFIGURATION

(Read Matthew xvii.1-9: II Peter i.15-18)

“FOR WE HAVE NOT followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty.” Such is Peter’s account of the Transfiguration, in his second epistle.

This agrees with the promise the Lord gave, that some of the disciples then standing there should not taste of death till they had seen the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. There is no doubt at all that in these words the Lord was referring to the coming Transfiguration, as the conjunction of the two things in each of the first three gospels proves (Matthew xvi.28; xvii.1-8, with Mark ix.1-8 and Luke ix.27-36).

The Transfiguration then, was a sample of the kingdom glory of the Lord Jesus. Not a *vision* of it, in the usual sense of the word vision, but the glory itself, as it will be in the future, displayed then on the mountain before the eyes of Peter, James and John.

Now it is very noticeable that this was the very thing that the Pharisees with the Sadducees had demanded of Jesus just before (Matthew xvi.1) — a sign from heaven, some manifest-

ation of the glory that belonged to Messiah. And this demand He had most emphatically refused. But here it is, granted unasked, to His three disciples.

The truth is that God always refuses to show marvels to satisfy men's unbelief. We recall that the Lord Jesus refused it on four other occasions — five if we include His refusal to cast Himself down from the temple's pinnacle at Satan's bidding. After His first cleansing of the temple (John ii.18,19) the Jews demanded a sign; after the feeding of the 5,000 (John vi.30); in Matthew xii.38 the Pharisees and scribes demanded it; and finally Herod questioned Him, hoping to see a miracle (Luke xxiii.8,9).

However, the Lord had asked of His disciples who *they* believed Him to be, and we remember that Peter took the lead in confessing Him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," while no doubt others echoed his words in their hearts. From among those who *had* believed, and had confessed Him, Jesus chose three — the required number of witnesses — to give them this remarkable *sight* of His kingdom glory. Of these one, James the son of Zebedee, was early killed by Herod the king, but Peter and John remained as witnesses, and in his second epistle Peter, just before his death, puts his testimony on record. He says, "I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." Then follow the words already quoted.

It would seem that the Lord Jesus did not grant this sight of His glory so much for the sake of the twelve, to encourage them when they saw Him taken and crucified, since He instructed the three not to reveal what they had seen till after the resurrection. The other eight apostles then indeed saw Him risen, as one who had broken the power of death. They had abundant proof of the reality of His rising. They too saw Him ascend to the glory. For them no doubt the witness of the Transfiguration glory was welcome, but does it not seem that at least part of the purpose of the Lord Jesus in it was related rather more especially to believers of a later time? This falls in with Peter's words in his epistle. Let us then consider the Transfiguration in this light.

To believers of this late day the witness of those who saw His glory is particularly helpful. We have indeed believed in Him whom we have not seen; we have rested our souls upon Him; we have pinned our whole eternity to what He has suffered believing Him to be the Christ of God, the very Son of the Father. We do not ask for a sign, because we know that it is faith that glorifies God. But the ages roll by, and the world mocks our hope. Sometimes it seems that the forces that oppose Christianity are gaining ground.

Worse still, many of those who profess to believe in the Saviour and confess Him as Son of God, have virtually abandoned belief in His coming kingdom and glory. They speak much of His spiritual presence (blessedly true and real as it is) in the church, but so largely discount the hope of His coming in power and glory that one is left wondering whether they really believe it at all. Else it is only "at the end of the world," too far off to be of practical importance.

To these things the witness of the Transfiguration glory is the complete answer. For He was there, on earth, and men in their natural bodies beheld Him, while His face shone like the sun. They saw even His clothes, reminders indeed of the lowly guise in which He walked this earth, glistening and radiant with heavenly light. And two of those who had long since passed into the unseen world, Moses and Elijah, appeared there with Him in glory, and were conversing with Him.

We may indeed go further and see the scene as typical of the Kingdom, taking Moses and Elijah as representing the heavenly saints (Moses who had died and Elijah who had gone to heaven without dying) in resurrection glory*, with Christ in the midst, and the three disciples representing redeemed Israel on earth, while the helpless multitude below shows the world needing the healing power of the Kingdom. But just now it is the scene itself that we would be occupied with.

The two heavenly visitants were conversing with Him face to face — a blessed reminder that nothing short of this will soon be our privilege — the privilege of every believer. More-

* Not that Moses was actually risen then, else he would have preceded the Lord Himself, who is the first that must rise from the dead.

over Luke tells us that they were talking of His approaching death.

During their lifetime on earth they had looked forward to the time when Christ would come — the Redeemer of whom God had spoken ever since man fell. That they were now talking of His death surely tells us that in heaven it was *this* that had engaged them. Purified from all selfish desires, their occupation down the ages had been with the purposes of God, and they had looked forward to the cross as the means of their accomplishment. Had they come there, by God's will, to tell Him this, that He too might be encouraged on His way to the cross?

To know that at last He had come, and was about to fulfil what God had promised down the ages — this was their joy, the joy of heaven. Disappointed of his hope of treading the promised land, Moses now enjoyed the far greater privilege of speaking with the blessed Saviour about His death, on the mountain of glory. Will it not be so with us, that we shall be occupied, not with the glory, not with freedom from pain and care, but with the astounding grace that brought the Saviour down to the cross of shame?

We need not be hard with Peter in that he did not realise the full meaning of what he saw. No doubt he was overawed at seeing the two renowned men of antiquity, and spoke with rash irrelevance of making booths for the three glorious ones to abide in (Matthew xvii.4), momentarily forgetting that the lowly Man of Nazareth with whom he was familiar was infinitely supreme. Then it was that he became aware of the bright Shekinah, the cloud of glory overshadowing them, and the Father's voice bearing witness, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight; hear ye Him."

Then, with James and John, he fell prostrate with terror, but when he wrote of it in his epistle he draws our attention rather to the wonderful fact that they, men in the flesh, *heard* the voice of God speaking. "There came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount."

Let us repeat it, this was no vision of the night — no dream or spiritual rapture. And men on earth are going to see Him in the glory of His kingdom, yes, and to stand before the throne of His glory, and that too on earth (Matthew xxv.31). It is no cunningly devised fable, but the sober witness of Peter who with the two others saw it all, and heard it. Note again how completely Peter appears true to character in the scene, giving the account the stamp of truth.

And finally let us remember that, if the Lord Jesus is the hope of our hearts, then we shall be with Him in His glory, not merely as *beholders*, but conformed to His image, and sharers of the glory, yea, our very presence there contributing, because of the riches of His grace, to the glory of our Redeemer.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

VIII. Chapter viii. 1-59

(Testimony in the Temple-courts)

The first verse of chapter viii. is the complement of the last of chapter vii., the two forming a single sentence: "And every one went to his home, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." The Lord on earth had no home or abiding-place.

Chapter viii. continues the style of chapters iii — vi., that is to say, it begins with an historical incident which is the background of the teaching that follows. The unbelief of the Jews is seen to become more daring, and their hatred more bitter, until they actually take up stones to cast at the Lord, but without effect (verse 59); for we read again (verse 20) that "His hour was not yet come." (See also vii.6,8,30).

(1) *The Sinful Woman Accused before the Lord* (verses 2-11)

In this chapter, the Lord is revealed as the Light. The very presence of the Lord Jesus in the temple-courts revealed man's state of darkness and sin. It showed not so much the guilt of the woman as the sin of the scribes and Pharisees who brought

her to Him. Standing before Him they were each convicted by their own conscience, and went away because they could not bear the Light. The woman the Lord would not condemn, but bade her “go”, not “in peace” as the woman in the Pharisee’s house (Luke vii.50) — but “and sin no more.”

The law could only condemn and slay in a case of this kind. What would the Lord do, Who had come not to condemn, but to save? The object of the scribes and Pharisees was to prove Him to be opposed to Moses. If He condemned, He brought nothing better than the law they already had; if He did not condemn, He overthrew the law, and discredited the commandment of Moses.

It was a cleverly-devised trap in which, however, the woman’s accusers were entrapped, not the Lord. He gave the law its full authority, but He showed that not one of the woman’s accusers was worthy to apply its penalty. The Lord had not come as a judge, and He dismissed the woman without either pardon or punishment.

(2) *The Lord speaks as the Light, answering Jewish cavillers, but some believe on Him* (verses 12-30)

In verse 12 the Lord Jesus declares Himself to be the Light of the World. Those who follow Him shall walk in the light, having in Him the knowledge of what is pleasing to God. The light which the Lord Jesus has declared Himself to be should be reflected by us into the dark world around us (Philippians ii.15).

Pharisees (verse 13) opposed the witness of the Lord to Himself. They took up perversely the Lord’s own words (chapter v.31) which declared that man’s uncorroborated witness when seeking his own glory was neither true, nor reliable. The truth was that the Lord always sought the glory of God Who sent Him.

When the Lord said, “I judge no one” (verse 15), He explained that He had not come among them to pass sentence as a judge. This He had shown when the woman was brought before Him. In a coming day He will judge the whole inhabited world (Acts xvii.31).

The Lord's witness to Himself was corroborated by the Father (verses 17, 18). His word was the conjoint testimony of the Father and the Son. According to the law, the like testimonies of two confirmed each other, and were to be accepted as valid before a judge.

Verse 19 contains the Lord's indictment of the Pharisees who claimed to have the knowledge of God. Later, verse 44, He said of them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." He is a liar and a murderer, and they had self-deceit on their lips and murder in their hearts (verse 59).

Because of His rejection by the Jews, the Lord announced His departure (verses 21-24). Those who did not believe on Him as the Sent One of God would die in their sins.

In answer to their question, "Who art thou?" the Lord, revealing his Godhead, declared He was essentially and personally what He was saying in His teaching (verse 25).

Again, the Lord testified of His place of subjection to the Father. Though of Himself He had much to say and judge concerning the Jews, He uttered only what He heard from the Father Who sent Him. After the cross, and His exaltation by the Father which followed, the Jews would learn Who He was (verses 28, 29). For the nation this will take place in the day of judgment rather than in the day of grace. As He spake these words many believed on Him (verse 30).

(3) *Questions and replies are followed by an attempt to stone the Lord* (verses 31-59).

These believers the Lord enjoined to continue in His word, and learning the truth as His disciples they would enjoy spiritual liberty (verses 31,32).

These "believers," however, valued their natural descent from Abraham (verse 33), and boasted in being already free from bondage to any man, unmindful that the Romans were their masters.

The Lord showed them man's terrible bondage to sin, from which the Son alone could deliver them (verses 34-36). Though they were Abraham's seed they were at enmity with God and they sought the Lord's life (verse 37). They were, moreover,

unlike Abraham in character for they had no belief in the word of God as he had (verses 38-40).

Defeated as to this claim, the Jews made the higher one, that they were children of God (verse 41). This, too, was groundless because they did not love the One Whom God had sent (verse 42), nor understand His words (verse 43). Instead of being of Abraham, they were of their father, the devil, a murderer and liar from the beginning, since they partook of his character (verse 44). Moreover, they refused to accept the words of the Lord though they were unable to convict Him of sin (verses 45-47).

Exposed by the Lord's searching words, the Jews resorted to personal abuse (verse 48), which provoked no resentment, for all His personal affairs were in His Father's hands, Whose honour He alone sought. Instead of retaliation, He made a gracious offer to any man who would keep His saying (verse 51).

The Jews then charged the Lord with making Himself superior to Abraham and the prophets (verses 52, 53).

The Lord, however, was not seeking His own honour; His Father would honour Him. But Abraham, looking onward by faith, had rejoiced in His day (verses 54-56).

The Jews, in spite of their pretensions, lacked the faith of Abraham entirely, even expressing their unbelief in our Lord as they considered His age (verse 57). The Lord closed His testimony by claiming the title, I AM, used only of the eternally self-existing One, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (verse 58).

Such an outshining of His glory as the Light of the world was more than His hearers could bear, and they took up stones to cast at Him. But Jesus passed through their midst and left the temple (verse 59). His hour was not come.

(To be continued, D.V.)

"THE BOOK"

"BRING ME THE BOOK, Lockhart," said Sir Walter Scott to his son-in-law, as he lay dying at Abbotsford. "What book, Sir Walter?" "There is but one book—the Bible," said the dying man. Let us realise this, not like Scott, on our death-bed, but this very day.

Oh, the greatness of "The Book"! Like its Divine Author, its name is "Wonderful" and "Counsellor."

"Here may the wretched sons of want
Exhaustless riches find,
Riches above what earth can grant,
And lasting as the mind."

When speaking of the books of Moses to the unbelieving Jews, our Lord said, "If ye believe not his (Moses') writings, how shall ye believe My words?" He seems, almost to give the writings of Moses a higher place than His own spoken words. Surely, as another has said, "Never was such honour put upon the written word," and this upon that very part which today religious scholars discredit. Oh! that these "scholars"—if they have not lost all faith in Christ—would ponder these solemn and startling words of His concerning the books of Moses.

Again, in the sixteenth chapter of Luke, the veil is uplifted for a brief moment, and we are permitted by Christ to gaze into the unseen. The "rich man" is crying out of Hades, "I pray thee . . . that thou wouldest send him (Lazarus) to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Abraham answers, "They have **Moses and the Prophets**; let them hear them." The anxious man replies, "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent."

"Such an amazing miracle," he seems to say, "as the re-appearance of a dead man, sent from the other world to warn them, would convince them." And what proof, think you, could be more convincing, or what power greater, than resurrection? Was it not by resurrection from the dead that Christ was demonstrated Son of God? "Resurrection will convince them," says the unhappy man. Now mark well the weighty reply, "If they hear not **Moses and the Prophets**, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." "**Moses and the Prophets**" a greater power than resurrection! Ponder this well, ye who deny the divine origin of Moses' writings.

Oh, the awful importance of "The Book"! Unlike all human books, "the word of God is living and active." Christian, think much of "The Book." Let each redeemed sinner say, with

David, "I will never forget Thy precepts: for with them Thou hast quickened me." "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth," when we were in spiritual death, and now He bids us "not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." It matters little what else we may read, if we neglect the Bible we will become poor, weak, sickly Christians.

Remember therefore, "The Book" is a daily necessity, if I would live here to the glory of God. Writing to young Timothy, Paul says, "The Holy Scriptures . . . are able to make thee wise unto salvation." What salvation? The salvation of the soul? No! Timothy was already a saved man. What salvation then? The salvation we all need every day, salvation from going the wrong way, and from falling into sin, and from our wretched selves: the salvation David refers to when he says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word."

"Well," says one, "I read the Bible daily, but I cannot understand it, and so I may as well give up reading it." Ah, how delighted Satan would be, were you to do so! But, maybe the Lord is just allowing you to learn a most wholesome and necessary lesson. He is teaching you that you are a dependent creature, that you cannot even understand His word without His help. Ask Him to do for you what He did for those disciples on that memorable occasion, when it is recorded, "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures," and He will hear your prayer, and the Bible will become a new Book to you.

Therefore, neglect not "The Book, "but daily meditate in its sacred pages, praying, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law," and, one day, thou too shalt cry exultingly, "Oh, how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day."

"Oh, wonderful, wonderful word of the Lord,
True wisdom its pages unfold,

And, though we may read them a thousand times o'er,
They never, no never grow old."

J.W.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

THE BRIGHT, THE MORNING STAR

The Lord Jesus will come again to this world. He will come as the Sun of Righteousness, as we read in the last chapter of the Old Testament. But He will also come to His own as the Morning Star, as we have it in the last chapter of the New Testament.

The Lord Jesus has His mission to the world to put its kingdoms right, but He has a relationship to us now. Now it is the night of His absence; the Sun of Righteousness has not yet risen with healing in His wings; the blaze of His glory has not shone from the east to the west yet, but amid the darkness are faithful watching believers. They see in the eastern sky that pale, resplendent, beautiful Star of morning, the Forerunner of the day. We by faith discern that gracious presence of our coming Lord, who has gone away to prepare a place for us and has pledged His word that He will come again and receive us unto Himself.

We may be weary in the long night watches. There is much to disturb and to agitate our hearts. We cannot sleep as do others; we must awake; we must consider what is about us, how much there is to grieve our Lord, how much even within ourselves that is not what it might be. But ever before our weary eyes, away in the distance, away towards the breaking of the dawn we see that incomparable Star of the morning, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour coming for us.

This is a light for us; and none but those who are awake see the morning star. The Lord Jesus says, I am the bright and morning Star . . . How bright indeed it is! . . . The light is shining upon us even now, and we know He is near. There are traces of His presence in the very sky. He is not far away. He is near at hand. No question of prophecy now, no question of beasts, visions, seals, and trumpets, but just the watchers in hope and the Bright and Morning Star.

EXTRACTED

THE DIVINE WORKERS

("My Father worketh hitherto, and I work")

John v. 17)

"Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Luke iv. 14). The power of the Spirit—that divine motivation which, unhindered, flowed forward in that perfect Vehicle "found in fashion as a man" went with Jesus into Galilee. Among the mixed population of Galilee were the poor of the flock. Their pronunciation of the language differed from that of Jerusalem, but their need was as great, and where they gathered in their synagogues the remnants of their four scattered tribes, Jesus sought them, and "there went out a fame of Him" from the midst of a mongrel race with its corrupted dialect.

The small town of Nazareth was a place of ill repute—yet Jesus was brought up in it. It was in that despised environment that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him" (Luke ii. 40). Luke tells his friend how "He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read" (Luke iv. 16). The rotation of the prophetic readings that was usually followed in these assemblies had reached the book of Isaiah, and this was handed to the Reader by the appointed custodian of the sacred writings. We may consider with what deliberation Jesus "found the place where it was written." The prophetic words He had given to Isaiah more than seven hundred years before were read by the Author at the time of their fulfilment.

"Anointed to preach the gospel to the poor; sent to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," He Himself was offered as the only antidote to the outcome of their sin. Their real condition was revealed as their facade of nationalism was swept aside with all its falsity. They were,

themselves, the poor—the broken hearted—captives imprisoned and bruised! Yet they placed their own interpretation on the passage, and, in the general discussion that usually followed, His “gracious words” seemed to their political minds a promise of action to bring about liberty and betterment without thought of the need to find the answer to their sin condition.

To national aspiration the prophecy was acceptable indeed. Was not their land infiltrated by Gentiles, and were they not in rebellious subjection to Roman overlords? Thus were they “poor”—often “broken hearted”—“captives” and “bound” by restrictions. It seemed a word preliminary to national uprising! That Jesus was aware of this is certain. That it added to the sorrow of His holy soul is also true. They looked for fame despite departure from the God of their fathers—He looked for acknowledgment of sin and faith that led to recovery. So He speaks to them of the very Gentiles they detested. There was the Gentile widow woman to whom Elijah was sent while Israel was under the famine displeasure of Jehovah—there was Naaman the Syrian, weak, yet finally submissive to faith, healed with a perfect newness of life. Their rage and disappointment He foreknew, and their intent to end His life became an evil unrestrained. He went His way—passing through the midst of a people sadly typical of the nation to whom He offered the blessing of His presence.

Who shall tell the sorrow with which He left them—or comprehend the grace that, later, brought Him back, only to be frustrated by their unbelief! To proclaim the new ministry of grace that made no demands—as Moses did—to tell a people ALL is FREE to repentance in “the acceptable year of the Lord,” and to be met with a demand for fleshly achievement, tested, beyond words, His dependence and submission as Man.

From the Nazareth of unbelief Luke turns, as though with relief, to the sabbath days of Capernaum. There, too, they must have heard a presentation of Isaiah 1xi. far removed from the purpose of God for His people. Nationalism was everywhere in evidence. The fear of losing “place and nation” from Roman intervention had become paramount (John xi. 48), and there was fierce determination to rebuild that which had fallen,

notwithstanding its collapse had been the outcome of the forfeiture of divine support. As He taught them on the sabbath days "they were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power" (Luke iv. 32).

There are, doubtless, those who read Luke's record as a story of events of long ago. They may, indeed, approach it with some reverence as setting forth occurrences of a religious character in an age becoming more and more remote. But, to the reader who knows that there is being portrayed a Person, divine, yet in form as a man, with sensibilities so acute that human perception is left bewildered, the words of the writer take form, and a living Reality moves into present day vision. It is only as Jesus is seen as a Person, instead of an historical figure, that we are able to walk near to Him—sensing, within our finite limits, His reactions to the House of Israel to whom He came. The Satanic power centres upon Him in enmity. He is shown what evil has been wrought. In the midst of the very synagogue man is exhibited as a Satanic trophy—possessed by uncleanness. The underlying sarcasm of the demon world in its reference to Nazareth is linked with the expression "The Holy One of God" as though the two were incompatible. Jesus is acutely aware of the enemy of His people, and, though He frees the poor sufferer, and shows the triumph of His word of power, yet the working evil is abroad and the pain of this realisation remains.

He goes out of the synagogue to the more intimate circle of Simon's house. Even there He is assailed. The poor woman in her "great fever" is type of Israel in her restless condition of smouldering insurrection—sick indeed, and tossed with national conflicts. "They besought Him for her", as, one day, they will so do for Israel, and, in gracious answer, "He stood over her" with that protective care which no malady, physical or spiritual, could withstand.

It is good to think of "the joy set before Him" that was all His own, and that reached on towards the day when, despite the armies of the nations, He will "stand over" His repentant and submissive Israel while they ask, amazed, "What are these wounds in thine hands? And He shall answer, Those with

which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (Zechariah xiii. 6).

The boats by the lake of Gennesaret were empty. The night had been unprofitable—despite unceasing toil. Without any apparent selection, Jesus stepped into Simon Peter's boat, and divine sovereignty had moved toward his election as one of the "fishers of men."

It is really beautiful to observe the gracious movements toward Simon's change of occupation. The crowded shore, the pressing throng called for *his* boat to be brought into service. Thus far Peter serves—he is near to the shore, and to the shore things, but the One who "prayed him that he would thrust out a little" makes further request—as though seeking the co-operation of a friend—"launch out into the deep." So the shore recedes, and he is alone in his boat with Jesus. The memory of the healing in his house—the immediate recovery of his wife's mother—the "shelter" attitude of Jesus as He "stood over her," dispelling the fever—left him with a conviction that here was a Teacher whose words held meaning deeper than those to which he was used. But he did not yet know Him as, later, He would be known.

This progression of patient revealing of Himself is a comfort to us in our own late day. He is the same "yesterday and today and for ever"—unchanging in His character of unfolding "things concerning Himself," until, at last, our hearts begin to "burn within us."

To the professional fisherman the wasted night of toil was clear evidence that the fish had ceased to feed there and had moved to another part of the lake. But there was something about the gentle suggestion in the Voice that impelled him. He was asked to go further in company with Jesus—to thrust out into the deeper sea—to find energy to perform the arduous function of letting down the nets. There was purpose—and an unspoken promise—but it was a promise to faith. So, notwithstanding the night experience of failure, "nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net."

It was not a command—more an invitation to move unfettered into the current of faith. So the plenitude of power

flowed as never before into the net that had been folded empty away, and the pouring out of the blessing was such that it could not be contained in earthly vessels. But, above all, the divine Person on earth was revealed to a wondering and humbled man.

EDWARD T. WOOD.

(To be continued, D.V.)

GREAT FAITH IN A DAY OF UNBELIEF

(Read 2 Kings iv. 8-37)

The story of the woman of Shunem is a typical instance of the rich store of instruction which the Old Testament contains. The story illustrates vividly the true character of faith, and proves that surrounding weakness and unbelief are no bar to its victories.

At the time when this "great" or wealthy woman lived, there were at least two idolatrous systems prevalent in the northern kingdom of Israel. The idolatry of Jeroboam was supported by king Jehoram (Chapter iii. 3), and the worship of Baal, though no longer officially countenanced, still persisted. The prophets of the true God, if not actively persecuted, were often in great straits as we see in chapter iv, 38-44, and incidentally in Hebrews xi. 37, and the woman of Shunem identified herself with their cause, using her wealth, for example, to befriend Elisha. Not once nor twice, but whenever opportunity offered, she showed him hospitality, and made permanent provision in the shape of the "prophet's chamber." Her faith was shown by her works.

God will be no man's debtor, and this Elisha well understood. We see him here in the character of God's representative, typical of Christ, the only true and complete representative of God this world has known. Thus Elisha called her one day, to enquire what recompense she desired for all that she had done for him. Did she desire favour of the king or the commander in chief?

Her reply showed another aspect of her faith. "I dwell among mine own people," she said. In other words, wealthy

though she was, by inheritance no doubt, she had no ambition to be a social climber. That worldly desire found no place in her heart, at a time when God's true ones were out of favour, and she was content to "go along with the lowly" (Romans xii. 16 New Tr.).

Gehazi, Elisha's servant, then pointed out that she was childless, and her husband an old man. We may wonder why she had not asked for a son, but perhaps she deemed it too great a favour to ask. Was it that, having prayed for it years ago, she had now sorrowfully resigned herself? However this may be, it was the very thing which God in His goodness would give her. How this illustrates the often quoted fact that God's delays are not necessarily denials. Let us learn to have more complete confidence in His love.

If the blessing was withheld before, no doubt it was in order that she, like Abraham before her, might receive it now through the power of God when nature had failed. For no blessing God gives can compare with the knowledge of Himself, and this woman was now to see God working mightily on her behalf. It is plain, too, that there was to be no further delay. God does not withhold any good thing from His children needlessly. There is nothing of caprice in His dealings.

Now let us think of the years of happiness which followed as the child grew—happiness made so much the greater because she could look back and trace God's gracious way with her. Then came the dreadful shock of the child's death, apparently from sun or heatstroke, and all that she had rejoiced in seemed suddenly taken from her. Yet her reaction was in no way one of despair. We may read the thoughts of her heart from the way in which she acted.

She called to her husband and desired him to get an ass saddled for her to go to Elisha, and return. He was strangely unmoved at the boy's illness, made no enquiry as to his condition, and in no way guessed the cause of his wife's request. We will not surmise the reason for this, but content ourselves with remarking that she seemed to feel that to reveal what had happened would only cause delay. Thus she merely replied, "It shall be well."

“It shall be well”! Surely there is more in these words at such a time than just putting her husband off. What does she mean? Was she *hastening* to the prophet merely in order to reproach him, saying “Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?” Surely, if reproach were her purpose, there was time enough for that. Her soul was, as Elisha saw, bitter within her, but it is crystal clear that the miracle which followed was just that which she expected. Her very haste declared it.

She reasoned from the fact that her son was God’s special gift to her. No doubt in a way this is always true, but this son in a special way. And he had not been given at her entreaty at all, as she said to Elisha, “Did I desire a son of my lord?” Could God then, who had freely given, now take him away? Was this worthy of God?

Now this is the reasoning of faith. Faith in God expects Him to be true to Himself. It was the faith of Abraham as he made his way toward Mount Moriah to sacrifice his son. He expected that the God who had given him Isaac as the fulfilment of His promise, would find a way to restore him again, even if it meant raising him from death. Thus we see that this woman of Shunem was led by her faith to know God as the God of resurrection.

When Elisha discovered the cause of her grief, he sent his servant to lay his staff on the child’s face. But she would not put any trust in his staff while in Gehazi’s hand. No, Elisha himself, the prophet who represented God among His people, must come. We will examine presently the typical meaning of this.

When he arrived at the house, he found the dead child lying on his own bed. It was the very bed that the Shunammite’s faith had provided for *him*, and the child had been God’s chosen way of recompensing her care of His servant. Here is the proof of the way her faith reasoned.

But the identification of the child with the prophet has to go even further before his prayer is answered and life is restored. Was it that Elisha himself had to enter into the remarkable faith of this woman?

As he hands back her son to her, she bows low in acknowledgment of Elisha as God's representative, but she utters no word of thanks. Did not she reserve that for God Himself? Neither does she say, as the widow of Zarephath said to Elijah, "Now I know that thou art a man of God." She had known it long before, and knew far more than the other of God Himself. But Hebrews xi. includes them both as witnesses to the power of faith in the sentence "Women received their dead raised to life again."

ELISHA AS A TYPE

Elisha is here undoubtedly a type of the Saviour who should overcome death and be the source of resurrection life to His people. But to bring life to those dead in sins could not be accomplished by an act of power, even Divine power. Neither could it be delegated to any servant—any angel, however mighty. Thus the prophet's staff, symbol of power and authority, and Gehazi wielding it, were ineffectual.

No, the Son of God Himself must take human form and identify Himself upon the cross with our death, if sin were to be put away, and life be brought in in righteousness. This is pictured in Elisha stretching himself upon the body of the dead child.

In this Elisha is a type of Christ, but in his own person he provides a striking contrast to the Lord Jesus. First he has to confess that God had not told him of the woman's trouble. We do not know why this was; but how different from Him who always had perfect knowledge of what the Father was doing!

Then again, though we may think how mighty a prophet this was through whom God would raise the dead, we cannot but contrast his *method* with that of the Lord Jesus, who had but to speak the word, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise" (Luke vii. 14).

We can understand Elisha's instructions to Gehazi to avoid all delay in hurrying to lay his staff on the child's face, as showing his fear that death would prove invincible if allowed to keep its grip too long. But we recall that the Son of God

came, not in haste but in the Father's time, to call Lazarus from the tomb after four days.

In these ways God reminds us of the vast gulf which separates the incarnate Son of God from the most exalted of His servants.

And whatever the unbelief that surrounds us today, let us remember that our faith rests in the God who has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. He raised up the Saviour who died for our offences, and every believer is accepted in Him before God. He is our righteousness. Moreover, the same mighty power is working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight. Power to walk uprightly, power to overcome sin, power to glorify God, is available for faith to lay hold of each day and each hour.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

X. Chapter xi, 1-57

(Testimony at the SEPULCHRE of LAZARUS)

It may be observed at the outset (1) that this chapter is in agreement with the general theme of the Gospel of John; and (2) that the comparison of the raising of Lazarus with that of the two instances in the other Gospels shows that the utter hopelessness of man's need is the spiritual significance of this sign.

At the beginning of the Gospel the faithful testimony of John the Baptist and the subsequent testimony of the Son Himself are both seen to be rejected by the Jews. Despite their unbelief, the record shows that the testimony to the love of God persisted, and in this chapter (xi.) we have the Father's testimony to the Son, the Lord's glory displayed, and God's power exercised in the resurrection of Lazarus.

Chapter xi. illustrates how the extremity of human need in the case of Lazarus was met by the Lord Jesus. In chapter ii. we see that when joy at the wedding had run out too soon, the Lord introduced something better, for He is the source of eternal joy. Chapter iii. shows us a man, though a Jewish rabbi, needing to be born from above, and that eternal life is

given to all those who believe on the Son. A woman finds permanent satisfaction in Christ (chapter iv.). An infirm man's inability to secure healing by his own efforts is met (chapter v.) by the Lord's word of power. In chapter vi. Christ is the bread of life to satisfy man's hunger; and in chapter vii. He is the living water to assuage his thirst. A guilty sinner is uncondemned (chapter viii.). Birth-blindness is cured by Christ in chapter ix. Chapter x. sets forth the fullness of salvation for Christ's sheep. In chapter xi. a climax is reached; man is dead and buried; corruption has set in. But Christ, Who is the resurrection and the life, brings Lazarus out of the tomb.

Chapter xi. also foreshadows the future millennial blessing of Israel after the nation's resurrection, as symbolised in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel xxxvii.).

As compared with Jairus' daughter and the young man of Nain, Lazarus was more advanced in age and was longer between death and resurrection.

(1) *The death of Lazarus and the coming of the Lord to Bethany*
(verses 1-19)

The sickness of Lazarus and the identity of his two sisters is first stated (verses 1, 2). Mary and Martha sent a message to the Lord, Who was beyond Jordan (x. 40), saying only that "he whom Thou lovest is sick." Its simple statement showed that they trusted Him to do what He judged best (verses 1-4). The Lord's love for these two sisters and Lazarus was known to the evangelist (verse 5), and also to the Jews (verse 36).

On receiving the message, the Lord took no immediate step. In the cases of the nobleman's son (John iv.) and the centurion's servant (Luke vii.) He spoke the word of healing power from a distance. But though the Lord might have arrested the disease of Lazarus in the same way, He refrained, and also stayed where He was for two days (verse 6.).

The Lord knew that this sickness was for the glory of God in the glorification of His Son (verse 4). The delay perplexed Martha and Mary, and when He came, they said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (verses 21, 32). How could there be death in the presence of Him Who is the Resurrection and the Life!

Though he loved the two sisters, the obedient Son waited until He received the necessary word from the Father. He always waited until His "hour" was come (ii. 4; vii. 6). He walked in the day, not in the night (verses 9, 10). This principle of conduct should be ours also. If we act hastily, apart from the Lord's will and without the assurance of God's guidance, we shall find the way dark and we shall stumble in our service.

How the disciples, through lack of faith and intelligence, failed to share the Lord's thoughts! (verses 11-16). Their outlook was gloomy; they saw nothing ahead but danger and death. Thomas alone exhibited a disciple's devotedness by his willingness to go with Him even to death.

The Lord was glad to work this miracle among His own that while they believed already, they might believe much more (verse 15). What remarkable words! "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there." What caused such sorrow to the sisters was a source of rejoicing to the Lord because it would be for the glory of God and for the strengthening of the faith of His disciples.

(2) *The Lord's Comfort for Martha and Mary (verses 20-37)*

The weeping and groanings of our Lord prove to all how He felt the terribleness of death (verses 33, 38). Outside the village He was met by Martha who said, like Mary afterwards, "If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (verses 21,32). The answer to the two "ifs" of the sisters is the Lord's words, "If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God" (verse 40).

Martha had not risen above the general truth accepted by the Jews. She said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." But the Lord was in Bethany to reveal that in His own Person He was the Resurrection and the Life. Lazarus would be raised before the "last day." At the Lord's coming, resurrection and life will be made good to the two companies mentioned in 1 Thessalonians iv. 16, 17—the living and the sleeping.

Martha, however, did not understand the unfolding of this new truth. She called Mary as the one more able to under-

stand the word of the Lord, seeing she had sat at His feet to hear it (verses 28-32; Luke x. 39).

We then behold the solemn picture of the Lord accompanying the two sisters to the grave (verses 33-37). Mary was weeping, and the Jews mourning. At the sight of their grief the Lord "groaned in the spirit and was troubled." He was not for Himself overwhelmed with grief, but in the presence of death He expressed His love and sorrow in perfect measure and with perfect propriety.

(3) *Lazarus brought alive from the dead (verses 38-44)*

The grief in verse 33, repeated in verse 38, differs from the "Jesus wept" of verse 35. In the former the terribleness of death itself is the cause. In verse 35, the Lord's tears are tears of human sympathy blended with divine love.

Then comes the great work of raising one dead for four days (verses 38-44). What was impossible to men was done by the Lord. Some present had their part to do. They took away the stone. No angel appeared from heaven to do it for them, as was the case *after* our Lord's resurrection (Matthew xxviii. 2).

The details show in a spiritual sense that however corrupt the sinner may be, being dead in trespasses and sins, Christ is able to give new life. At the word of the Lord, Lazarus came forth. The dead hear the voice of the Son of God and live (John v. 25).

Lazarus came forth bound hand and foot—alive, but not free. Again, those standing round had their part to do in setting him free. The grave-clothes were for the tomb. They were a positive hindrance in the new life he had received.

So the habits and associations of the believer in his unregenerate days are bonds and fetters to him in his spiritual life. They must be taken away. The recipient of eternal life in Christ must not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of his mind (Romans xii. 2). Later, we learn how rightly Lazarus used the liberty imparted to him (John xii, 2).

(4) *The Death of Christ determined by the Jewish Council (verses 45-57)*

The chapter closes with a plot on the part of the chief priests

and Pharisees to put the Lord to death (verse 53). The miracle had made them afraid lest they should lose their place and nation. From this time the Lord Jesus no more walked openly among the Jews (verse 54).

How little did Caiaphas imagine when he made his shrewd predictions that Jesus would indeed "die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (verse 52). Do not the Acts and the Epistles show how precisely these very things took place?

(To be continued, D.V.)

PHILIP CAUGHT AWAY

(Note on Acts viii.39)

It is widely held that Philip was removed from the presence of the eunuch by supernatural power and that the miracle of his removal confirmed the faith of Queen Candace's treasurer, since he would thereby recall Old Testament scriptures recording similar experiences with the ancient prophets (1 Kings xviii.12; 2 Kings ii.16; Ezekiel iii, 14). The act would teach Philip that this chapter of his service as an evangelist was now concluded, while it would impress upon the eunuch that his faith must not rest upon Philip, but upon Philip's Unseen Lord and Saviour. This the eunuch appears to have realised, for we read that he went on his way, not grieving for the loss of Philip, but rejoicing in his new-found faith.

While there is no difficulty in believing in the possibility of the supernatural removal of Philip, it is not so asserted in the text. What is certain is that Philip was made to realise through the *irresistible* influence of the Holy Spirit that he must now leave the company of the eunuch. So Paul was not suffered by the Spirit to go into Bithynia (Acts xvi.7). W. J. HOCKING

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