

# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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### RAVENS AND LILIES

(Note on Luke xii. 22-30)

The utter powerlessness of man, in what most nearly concerns him, is brought out with matchless beauty and truth. "Which of you, by being careful, can add to his stature one cubit? If therefore ye cannot do even what is least, why are ye careful about the rest?" What concerns the body is least. "Why take ye thought for the rest?"

Then we are given a still more graphic instance from the flowers of the field. "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin". God's care of the vegetable, no less than the animal world, affords striking and familiar proofs which cannot be gainsaid. "They neither toil nor spin". The ravens might seem to do somewhat: but as to the lilies, what can they do? "They neither toil nor spin; but I say unto you, not even Solomon in all his glory was clothed as one of these". This was not said of the ravens. "But if God thus clothe the grass, which today is in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven"—the meanest thing as it were that He has made in the vegetable kingdom, that which is both common and transient—"How much rather you, O ye of little faith?" The one, therefore, the ravens, rebuked their care for their food and the lilies their care for their clothing.

Hence they were to beware of resembling the nations of the world which know not God. "Seek not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, and be not in anxiety. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after". They were without God. "And your Father (not only God, but your Father) knoweth that ye have need of these things". He advances now until He puts the disciples into the enjoyment of their own relationship with a Father Who cared perfectly for them, and could fail in nothing towards them. The God Who watched over the ravens and the lilies—their Father—would surely care for them. He knows that we have need of these things, and should be trusted by us.

(From "An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke"—by W. Kelly)

## THE NEW YEAR

*“What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?”*

*“I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.”*  
(Psalm cxvi.12, 13)

The singer looks back. His is a vista of the benefits that have come from the divine hand. It is in the beauty and assurance of this vision that he goes forward into the coming days.

To accept the gracious benefactions of God as a matter of course is all too customary. The psalmist has dwelt upon the memories of them—they swell into a song of thankfulness. What treasures they are! these evidences of the personal care of his God. The more he considers them, the more they are! He feels an impulse to answer them. To this end it seems, at first sight, he would “render unto the Lord.” It is evident, however, that his awareness of the infinite overflow of divine bounty grows with his memories of it as he looks back. What wealth of his could answer to the inestimable benefits from the Divine Hand? He is without resource of his own, for the gifts of his God are without money and without price.

What, then, is his answer? “I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord.” It is his faith that reaches out to the future, strengthened by experience of the past. The man who takes the cup of Salvation has ceased to rely upon the transient treasures of time. Men may raise their wine cups to pledge adherence to friends and fortune, but the one who takes the CUP OF SALVATION has known the poverty of a lost condition, and declares his faith in a LIVING SAVIOUR. He calls “upon the Name of the Lord.”

In this condition, all is, again, a benefaction. How shall he take this holy and glorious cup save that it is GIVEN to him! He cannot acquire or deserve it—but HOW HE NEEDS IT! And how gracious is the Hand that gives it!

At the close of their year of labour, Israel kept “the Feast of Ingathering at the year’s end” (Exodus xxxiv.22). This was enjoined upon them, and they rejoiced in the fruits of the land

given to them. The abundance of Jehovah's providing gave evidence of His faithful care, and they could go forward into their **NEW YEAR** with **RENEWED FAITH**.

At the end of our year, we, too, will look back remembering proofs of His faithfulness—in trials overcome—petitions freely granted (or mercifully withheld)—and even sorrows shared and borne in the assurance of His word "your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Carried forward by time into another year, we "take the **CUP OF SALVATION**," gratefully hearing the voice of the Giver, "this cup is the New Covenant in **MY BLOOD** which is shed for you" (Luke xxii.20), and we "**CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD**."

EDWARD T. WOOD

## TOWARD THE MARK

*"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"*

(Philippians iii.13, 14)

The proverb says, "The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook" (Proverbs xviii.4). Those who give heed to the sayings of the wise find them waters that gladden, satisfy, refresh, inspire. They spring from the depths of living experience. They testify what they have seen and heard. Like a flowing brook they carry us forward to the ocean fullness beyond. "Consider what I say," the apostle wrote to his son Timothy; "the Lord give thee understanding in all things" (2 Timothy ii.7).

Here in Philippians we have a believing man, a servant of Christ, speaking, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (I Corinthians ii.13). Paul is speaking out of the depths of his heart, but in the power of that Spirit Who searches all deep things, and Who knows "the things of a man." In self-revealing words, he says "Stretching out to the things before, I pursue, (Looking) towards (the) goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus" (New Trans.).

These burning words were not uttered in the exuberant spirit of his youth, a time when life is full of high ideals; but in the evening of life, when so often the grasshopper becomes a burden, and the desires fail (Ecclesiastes xii.5); it is such a one as Paul the aged who speaks of pressing toward the mark. He is not, as on another occasion, speaking as it were foolishly in a "confidence of boasting" (2 Corinthians xi.17), but giving utterance to words of truth and soberness, as a prisoner at Rome with plenty of time to reflect. In his compulsory retirement, he declares that his eye is still upon the heavenly goal. All his energies are bent in pursuit of it.

These aspirations are deep waters of the wisdom that comes from above. There is a mighty force here which keeps the brook flowing ever onwards, past every rocky obstacle, "toward the mark." Are we pursuing the same goal with the same steadfastness of purpose?

## **CALEB THE SINGLE-EYED**

We may often see in God's roll of honour the single eye and heart exhibited in the men of mark. Think of the 600,000 men who left Egypt to go to the land of Canaan. Follow them through their devious wanderings in the desert. See them turning back in unbelief from the promised land, and longing to be back in Egypt. They lose sight of the promise of God to Abraham, and fall away in heart and purpose. Their vacillation and unbelief is visited by the judgment of God, and the many thousands brought out of the house of bondage dwindle and dwindle, until after forty years, only two men of those who came through the Red Sea cross the Jordan. Of these two striking exceptions, Joshua and Caleb, let us consider now only Caleb, the one less prominent in the scripture narrative.

Caleb, the head of the tribe of Judah, was one of the twelve representatives of the people sent from Kadesh-barnea early in the second year after leaving Egypt to search out the land in advance. He was a man forty years old. In Egypt he had learned God's promise and oath to their forefather that the land of Canaan should be their inheritance. This was the goal set

before him in the brickfields of Egypt (Exodus iii.17). It also shone before him through the dark night-passage of the Red Sea.

And when Caleb went with his colleagues into the land, and saw Hebron, and its massive walls, and gigantic sons of Anak, his heart was undaunted. He remembered God's promise, and his eye still rested upon the mark. Jehovah had spoken, and Hebron was the prize for him and his seed. He found himself alone, but for one other stout-hearted man. He could only bring back to Moses a minority report, but he "wholly followed the Lord his God." Caleb was for pressing on towards the mark: "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers xiii.30).

These bold words of faith came from a courageous man, "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." But there was no response to these wise words. All in the camp turned away from him and Joshua, the men who believed God. Overcome by their unbelief and fear, the masses never reached the promised land.

Forty-five years passed, and Caleb stood before Joshua, his old friend and leader, in Gilgal (Joshua xiv.). His undimmed eye was still upon the same mark. Hebron was in his heart, as it had been at Kadesh-barnea. This was an example of remarkable steadfastness of faith: thirty-eight years of desert life with all its privations and rigours, seven years of warfare with fierce and unclean idolaters in the highlands and lowlands of Canaan, but always pressing towards the mark—Hebron on the hill, where his feet trod in the day when he first viewed the fruitful and pleasant land.

In Kirjath-arba forty-five years before, Caleb looked not around him upon the great and fenced cities of iniquity, nor upon the mighty champions of idolatry, but his faith in God looked ahead and saw these things swept away, and the building of altars to Jehovah, of a city of refuge for the manslayer, an abode for the priests of the Lord, and the place for the coronation of Jehovah's anointed king over the twelve tribes of

Israel. Throughout the long years of patient waiting to be settled in his possession, the Lord God had kept Caleb "alive" in this hope, his strength unabated, the energy of his faith carrying him forward to his goal. Friends, relatives, and fellow pilgrims had long ago fallen out of the ranks. He was in a sense alone, but as fully animated as ever with the hope that Hebron might be his and his seed's for ever. The son of Jephunneh stands out notably amongst the heroes of faith in Old Testament days.

## THE HEAVENLY PRIZE

Caleb's eye was on an earthly inheritance in the special territory of the Lord between Dan and Beersheba, but Paul looked upward to a prize in the heavenly kingdom. The Lord of that place had caught his eye, and was beckoning him upwards. Throughout all the "weariness and painfulness" of an undeviating course of faith and self-renouncing service, Paul therefore kept running the race, ever pressing on towards the mark.

We may learn something from each of these two men. We may follow Caleb's steadfastness, and press towards Paul's mark. "Be my imitators, even as I also (am) of Christ," the apostle wrote in another place (1 Corinthians xi. 1, New Tr.), and here he exhorts, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Caleb's mind was on Hebron; Paul's mind was on Christ, and conformity to Him in glory. This is also the object for all those that are "perfect," those that have grown up from the things of the law to the things of grace, from the hopes of servants to the hopes of sons, from the attainments of the flesh to the power of the Spirit, from the vanities of self to the exultation in Christ.

The needle turns to the pole because it is impelled by a magnetic force outside itself. "Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." So Paul pressed towards the mark because of the sweet attractiveness of the Lord on high. He was not carried on by the force of his own indomitable will, but by the beauties and

glories of Christ, as he says, "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Impelled by this knowledge, he suffered the loss of all things, counting them but dung, that he might win Christ.

Paul, the servant of Christ, was filled with an intense longing to know Him, to share His sufferings, even to pass through the dark waters of death as his Master had done on the way to glory where He now is. If Paul were thus made conformable to the death of Christ, he would then know the power of His resurrection to fit him with a body of glory like His own. These are remarkable aspirations, but they can be the common property of all believers in Christ.

These lofty desires are inseparably associated with our heavenly citizenship. We are not called out by God to share the possessions of flesh and blood in a holy land of promise on earth. Our assured destiny is to be with Christ, and like Christ in heavenly glory, a glory which is necessarily superior to all earthly patterns.

Are you, my brother and sister, convinced that this is the character of your calling? If not, as the apostle says, God is able and willing to reveal even this unto you, and to deliver you from pre-occupation with temporal concerns, which will hinder your progress in the heavenly race, and prevent your whole-hearted imitation of Paul's zeal in pressing towards the mark for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly"—June, 1929)

## **"SO SHALL YE BE MY DISCIPLES"**

(John xv.8)

Great is the privilege granted to us by the Lord when He calls us, not only to believe on Him, but also to be His disciples.

The **PRIVILEGE OF DISCIPLESHIP** is brought before us in Mark iii.14, where we find that the Lord's object in choosing the twelve disciples was two-fold—"that they should be with Him," and "that He might send them forth to preach." How greatly privileged the twelve were! They were constantly in the Saviour's company; daily they journeyed with Him, they



heard His words, they saw His miracles, they experienced the warmth of His love, they felt the power of His presence. They were with Him continually, and then they were sent forth by Him to preach and witness in His name.

This two-fold privilege may be ours also. First, the privilege of communion with the Lord; of being with Him continually. Do we know the joy of travelling through life every day with the Lord—the intense joy of unbroken communion with Him? As his disciples, He would have us so near to Himself, that we feel in our hearts the warm glow of His great love; and our lives are controlled, transformed, and mellowed by the power of His holy presence.

The second privilege of the disciple is that of serving the Lord. The order is important. The Lord says, as it were: First, Myself; then My errands. It is when we have dwelt in His presence long enough for our souls to be saturated with His love, His tender compassion and grace, that He can send us forth on His errands of mercy, to minister His grace to those in need, to carry His message of love to others, and to speak His words of comfort and assurance.

The **PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP** is emphasized in John viii.31: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed." The true disciple treads the path of faith, in communion with the Lord, to the end of the journey. In John vi.66 we read of those that went back and walked no more with Him. How much they missed! How great their loss! They were merely nominal disciples. The true disciple never gives up; like his Lord, he goes on to the end. John xiii.1 relates how that, "Jesus . . . having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." The end for Him was the cross, its intense shame and suffering; but, undeterred, He went on to the end, even unto death. The end for us is in the sharpest contrast: the coming of the Lord, which will thrill our hearts with intense joy as we are caught away from this world's sin and sorrow to meet the Lord in the air and to be for ever with Him.

Until that joyful moment comes, the true disciple continues in his Lord's word. Every day his ear is bent to hear his Master's voice, to receive from Him the counsel, the direction, the encouragement and help which we all need continually. In addition, it is the disciple's constant care to bring his whole life and conduct into conformity with the word of his Lord.

The path of discipleship requires the utmost vigilance and watchfulness, lest "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things" crowd out our Lord's word from the place of pre-eminence that it should have in our lives.

The **PROOF OF DISCIPLESHIP** is seen in John xiii.35: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love is the proof, or evidence, of our discipleship that the world sees. It is the badge of discipleship, which is read and understood by all men.

The Lord Jesus, here in this world, was the perfect manifestation of the love of God. He loved us and gave Himself for us, and His commandment to us is, "That ye love one another, as I have loved you." The character, the manner, and the measure of our love is to be nothing less than the measure of His love to us. We are all conscious of how far short we come of His perfect standard, but who would dare to lower it, or to minimise His words!

See how these Christians love one another, was the comment of the world in the early days of the Church's history. As the character and manner of love, which was seen in Christ in all its perfection, is expressed in our ways, in our words, and in our relationships with one another, all men will know whose disciples we are; that we are disciples of Him whose very name is love.

The **PINNACLE OF DISCIPLESHIP** is reached in John xv.8: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." This is the height of the Lord's purpose in calling us to be His disciples. How stupendous! How wonderfully precious is His thought for us! Not only

that we might bear much fruit: that, in itself, is very blessed; but the Lord's thought rises higher still, until it reaches the very pinnacle of His desire for us—My Father's glory! "Herein is My Father glorified."

As the Son of God trod this wilderness world, in all the beauty of His perfect Manhood, His Father's glory was always the paramount object before His heart. We remember His words in His prayer to His Father (John xvii.4): "I have glorified Thee on the earth . . ." And to us, sinners saved by grace, He grants this most precious privilege, that of being His followers by bringing, in our turn, glory to His Father; "so shall ye be My disciples."

A. E. JORDAN

## STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### XI. Chapter xii.1-50.

#### (The Conclusion of the Lord's Public Testimony)

This chapter contains the final rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel, stated by John (verses 37-43) and also by the Lord Himself (verses 44-50). Borne witness to as the Son of God by His resurrection of Lazarus, as Son of David by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and as Son of man, to Whom the Greeks (Gentiles) will be gathered, He nevertheless is utterly and finally rejected by the Jewish people and their rulers. The light of the world is refused, and men prefer to abide in darkness.

Historically, the chapter records certain incidents in the closing days of the Lord's public ministry. After these incidents, the next public event recorded is the coming of Judas and the band of officers into the garden of Gethsemane to arrest Him (chapter xviii.). The intervening chapters (xiii-xvii) record the Lord's private intercourse with His disciples prior to His departure to the Father.

This chapter may be divided into five sections:

- (1) The supper in Bethany (verses 1-11);
- (2) The Lord's entry into Jerusalem as King (verses 12-19);

- (3) The desire of the Gentiles to see Christ, and the Lord's discourse (verses 20-36);
- (4) John's record of Christ's rejection (verses 37-43);
- (5) The Lord's final testimony (verses 44-50).

**(1) The Supper in Bethany (verses 1-11)**

The beautiful account of the supper in Bethany shows us the beloved and devoted family who had passed through the school of suffering and bereavement (chapter xi.). They are seen in the calm enjoyment of the presence of Jesus, the Son of God, Whom they now know as the Resurrection and the Life (John xi.25). Each of them exhibits a feature of the Christian life. Martha is serving without the haste or irritation of a former occasion (Luke x.40); Lazarus is enjoying quiet communion, apparently in silence; whilst Mary is filling the house with the sweet odour of her worship. How grieving to know that the quiet beauty of this scene was marred by the ugly selfishness of the betrayer within and by the ripening of enemy hatred without!

Mary's ointment was "very costly"—at the lowest valuation, "300 pence," about £20 (verse 5). And with her hair, her personal glory as a woman, she wiped His feet. No wonder that the odour of the ointment—the savour of true worship—permeated the house!

This pure and intelligent devotedness to the Lord, however, aroused the enmity of Satan, and Mary's action was called in question by one of the Lord's disciples. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor," Judas enquired. The objection, however plausible it might seem, was entirely groundless; for the poor were habitually remembered by the Lord (Chapter xiii.29). And the wicked insinuation that what had been devoted to the Lord was wasted showed the malice and covetousness of an evil heart.

The Lord, however, justified Mary's action. Mary, taught that the Lord would die, had acted with loving intelligence in view of His approaching death. She believed Him to be the Son of God and worthy of the highest honour. Nothing, therefore, was too costly for Him. The Lord's words (verse 7) associ-

ated her anointing with His burial; and it may be that, knowing the enmity of the Jews and that He might soon be hurried away to a violent death, she seized this opportunity of anointing His body.

According to the parallel passages (Matthew xxvi.6-13; Mark xiv.3-9) this feast was held in the house of Simon the leper. Many of the Jews came there to see not only the Lord but also Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead (verse 9). How powerful was this testimony of Lazarus! Because of it, the chief priests consulted to put him to death (verses 10, 11). What folly on their part! The presence of Lazarus in Bethany had already showed that at the word of the Lord death must yield up his prey.

## (2) **The Lord's entry into Jerusalem as King** (verses 12-19)

Then comes the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem as the promised King of Israel. He, the Messiah, the Son of David, went in procession to Zion in the meek and lowly manner foretold by Zechariah (chapter ix.9). The fulfilment of this prophecy and also of the prophetic stanza from Psalm cxviii.26 was further evidence of His Messiahship (verses 13-15).

The evangelist does not quote the whole of Zechariah's prophecy (Zechariah ix.9, 10), the clause, "he is just and having salvation," is omitted. This clause will not be fulfilled for Israel until the nation repents, and welcomes her "lowly" King out of a renewed heart. Indeed it could not then be fulfilled, seeing that the Lord had not yet died for that nation and its sin. From verse 16 we learn that the disciples did not understand the true relation of the incident to the prophecy until after the Lord Jesus was glorified and the Holy Spirit had come down to indwell and instruct them.

The crowd of provincial Jews who had come up from Galilee to Jerusalem for the passover acclaimed Jesus with signs of loyalty, crying, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (verses 12, 13). This public acknowledgment of His Messiahship, following the miracle upon Lazarus, caused the Pharisees to own the failure of their opposition, saying, "The world is gone after Him" (verse 19).

### (3) **The Desire of the Gentiles to see Christ, and the Lord's Discourse** (verses 20-36)

John next records (verses 20-22) the request of the Greeks (Gentiles, not merely natives of Greece) to see Jesus, an incident peculiar to this Gospel. This request seems to be a foreshadowing of the time when all Gentile nations will seek Messiah's blessing. The sequel to this request is not stated. Its effect upon the Lord Himself was that He said of Himself, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified" (verse 23). Before the time of His glory, He must be crucified and slain. He set forth both His death and resurrection by the figure of the corn of wheat, dying in order to produce "much fruit" (verse 24).

In this connection the Lord showed that this order, viz., self-abasement and suffering followed by ultimate glory, will be the order for those who follow Him in service (verses 25, 26). This denial of self enjoined upon others was the pathway trodden by the Lord Himself. For Him it was the fulfilment of His Father's will, a fulfilment so perfect and acceptable that for the third time the Father's voice of approbation was heard from heaven (verses 27, 28).

To the people around, the voice from heaven seemed to be the voice of thunder. The capacity to apprehend God's message intelligently always depends upon the attitude of heart to Him.

The Lord at this juncture spoke solemnly of the judgment of this world. In the sight of God its moral condition which led to the cross was already manifest. Yet through grace, it was when He was "lifted up" that He became the attracting centre for all men (verses 30-33).

The Lord foretold the exact manner of His death, but the thoughts of the people were still centred upon an earthly Messiah and earthly glory. The Lord knew that His death must be accomplished before millennial blessing could be introduced (verse 34).

Leaving their question "Who is this Son of man?" unanswered, He warned of the short time remaining for them to believe in Him, the true Light (verses 35, 36). And then, to emphasize this warning, He withdrew and hid Himself from them.

#### **(4) John's Record of Christ's Rejection (verses 37-43)**

Signs and wonders, unmistakable and irrefutable, had been given to the Jews to establish that "Jesus is the Christ," yet they did not believe. The heart of man is so wilfully obstinate that if one went to him from the dead, he would not be persuaded (Luke xvi.31). On this account, the nation, in the government of God, was visited with judicial blindness. This was not a peremptory act of divine anger, but a solemn and deliberate act of punishment.

The two quotations from Isaiah (verses 38-41) relating to the unbelief and judicial blindness of the Jews contain a striking testimony to the deity of the Lord Jesus. He is identified (verse 41) with the Jehovah (Isaiah vi.1-5) seen, by Isaiah, upon a throne "high and lifted up."

John speaks of those who did not believe on Him (verse 37); and also of those who are said to believe on Him but did not confess Him (verse 42). Is there any real difference in the end between these two classes, seeing that both belief and confession are necessary to salvation (Romans x.9)?

#### **(5) The Lord's Final Testimony (verses 44-50)**

Next, the Lord's own summary of the effects of His teaching is given. So far as the believer is concerned (verses 44-46), he abides no longer in darkness but has "the light of life." The application is general; not only those of Israel, but whosoever believes in Christ walks in the light.

On the other hand whosoever believes not (verses 47, 48) will be judged in the last day by the word which the Lord had spoken. His word would bring light or condemnation according as it was received or refused.

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*from the Scripture of Truth*

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### "RAISING UP" AND RESURRECTION

(Note on Acts xiii.33, 34)

Some confusion in the interpretation of this verse (33) and of that following has arisen through the assumption that "raising up" signifies resurrection, when it is a rendering of the Greek verb, *anisteemi*. It is argued that because this verb occurs in the two verses (33, 34), the resurrection of the Lord must be referred to in each case.

But this inference will not bear examination. In the latter verse (34), its meaning is restricted by the qualifying phrase, "from the dead". When we read, "*He raised Him from the dead*", resurrection is certainly stated. But the general meaning of the Greek verb is that of setting a person, or causing him to stand, in a certain position. And the verb is employed in this general sense in verse 33: the Lord Jesus was set in the position of the Fulfiller of the promise: "*God . . . hath raised up Jesus*" (the R.V. omits "again").

W. J. HOCKING

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*(continued from Inside Back Cover)*

conscience on the heart, or it cannot profit those to whom it comes, as it is not mixed with faith in the mere hearers of it.

Finally, is there really anyone who can examine the available positive evidence of God-fearing men and then deny that God can personally be known by and deal with individuals? Or, on the other hand, is there anyone who can contemplate the active aspect of the moral darkness that is so obvious all around, and then deny that there is an active opponent of God; in fact, a personal devil, of whom it is written that he is a liar and the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning?

There is a great significance in the saying that the blindest are those who from one cause or another do not want to see.

G. S. PURNELL.

## THE GLORY OF THE CREATION

*"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork"* (Psalm xix.)

"O Lord our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth, who hast set Thy glory above the heavens. When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (Psalm viii).

It is well for the Christian to ponder the immensity of God's universe. We are so familiar with the thought of His grace, and of the nearness to Himself into which our Lord Jesus Christ has brought us, that there is a real danger of our overlooking His majesty. One has even gone so far as to write, "When we get into the presence of God, we feel we are on a parity with Him"! It is, of course, a completely false conception of grace which could allow a man to speak in such a manner, but it proves the danger we are speaking of to be real.

The God to whom we may speak as our Father, to whom we may unburden our troubled hearts, is the very same as He who has made the uncountable myriads of stars, who controls at this very moment the inconceivably distant galaxies. Let us remember this when we kneel down to pray to Him; let us meditate upon it when we come to worship before Him.

"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" cried the Psalmist, and each of us, remembering the glory of His creation, may echo the cry for himself, "How canst Thou be mindful of me?" But the revealed truth that the Creator and Sustainer of all things *is* both able and willing to make Himself known to each of us, to give us assurance of His love and care, is but fresh testimony to His greatness.

Some people today claim that the known immensity of the universe has made this simple faith of our fathers impossible. They will have it that our little speck of an earth,

and still more individual men and women on it, must be far beneath the notice of a God who created such a universe. This incidentally is no new doctrine, for the Epicureans whom Paul rebuked when speaking in the Areopagus (Acts xvii. 27,28) held much the same view.

But whereas this doctrine professes to base itself on the greatness of God, in reality it limits His greatness. In reality it is based on man's own feeling of weakness and limitation, as though they would make God in the image of man. God has already answered this in the words of the prophet, "To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth."

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding" (Isaiah xl. 25-28).

If our imagination is overwhelmed (as it may well be) by the sheer vastness of the creation, we need to remind ourselves that, merely to say that He who created it must be the greater still, is a gross understatement. No, we cannot measure God by what He has created. He is not only greater, but infinitely greater. He is infinitely beyond measurement, even if the universe itself is our yardstick, and infinitely beyond comprehension.

Thus it is in the simplicity of the faith of a little child that we need to grasp the fact that to Him it is no problem to encompass both the immensities of the galaxies and the needs of His children, and indeed, of all His creatures.

There are no illustrations that can possibly help us here, for no illustration can span the gulf between the Creator and what He has created, for all our illustrations are based on what is created.

Yet even the puny mind of man has been able to measure not only the distances of the stars, but also the sizes of the immensely small particles of which matter is made. Why then should he be unable to accept that the Creator should number not only the stars, but also the very hairs of our heads?

## GOD'S GLORY SET ABOVE THE HEAVENS

The last clause of Psalm viii. verse 1, is worthy of close attention: "Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens."

We have already noticed that the heavens are not a *measure* of the power of God, and here we find that the true glory of God is *superior* to the visible heavens, however glorious they are. This theme is not developed in this Psalm, but the New Testament reveals that the glory of God is manifested in relation to His creature man.

What is introduced here is interpreted by the Holy Spirit in Hebrews ii. We see not only *man* in his insignificance, but Jesus who came down as *Son of Man* to share this lowly place, made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. If we link with this the saying of our Lord in John xiii. as the betrayer went out, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him," we discern that the special place given to man in God's creation is really in view of the display of God's brightest glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The mightiness of creation reveals infinite power and wisdom; but by itself this shows no way of recovery to man, whose self-will has led him into conflict with its perfect order. To accomplish this deliverance God Himself, in the person of the Son, has humbled Himself to become man, taking a place in His own creation.

The immensity of this down-stooping baffles our understanding. Yet we know that it did not mark the limit of His grace, for upon the cross He went lower still, suffering the judgment of God upon man's sin.

This was the perfection of love, and the perfection of holiness: the perfection of wisdom also, that made use of the

very disorder which sin had brought in, to display the glory of God "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians iv.6).

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

XII. Chapters xiii. 1-xiv. 14

*(The Lord's Lowly Act of Loving Service)*

The next five chapters are occupied with the private service of our Lord a few hours before He was crucified. Chapter xii. marked the close of His public dealings with men in general. In chapter xiii., His testimony in the world is ended, and He is seen alone with His own on that last evening, which deepened into the night of His betrayal before the day of His death.

Though the Lord knew that the hour of His anguish was at hand, He was occupied with His departure to the Father, and with the needs of His disciples during His absence. His heart was full of love for them — of love which would not spare itself in their service. This He unfolded to them, but they did not comprehend Him, but rather contributed to His sorrow.

### (1) *The Lord Washing His Disciples' Feet (xiii.1-17)*

Being assembled with "His own," the Lord performed an act of deep significance. He rose from supper and prepared to wash the disciples' feet (verses 4,5). "He riseth from supper" probably means that the Lord rose up immediately prior to the actual supper. The usual time for the washing of feet would then have passed, and no menial would come forward for the task. Apart from the Lord's service it would have remained undone.

When Peter's turn came, he protested that the Lord should never wash his feet. Impetuous in spirit and insubject to his Master, he saw no necessity for the Lord's action. He saw only a display of his Master's humility, from the acceptance of which his pride instinctively shrank (verses 6-11). The Lord, however, had only to touch the most sensitive

spot in Peter's heart with the word, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," and Peter bounded from one extreme to the other, desiring that he might be washed all over. To this request, the Lord made His significant reply, "He that is washed (bathed) needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (verse 10). Those who were "clean every whit" through the word the Lord had already spoken to them (xv.3) would also need the heavenly service of the same Lord as Advocate when He had gone to the Father (I John ii.1). This continual need of moral cleansing and the divine provision to meet it are both represented here by the washing of the disciples' feet undertaken by the Lord Himself.

The medium for bathing the whole body and for washing the feet is the same, namely water, and water is a figure of the word of God (Ephesians v.26). Bathing with it is a symbol of the entire purification which is the result of the atoning work of Christ Who came by water and blood (I John v.6; cp. John xix.34). It is by means of the word of God that man is born anew (John iii.5; Titus iii.5; James i.18; I Peter i.23).

The believer is completely purified from sin's stain, and moreover at his new birth receives a new nature which itself judges sin in the light of the word of God, and confesses it. This corresponds with the cleansing from the defilement contracted in the daily life of a believer, and is illustrated by the feet-washing of the disciples.

If we sin, the Lord Himself, our Advocate with the Father, lays it upon our consciences by the Holy Spirit and through the word; and then, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John i.6.-ii.1). This truth of practical periodical purification is foreshadowed in the Old Testament. The Jewish priests, at their consecration, were washed with water (Exodus xxix.4; Leviticus viii.6). Subsequently, before performing their duties in the holy place, they were to wash their hands and their feet at the laver (Exodus xxx.19-21).

The Lord's humility and service to the disciples also afforded an example to them, as He said, "Ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (verse 14). The Lord has given us this twofold obligation, not only to serve Him but to serve one another. We can wash one another's feet by ministering the word of God with lowliness and meekness to those who have fallen into error.

(2) *The Betrayer in the Midst* (verses 18-30)

The following section of the chapter deals with Judas. The Lord said to the apostles, "Ye are clean, but not all" (verse 10), referring to Judas. Neither was he competent, being himself unclean, to wash another's feet. By him the prophetic words of David were about to be fulfilled, "He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me" (Psalm xli.9; verse 18). The questioning among the disciples as to which of them the Lord was referring led to the inquiry put to the Lord Himself by the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (John, no doubt). What a vivid contrast between this disciple in a place of intimacy with the Lord (verse 25), and the betrayer into whom Satan was about to enter (verse 27). It was Judas, however, who received the Lord's mark of special favour as the sop or morsel implied. This the Lord bestowed so that even then the traitor might be awakened to repent of his wicked purpose.

Alas, Judas rejected the silent appeal of the Lord, and Satan entered into him (verse 27). And then the betrayer immediately went out on his terrible errand. How impressive are the words of the evangelist, "and it was night"! (verse 30). Turning his back on the Light of the world, Judas plunged into a darkness which knew no dawn. The history of Judas is a warning for all time of the results of trifling with sin in the face of special privilege. His terrible end to which he went by his own choice was the awful climax to which the love of money led him (Acts i.18; Matthew xxvi.24).



(3) *The Lord's Words of Farewell to His Own*  
(xiii.31 — xiv.14)

As soon as Judas had gone out, the Lord freely uttered His mind to the disciples. His death which was before Him would be the occasion for Him, the Son of man, to be glorified, and for God to be glorified by His obedience unto death: God would be glorified in Him because through that death God would display His grace to sinners on the basis of sin righteously put away and of all the claims of justice met. Further, on account of God's glory, the Son of man is glorified in resurrection. God has glorified Him in Himself, setting the Son of man upon His own throne, which was done immediately (verse 32).

The Lord then gave His disciples the new commandment that they should love one another as He had loved them. This love would be the distinguishing badge of their discipleship to Him (verses 34,35). Love therefore would be the prominent feature of their testimony during His absence.

Simon Peter inquired of the Lord, "Whither goest Thou?" The Lord replied that Peter could not then follow where He was going, though afterwards he should follow Him. Peter, however, not understanding the Lord's words, declared His readiness to lay down his life for the Lord's sake if only he might follow Him (verses 36,37). Alas, Peter was on the point of denying his Master three times, as the Lord warned him (verse 38). His boastful self-confidence ended in shameful failure.

We may note here the difference between Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. The Lord's love in offering the s<sup>c</sup>ap to Judas had no effect upon his sin-hardened heart: but the Lord's look at Peter after his denials broke his heart, so that he went out and wept bitterly (Luke xxii.61,62).

The Lord then provided a solid and satisfying comfort for the hearts of His disciples, while He was absent from them, by revealing His personal return to take them to be with Him. To believe in One Who was invisible was no new experience for them, since they already believed in God.

The Lord was about to become, similarly, the Object of their faith; and therefore their heart need not be troubled (xiv.1). Further, the Lord set Himself before them as the Object of their hope. He was going on high to prepare for them a place in the Father's house, and He would Himself come again to receive them to Himself to be where He is (verses 2,3). The "many mansions" in the Father's house allude to the many abiding places in the temple at Jerusalem for the priests' use when they were in attendance for their priestly duties.

To the questions of Thomas and Philip the Lord answered "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life" (verse 6), and also, "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (verses 10,11). The Father is revealed in Christ the Son, Who said to Him, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it" (John xvii.26). Such a manifestation was only possible by One Who was in the Father and the Father in Him, while such a state of being was possible only in the divine nature.

As the Lord had done many works of testimony (verse 12), so those who believed on Him should do greater works still. The promise was fulfilled when the Holy Spirit came down and wrought mightily and widely through faithful men and women, as we learn from the Acts and the Epistles.

The Lord then assured His own that during His absence they would, by prayer in His Name, be supplied with what they needed for their testimony (verses 13,14). First, He said that whatsoever they might desire for the glory of the Father in the Son He would "do," and secondly, He guaranteed to "do" any particular thing they might ask in His name.

*(To be continued, D.V.)*

## THE MIND OF CHRIST

We *have* the mind of Christ. As true believers quickened to life by the Spirit of God through the word we enter into the mind of Christ. Not only or exactly Christ's thoughts—the exercises of His holy mind recorded in the Gospels, but

that full intelligence as to God's purposes in Christ now revealed in all the New Testament scriptures.

We have been taken out of the world system of thought, man's philosophy of life which is tinged and coloured if not entirely governed by vain deceit and imagination, and have been translated into the realm of the Son of God, and as thus risen with Christ are enjoined to set our mind on things above (Colossians iii.2); at the same time being exhorted in all our activities here below to let the same mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians ii.5).

The possession of this mind has naturally very great bearing upon all our conduct, character and conversation.

First, it gives us the balance of truth and enables us to see light in God's light and thus to preserve the true proportion in handling the word of God which guards alike from overstatement and misapplication.

Secondly, the mind of Christ operative in us, purifies our preferences and purges out our prejudices in the things of God. As to the former, it gives a single eye. If on account of some personal preference, I plead, "I can't see," then the mind of Christ causes me to understand my dimness of sight by reminding me that if the eye were single the whole body would be full of light, and thus I should be able to see. It was the mind of Christ expressed in speech when He uttered what is still scripture: "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." As to our human prejudices, those things which tend so to warp sound spiritual judgment and to magnify trifles into matters of weighty importance in our sight, the mind of Christ has much to say. The streamlet of personal prejudice quickly becomes, if unchecked, the rushing torrent of envy, strife, self-seeking and censorious judgments, which threaten to sweep away all the holy barriers of brotherly love, kindly consideration, lowliness and gentleness by which the Christian character is fenced from that of the worldling.

The mind of Christ which we are to allow as the intelligence from whence our activities spring is revealed as a

mind of unselfish love and lowly service to God and man. Would indeed that it more frequently and fully characterised us in our work too; for we wonder at His lowly mind chiefly on account of our own petty thoughts of what we imagine to be due somehow to ourselves, from those we seek to serve.

Finally, the mind of Christ when operating in us, leads to a clear course of simple straightforwardness of conduct. This promotes at the same time a good conscience towards God and before man.

The pathway of true blessedness, trodden first by One Whose steps we are bidden to follow, is one of power, love and a disciplined mind. True liberty in entire obedience and recognised responsibility marks this holy highway, and the wayfarer finds the secret of deliverance from gnawing envy, inflated pride and a self-seeking spirit in the mind of Christ. It has been remarked, very aptly, "The true Christian rule of life is not scripture only, but scripture illustrated by the living example of the Lord Jesus." Looking on Him as He walked here as man we learn the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Lack of the mind of Christ on our part is usually found to be connected with some secret failure in affection towards Himself. "My son, give Me thine heart."

There is no safety for the heart and mind of the believer except as they are closely engaged with the person of the Blessed Lord. But walking in communion with Him, the believer finds the historical and typical story of Samuel the Seer reproduced in his own experience. "Now the Lord had told him, in the ear, the day before" (I Samuel ix.15).

He who has the mind of Christ is under no illusion as to the future of the Church and the world. He knows what is going to happen in the to-morrow, for the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.

The mind of Christ interprets history and explains prophecy.

W. G. TURNER

(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly", September, 1924)

## EAGLES' WINGS

*'Ye have seen. . . how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself'* (Exodus xix.4)

This was part of the first message which Moses received for the people of Israel when they arrived at Mount Sinai. The beautiful image used to express God's care for the people was no doubt very appropriate to the natural surroundings in which the tents had been pitched. The people had come three months' journey, the last part of which was among mountains and through passes which gradually led them higher and higher until they had come at length to the lonely grandeur of Mount Sinai. The eagle is a denizen of such places and builds its nest amongst the loneliest and loftiest crags which are only reached by its broad and powerful wings.

Surely this was a fit emblem of the way in which the people of Israel had come their long journey. A stronger arm than that of Moses had supplied their needs; a wiser one than he had been their guide; for unseen, there had been underneath them all the way, sustaining and protecting, the mighty power and the unceasing love of Jehovah their God.

Why had these people been favoured so? If they never knew it before they would understand now that it was that they might be brought to Jehovah. "I have brought you unto Myself," He says to them. They had often thought no doubt that God had come down to deliver them from the bondage of Egypt because of their miserable state and the groanings which had been wrung from them there. Those who thought so read the same lesson of God's love to them in all that had happened since their deliverance. This was all true, but there was something better still. All their experiences God designed should be to bring them to the knowledge of Himself. He would have, amidst the idolatry of the nations, a people on earth who knew Him, and it was for this blessing that He had brought them that marvellous way up into the mountain tops, there to reveal Himself to them still more nearly, more openly.

Had we eyes to see we should find the same eagles' wings beneath each one of us, bearing us ever upwards to the place where we may learn more of God Himself. We often think of our circumstances in the light of our own blessing and comfort; God would have us think deeper than that, and see in all that occurs in our lives, opportunities of learning of Himself. We have been brought to a place where we may learn of Him in the fullest and best way — in the face of Jesus Christ. But every day there are opportunities of experiencing how He is bringing us closer to Himself in the things that befall us.

May we have grace to rejoice in the knowledge that we are borne along to such a blessed conclusion by those strong eagles' wings which never swerve from the path of divine purpose.

“And now in perfect peace we go  
 Along the way He trod,  
 Still learning from all need below  
 Depths of the heart of God.”

*(Reprinted)*

L. C. HOCKING

## THE SECRET OF UNBELIEF

It is said that Professor Huxley was once asked whether he believed in God, and that his reply was that he saw no god in his science. This attitude of mind is very aptly described in the Book of the Psalms, where twice over the statement is made, “The fool hath said in his heart, ‘No god’ ” (Psalm xiv. 1; liii. 1). The italicised “There is,” interpolated by the translators before the words “no god”, makes a subtle and unwarrantable change in the meaning.

There is no intelligent man, however blatantly he may express himself and try to deceive himself in expressing his unbelief, who is really convinced that there is no God. To be convinced, the direct evidence of the senses has to be deliberately denied; for God's eternal power and Godhead cannot but be understood in contemplating creation. Is it not

written that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shews His handiwork? The regular succession of night and day are silent witnesses of His majesty. But the one whom the writer of the Psalm calls a "fool" says in his heart that whether there be a God or not is no concern of his, and that if there be a God, he has no wish to have anything to do with Him; all this is expressed in two words: "No God."

Why does human reason strive so strenuously against the things that can only be comprehended by a God-given faith? Surely the reason is not far to seek. The truth of God, revealed with a simplicity that "little children" cannot mistake, is absolutely unpalatable to the intellect and heart that is occupied only with its own possibilities, even to enthroning itself as God, and anything that tends to dethrone intellectual self-worship is rejected with open hostility.

The writings known as "The Scriptures" and comprehended in what is called "The Bible" have a power which intellectual attainment recognises when tacitly it acknowledges that it cannot find anything more expressive than the phraseology to be found therein. A Carlyle can say that inside or outside of the Bible there is not a greater work than the book of Job, and a Renan gratuitously acknowledges the surpassing beauty of the Gospel of Luke. A man may read the Bible from cover to cover and still remain in open agnosticism or even more decided unbelief because its principles run counter to the dictates of his own intellectual reasonings.

The One whom the evangelist John calls the Word, a name which implies the embodiment of what God has to say, reached the conscience of a society outcast and wrung from her the tribute, "Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" and in like manner one whose conscience has been reached by divine inspiration can say: "Come and read a book that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the word of God?" Divine Inspiration carries its own credentials and does not require supporters and apologists, nor will it succumb to the attacks of those who, under a mask of faith, are eloquent in the principles of unbelief. The word of the Living God must operate through the

*(concluded at foot of Inside Front Cover)*

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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(Continued from Inside Back Cover)

of what we said at the beginning: *It is easily possible for any of us to stand in the most favoured of all Christian associations and yet to be out of fellowship with our Master in feelings and sympathies and spirit and ways.*

Perhaps you believe that the immediate circle in which you move is the most favoured of all circles. You are constantly receiving — so you suppose — fresh light from the Word, and you complacently regard yourself as standing on a spiritual elevation from whence you can look down with feelings akin to pity on your fellow Christians who have no eyes to see what you see. But take care that you are not out of harmony with your Master's mind. It is easy to be far, far astray and utterly unconscious of it — easy to filled with a zeal for His honour and rights which instead of receiving His approval only meets with His rebuke. What need there is ever to pray the Psalmist's prayer: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalm cxxxix. 23). Have you ever prayed it? May we ask you to pray it once more.

(The foregoing, reprinted by courtesy of the Central Bible Truth Depot, was written many years ago by William Barker, one greatly beloved for his service to the Lord's people. It was penned shortly before his departure to be with Christ, and was regarded as characteristic of his ministry. It is felt that what he wrote is timely for our own day.)

### KEEPING MERCY FOR THOUSANDS

(Exodus xxxiv. 7)

O my soul, hearken to the melody of this sweet note. The thought may sometimes rise, that mercy visits but a favoured few; that the rare gift enriches but rare souls. Nay, mercy's arms are very wide. Mercy's heart is very large. Mercy's mansions are very many. It has brought saving joy to countless multitudes. It has saving joy for countless yet. The door stands open. Thousands have found. But there are stores for thousands yet.

*Extracted*

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

*"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"* (John v.17)

Peter had left the shallows of the shore and had "launched out into the deep" (Luke v.4) — the DEEP OF FAITH where no fish are known to be! The long labour of net casting began there — "faith and works" are partners in spiritual activity. It is out in the deep of dependence that Peter learns the divinity of Jesus — and thus his own sin condition, for conscience, NOT sentiment or family, forms the bond. Adam knew more of God OUTSIDE the garden. There was no condescension for God in making Heaven — but, to make a covering for man *He emptied Himself*.

Luke v.12. The "beloved physician" writes on. He is filled with desire to present to his friend that living picture of the Son of Man so dear to himself. The work of Jesus in this character was so perfectly suited to each individual. Indeed, He worked under the eye of God, and was ever conscious of it, as well as in accord with the holy and beautiful character He came to present to Israel. We, too, as following Him, however weakly, act under the eye of God. It is a solemn thought. If our actions are really under His control we may know something of "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Philippians iii.10), for there is a twofold aspect of events to be observed in this record.

The poor fever-ridden woman in Peter's house is not only a sufferer to be raised in full vigour of service to her family — she is a presentation of Israel in helpless grip of sickness. It is as though the evil adversary of His people exulted in exhibiting his satanic accomplishments. By the lake shore, the boats are empty, and the weary toil of Israel's night has produced nothing but disillusion. Now, in verse twelve, Jesus is "in a certain city"— the name is of no consequence — and the work of the same foe is presented by a man "full of leprosy," humiliated in the dust and pleading for cleansing. The moral order set forth by the Spirit of God shows Israel in sickness, in fruitless toil, and in the grip of leprosy.

Such a presentation could not but bring sorrow to the heart

of Jesus. It is no mere narrative that we read. Within the words are the sufferings of Christ. "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" — so writes Matthew as he quotes the prophet Isaiah (Matthew viii.17). Paul, too, in writing to Hebrew believers, assures them they have an High Priest touched with the spirit of their infirmities (Hebrews iv.15). The sight of His people, marred by sin, and showing on all hands the scars of their disfigurement, must have grieved Him in a way incomprehensible to us.

The crowds come in great multitudes with their sick, and "power" flows from His touch to each one for personal healing. Luke shows his friend the place of resort for that sensitive Soul from the impact of suffering Israel — "And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed" (verse 16). It may be that we, in some smaller measure, know something of this "wilderness." Is it not here, where sparse growths show the dearth of human endeavour, and the world clamour is stilled, that we may withdraw to find reviving in prayer communion with God?

In rehearsing the events of a past, so precious to him, Luke now describes for Theophilus the gathering of a "learned" assembly (Luke v.17). "And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them."

It may be that Theophilus, in reading these words, viewed that day as one of challenge. It was evidently not just *any* day. The word indicates a specific occasion. It was "one day" as set apart in significance. The word is used again — "a certain poor widow" (Mark xii.42) — "a certain Scribe" (Matthew viii.19). They were persons identified. The "learned" ones made their journey from every town of Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem — and they assembled at a certain place, and were present in a certain house.

*They* had travelled distances to be present, but the Divine Direction by the pen of Luke adds significantly the truth of another Presence — "The power of the Lord (Master) was

*present TO HEAL THEM.*” So the Pharisees and doctors of Law, however learned — however sincere — are in need of healing.

It was a conference of the critics — a day of challenge. Shall we not consider — as far as we may — the feelings of the Lord Jesus in presence of such a company? Were not these the self-appointed teachers of His people who led them into error? Did they not make the Law of God of none effect by their traditions? We may think of the Divine Worker, aware of the alien spirit in that crowded house, yet, teaching patiently, undeterred from His work despite “the things that He suffered” (Hebrews v.8).

And now Luke writes his word of amazement. In the midst of the overcrowded assembly, “Behold (see) men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy.” His reader is to picture the scene — to “see” with astonishment the four “workers together” in the service of faith, who carry a palsied friend in his mattress bed through the roof into the presence of the greatest Worker of all time.

There were, we may thankfully and humbly observe, some few occasions when Jesus was comforted. The four men broke through the roof canopy of the courtyard, but it was their FAITH that shattered the criticisms of the “learned,” and Jesus “SAW” their faith. The word “saw” is ‘eidon’ — it combines knowledge with sight. It is used in Mark ix. “They saw no man save Jesus only.” It was their simple unquestioning FAITH that must have comforted Him. They said no word. They made no impassioned plea. Silently they placed the object of their care and labour at the feet of Jesus, knowing He would react in perfect understanding. They came, not by the orthodox way, as did the leaders of religion and their followers of that day. It was not an easy way — but it was the way of the “overcomer,” for “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH” (I John v.4).

We may know very little of Theophilus, but the significance of this episode had the same message for him as for ourselves. Time has not ministered to man’s helpless paralysis under

the scrutiny of God. In the retrospect of our lives we may each see a distorted man, and never cease to be amazed at that grace, reaching to the four corners of the earth, that brought us into the presence of the divine Worker. Nor may we claim an attribute in coming — the helpless inarticulate man is “borne of four” (Mark ii.3). Theophilus (“Loved by God”), highly placed, perhaps, in his senatorial position, may have paused in thanksgiving as he meditated upon the universal need, and the grace that had shown him the effective meaning of his name.

There are others facets to the gem of this miracle. The paralysed man is Israel laid before Him. “He came unto His own (things) and His own received Him not” (John i.11). The outcome of the working of evil upon His ancient people once more assaulted His holy sensibilities. Within our human limits we may become aware of His sorrow. That which God had purposed for His earthly witness had been brought to the paralysis of utter failure.

The measure of His work — the immense need for it — must have been before Him at all times. The measure of it would soon be shown — at Calvary. He would “endure the cross, despising the shame,” that He might pronounce to Israel, as to the stricken man, “thy sins are forgiven thee.” The learned ones may say, “Who is this?”; but the answer is reserved for the man forgiven, moving in newness of life, and bearing away that which had borne him.

It is good to think of this “joy that was set before Him.” The rejoicing of the forgiven man swelling into the praises of the whole company as they glorified God, was a portent of that future day of reconciliation when Israel shall move toward her “own house,” — for she *has* a place to occupy in which, as God’s earthly people, there will be display of the wondrous character of God in righteousness and peace.

E. T. WOOD.

*(To be continued, D.V.)*

## PHILADELPHIA, or THE OPEN DOOR

Most believers know that the seven epistles to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation ii. and iii., represent, in their prophetic aspect, seven phases of the church in history — phases which seem to have appeared successively, although the last four continue up to the Lord's coming.

Apart from the epistle to Smyrna, where the testing fires of persecution are referred to, and consequently only words of comforting and strengthening are used by the Lord Jesus, every church but Philadelphia receives both praise and blame. Thus the Philadelphia epistle is specially attractive, and its unmixed commendation such as we may well covet to receive.

It is the last epistle but one, and so ought to represent a phase near the end of the Church's history. Seeing then that so much that is happening today makes us think that the Lord's coming must be near, the message of Philadelphia ought to have special force for the Lord's people today. So there are two good reasons for giving our attention to it.

"These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name."

In each epistle we find the Lord Jesus speaking of Himself in terms which underline the main features of the conflict and temptations of His people at that time. Well then, here it is His own holiness and truth that He brings forward. Does this mean that Philadelphia has to meet and overcome attacks on the *holiness* and *truth* of the Lord Himself?

Consider in this connection the special commendation He gives. "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name." It would seem that we are on the right track. Furthermore, the later part of the letter is full of references to the Lord's own things, "My God," "the city of My God," and so on.

Now we surely believe that these words have had a message that seemed appropriate to believers in other days, yet it would be hard to find days in which their appropriateness is more startlingly clear than today. In other days believers have had to contend for many aspects of the truth, but at least the Lord Himself was honoured, His sacred person above attack.

Today it is no longer so, but with many and varied assaults Satan seeks to deprive believers of their Lord and Saviour.

If we mention first those who make much of the name Jehovah in order to deny the glory of Jehovah-Jesus, it is not because their attacks seem most deadly. By attacking so much, they betray themselves to the one who loves the Saviour. Yet to many who are unenlightened they seem to be the apostles of light, and contenders for the truth of the Bible. It is Christ Himself, as one with the Father, who has no place in the scheme. The *double* word of the Lord here, "Thou hast kept My word, *and* hast not denied My name," provides a test which shows their contention for scripture truth to be hollow.

The more subtle attacks of today acknowledge in word that He is divine, give assent to the whole Christian revelation, and then proceed to demolish in detail His claim to be the only Saviour and Redeemer of mankind. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me," He declared. They will have it that God is equally revealed in other world religions. They point to the integrity of prominent men on the international scene to prove that other religions are equally acceptable to God. Yet this is to deny flatly His name and Word.

Now our temptation is to think that these opposed positions can both be right. But it is not a question whether "there is good in other religions." The question is, Is Jesus the only Saviour, and can anyone be saved while rejecting Him?

The call for Christian unity, while undoubtedly genuine on the part of many christian supporters, is yet serving Satan as a smoke screen to make these attacks more effective. For it is notorious that vital differences of doctrine are to be



laid aside till outward unity is achieved, so that attention is directed away from the fact that His unique claims are being whittled away. And if Rome holds to her adoration of Mary, must this also be allowed to be of minor importance?

Moreover similar, but wider movements, are in the air. We have already seen Christian, Jewish and other religious leaders "worshipping" together. But the Lord Jesus has declared that the true worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth. How then can this be true worship on the part of men who deny the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the one Name under heaven whereby we must be saved?

Believers then, if they would be reckoned of Philadelphia, must resist every temptation to be swept along by these currents. They will be dubbed narrow, bigoted and intolerant, yet what is this, compared to the Lord's approval?

Another subtle attack on His holiness and truth is concerned with His human life in this world. In an attempt to make everything "natural," His virgin birth and sinless humanity are denied, and called "unnecessary." We are told that He had to battle with sinful temptations just as we have to, in spite of the clear statements of scripture that "He knew no sin," "He did no sin," and that Satan had nothing in Him.

Moreover it is taught that He grew up to partake of the outlook of men of His day, with their erroneous notions, so that He can no longer be regarded as an authoritative teacher on any but moral matters.

Thus for example, the promise of His coming again is put aside, and instead of being the bright hope of His people's hearts, is relegated to the end of the world, so that it need not be taken into account in our daily life.

Along with all this is an undeclared, insidious playing down of the reality of His glorious being. He is a spiritual force in the world and in men's hearts, but not One who already possesses all authority in heaven and earth, not the One who is coming to put down all rule and all authority and power.

His solemn warnings of the coming of the Son of Man in power and great glory in days like the days of Noah, or like the days of Lot (Luke xvii.26-30) are thus entirely cast aside, and Christian leaders speak and write as though the world were going on under man's control indefinitely.

Accordingly, preaching the gospel to every creature as He commanded, is often supplanted by an attempt to reach an accommodation with heathen religions, and the vital work of saving souls replaced by purely humanitarian mission work. For certainly Christian love must be practical, but denying men the gospel of salvation is not to love them.

He says, "Thou hast kept the word of My patience." This implies an understanding of the fact that His rights are set at nought in the world today, and that He is waiting for God's time, to come and enforce them. This truth the believer has to maintain, refusing the thought that it is the church's task to set the world to rights, for only He can do that. The church's task is to present Him to the world as its Saviour.

"Behold, I come quickly. Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

*(To be continued, D.V.)*

## BRETHREN

The term "brethren" in New Testament thought suggests nothing of a denominational or sectarian character, but describes an abiding relationship entered upon by every believer in Christ, irrespective of sex, age, or nationality. "One is your Master, and all ye are brethren," says the Lord Himself to the disciples. The abiding relationship is entered upon by birth, and is quite unlike friendship, which may be formed or severed by circumstances, or at will. John i.12,13; Galatians iii.26, with kindred scriptures, clearly teach how one becomes a child in the family of God, and hence one of the brethren.

W.G.T.

## OUT OF TOUCH WITH THE MASTER

I am going to invite the reader's attention to a fact that seems to me full of significance, and one which, I venture to say, claims more than a passing thought. Briefly stated it is this: *It is easily possible for any of us to stand in the most favoured of all Christian associations and yet to be out of fellowship with our Master in feelings and sympathies and spirit and ways.*

No one will doubt that when the Lord was on earth the twelve men who were chosen by Him to be His companions and messengers were privileged beyond all others. They were with Him all the days of His public ministry, and if in His teaching there were things they did not understand they had every opportunity of asking Him to pity their ignorance and to explain His meaning. They were with Him also in His private life, seeing, hearing, and observing things that could only be known by those who were admitted to His dear and hallowed companionship. "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see"—said He to them on one occasion—"for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them" (Luke x.23). Yes, beyond all doubt they enjoyed unequalled privileges, and yet their thoughts and wishes and ways often jarred upon their Lord and Master and had to be corrected by Him. Let me give you some examples.

*"And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God"* (Mark x.13).

We may be sure it was the best motives that led them to bring these dear babes to Jesus. They prized His blessing and believed that His touch would do them lifelong good. Therefore did they come and ask that His hands might be laid on their little ones. But this wish found no favour in

the eyes of His disciples. *Their* Master was not to be troubled about a matter of such trifling moment! Other and more important concerns engaged His time and attention, and so they took it upon themselves to bid them go away. Oh, how little did the twelve understand their Master! How little they knew His heart! This they were soon to see. For when Jesus saw it "He was much displeased"—*indignant* is the word—"and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." And instead of touching them only, He laid His hands upon them and took them in His arms and blessed them. Now that word *bless* is a strong one and means that He blessed them abundantly. How ashamed should these disciples have been at the rebuke of their Lord and Master! They learned in that hour that His thoughts were not their thoughts, neither were their ways His ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so were His ways higher than their ways, and His thoughts than their thoughts.

And He who abundantly blessed the little children when on earth is still blessing them. The years may come and go and the centuries may roll away, but there is no change in His love. He is always the children's Friend. And they are most in the secret of His mind who are earnestly striving to bring the little ones to Jesus. To this end they labour in fervent prayer. To this end they seize every opportunity to tell them of the Saviour's dying love, of His precious blood that cleanseth from every sin, and how He longs that they should know and love and follow Him.

Strange to say there are those — followers of Christ in some things — who frown upon Sunday-school work and have given it up as not being in accord with the mind of heaven for to-day. Thank God their number is not large. Possibly they think that parents are responsible to teach their own children and that they should not be encouraged to pass on their duties to others. But if I am a Christian parent may not my children sometimes hear the story of redeeming love from other lips than mine? And then the children of our Sunday-schools, for the most part, come from homes where

the Bible is never read and where the children are never taught to pray. Oh, it is Christ-like work, let others say what they will, to gather the children together by twos or tens, by hundreds or thousands, if possible, to tell them, for one brief hour a week, of Him, their best Friend, who came from heaven to save them, and who, saving, will be their Guardian and Guide through life.

*“Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbade him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our part”* (Mark ix.38).

Who this man was we cannot tell. Nor does it matter. Enough that he was one who hated the devil and all his works, and when he met one possessed of demons he cast the demons out in the power of the name of Jesus. But the disciples forbade him. Had they been in a right frame of mind they would have been glad to see one able to spoil the “strong man’s” goods in their Master’s name. And more especially as they themselves had just failed to cast out the evil spirit from the son of the sorrowing father who had brought his afflicted boy to them. It is a sure mark of singleness of eye and largeness of heart when we rejoice unfeignedly in seeing others possess a richer measure of spiritual power than ourselves, even though they follow not us, and it is an equally sure sign of a narrow spirit when we do not. But in the eyes of the disciples the fact of his not following them was a fatal flaw. It seemed intolerable that he should cast out demons in Christ’s blessed name and yet not be of their company. So in their mistaken zeal they bade him cease. And in returning to their Master John made haste to tell Him what they had done. Instead of commending, the Lord corrected them and bade them never do it again, saying, “For there is no man which shall do a miracle in My name, that can lightly speak evil of Me. For he that is not against us is on our part.”

How we need to guard against the same sectarian and un-

generous temper. We are too ready to suppose that spiritual power can only be found along the lines on which we move, and to criticize and find fault with the devoted service of another because it is not cast in our mould and carried on according to our methods. *He followeth not us* is reason enough to condemn him root and branch. True, he is winning souls for Christ, he is seeking by devoted labour to feed the flock of God, and he is waging unceasing war with the forces of evil. Yes, all true, but *he followeth not us*. Our thoughts are not his thoughts, and our ways are not his ways, and that is an offence which cannot be overlooked. So we shut up our sympathies, we give him no words of cheer, and brighten his life with no kindly deed. We leave him severely alone, and in acting thus sincerely believe that we have our Master's mind. But it is not so. We are as completely astray as were the disciples on the occasion of which we have spoken. Oh, let us jealously guard against such a spirit. Let us ungrudgingly recognize all the good we can in another even though *he followeth not us*.

*"And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village"* (Luke ix.51).

These Samaritans made a great mistake in refusing to receive the Saviour even as a passing guest. Strong religious prejudices were at the bottom of it. They profoundly differed from the Jews as to the place where men should worship. Mount Gerizim was their sacred spot and Jerusalem was that

of their rivals. Now the face of Jesus was stedfastly set towards Jerusalem, and they, knowing this, would suffer Him to tarry in their village, no, not for an hour. They were wrong, very wrong, but their refusal serves to show how religious prejudices darken the understanding and lead to sorrowful results. It is always so. We have, even in our day, to beware of the Samaritan spirit. It steals into the heart and takes possession of it all unawares. And under its influence it becomes easy to close the door against those who should be warmly welcomed. It is not that we are insincere. Far from it. Deep down in our hearts we think that we are doing God service and caring for His glory. Doubtless the Samaritans thought the same.

And this affront to their Master was more than His disciples James and John could endure. That the despised Samaritans should treat their Lord thus was an offence that deserved signal punishment, and they were ready to inflict it. Should they command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did? How gladly would they have done it and how vehemently, and with what plausible reasons, would they have justified their act had it been challenged! But these disciples did not know their Master! Nor did they know what manner of spirit they were of. He had not come to destroy men's lives but to save them. And they went to another village. Here is the meekness and gentleness of Christ!

Alas! how many un-Christlike things have been done under the plea of faithfulness to Christ. Possibly we have done them ourselves. And when we did them our zeal for our Master's honour sprang from the very same spirit that made James and John eager to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans. And if there was a voice that would have restrained us, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" our ears were so filled with the clash of tongues that we did not heed it. We would vindicate our Master's name, we *would* uphold His rights, regardless of all consequences, and we called down the fire!

But we need go no further. These examples show the truth  
*(Concluded Inside Front Cover)*

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# WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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## WATCHINGS AND FASTINGS

(Note on 2 Corinthians vi.5.)

Watchings and fastings are included in the Christian service of Paul and others, and they, with other acts of endurance, proved that they were genuine servants of God. Watchings and fastings are only two of the twenty-eight items given in verses 4-10 as the special characteristics of the ministers or servants of God.

The "watchings," no doubt, refer to the many sleepless nights passed by them in the course of their service for the Lord. Their hours of rest were often abridged; sometimes by bodily pain, as at Philippi (Acts xvi.25); by preaching the word (Acts xx.7,31); by manual labour at night in order to preach by day (1 Thessalonians ii.9; 2 Thessalonians iii.8); by fervent prayer for the welfare of all the saints (1 Thessalonians iii.10; 1 Timothy v.5; 2 Timothy i.3). See also Ephesians vi.18; Colossians iv.2, where watching and prayer are connected.

The "fastings" would include, not only the occasions in their travels when they were unable to obtain food, but especially those when God's ministers voluntarily abstained from food during special seasons of waiting upon the Lord at critical times in their service (see Acts xiii. 2,3; xiv.23; 2 Corinthians xi.27). Compare also Luke ii.37 and Acts xxvii.33.

It must not be thought that these verses are out of date. There are today, those who labour for the Lord, and some who have given themselves entirely to that service. The long list (verses 4-10) provides them a means of testing their own service. How many of the 28 features recorded of this ministry could they write down as truthfully of themselves as Paul did of himself?

W. J. HOCKING

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*(Continued from Inside Back Cover)*

of error, and be ever taught and kept by the blessed Spirit of Truth, as we feed upon the word of God, and hold it fast, and wait for the Lord from heaven. W. H. L. GRAHAM

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

**“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work”** (John v.17)

“And after these things He went forth” (Luke v.27). The gathering in the house dispersed. The curious and the critics “were all amazed.” Their puny thoughts had faded in face of divine demonstration. “They glorified God, and were filled with fear.” Fear (phobos — terror) mingled with their homage, while the once paralysed man strode homewards carrying the mattress that had, hitherto, borne him. No terror hindered his overflow of gratitude. He had heard with faith the word of the Son of Man, and knew the forgiveness of sins.

The sense of movement is again conveyed as Luke brings one scene after another before his friend Theophilus. “After these things He went forth.” The Divine Worker ceases not. He “must work the works of Him that sent Him while it is day — the night cometh.” Levi is “sitting at the receipt of custom.” He is seen surrounded by evidence of self interest. The circle of movement in his life was circumscribed by the calling he had chosen in the face of popular hatred — the Levite was linked with the Sinner! The opposition of his fellow Israelites closed all doors to him save the one he had himself opened in service to the Roman overlords. In common with the world-spirit he lived amid the stagnation of his “own things.” The grace of unfaltering movement on the part of Jesus is seen linked with a Power far beyond the possession of self interest. There was no virtue in the words “Follow Me,” but the Power that flowed with them drew Levi from all that he possessed to be with the One who, in that moment, had become the new centre of interest in his life. We should never have been at the feet of Jesus had he not drawn us there!

In each of the previous episodes recorded by Luke, the vital need of the individual seems used of God for the lavish outpouring of His grace. There is a NEW experience for each which, in itself, presents a separate beauty among the

treasures of divine fulness. Peter has a **NEW CONVICTION** of **SIN** that went beyond the mere acknowledgment of human failure. The leper knew a **NEW CLEANSING**, superseding that which he knew before the onslaught of the disease. The paralytic rose from his bed with a **NEW POWER** from a **Source** he had never known before.

So, in the power of this great new Centre of interest, Levi left everything he had in the world to follow Jesus. The evidence of the Master Hand of the Divine Worker is at once convincing, but how beautiful to consider, also, the harmony of purpose that linked Levi the prodigal with the One who had called him to nearness to Himself. "And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them" (Luke v.29). The divine impulse now controls Levi. He "made Him a great feast in his own house"—he feels the kinship of need in so many. The centre of interest has moved away from himself to the One who has called him—thus "a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them." His objective is elevated to be in harmony with that of Christ. He knows, with spiritual insight, the object of His Master's purpose, and the table that he spreads is for Him to preside over—He is host in the house of Levi the taxgatherer!

The Pharisees of that day emphasize their rules of reception—as they do today—but it is not the righteous who are called, but sinners. It is the table of repentance. The sin-sick are welcome where the Great Physician is Head of the "Great feast." Have we a table in our own house where Christ can preside? This closer intimacy with Himself would enable us to overcome the world—for that which makes a feast for Him is knowledge of Himself. At that table He presides.

So, under the hand of the Divine Worker, Levi moved from the cold atmosphere of hostility into the warmth of overflowing **GRACE**. Brought into this communion, he followed in the affection of real worship. How blessed it is when contrasted with the ostracism of legality! In the

ways of God the thought of "following" is always associated with advancement in spiritual intelligence. Levi FOLLOVED in the activity of his new and absorbing interest, and so became aware of Christ in the character of the Bridegroom.

There were those who raised questions of procedure—as they do today! The fasting of disciples of Pharisees and of John the Baptist were powerful precedents. Why did not His disciples follow this course? The grace of His answer is wonderful, but then, all His replies to questions are in keeping with His perfection as Man. The simplicity of His response, as well as its truth silenced all critics: "Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?" The thought of the Bridegroom strikes the note of JOY. There are those who are identified with Him in this joy. They are the true "Sons of the Bridechamber." There is no place for fasting while He is with them, for, in the character of the Bridegroom, He represents the JOY OF GOD FLOWING FROM THE FULNESS OF DIVINE GRACE!

So Levi joins the "sons of the bridechamber" as they enter upon a blissful day. They are with the Bridegroom, and He is on the way to His marriage. They are identified with Him in His joy. The day approaches when "the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them." The Divine Worker must lay a sure foundation for the outflow of God's grace to men. Calvary is the scene of that greatest of all His labours. "Then shall they fast in those days" (verse 35). John refers to this "fasting" when he records the words of the One he loved: "And ye shall be sorrowful—but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John xvi.20). So did Jesus link, with the sorrow of that fasting, the undiminishing joy of the Bridegroom and the Bride.

Levi is no longer surrounded by evidence of his former calling. He is brought into that communion of spiritual joy known only to those whose joy is to contemplate the joy of Christ. He sees enduring wealth in the abounding GRACE of heaven itself as shown in the Person of Jesus. He is so

aware of this that he acts in accord with the reality of it. His great feast and his great company answer to the magnitude of this grace and so minister to the joy of the Bridegroom who gathers His friends into a community of divine rejoicing.

To be near to Christ, as associated with *His* interests in fellowship with Him as to His joy of accomplishment, is more to Him than any service we may render. He has ministering spirits whom He sends forth in service, but though he may regard in wonder and ever growing knowledge, no angel knows that communion of grace which the once sinful creature knows. This well-spring of joy overflows the cup of the Sons of the Bridechamber.

The bride is not mentioned in the presentation of this symbol. The thought of the church is not revealed here. It is the **FEAST OF GRACE ABOUNDING** — of Christ presented by the bounty of God in the character of the Bridegroom presiding to dispense unfailing joy, in association with Himself, among those who have been gathered out to feast with Him. Who, in the contemplation of this table, spread in inexhaustible grace, could feel no sorrow at the thought of the Bridegroom being taken away!

Is it not for us, in this day, the day of our responsibility, to be aware of the activities that characterize the true “sons of the bridechamber”? To apprehend the significance of the bridechamber as the scene of **PREPARATION FOR THE JOYS OF CHRIST**, is to savour the good of the “new wine” of grace, and to know that the “old wine” of formality and failure has lost its power over us.

EDWARD T. WOOD

## **PHILADELPHIA, or THE OPEN DOOR. (II)**

In the first article we looked at Philadelphia as consisting of those who hold fast, in a day of unbelief, the confession of His Name, and the authority of His word as establishing His own personal glory.

Now in this sentence “thou hast kept My word,” we have something more. To acknowledge His authority is truly of

the greatest importance: but to obey His word in detail is positive proof that our allegiance is genuine.

Now there is but one place where His word is to be found, and that is in the scriptures. The words of His own mouth, and His instructions made known to the church by the apostles of His own choice, must have irresistible claim on our obedience if we desire to receive this approval: "Thou hast kept My word."

The modern notion that we can pick and choose among these commands according to our own idea of what is fitting, is incompatible with the spirit of obedience. "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" And again, Paul says, "If any man seem to be spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (I Corinthians xiv.37).

Likewise the belief that leaders of the church are at liberty to add commands of their own when they think necessary is equally contrary to the Lord's scathing evaluation of "the traditions of men" in Matthew xv.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that only questions of church order are involved, however. For to-day we find not only worldly philosophers, but church leaders declaring that there is no unchangeable standard of morality, but that whatever is commonly done in each age must be right. Thus the question for each believer, and especially for the young believer, is, "Shall I obey the unchanging word of God, or go with the current of the age?" At the same time let us be vigilant in *teaching* what the word of God declares, whether of chastity, of faithfulness to the marriage bond, or of any other subject where man presumes to sweep away whatever is based upon the Bible.

In trying to keep His word we may have to reject a good deal which we see around us which is contrary to that word, but it is equally important to ask ourselves whether we are giving prominence to the things which the Lord Jesus (and likewise His apostles) put in the forefront of His activity.

For example, if His primary command (see John xv.12) to love one another is obscured by our contending for the truth,

are we keeping His word? Or if His concern for the souls of men does not produce concern in us, have we any right to expect this word of approval?

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” wrote Paul to the Colossians, and the more intimate our knowledge of it, the more conscious shall we be of what is pleasing to Him, and the less likely to lapse into formality.

If we test everything by the standard of His word we may well encounter disapproval from Christians who do not realize how far Christendom has moved away from obedience to it, and still more from modernists who, as we saw in last month’s article, consider the Lord as fallible.

The original Philadelphians evidently encountered opposition from those whom the Lord calls “the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie.” These were no doubt Jews who opposed the testimony to the Name of Jesus, and of them the Lord speaks in a remarkable way: “Behold, I will make them to come and do homage before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” No disapproval or derision then need disturb us, from whatever source it comes, if we ponder such marks of the Lord’s own approval, and if we really honour His Name and keep His word.

“Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” “The word of My patience” reminds us of His own steadfastness in the face of opposition and misunderstanding; but probably refers more directly to His present patience, carrying on His work of grace in this world, and awaiting the Father’s time to come and assert His rights.

Here then is further encouragement. And let us note carefully that to be kept *from* the hour of trial — the coming great tribulation — is quite different from being brought through it (see Revelation vii.). It is the promise of the Rapture — of the church being taken to heaven to meet our Lord *before* His judgments are poured out.

If it be objected, why then is this only promised to Philadelphia (i.e. not to Thyatira, Sardis or Laodicea, to whom the



Lord speaks differently of His coming), the answer surely is that all will receive the blessing, but only Philadelphia will enjoy the promise during their time of trial and conflict.

We have noticed earlier that the Lord Jesus finds nothing to condemn in Philadelphia; but when He says, "I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it," His words surely imply a danger of our being discouraged. We may feel shut out by our very obedience from much Christian work (yes, and fruitful work too), which yet goes along with things that dishonour His Name. But if we feel that many doors are shut to us, the Lord speaks of *an open door*. And He is the One who has the key of David, that is, who already possesses all the authority and power of His coming kingdom — power too on earth, where His own are engaged in conflict.

Now if He has opened a door, and holds it open, defying anyone to shut it, He surely wants us *to go through it*. "I know thy works," He says, but are there enough of them? Are you doing all you could, in My strength, to make known My Name, bringing its grace to the attention of sinners, and contending for its authority and truth and holiness in the ears of the professing church? Others may wait for man's "ordination" or "induction," but the Lord holds the door open for His obedient ones. We remember how when the church shut her doors against John Wesley, the Lord opened doors everywhere for the poor to have the gospel preached to them.

We may be weak, but He has taken account of that: "Thou hast a little strength." Do not let us imitate the man who had but one talent, and so buried it. There is still a vast field of Christian activity, scriptural activity, in which we may engage, each one according to his measure of faith (Romans xii.3). Neither need we listen to some who are ever forbidding entry here or entry there, as though with the church in ruins we could expect to find anything but ruin on every hand. Only from what compromises the honour of Christ, or compels disobedience to His word, need the Lord's servant draw back.

Moreover obedience to the word by no means implies

refusing whatever is not therein mentioned, for example Sunday Schools. Above all, let us refrain from criticizing others in their service.

**BEHOLD, I COME QUICKLY: HOLD THAT FAST WHICH THOU HAST, THAT NO MAN TAKE THY CROWN**

“Behold I come quickly”: in how many quarters of the church to-day are people taught that this is a first-century delusion? But if instead, it is meant to be a continual incitement to expectation of His coming, then we must hold fast the hope, and not allow anyone to rob us of it. For His evaluation of our service takes place at His coming, and the promises which show His approval of Philadelphia are breath-taking.

Let us examine them, for as in all seven epistles, they are very relevant to the conflict of that church which He addresses. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out.”

This is an instance of the Lord’s teaching that many that are first shall be last, and the last first. The world-church has its dignitaries, its titles of honour, its positions of eminence, which are, one and all, contrary to the Lord’s word (Matthew xxiii.7-10). But those who, not in temples made with hands, worship in spirit and in truth; and those who give eminence to no Name but His, that they may keep His word, these He will give a place of the utmost prominence in the temple of God. It is not for anyone to ask whether he can possibly be worthy of such a reward — of course worthiness is out of the question. But learning from this what the Master thinks of faithfulness to His Name and word, let us diligently endeavour to do what pleases Him.

But there is more: “And I will write upon him the Name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and My new Name.”

How are we to understand these wonderful marks of favour? Shall we say that, on those whom He will make

pillars in the temple of His glory, He will write for all to read, those things which they have striven to uphold? He speaks in each case as one who had become *Man*, saying "My God;" so reminding us that the confession of Himself as the true but spotless Man, the sole Revealer of God to men, had been both the banner of their conflict and the strength of their souls.

Then He will write the name of New Jerusalem — the emblem of the heavenly hope of the church, which they had set their hearts upon, and which had caused them to regard earthly honour and riches as of little value.

And finally "My new Name." On earth He bore a personal name which He bears still, but when His work on the cross was accomplished, He was raised up from the dead and then to the Father's throne, receiving from the Father "a Name which is above every name" — the name in which His triumph will be declared to the whole creation, the name to which every knee shall bow.

The glory of that new Name is at present known only to faith, and its confession in times of special unbelief like the present is, as we have seen, one of the marks of a Philadelphian. Thus, the writing of His own new Name on such will be His most gracious, public acknowledgment of His confessors.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### XIII. Chapters xiv.15-xv.27

*(The Lord continues to prepare the Disciples for His Departure)*

In this middle portion of the Lord's private intercourse with His disciples prior to His departure to the Father, He makes known to them the immense truth of the coming presence and in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. He also indicates that while the world's attitude to them would be similar to

that towards Himself, nevertheless they were not to fail and give up, but to bear fruit to the Father's glory.

As we ponder the verses now before us, it will be well to realise afresh the Lord's deep love to us His own; and to ask ourselves how far in fact the fruit of the Spirit is seen in our daily lives.

(1) *The Lord's Promise of Another Comforter* (xiv 15-31)

The commencing verse reads in the Authorised Version, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." An alternative wording is, "If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments," and this brings home to us that we cannot be truly *loving* the Lord if we are not *living* in obedience to Him. So we read in verse 21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me," and I John v.3, "For this is the love of God (our love to Him), that we keep His commandments." Love and obedience must go together. It is good to sing hymns expressing our love to Christ; let us not forget the obedient daily walk which provides an authentic note to our worship.

As the disciples listened to these words of their Lord, did they say to themselves, "We do love Him, and of course we must obey Him, but if He is leaving us, all is lost." His next words are reassuring. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth . . . I will not leave you comfortless (or, orphans)."

Here is the great provision made by divine love for the life, blessing, and service of Christians all through this present dispensation of grace, during which the Lord is absent on high; that is, the presence and in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit of God, the third Person of the Godhead.

The world, whose god and prince is Satan, cannot see or know or receive the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist saw the Spirit as a dove at Jordan (John i.32). It seems that it was the Spirit Whom the disciples saw as cloven tongues like as of fire when He descended at Pentecost (Acts ii.3). The world can neither see nor know him. "But," says the Lord to His

own, verse 17, "ye know Him; for He dwelleth (abideth) with you, and shall be in you." While the Lord was here with His own, the Spirit was present with them; from Pentecost the Spirit would be in them. So we read in I Corinthians vi.19, "Know ye (Christians) not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit Which is in you, which ye have of God?"

Verse 18, the Lord declares "I will come (or, I am coming) to you." See also verse 3, "I will come again," and verse 28, "and come again unto you." These words may be taken to cover the Lord's appearances to the disciples after His resurrection (verse 28), and His spiritual presence with His own in this world (verse 18), and also His coming for all His own at the end of this day of grace (verse 3) (I Thessalonians iv.16-17).

In verses 19-24 the Lord indicates the rich blessing which would be the portion of His disciples when He Himself had returned to the Father. The world could see Jesus no more, but His own would enjoy spiritual sight, and life, and union with Him, and the continuing sense of being loved by Him and the Father.

"The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me;" compare Hebrews ii.9, "We see Jesus." "Because I live, ye shall live also;" so Paul declares, "To me to live is Christ" (Philippians i.21). Then also the disciples would know mutual indwelling (verse 20), very different from being left orphans. There is to be mutual love also, and manifestation, and when Judas (not Iscariot, who had already gone out to betray the Lord, chapter xiii.30) asked how the Lord could manifest Himself to them but not to the world (which would see Him no more), the Lord speaks of a spiritual abiding in love by Himself and the Father with the disciple who loves and obeys. The Lord adds, "He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings (words)," and His words (which they heard) are in truth those of the Father.

For the further comfort of His disciples at that solemn time, the Lord in His goodness declares (verse 26) that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to be sent to them by the Father in Christ's Name, would be their Teacher (in place of Jesus),

and would bring all the Lord's teaching to their remembrance. Cannot we today whose memories may be weakening, have faith that the Spirit can help *this* infirmity amongst others (Romans viii.26), and enable us to recollect the appropriate scriptures for blessing just when needed?

The Lord then leaves to them His peace (verse 27), and exhorts them to control their feelings at such a time; "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Also, they were not to think solely of themselves, but were to have thought for Him — He had told them He was going to the Father, and they were to rejoice in the joy this would mean for Him. "If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father: for My Father is greater than I."

In chapter xiii., the Lord had told the disciples that it was one who had companied with Him who would turn against Him, and said, "Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He." So here is the same precious consideration — "Now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" (verse 29).

He would say little more, for Satan's hour was very near; not that the enemy had any claim or power whatever over our perfect divine Saviour. He would voluntarily surrender Himself, cost what it would, and so show to the world His love to the Father Who had thus decreed.

## (2) *Fruit-bearing* (xv.1-16)

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the Husbandman." When the nations of the earth had turned their backs upon God, and forgot Him, and were going their own ways, God formed the nation of Israel to be His people, to love Him, and to keep His laws and do His will, to be a vine bearing fruit to Him. Israel failed, Isaiah v. Christ came as God's true and perfect Servant, and glorified God in the whole of His life here—and above all in His death—the true Vine indeed.

The disciples who professed to follow Christ on earth are the branches in this Vine; the true are fruitful though failing

—like Peter; the false bear no fruit and must be removed—like Judas Iscariot.

The Lord's desire is that the disciples should abide in Him, and have the Lord abiding in them and His words also, and should accept also the Father's purging (cleansing), so that there should be fruit, more fruit, (verse 2), and much fruit, (verse 8), to the Father's glory.

The Lord says, verse 16, "I have chosen you, and ordained (or, set) you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain," and this when He was about to leave them. Clearly He was expecting the disciples to be bearing fruit down here when He was glorified in heaven.

In these verses the Lord also desires that we should continue in His love, keep His commandments, be full of divine joy, and love one another; and He promises that, if obedient, our prayers will be answered. He gives those who are obedient the place of being His friends.

In the epistles we are shown that the Christian's fruit includes winning souls by the gospel (Romans i.15); making a contribution for poor Christians (Romans xv. 28); love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians v.22-23); every good work (Colossians i.10); and the sacrifices of praise (Hebrews xiii.15).

### (3) *Service under Difficulties* (xv.17-27)

For the third time as He was leaving them in a world of hate, the Lord commands His own to love one another (verse 17). They would need one another's love the more as they experienced in the Lord's absence the enmity of the world. The men of this world had in their blindness hated without a cause and persecuted the blessed Son of God, and it would be the same for His followers just because they were such. The disciples were to be prepared for this, and were nevertheless to witness for the Lord, having been with Him from the beginning of His public ministry.

They would not be alone, for the Comforter to be sent them from the Father by the Lord, the Spirit of Truth, would also testify of Christ. May we be delivered from the spirit

*(concluded at foot of inside front cover)*

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# Words of Help

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# WORDS OF HELP

**A Monthly Magazine for Believers**

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## **"IF CHILDREN, THEN HEIRS"**

(Note on Romans viii. 17)

The expression shows the riches of the grace into which believers are brought. Previously, it is declared that we are the children of God, as well as His sons. We have the inward conscious knowledge that we are even now the children of God, because the Holy Spirit bears witness of it to our spirit. And the fact that we are now His children demonstrates what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us (I John iii. 1).

But it is shown that a further distinction is conferred upon those who were by "nature the children of wrath even as others." We are "if children, heirs also: heirs of God, and Christ's joint-heirs" (New Tr.). An heir possesses a right and title to claim the inheritance. And such is the dignity imparted to those who naturally were destitute of all rights to what is good and blessed. We are heirs now, and the future inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is reserved in heaven for us (I Peter i. 4.).

W. J. HOCKING

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*(continued from inside back cover)*

they said, sympathisingly, "The people is hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness."

In these shining examples of devoted service during a day of extreme selfishness and disorder, is there not a voice to us who await the coming of Him Who says, "I am the Root and Offspring of David, the bright and Morning Star" (Revelation xxii.16, New Tr.)? Let us show our devotion while we may, for "the time is short." The next chapter (2 Samuel xviii.) tells how the usurper was destroyed and the rightful king of Israel enthroned, while all the people who had been divided bowed to David as the heart of one man. The opportunity for the special devotion shown to David by the "two or three" at Mahanaim had then passed

H.C.B.

*(Reprinted)*

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

*"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"* (John v.17)

Luke vi. The pen of the beloved physician writes on, as Luke continues his record for the comfort and establishment of his friend, but the Divine Scribe guides his hand. It is not by accident, nor by human design, that events follow in a sequence that presents the closure of Jewish relations and the onward movement of expanding grace to all men.

It is "the second sabbath after the first." The first sabbath was the sabbath of the Passover. The "second first sabbath" was the first of seven sabbaths which were to be counted until the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus xxiii.). Here was no mere religious ritual designed to placate a deity. It was a deeply significant portent — a proclamation — divine in origin and profound in consequence. The "second first" sabbath saw the first fruits of harvest. It foretold the abundant harvest of God's grace, overflowing from the resurrection of His Son from among the dead. "Ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering to the Lord" (Leviticus xxiii. 10, 11, 12.).

The barley harvest was ripe. The sheaf of firstfruits was soon to be waved before Jehovah. The unblemished lamb would be offered, but, in this "second first" sabbath, "He went through the cornfields; and His disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands" (Luke vi. 1). The "sons of the bridechamber" were entering into the abundant liberty of the grace which was soon to flow to all as the outcome of the resurrection of the Lord of the Sabbath. Here is GRACE expanding far beyond the barriers of legalism which must forbid partaking of the harvest before the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits.

The displeasure of the Pharisees answered to the symbols of the old bottles into which no man would put new wine

(Luke v. 37), and the "old garment" ordinances, designed to cover man in the flesh, which could never bear the introduction of new cloth. These were the homely illustrations graciously given by Jesus to His critics in the hearing of His disciples. Yet it was not the critics, but the disciples who, on this significant sabbath, partook of that harvest firstfruits — the symbol that would so soon ripen into resurrection reality.

As He beheld them, rubbing the husks from the grain as they walked, Jesus alone would have been conscious of the deeper import of their act. This sabbath, prefiguring His resurrection, spoke of a Sabbath of Rest which God would secure for Himself — an holy Rest of deep refreshment that He would, in grace, share with men. They, in His bounty of favour, would enter into the secure serenity of it, and would pass the harvest grains into grateful hands with worship in their hearts. But resurrection could only follow the giving of Himself in death. O precious grain that, dying, would fall into the ground to bring forth much fruit — illimitable love that would not abide alone!

There is so much to admire and adore — and, indeed, humbly to follow — in the way by which the Divine Worker presented the character of the Father who had sent Him. The leaders of the legal system — the Pharisees — are opposed to the purposes of God in grace. Despite centuries of failure to establish a righteousness reaching to the divine standard, they yet maintained the merits of men to scale those heights of holiness which alone could reach the summit of acceptance with God. They now assume authority over the followers of Jesus. It was "not lawful" to pluck the ears of corn on the sabbath days (v. 2). Jesus answers for His own — as He still does — giving us the words, when words are needed. How easy for Him, then, to have recalled their failing past and judged their pretence of righteousness. Yet, as one who, Himself, is not accepted, He directs their thought to David in his exile — the anointed king where a usurper is enthroned. If they would, they could have seen — as David saw — the holy bread, that type of Israel in favour with God

through grace, so available, so "common" to all who had a need that only grace could fill (1 Samuel xxi. 5).

Surely Theophilus, as he read, must have found joy in the Spirit's presentation of the cornfields — the Sabbath of Harvest firstfruits — the Shewbread, all of which, as a setting of precious stones, showed Christ as the Source of their beauty — the Centre of God's purposes in grace — "the Son of Man . . . Lord also of the Sabbath" (Luke vi. 5).

"And it came to pass also on another sabbath" (Luke vi. 6). Time could not efface the sinful intrusion of man upon the Rest of God. The divine sabbath was broken and the divine Person worked again. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"—there is still no rest for God — He labours on until, His work of grace complete, He may, in righteousness bring repentant man into the eternal good of it.

On this sabbath the Divine Worker continues in His labours of healing grace. The synagogue was the family gathering place of the subject Jews of the neighbourhood. Here, many sought kindred sympathy in a friendship bonded by oppression as well as the pathetic presentation of a nationality in remnants. Jesus "entered into the synagogue and taught."

It is impossible, adequately, to appreciate the grace that brought Him there. In submission to custom He probably waited His turn to be handed the Scroll of the sacred Words He had Himself inspired. He taught in presence of a fiercely critical leadership, watching with that smouldering distrust that could burst into a flame of uncontrolled antagonism. Like an insignia of the condition and character of Israel was the man there "whose right hand was withered." It was not possible for *him* to partake of the ears of corn — rubbing them in *his* hands! It was a synagogue of sorrow. Who knows what hope began to rise in the heart of the man deformed!

In face of that barrier of hostility to sabbath healing, what courage was called for that he should "rise up and stand forth in the midst"! He knew that the scribes and Pharisees would leave him helpless rather than surrender their sabbath symbol — yet the true significance of the sabbath was God's covenant

token of GRACE. Jesus acts in accord with this grace — the need for healing has overflowed the legality of the Jewish sabbath! The alternatives are of dreadful significance — “to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it.” He read death in their thoughts, but, as the man stretched forth his hand, the death within it was dispelled by life.

Their hatred of Him possesses them to madness — the Satanic energy is murderous activity. “They communed one with another what they might do to Jesus. And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (vi. 11-12). While they planned what they might do TO Him, He prayed in regard to what He should do FOR them.

That night of prayer — that submissive seeking from His Father the direction of His Mind in this climax where GRACE confronted the Law and the Prophets! So much, for mankind, depended upon the outcome. For the Son of Man to pray, portended weighty and eternal matters. When Jesus prayed, it was no formula of words. It could not be less than the emptying of Himself in holy subjection until, within divine dimensions, there flowed that intercommunion of perfect planning which would be unassailable by the prince of the world of evil. The answer to this night of prayer was the founding and order of this new dispensation with all its gracious outreaching to man in a power beyond his telling.

As the scene is pictured for us, and we see the man rising from among the company in that synagogue, “standing forth” in obvious deformity, there is a memory, for each of us, of our own day of response to the invitation of this GRACE, when, despite the unbelief around us, we were enabled to “stand forth in the midst” — to “stretch forth” our hand of dead possibilities, and to find it infused with “newness of life.”

EDWARD T. WOOD.

*(To be continued, D.V.)*

## ELIJAH AND ELISHA

It was a great day for Elisha when he came into personal relations with Elijah. The story, as recorded in 1 Kings xix. 19-21, shows it to have been just an ordinary day upon which the call came that was to transform his life. One supremely vital fact stands out clearly in the inspired narrative, namely, Elisha's whole-hearted response to God's claims upon his life then made by the significant action of the man of God. Never again could life be the same to him, for the call of God had reached him; and "he arose and went after Elijah and ministered unto him." Henceforth he was to be definitely and decidedly associated with the true man of God, and the testimony to God bound up with Elijah.

This is surely typical of what has happened in the history of every true believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. Who that has known it, can forget the day when the claims of God, expressed by the action of the true Man of God, were recognised, and the heart won to Himself? The actual date may be unknown; the real fact, however, is undeniable.

The Man of God, who in wondrous grace had come where we were by giving Himself a ransom for us, drew us by His grace, and our souls truly feasted as, like Elisha, we arose to go after Him in simple faith and obedience.

### GILGAL

Elisha is next found in company with his new master at Gilgal (2 Kings ii.). Here he is shown as about to go forward in newness of life and full purpose of heart through a series of experiences truly typical of a Christian believer's pathway in this world.

Gilgal was a spot fraught with solemn and significant memories to a godly Israelite; and as a type, serves to remind the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ of what must of necessity be the true starting point of a walk of faithful testimony to God, and of realised fellowship with Christ.

Gilgal was the place where in the early days of their national life the redeemed people had rolled away the reproach of Egypt. Egypt, with its bitter memory of hardship,

idolatry and slavery, was the house of bondage out of which, by the sprinkled blood of the Paschal lamb, and by the might of God's outstretched arm, they had been for ever delivered. At Gilgal, therefore, by the distinctive rite of circumcision — sign and seal of the covenant of grace made to Abraham — the people re-affirmed their separation to God and death to the old life.

It also became the starting-place from whence Joshua led the redeemed people from victory to victory against the entrenched foes in the Holy Land. To the Christian believer, baptism represents what Gilgal stood for in the history of the Israelites. In baptism, the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ confesses deliverance from the tyranny of Satan and the thralldom of sin through the death and resurrection of his Lord and Saviour. For the true believer is, in Christ, delivered from all condemnation, freed from the law of sin and death, and perfected for ever by the one offering — the body of Jesus Christ (Hebrews x.).

Thus being baptised unto Christ's death, the believer owns that he has died with Christ out of the old life; that Christ died *for* him, and he died *in* Him to the world with its hostility to Jesus our Lord; to the flesh with its seductiveness; and to the devil with all the power he has usurped over man through sin. It is a present, personal and permanent deliverance, to the praise and glory of the Lord Jesus, in which that believer rejoices, who reads aright the meaning of Christian baptism. Buried with Christ in baptism unto death he thus confesses the real lordship of Jesus. Christ, who died for our sins according to the scriptures *and was buried*, rose again on the third day as Victor over death and the grave, and we exultantly hail Him as Lord of our life and the God of our salvation. We rise again from the typical grave of our baptism to walk with Him in newness of life; for as surely as we died with Him we also live together with Him. This we confess, as we steadily set our minds on the things that are above, where Christ our Risen Lord now is.

Thus the call of God which comes to us in conversion is but the commencement of our new life; and baptism becomes



the real starting-point of the Christian course here on earth.

As Elisha discovered at Gilgal, so the believer also finds that there are many steps forward to be taken if the companionship of the Master is really desired; and the affections and real purpose of heart will be tested again and again.

"Tarry here, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel," says Elijah; and the believer today finds the love and loyalty of his heart tried from those he loves very dearly. "Have you not gone far enough?" they enquire. "You have professed conversion, and been baptised — why go further?" "No," says Elisha, and "no" emphatically replies the loving, loyal heart of Christ's true disciple. "As the Lord liveth, I will not leave thee." As one has said:

**"The Master is so fair,**

His smile so sweet to banished men,

That they who catch it unaware

Can never rest on earth again."

There is a real purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord when He is the supreme attraction, and valued solely for His own matchless worth.

In our chapter we now find that Elijah and Elisha proceed together to Bethel.

## BETHEL

Bethel was a place of hallowed and interesting associations. Here it was Jacob had seen the ladder reaching from earth to heaven; here also the Voice of God in unconditional grace had reached the wanderer's heart.

But in the days of Elijah, Bethel in spite of its suggestive and typical name — the house of God — had, alas! become a place of transgression and confusion. The very religious surroundings had become abominable because of established idolatry. But to Bethel Elijah and Elisha came, just as in the walk of faith and testimony the believer in Christ comes after baptism to that which bears the outward name of the house of God now on earth.

To the vast Christian profession — commonly called Christendom — every baptised person is by his baptism introduced; and Christendom itself — like Bethel in Elijah's

day — is a city of confusion and transgression. Yet in the midst of it there is to be found the church of the living God, the house of God upon earth. Therein God dwells by His Spirit; and therein every believer should know how he ought to behave himself. The Apostle in his first letter to Timothy specially emphasises the need for this (1 Timothy iii. 15).

Into God's house, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are brought, solely by that one baptism of the Holy Spirit whereby every member of Christ is baptised into one body (1 Corinthians xii. 13); but into the public profession of Christ's Name on earth by their baptism in water in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This modern Bethel — Christendom — which of necessity contains the true House of God on earth, had by transgressions of God's word, and corruptions of God's word, become a place of great spiritual confusion and grave dishonour to Christ's Name (2 Timothy ii., iii.). Hence the Holy Spirit through the apostle in 2 Timothy ii. 19-21 exhorts "every one who names the Name of the Lord to depart from iniquity"; not surely to leave Christendom, for this would be personal apostasy, but to separate oneself from the vessels to dishonour therein, and to "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, *with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart*" (2 Timothy ii. 21,22). The company of God's saints is our society on earth, and all the privileges and responsibilities at once attach themselves to us. This solemn but happy position is a great honour, and this honour have all His saints.

Thus walking in the company of the Master, the believer desires and discovers the blessedness of fellowship with the other members of the body of Christ.

Again, however, the testing voice is heard. "Tarry here: you may surely settle down among the blessed associations of the house of God, and find therein both congenial society and pleasant occupation for heart and life."

"As the Lord liveth I will not leave thee" is Elisha's reply at Bethel, for the way of the testimony to God by Elijah leads on to Jericho, and thither they go in company.

To the same suggestion the loyal and loving heart of the

Christian believer replies in effect, that while Christians are good, yet Christ is all; and learning that the way of faithful testimony is not in settling down in spiritual ease and sloth, but leads onward through the world where Christ alone suffices as an object for the heart.

Forth from the corruptions and confusions of Bethel unto Him, who suffered outside the gate, bearing His reproach goes the truly loyal servant, finding true discipleship in following Christ's steps.

### JERICHO

This city is a very obvious type of the present world. In spite of its pleasant situation and many attractions, it was a city cursed with bad water and barrenness of land (2 Kings ii. 19).

The world of business life is suggested by its fords and busy customs offices; the world of pleasure by its graceful palm trees and generally pleasant situation; the world of conventional and established religion by its school of the prophets; but nothing can disguise the real barrenness of the place, nor the most unsatisfactory state of the water supply. Yet even to Jericho the servant may safely go in close company with his master; as the Christian believer today, sent back into the world to bear witness of truth with the assurance of his Master, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end."

There is testimony still to be rendered to God's longsuffering patience in grace; there is testimony to righteousness to be borne in a world given over to unrighteousness; there are souls to be won for the honour and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ; in short, the word of the Master still presses in binding obligation upon all His disciples, "Occupy till I come."

But voices make themselves audible to the ear of the believer as he passes through the Vanity Fair of this Jericho-world.

"Tarry here," cries the testing voice; but alas! many a true believer has followed in the steps of Demas, who left the company of the apostle, "having loved this present world."

The test which should have been a trial of faith, has, through hearkening to his own heart, become a temptation of the devil.

“Acquire wealth, fame, influence; it may be used by you to uplift the world, bless humanity, further the very cause of Christ.”

It is significant that our Lord bade His disciples *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness”* (Luke xii. 15), and that His apostle writes by the Holy Spirit, *“The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Timothy vi. 10).

To the subtle suggestions of Jericho as a type of the world the only safe and satisfactory reply is, as in Elisha’s case, *“As the Lord liveth, I will not leave thee.”*

*“And they two went on.”*

### JORDAN

They now arrive at Jordan, type of the death of Christ as admitting the believer into the heavenly places. The parted waters tell of the passage made by the mantle of the man of God, and now the secret of a successful and victorious spiritual life is told. *“Ask what I shall do for thee”*—so speaks the master to the servant, disclosing the fact that prayer is the key to unlock the blessing.

Elisha exhibits both intelligence and humility by his request, as he asks for a double portion of his master’s spirit.

It is the portion of a first-born; and in like manner the Christian believer learns that not only is the relationship of children with the Father the result of faith in Christ Jesus, but that the dignity of sonship before God is ours through the One who is the First-born among many brethren. In Him we stand as sons of God, led by the Spirit of God.

The humility of Elisha’s request is seen, too, in his conscious need of a double portion of Elijah’s spirit to enable him to prove a worthy successor in testimony to Jehovah.

One indispensable condition is stated by Elijah, *“If thou see me when I am taken.”* How closely now would Elijah observe his master’s movements! — how carefully guard

against losing sight of him!

The moments speed as the two converse together, and then the whirlwind catches away Elijah, and Elisha sees him no more. To the servant is granted, however, a sight of the chariots and horses of fire, as though to assure his heart of the abiding presence and power of God still with him for all the service and testimony to which he is called.

Elijah the master is taken up, but the mantle of the ascended man falls upon Elisha, who forthwith, in the energy of faith, acts in the name of the Lord God of Elijah.

What rich lessons for the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the ascended Man of God, are to be learned from this part of the narrative! From that first moment when the mantle of his authority was thrown over Elisha, and responded to by him, until the last hour when he gazed upwards on his ascending master, one deep purpose of heart is seen — "I will not leave thee."

Repeated trials of faith; voices of others telling him what was no news to him; nature that would bid him tarry — all only served to throw into greater relief the love and loyalty of a devoted heart that found everything in his master Elijah. We, too, as believers in Christ, know the charm of that Blessed One who called us in grace to His allegiance when we were occupied entirely with other things. In His company we learned something of the meaning of Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho and Jordan as we were called to testify to His death as delivering from condemnation and bondage to Satan and sin; as we were led into the blessed fellowship of His own people, and learned something, too, of the house of God on earth; as we were brought to see that, although in the world, we were yet not of it; as we understood the entrance into the holy land of conflict and victory through His death.

The soul-searching enquiry, too, came to us by the Spirit, not only who was our object, but what was our deep, secret desire. "Ask *what* I shall do for thee."

Then the ever-growing yearning for *His* Spirit, *His* mind, *His* secret of life, coupled with the clear conviction that only by His Spirit could we ever *be* or *do*, led us to realise that

our walk, worship and work depended upon looking off unto Jesus, our ascended Master, from whom all grace to help comes down.

Conversion, confession in baptism, communion of saints, conquest over the powers of evil, all alike depend for reality upon the ascended Lord from whom the Spirit came; and it is our wisdom, in love and loyalty to His Person, to walk with Him simply, sincerely, and humbly, so that the power of Christ may be upon us, and others may note — as in Elisha's case — that the Spirit of his Master doth rest upon him.

W. G. TURNER.

(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly," 1922)

### SHOBI, MACHIR AND BARZILLAI

*"And as soon as David came to Mahanaim, SHOBI the son of Nahash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and MACHIR the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar, and BARZILLAI the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched (corn), and beans, and lentils, and parched (pulse), and honey, and cream, and sheep, and cheese of kine to David, and to the people that were with him, to eat; for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness"*

(2 Samuel xvii. 27-29, New Tr.).

What a choice example of devotion, and what a fillip to active and energetic service towards an outcast Lord, the loyal-hearted believer will find by meditating upon the above passage! Here we read of three unlikely men singled out by the Holy Spirit for honourable mention in the scripture because they brought cheer to the heart of David, the rejected king of Israel.

The record is an encouragement to all of us who have been brought into happy and blessed allegiance to the despised Saviour. None needs to say despairingly, "What can I do in this day of appalling difficulty and division to cheer the heart of Him Who loved me so much? I have no qualifications; I am poor; or I am aged; or I have no ability whatever."

But each one can, if he will, perform some act of loving

loyalty. If he cannot bring wheat, perhaps he can bring beans; if he has no sheep to offer, a cheese will be acceptable. "For if the readiness be there, (a man is) accepted according to what he may have, not according to what he has not" (2 Corinthians viii. 12, New Tr.). There is no doubt that Shobi, Machir and Barzillai, though they were such unlikely persons, were in readiness to serve the king, as soon as an opportunity came.

SHOBI was brother to Hanun, King of Ammon, to whom David at one time sought to show kindness and grace, but who treated David's messengers most shamefully (2 Samuel x.). Shobi, however, was attracted to David, and when the exiled king, fleeing from the usurper, Absalom, was at Mahanaim, he came to him with his gifts, though he was of the house of Ammon. How brightly Shobi's loyalty shines out in the dark interval when the rightful king of Israel was a fugitive! Shobi brought joy to David, and comfort and refreshment to his people.

MACHIR at one time housed Mephibosheth, the lame son of Saul. Machir knew what grace and kindness David had shewed to Mephibosheth, giving him a seat at his own table as one of his own sons (2 Samuel ix.). Machir was still at Lo-debar, a place of "no pasture," and he was presumably a poor man. Yet, like the assemblies of Macedonia at a later date (2 Corinthians viii. 2), out of his deep poverty he abounded unto the riches of free-hearted liberality. Many others, better circumstanced than he, were seeking their own things, but Machir surrendered his substance for the king's use, and this was his "intelligent service" (Romans xii.1, New Tr.).

BARZILLAI, in his eightieth year, was not a whit behind the two others in his devoted loyalty to David, not in mere words but in opportune and self-sacrificing service. The three men acted together in united fellowship to bring to the king a goodly assortment of gifts. These were all presented to David for the use of his followers, who were feeling the effects of their wilderness experience, and needed rest and refreshment. The three self-denying men had "understanding of the times," and judged what was needed in Mahanaim, for

*(continued at foot of inside front cover)*

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# Words of Help

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# WORDS OF HELP

**A Monthly Magazine for Believers**

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## THE MIND OF CHRIST

We have the mind of Christ . . . The possession of the mind has naturally very great bearing upon all our conduct, character and conversation.

First, it gives us the balance of truth and enables us to see light in God's light, and thus to preserve the true proportion in handling the word of God which guards alike from overstatement and misapplication.

Secondly, the mind of Christ operative in us, purifies our preferences and purges out our prejudices in the things of God. As to the former, it gives a single eye. If on account of some personal preference, I plead, "I can't see," then the mind of Christ causes me to understand my dimness of sight by reminding me that if the eye were single the whole body would be full of light, and thus I should be able to see. It was the mind of Christ expressed in speech when He said, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." As to our human prejudices, those things which tend to warp sound spiritual judgment and to magnify trifles into matters of weighty importance in our sight, the mind of Christ has much to say. The streamlet of personal prejudice quickly becomes, if unchecked, the rushing torrent of envy, strife, self-seeking and censorious judgments which threaten to sweep away all the holy barriers of brotherly love, kindly consideration, lowliness and gentleness by which the Christian character is fenced from that of the worldling.

The mind of Christ which we are to allow as the intelligence from whence our activities spring is revealed as a mind of unselfish love and lowly service to God and man.

Finally, the mind of Christ when operating in us, leads to a clear course of simple straightforwardness of conduct. This promotes at the same time a good conscience towards God and before man.

W. G. TURNER.  
(Former Editor of "Words of Help").

## THE MEANING OF OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES

*"The Lord smelled a sweet savour"*

(Genesis viii.21)

It is all very well for present day believers, in the light of the New Testament, to look back and see the spiritual meaning of such words as the above, but the words have lain on the page of scripture for many centuries. What meaning did they have for readers in past ages?

We may well say that for many they had indeed very little meaning at all, or no spiritual meaning. However, we are not concerned with the thoughts of men without faith; what did the words mean for men who believed in God and trusted His promises? What did they mean for Noah himself, for instance?

This, of course, is tied up with the related question, what did men of faith mean by the sacrifices which they offered to God? Once again it is profitless to enquire about the understanding of men who brought offerings *merely* as a ritual, or because other men did, or to demonstrate their own religious fervour.

Now if we go back to the earliest offerings, those of Cain and Abel, we find a principle established which applies throughout the Old Testament times. Cain's offering of the fruit of the ground, probably of the very best that he could obtain, has always seemed to human eyes a most appropriate offering — yet God rejected it. On the other hand, Abel's offering of a slain lamb was accepted.

Now Cain's offering implied that a man, and fallen man indeed, could bring something to enrich his Maker. Moreover what he brought was the fruit of his labour, though the very labour was God's curse. Could a man more completely ignore God's sentence of banishment?

Abel's sacrifice on the contrary implied no *gift* to God. Had he brought a live animal, this might have been like Cain's gift, for Abel was a shepherd. But to bring a dead

animal — as repulsive to natural feeling as Cain's was agreeable — was first and foremost an acknowledgment in symbol that death had come in, because of man's sin. It acknowledged death as man's portion, his destiny. It acknowledged what Cain rejected, namely, God's judgment. It was a confession of the place he found himself in, one of a fallen race, expelled from Paradise, doomed to die. To confess this was the first step to blessing, for he came as one who approached God, not to bestow something on Him — vain thought indeed! — but to receive His mercy and compassion.

Then further, we must remember that there had been the definite prophecy of the Deliverer that should come, the Seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head, whose own heel should be bruised. This implied unmistakably a Saviour who should overcome the enemy, yet should himself suffer in doing so.

To what extent the offering was understood as a *type* of a Saviour who should die, may be a matter for discussion, for one can hardly be dogmatic about it. But what points definitely in that direction is the emphasis on the kind of animal offered. For Abel this was a lamb. In Noah's case the emphasis is on the *clean* beast. Later on, instructions for the Passover made quite clear that an unblemished animal (Exodus xii.5) must be chosen. Hence if we keep clearly in view that the sacrifice brought was not to be looked on as a gift to God, then for a sinful man to bring a perfect animal and to kill it has a very definite symbolic meaning. It implies that a sinless substitute is needed, to die for the sinful offerer.

It may make this point clearer if we consider for a moment the rash and unfortunate suggestion of one otherwise excellent expositor, that the *goat* was specially suitable for a sin-offering, because goats are used in Matthew xxv.33 to represent wicked men! But no, the goat for a sin-offering had to be "without blemish" (Leviticus iv.23) like all other offerings. It did *not* typify the sinner, but the holy Saviour who was to die for him.

Now let us consider the words at the head of this article,

“The Lord smelled a sweet savour.” What was understood by these words?

We can reject at once the infidel teaching that Noah thought of God as smelling his burnt offering. It is needful to speak thus plainly because unbelieving men do speak in these terms. Even on their own “rational” basis, a burnt offering could hardly suggest a *sweet savour*.

No, the offering in itself was nothing, and could be of no account at all to the mighty Creator. We cannot believe that advanced civilization, or a developed philosophy, was needful for man to reach such a conclusion. It must have been clear to Noah. Again, men without faith might have imagined otherwise, just as they foolishly bowed to idols instead of the true God, but we are speaking of believers.

The pleasure to God, then, was not in the offering itself, but in the response which it revealed in the heart of the offerer. For God’s gracious, unvarying purpose is to bring man back from the dominion of sin into communion with Himself, and the first step is for man to acknowledge his own need.

“The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, and in those that hope in His mercy.” And when faith reached as far as to see in the sacrifice offered, some faint picture of the promised Saviour, was not this of still greater delight to Him?

We must never lose sight of the fact, however, that every offering was in itself an acknowledgment of its insufficiency. A bull or a goat could never atone for a man. It was nothing but a token of the reality. Thus all the sacrifices of the Mosaic law were not in any way for God, but wholly for man’s sake, to keep before him the fact of his need as a sinner, and of God’s coming Redeemer.

In point of fact we find that where there was no recognition of this, and men brought offerings merely as a ritual, God rejected them altogether. He said, “I will take no bullock out of thine house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?” (Psalm 1.)

Then in the 40th Psalm we find that these offerings, by whomsoever offered, were to disappear. God had no pleasure in them: they did not meet the need. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required." But the Psalmist is led on by the Spirit to utter prophetically the words of the coming Lamb of God. "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God." As we are shown in Hebrews x., the doing of God's will by the Coming One is in contrast to the failure of the offerings of the law to accomplish that will.

In effect this did already set aside the law as ineffective. But the great work for God — the work of Calvary — that was to replace offerings of every kind, was not yet made known explicitly. We have to turn to later scriptures such as Isaiah liii. to see that revelation. Finally, as we recall again the words we have been considering, "The Lord smelled a sweet savour," let us ask ourselves, Do *our* offerings bring pleasure to Him?

Now that sacrifices of slain beasts have been replaced by the one sacrifice of God's Lamb upon Calvary, offered once for all, and never to be repeated, what is the response of *our* hearts to it? Do we come to God to seek the blotting out of our sins? If so, He would have us remember that the blood shed on the cross cleanseth from *all* sin (I John i.7). We ought to *believe* this, and so have the assurance that we are clean in His sight. "By the which will (of God, which He came to fulfil) we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews x.10).

Do we come to God to rejoice in His salvation, and to thank Him for it? This is excellent, but let us not stop even there. For there is a glory and a perfection in the Sacrifice of Calvary that goes far beyond the salvation of the sinner. Let us ponder the obedient devotion to the will of God expressed prophetically in the 40th Psalm, and fully displayed in Gethsemane: "Nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done."

Let us dwell on the love that endured the agony of the cross, and the divine wrath against sin, the love that revealed the love in the heart of God.

By meditating upon the splendour of this work of our Saviour, we shall be enabled to come to God with ever deepening worship — our hearts stirred by the glory and grace of Him who is God the Father's own delight.

In this way shall we also cause a sweet savour to arise to Him, while our own enjoyment of blessing will become all the greater.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY

(Notes of an address given at Camborne, Cornwall, by Dr. Gordon Taylor of Reading, in January, 1967)

Scriptures read: **Genesis xlix.22-24; Psalm cxxxiii; Acts ii.1-4, 46; Revelation iii.7-13.**

This afternoon we were taken back to the foundation truths of the Church — the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers. Going back in that way is the foundation for going forward, and I wish this evening to look forward, and to give you God's prescription for prosperity, written not on a mere piece of paper, but in the indelible pages of Holy Scripture. In one word, this prescription is **UNITY** — oneness. Not uniformity, not sameness — how boring if we were all exactly alike! We are all so different, different in personality, background and calling; nevertheless we are blended in the unity of the Holy Spirit and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus as our Saviour.

If we want to be prospered in our Christian life, our worship and our service, we must know something of this unity. Unity glorifies God because, as is evident from the Creation story, it has always been His purpose that there should be this unity. God said "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Thus we see the Godhead united, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. When God introduced Eve to Adam, his response was, "This is now

bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," an utterance which has come down to our own day: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

Unity does glorify God, and one of the things that has been most grievous in spoiling our worship and our service for Him has been the lack of unity. If we glorify God by fulfilling His purpose, He will honour this and send down His showers of blessing upon us. Every Christian is, the Bible says, accepted in the Beloved. Jesus is the beloved of God. The heavens were opened upon Him when he was here on earth, and the voice from heaven declared, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." This is made good to us by the Holy Spirit. So we have this amazing thing, the unity of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, engaged in manifesting to us the great things our Saviour has done for us. Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Let me treasure this, enter into it and enjoy it — that the great Creator has become my Saviour, and I am inseparably linked with Him.

It is a unity of life. The most precious possession we have is life, as our most terrible enemy is death. The Christian, being united to Christ, has the unity of eternal life — "God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." We should enjoy the unity of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. I saw once a clever device whereby a man who had only part of an arm was able, by some mechanism directed by muscles he did have, to so control an artificial arm as to be able to pick up various objects. But that artificial arm was not livingly linked with him. A person with an artificial limb takes it off at bed-time. It is not really part of *himself*. I hope there is no one here like that — outwardly associated with the church, but without the living link. It can happen. It is possible for a person to like the company of God's people, to be in with them,



yet not to be really controlled by the Lord Jesus as Head, as a member of His body. If there is one here to-night like that, will you not come yourself and "taste that the Lord is gracious," and ask Him into your heart, so as to become a member of His body, knowing Jesus Christ as your Saviour, God as your Father, and other Christians as your brothers and sisters in the Lord.

There is not only the unity of life, but the unity of the one body — the body of Christ. We need to get back to this truth; for this is the basis of our fellowship. We are members of one body, the body of Christ: every Christian should therefore be loved because every believer is a member, and every believer sound in walk and doctrine should be received as a member of the body of Christ. This is the only unity which God will recognise. Paul in Ephesians iv. writes, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." This is what we must get back to, and learn from the way brethren acted in the earlier years, when first God spoke to them about the unity we should share in Christ, that there is one body only, and every believer a member of that body, to be beloved and respected.

My second point is that God wants us to be living in this unity: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." You will remember the words in Acts, that they "were all with one accord, in one place," and you know the sequel. The Holy Spirit came and filled them, so that they all spake . . . "as the Spirit gave them utterance." The Holy Spirit led them. They were living in unity. What great power there was in their worship and their service! Do we know anything of this today? I believe we do. It is very lovely to be at the Lord's table and to realise the presence of the Son of God, unseen, yet with us, and to worship Him together in unity. But we do not know as much about it as we should do, or there would be more power in our worship and our service.

"With one accord": in Psalm cxxxiii. we are told how good it is for brethren thus to dwell together in unity. We

are told this is like that precious ointment which was compounded for the consecration of the High Priest in Israel, and was used for this purpose alone. It typifies the preciousness of Christ in all its fragrance. It is not the unity of a political party, nor the unity of those who have a common hobby; it is a spiritual unity, which alone can glorify Christ, our Saviour, Who loved us enough to come from heaven and give Himself for us upon the cross. Those well-known verses in Philippians ii. speaking of "the mind which is in Christ Jesus" are prefaced by the exhortation to be "of one accord, of one mind."

One of the troubles which beset us in Christian service is that we are often told what we ought to do, but seldom how to do it. That, I think, is a fair criticism, for we all want to do what pleases God. Yet when we look at our lives, we see how far short we come. As the apostle said, "I want to do good, but I do the wrong thing." How then can we do the good? We shall if Christ is present in our lives. It is better if He is prominent there, and best if He has the pre-eminence. So the first thing is to put Jesus first, own His Lordship. When we have decisions to make, let our first thought be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" To obey, the Bible tells us, is better than sacrifice. At the marriage in Cana of Galilee, the word of Mary to the servants was, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." So, to be really united with your brothers and sisters in Christ, in His worship and service, put Christ first, and make Him Lord of all.

"Consider Him," we read in Hebrews. That means, when we wake up in the morning, let our thoughts go to Him. Satan will endeavour to fill our minds with other things. We all know that. The world is all round us, the pressures of life are great, but "consider Him" if you want to be living in that unity with Christ.

So the first point in "How to do this" is, make Christ pre-eminent. The second thing I would say is "Dwell deep." What does that mean? A passenger on a ship on the Mississippi river said to the pilot, "I suppose you know

where all the rocks and shoals are!" "No," he replied, "but I know where the deep water is." That is the trouble with many of us; we know all about the rocks and shoals. But the Bible says, (Philippians iv.) "Whatsoever things are lovely . . . pure . . . of good report . . . think on these things." If you would be prospered in your assembly, do not get occupied with Christian gossip, unfriendliness and things of no consequence. Put the Lord first: love and worship your Saviour: know where the deep water is: dwell deep — in His love.

Then if you would live in unity with your Christian brothers and sisters, learn to esteem others. Nothing mars unity more than a component behaving as a unit. We are all only components, just members of the body. The Lord has given to each of us, and to each and all our brothers and sisters also, something to do for Him. It therefore serves no useful purpose to look around on our brothers and bemoan the fact that they do not seem very united. Maybe there is something I ought to be doing about it.

Finally, unity in service: Paul says about Ephesus that there was a great opportunity: "A great door and effectual is opened unto me" (I Corinthians xvi.9). In the letter to Philadelphia (Revelation iii.) the Lord says, "I have set before thee an open door, *and no man can shut it.*" Maybe the Lord will come for His church this year. Who knows? We long to see Him, and to be free from sin and self. But until He come, we may take this word to ourselves. It is the word of Christ Himself from the glory. Take it, believe it, and no one will hold you back in your unity of service.

Joseph was a type of the Lord Jesus, but he was also a man in this world, a man of faith. If you read his story through, you will find he never looked at second causes, but always put God first. He did not blame others when things went wrong: he believed it was God's hand. The Bible says his arms were made strong — the arms that held the bow — by the strength of the mighty God of Jacob. As we serve the Lord, may this be our experience too. It will

be if we are truly consecrated to Him.

There is a verse in Isaiah (chapter lviii.11) which we can put alongside the verse in Revelation iii.8, "I have set before thee an open door." It follows verse 10, which speaks of the hungry and afflicted, and our duty to them — and they are many. Tragedies occur around us daily; we hear of them continually. But caring for them, ministering the Bread of Life to the hungry, the grace of Christ to the afflicted, we are assured in verse 11, "And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." So,

On to broader fields of holy vision,

On to loftier heights of faith and love;

Onwards, upwards, apprehending wholly

All for which He called thee from above.

May we enjoy the unity-of the bond of peace with our Saviour, and He will lead us on—lead on to victory.

GORDON TAYLOR

## THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

*"The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts"*

(Haggai ii.9. New Tr.)

There has been much controversy over this verse of Scripture, caused no doubt by failing to discern that prophecy often looks on to a future period as well as being applicable to that in which the prophecy was written.

The two distinguishing features in the verse referred to above are:—

1. The Glory;

2. The House.

Does the prophet look forward to a greater glory than Jerusalem has seen yet? and does he look forward to another house not yet built in Zion?

Scripture only speaks of one house where God was pleased to place His name. This was the temple at Jerusalem, and He called it "My house." This house was built originally by king Solomon, and when completed, "the cloud (symbol of God's presence) filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord" (I Kings viii.10,11).

This house was destroyed and burned when Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon (2 Kings xxv. 8, 9); and it was again restored in the reign of Darius the king of Persia (Ezra vi.15), in the days of Haggai. Moreover, the temple, re-built by Herod, was standing when the Lord was here, Who speaks of it, however, as His Father's house made into a den of thieves. It is evident therefore that while there were reconstructions of Solomon's original, it is the same temple throughout, and the verse in question must be taken to refer to a future glory but to the same house.

The house that king Solomon built was "exceedingly magnificent," but the house that is yet to be built (on the same foundation) will have a greater glory than Solomon's. It will be a house fit for the Lord of Lords and King of glory when in His millennial kingdom He will reign as "King of Righteousness" and "King of peace."

But after the return from captivity in Babylon, what was the people's attitude towards the re-building of the temple? They attended to the erection of sumptuous houses for themselves, and neglected Jehovah's house. "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." Is it any wonder therefore that the Lord should reprove their neglect? They were dwelling in their own ceiled houses, and yet the Lord's house was lying waste. "Consider your ways," saith Jehovah of hosts. They ate and drank, but were not satisfied. They were clothed, but not warm. They earned wages only to put them into bags with holes.

What was the reason they were in this most unsatisfactory position? They were occupied with their own things, and

utterly neglected the Lord's claims upon them as His people. The Lord showed His displeasure by withholding the dew from heaven, and fruit from the earth, and He sent drought upon the land. All this was brought upon them by their own sinful folly. But when they gave the Lord what was due to Him then the Lord would open the windows of heaven, and pour them out such a blessing that there would not be room enough to receive it.

In the building of Solomon's temple, every stone was first prepared, cut, pointed, and shaped, and then brought to the place designed for it. Not an axe nor a hammer was heard. Even the tiniest stone had its place and purpose in God's house, and was as necessary to its perfection as the largest and most prominent. Loving hands and warm hearts worked willingly in the service of God to raise a worthy temple to His praise and glory: and when the work was completed they could all add their "Hallelujah" at the glorious sight.

In the New Testament we read of God's spiritual house: "In Whom (Jesus Christ Himself) all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians ii.21,22).

The temple here is God's dwelling place, composed of believers builded together by the Holy Spirit. Every stone in this building has been taken out of the world's quarries: and how rough some of us were! We needed to be chipped, squared and polished, and thus made ready for our place.

You may say that this is the work of the Holy Spirit. I admit it. But He uses the servants of the Lord. How grateful we should be to them for their work and labour of love, for their prayers and supplications, for their personal exhortations and teaching, which have all helped to fit the living stones for the spiritual house!

Is it not well for each one to ask, How much have I helped my brother or my sister to be a witness for Christ? How much have I nurtured them, that they be properly fitted for their places in God's building? Being an integral part of this building, everyone of us is necessary to each other.

As in the body, the eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet I have no need of you. Alas, we have too often manifested a spirit of independence and selfishness, and as a result there is not the collective growth in the things of the Lord that there might have been.

Let us pray earnestly that God may give us all more grace to be of one mind, and have one purpose. Let us seek to edify the body of Christ, and to build one another up in our most holy faith. Let us show by acts of kindness that we desire the good and blessing of one another.

When the Lord comes, every stone of His house will be in its right place, and the whole building will be transferred to heavenly glory, to the praise and adoration of the One Who has fitted us for His holy presence. Then we too shall be able to raise our Hallelujahs.

C. H. COCKS

(Reprinted from *"The Bible Monthly"*—August, 1932)

## RECEIVING ONE ANOTHER

There ought to be the strongest, strictest dealing with souls, whether in deed and in truth they believe and confess the divine glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. The smallest compromise as to this allowed would be a reason for standing in doubt of any soul. You have no ground to receive as a Christian him who tampers with the purity, glory, or integrity of the person of Christ. The Church is founded on Christ the Son of God: if this rock be shaken, all is gone. "If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" To touch Christ is to touch the very basis on which the Church of God rests.

But where a soul confesses Christ really and truly, confesses Him in such a way that it commends itself to your conscience as divine, receive him; for God has. He may be Baptist or Paedo-Baptist: never mind, receive him. W.K.

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

Vol. LV

AUGUST 1967

No. 8

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# WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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## ELECT, HOLY, BELOVED

(Note on Colossians iii.12)

The apostle . . . *first* appeals to them as "the elect of God." Who are they? Some specially distinguished persons? Is there an aristocracy among believers? Thank God, we know that *all* those who are His were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians i.4). It is our birth-right that we are the elect of God. We ought not to fear to speak of what God has revealed. There is pride in the doctrine of election, but only the pride of knowing, let us make no mistake, what God has done and what relationship He has given us. The Lord Jesus went through this world as the Elect of God (Isaiah xlii.1), and by grace we can do the same.

*Secondly*, we are a *holy people*. Let us be clear in our minds on this point. How could we be children of God and be unholy? No, His nature forbids it. He is holy, and we are holy, for He has made us so. Would God look down upon an unholy man or woman and say, That is My Child? Whether we live up to His standard of sanctity is another matter; whether we put on the appropriate garments of a holy person is your affair and mine. But the fact of our holiness is inscribed in scripture. Our names are written in God's book as His children, and we are allowed to roam here and there in the world as we will, but He always regards us and speaks of us as holy. We are His holy children.

*Thirdly*, "beloved." We do not always realise the preciousness and value of this word. We are the direct objects of God's special love. We revel in John iii.16, God's love for the world, but when we are gathered together as the assembly of God we are entitled to know that He looks upon us with a "manner of love" of which the world knows nothing. There is the quiet gracious love of God ever brooding over us all as a tender parent might do, caring for us in every particular, individually and collectively.

W. J. HOCKING

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

*"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"* (John v.17)

Luke vi.13. With efficiency never reached by man, the Divine Worker moved toward the clear announcement of His Father's purpose in sending Him. From the numbers that gathered about Him, attracted by impulses of bewildering variety, He made His own selection, reading their private motivations as from an open book. There were many who professed discipleship as a cult to be adopted — there were others who felt the wonder of divine attraction, in view of their own human incapacity. It was these who could draw from Him the only power of enabling — the strength, not their own, that would take them far and wide in His service of announcing the great principles of His kingdom. In these hearts there could be the same song that rose to the lips of their king of long ago, "Draw me, we will run after thee: . . . the upright love thee." With unerring discernment He had chosen them — the seventy ambassadors of the King — and, in preparing his record under spiritual direction, Luke makes clear the characteristics of that kingdom. But, first, he shows a special selection of those "whom also He called apostles" (verse 13).

They were "sent ones": not because they asked to go. There was One alone who could send them, and He alone would give all they needed as heralds of a King whose great love was active in giving — in the gathering of souls. He was, Himself, the "sent One." How lowly, and how dependent as such, whilst ever God! For God had "sent His Son," and we may well stay to see His own perfect Man in unimpeded communion with Himself, with power, indeed, and giving power also to those He chose to bear this testimony. How well He knew these men — yet He sent them — and one of them "a devil" (John vi.70)! They all had an outward place in the kingdom, but the very association with the kingdom was a condition of testing. Failure was all too possible in the human administration of it, and varied, indeed, were these human components He chose. We may

well wonder at the abounding grace that would take up the significant "twelve" of administration though it would include "Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor" (Luke vi.16).

The power of Satan was shown openly in the plain. If we view the camp of the enemy massing against the King, and remember that He had come to His own things only to find them in evil hands, we shall begin to marvel at the grace that brought Him to the plain. The enemy already had his own representative placed among the twelve, and, as they descend from the mount of prayer, the plain presents the Satanic achievement of disease, deformity and despair. They have come from near and far — "A great multitude of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases . . . there went virtue out of Him and healed them all." The outflow of power, from holiness in perfection, was His overwhelming answer to the power display of Satanic evil. O mighty power — so abundant to meet all onslaughts! O grace, so overflowing, that cannot be limited to selection, or bounded by Judea and Jerusalem!

So were their hands stretched out to touch Him, and not one among the vast concourse failed to make this wonder-contact with Him! There was no diminution of the flowing power to heal, and Grace could never ask for giving in return! "There went virtue out of Him" — He always knew when this was so (Mark v.30; Luke viii.46). He did not display or even invite this contact, but never, in the sad history of man, had such "power in purity" been more unreservedly available or more beneficently efficacious! Shall we not spare a further thought for Him in this, His time of giving? When men give, they are left the poorer. This was never so with Him — though poorest of all in earth possessions — but did He not give in a deeper sense than we can know? Did it cost nothing when "power went out of Him and healed them all"?

The healing virtue of the Kingdom of God was displayed — it was, indeed, given to them in Jesus. It had formative power — capable of producing IN MEN that *new kind of*

*man* to accord with the standard set by divine grace.

The crowds are healed. They came in pain, in deformity, with bodies and minds distorted under demon control — they depart in ecstasy. They have tasted the joy of a Kingdom hitherto unknown — it is a foretaste of His kingdom yet to be! “And He, lifting up His eyes upon His disciples, said, Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God” (verse 20). He gathers them to Him as apart from the great company. He finds joy in contemplating them as those who have no part in seeking the false values around them — whether of nationalism, or personal power, or possessions. The condition of blessedness is not general. It is individual. Can we think that the Iscariot ever knew it? It was personal to those who would be like Him. All their source of wealth would be in Himself in a scene where man was exalted and grace was unknown. They could not fail to be “blessed” were they to bear His characteristics. He said it long ago, but is it no longer true? The Divine Worker still works — He would bring about in us this likeness to Himself that we may know the satisfying blessedness of the Kingdom of Heaven. To preach the principles of this holy Kingdom it is essential to reflect them.

So there was, for those who would attach themselves to Him, a poverty which was close to His own, and would reflect, however feebly, the absence of dependence upon wealth as man knew it. “As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians vi.10). They could never be as poor as He — nor have so much to give — He gave Himself! They would know hunger and sorrow in a world that feasted and rejoiced. Hatred and ostracism, for His sake, would bring them very close to Him, for the world hated Him also, and without cause. But, in it all, they would know a sweet undercurrent of rejoicing, flowing true and constant, notwithstanding the surface turbulence of the world of unbelief, for they possessed in Himself all the true riches of His abounding grace, and would be eternally replete with, and for ever comforted by, the outcome of His death for them.

Do we feel distress of spirit in contemplating the sin of mankind and the sorrow flowing from it? A future famine awaits them for they have lost God. Do we find the offerings of this world satisfying, or are they but the husks of things? The day is near when God shall have His own purposes fulfilled. In that day His own will be complete and satisfied.

Surrounded by a distorted system of things ready to perish, His disciples are "poor"—but theirs is the Kingdom of God. Jesus takes them from the depths of things seen, to the very heights of eternal things. Shall we not go with them?

From verse 27, untiringly, Luke continues his portrayal of the ministerial glories of Christ. The Divine Worker has great desire that His own shall be vessels for the outflow of all that accords with the holy character of God. Grace, divine in origin, is to flow, and they are desired to be the channels of it. This is, now, our responsibility — and the extent to which we show grace is never more than the measure of our appreciation of it. How can one consider this great principle of our pathway and be unaware of failure in regard to it! These succeeding verses show God, not as remote but in closest operation, exhibiting, in practice, the unsullied qualities of divine perfection which are a challenge, alike to the works of darkness as to the false religionism of man.

Jesus seeks they shall do even as He did — an honour in itself. In their day, perhaps more than in our own time of dangerous toleration, they would do well and suffer for it — and endure patiently! The circumstances are very human. He comes down to their condition, indeed, in all His grace, and they shall not lose by any sacrifice made for Him.

Luke closes this part of his record of the "sayings" of Jesus (Luke vii.1). He re-tells for his friend the simple parables that Jesus used for His own concluding word. There are no swelling words of rhetoric — no grandiloquent phrases — the vocabulary of heaven restricts itself to the limitations of the poor — the comprehension of the wayfaring man. Yet, what infinite power is present in each simile.

The blind man being led — a familiar sight — the tiny speck in the brother's eye — the tree with its fruit display of character — the men with treasure, good and bad — the house builders, wise and foolish. As we listen to the telling of them — as they listened long ago, and remembered — shall we not allow the searching word to reach deeply within our private mind lest the sincerity and beauty of the Kingdom be dulled by poor reaction?

Are we led by habit and association, or do we know where we are going? Our fathers held the truth, but this is not enough. Do we hold it as a personal exercise — with spiritual vision? There is no blind leadership in the new order instituted by the Lord Jesus. The disciple is not above his Teacher, but he *is* in the path of learning and moves forward under divine instruction toward perfection. We may not be blind, indeed, but there are "motes" and "beams" that hinder vision. How diligent we become in seeking defects in the eye of another — an unprofitable business when the one most in need of assistance is oneself. It is the character of hypocrisy, to use the divine word, and it can be expunged only by that personal spiritual act of subjective examination that clears the sight from a "beam" of self complacency.

Again we are shown the clarity of discernment in the fruit of the tree. It is there for all to see — it proclaims the source; it is good, or evil! There is no tolerant admixture — the heart holds no secret from Christ. There is good treasure, or evil. The heart is under scrutiny, "for of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (verse 45).

EDWARD T. WOOD

## ELEMENTARY LESSONS IN LIVING BY FAITH

(From Notes of an Easter Address)

Read: Luke xxiv.13-35

One thing which was abundantly evident when our Lord rose from the dead was the collapse of the disciples' faith.

Despite His positive and repeated assurance that He would rise again the third day, and the demonstration of His power over death in the raising of others, notably Lazarus, they could not bring themselves to believe that the One they had last seen upon the cross would live and move amongst them again.

There is no doubt that the initial unbelief of the disciples was overruled by God for the strengthening of their subsequent testimony. Men who had themselves experienced difficulty in accepting the fact of the resurrection would certainly be in a position to assist others to belief, and the record of the Acts shows clearly that these men who had been so hesitant to believe at the time were unwavering in their witness afterwards.

The failure of their faith however did not itself hold out very great promise of success for the Christian cause. Was this the best that some three years in the Lord's immediate company could produce? But the Lord Himself bade the disciples wait for "power from on high" before they sallied forth to obey His command to preach the gospel to every creature. Not indeed in their own strength, but only by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, would they be effective in their commission.

Nevertheless the Lord saw fit to give them Himself certain elementary lessons in the exercise of faith, and He chose as pupils for this purpose the two who were on their way to Emmaus in the evening of the resurrection day. Typical of the whole band of disciples, these two were the disconsolate victims of their own unbelief.

It may be recalled that Joseph, who must have been yearning to reveal himself to his brothers the first time he saw them in Egypt, nevertheless kept them in ignorance of his identity until, as the outcome of his own skilful planning, they showed true repentance for the evil they had done years before. This wholesome end achieved, Joseph could make himself known to them. So here, the Lord will not permit His two followers to "see" Him until they have learned cer-



tain lessons of the faith in which they had proved themselves deficient.

The first of these lessons appears to be this:—

**IT IS POSSIBLE FOR CHRIST TO BE NEAR US,  
WITH US IN FACT, WITHOUT OUR SEEING HIM  
WITH THE NATURAL EYE.**

This was really no new thing. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and many another who followed them, had learned to walk with God — **BY FAITH.** Hebrews xi. makes it clear that these worthy men of old (though the remark has particular reference to Moses) “endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” Only three evenings before the Emmaus walk, the Lord Jesus had said to His own in the upper room in Jerusalem, “Ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” Now on the road to Emmaus He lets it be known that He can draw near to His own in their weakness and sorrow without their perceiving His bodily presence, just as God Himself had been with Joseph, and David, and Daniel, and all such who “believed” Him, in their hour of need.

The grace of the Lord is specially evident on this occasion because the disciples were so undeserving. Were they not displaying ignorance, when they should have known what the scriptures had foretold? Were they not stiffnecked in their refusal to accept the testimony of others? Were they not sad, when their hearts should have been jubilant with the knowledge that death itself had been overcome? And were they not selfish, thinking only of redemption for themselves and for their nation — of which they now seemed to despair — instead of being thrilled by the thought of their Master’s triumph and vindication? The Lord’s tender way with the unworthy is magnificently illustrated in this incident.

Dear reader, have you no experience of this grace of the Lord? Jacob never forgot *his* Bethel, the place where God “answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went,” as he says. Cannot most of us look back to occasions when, our faith failing like that of

the two on the Emmaus way, the Lord drew near to us to comfort us in sorrow, to strengthen us when overwrought and anxious, and to save us from the throes of despair over some grievous failure? How fittingly we have found the confession of Paul rising to our own lips, "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant" (1 Timothy i.14).

Secondly :

**WE MAY LEARN FROM THE SCRIPTURES, BY DIVINE TUITION, ALL WE NEED TO KNOW OF CHRIST FOR LIFE IN THIS WORLD.**

In human affairs today, where interview and personal contact are considered so important, there is a limit to what is practicable. To understand the character and wishes of the head of a business, most subordinates have to be content to take what they are told, or possibly what they read, concerning him. Some devote the whole of their working life to an organisation without ever seeing the man at the top. Thus the element of "faith" enters necessarily into much of modern life.

The Lord Jesus was with His disciples for a long time, and He had taught them many things. He had been with them long enough for them to know Him, and, knowing Him, to know the Father (John xiv.9, 10). But He was leaving them, and their memories might fail if unaided. So He promises that the Holy Spirit will come, to bring to their remembrance what He had said, and to lead them into further truth. Continuity of divine instruction is thus provided.

To the two on the Emmaus road (one of whom did not belong to the apostolic band), the Lord made quite clear the source from which they might learn all they needed to know concerning Himself, namely, the Holy Scriptures. With the Lord Himself unfolding and interpreting from all the scriptures the things concerning Himself, how marvellous must have been the discourse! What enlightenment they received! As they confessed to one another a little later, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?" This our Lord did, as we know from Acts i.2, by the Holy Spirit.

And when He ceased to be present physically, the selfsame Spirit would continue to minister the selfsame things to them.

We are well aware the scriptures unfolded on the Emmaus road were the law, the prophets and the psalms, the collection we know as the Old Testament. But the Lord undertook to give more than this (John xvi.12-14). and that promise has been fulfilled in the provision of the New Testament writings, inspired indeed by the same divine Author.

The teaching which moved them so deeply was imparted to Cleopas and his companion while their eyes were still "holden that they should not know Him." Clearly therefore they were to receive the teaching, and did in fact receive it, by faith. Therein truly lay the importance of the lesson — not until they had exercised their faith were they allowed a glimpse of their Teacher to confirm that it was no other than the Lord Himself who had been with them (Luke xxiv.31). Having thus made Himself known to them, He vanished immediately out of their sight, showing that henceforward faith was to be the normal medium of their knowledge of Him.

In this way, too, the pattern was set for those who should follow in the apostles' footsteps down the centuries of the Christian era. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus may appear to be an exception, but undoubtedly he was given his special vision of Christ in glory because of the unique task assigned to him by the Head of the church, and to qualify him to endure the exceptional sufferings which his ministry would entail (Acts ix.16; and cf. Acts xv.25-27).

It is inconceivable that the great Captain of our salvation would leave those dependent upon Him with inadequate means of knowing both Who He is, and what His directions are for their progress heavenwards. But with the written word of God to inform our mind, and the Holy Spirit to guide into all truth, we should not, and we shall not, fail.

Lastly :

**COMMUNION WITH CHRIST IS POSSIBLE IF WE SEEK IT.**

When they arrived in the village whither they went, the

Lord Jesus made as though He would have gone further. This was not because of any reluctance on His part to enter their humble dwelling, for it was in such homes as theirs that He found the only refreshment and joy which human surroundings could provide.

There were occasions when the Lord invited Himself to a house to which He had not first been bidden. Such a case we find in Luke xix.1-10. Zacchaeus was a man whose heart was attracted to the Saviour. Despite the rectitude of his normal behaviour in the past, he was aware of his need of something more, and so he sought to see Jesus, who He was. He would not have ventured to invite Jesus to his dwelling. As we read the story, Zacchaeus displayed a becoming humility which the Lord Jesus rewarded by declaring that He would abide at his house. And in so doing He would bring to him that day the salvation which Zacchaeus's previous uprightness of conduct had failed to procure.

At Emmaus the circumstances were different. Had the two not been prepared to invite Him in, He would have gone His way. So He made as though He would have gone further to test their desire and to prompt their invitation, for He will not be the guest of any who do not want Him.

In the light of this episode it is true to say that we ourselves largely determine the extent of our own communion with the Lord. The Lord's gracious appeal to the self-sufficient church at Laodicea seems to indicate a principle in His ways with those that profess His name. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; *if any man . . . open the door, I will come in to him . . .*" (Revelation iii.20). Spiritual deprivation and poverty are things for which a man has only himself to blame.

Saints of all ages have testified to the reality of communion with the Lord. But there must be the growth, as well as the diligent exercise, of faith on our part. Not until we reach the mansions above will faith give place to sight, and prayer to eternal praise.

E. A. PETTMAN

## STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### XIV. Chapter xvi.1-33

#### *(The Coming of the Paraclete and Christ's Departure and Return)*

The Lord continues speaking of the world's enmity, and warns His disciples of its persecutions. He also tells them of the Holy Spirit's witness to the world.

#### (1) *The World and the Paraclete* (verses 1-11)

The Lord was preparing the disciples for persecution unto death when He was no longer with them, so that they might not be stumbled or offended (verse 1). Some of the Jews, in false zeal for God, not knowing the Father nor the Son, would think it a service to Him to put them to death. How exactly did Saul of Tarsus fulfil this prediction! (verses 2, 3). When persecuted, they should remember these words of warning (verse 4). While with the disciples the Lord had been their Shield and Paraclete, and had kept them from the power of their enemies.

The knowledge that the Lord was going away filled them with sorrow (verses 5, 6). Their own loss was uppermost in each heart. Had they thought less of themselves and more of Him, they would have asked Him concerning His going, and learned its bearing upon His glory and their blessing.

The Lord assured them, however, that His going would be — not so much expedient for Him — but expedient, or profitable for *them*. If He went not away the Comforter would not come to them. He was going to the Father on the ground of accomplished atonement and redemption, and He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them on earth (verse 7).

The Holy Spirit in the disciples would be a witness against the world in its hatred of them (verse 8). His active presence on earth would "afford proof" or "bring demonstration" to the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment (verse 8); "of sin," because He would not have come

into the world if the Lord Jesus had not gone out of it as the rejected Son of God: "of righteousness," because the One rejected on earth is exalted to the right hand of God: and "of judgment," because the prince of this world is judged in the cross of Christ (verses 9-11).

(2) *The Disciples and the Paraclete* (verses 12-15)

Moreover, when come, the Holy Spirit would unfold the "truth" to the disciples (verses 12, 13). At the moment, though the Lord had many things to say to them, they were unable to bear them. The Spirit of truth would impart the truth, and also be their strength to hear, receive, and understand it. He would not speak from Himself, that is, not independently of the Father and the Son, but He would communicate what He should hear, revealing all that wealth of truth which could only be made known after the death, resurrection and ascension of Himself, the Lord Jesus (verse 13).

The Holy Spirit is not a mere influence, nor is He only a power. He is a divine Person Who is now a heavenly link between Christ on high and His saints on earth. Only the Person of the Holy Spirit of God could take the place of the Person of the Son of God.

Again, the Spirit came to glorify the Son. As the Son served not Himself but the Father, so the Spirit serves, not Himself, but the Lord Jesus, unfolding, among other truths, those things given to the Son by the Father (verses 14, 15).

(3) *The Lord's Departure to the Father and His Return* (verses 16-22)

The "little while" refers to the period of the Lord's absence by death from His own. This absence He implies but does not explain. The world would rejoice to be rid of Him, but the disciples would be grieved. By His resurrection, their grief would be turned into joy—a joy to be experienced more fully at His coming again for them and for us (verses 16-20). This the Lord illustrates by the most familiar of all figures of "sorrow issuing in joy" (verses 21, 22).

(4) *The Lord's final Words of Counsel and Comfort* (verses 23-33)

In "that day," that is, in the present day of grace when the Spirit is come, the disciples would no longer resort to the Lord in their need, as they had done while He was with them. They would then have access by the Spirit to the Father and would ask in Christ's name. Loved of the Father Himself, they would have the privilege of asking the Father in the name of Christ. They should receive, that their joy might be full in the consciousness of their new relationship and of their new resource in prayer (verses 23, 24).

What the Lord was saying seemed but as "proverbs" (or "enigmas") to the disciples, but after His resurrection He would speak to them more plainly of the Father. Compare the message He sent to His disciples by Mary Magdalene (John xx.17) associating them with Himself as His brethren, and declaring that His Father and God was their Father and God too (verses 25-28).

The disciples confessed that the Lord Jesus had come "forth from God" (verses 29, 30), but He had said, "I came forth from the Father" (verse 28), as He had taught them throughout His ministry. But they were slow of heart to understand His words.

The Lord then spoke of the bitter hour of trial now come. They would be scattered, but He would not be left alone, the Father being with Him (verses 31, 32).

Finally, He tenderly assured them that in spite of their tribulation in the world, He had overcome the world. Hence they could be of good courage, whatever opposition they encountered. (To be continued, D.V.)

## MANNA

The Manna came not through man's toil. But still it came not to encourage sloth. Active art must grind and sweeten for the use. Vain is it, that Christ with all salvation is at the door: vain is the Bible-store: vain is the pulpit-food, except the eager soul gird up the loins of eager doing. Faith labours all the day to draw out sweetness from the Gospel-page. With skilful care it sifts each word. With anxious appetite it sucks the sweet. *Extracted*

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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SEPTEMBER, 1967

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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Postscript to the article in July issue "The meaning of Old Testament Sacrifices."

"Some readers have queried the remark 'Abel's sacrifice . . . implied no gift to God,' because of the statement in Hebrews xi.4, 'God testifying of his gifts.'

Perhaps the meaning will be made clearer by reading: 'Abel's sacrifice *in itself* — a dead animal — could not be thought of as a suitable gift to enrich God.'

In Hebrews xi. the Spirit of God declares what *He* saw in it — the worship of Abel's heart as he bowed to God's judgment and thankfully looked for the coming Deliverer.

Response from our hearts to God's love is, and always has been, the *only gift* man can give to God."

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

and man see (2). Therefore, on the Lord's day, let there always be (1) within, the renewed mind, and (2) without, non-conformity to the world (Romans xii.1,2), because it is His day.

If we take care that on the Lord's day we begin early, continue uniformly, and end consistently, with the Lord Himself before our hearts, then our conduct, without any conscious effort of our own, will plainly indicate to any who may be observing us "where our treasure is." It is very simple: the best things in life always are.

W. J. HOCKING

(From "The Bible Monthly," February 1932)

## THE FATHER AND THE SON

(Read: Genesis xxii.)

*“And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son”* (Verse 13)

There can be no doubt that this particular offering differs in several respects from other sacrifices of which we read in the Old Testament. The circumstances which led up to it were unique; the sacrifice was so plainly in substitution for that of Isaac himself; the ram itself was not Abraham's offering at all, for he found it there, caught by its horns. Let us consider these points in detail.

Among the men of God to whom the sacrifices which they offered were understood as presaging the coming of Christ, Abraham was probably pre-eminent in his understanding. Our Lord's words, “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad,” certainly imply a real grasp of what God was going to do. It seems likely that in the occurrence we are to consider, Abraham's enlightenment became yet further enhanced.

We find him making burnt offerings on various occasions in his worship and witness to the true God, but on this occasion we meet this unique feature — God Himself instructed him as to what sacrifice he was to make.

Now the testing of Abraham's faith, right up to the moment when he grasped the knife to slay his son, and heard the Angel of the Lord proclaim that he had proved his willingness to surrender even his beloved son to God, this is a most instructive study, but it is not our present subject. Rather let us see what we can learn from the typical aspect of the event, as the inspiring Spirit sets it before us, and especially the sacrifice of the ram.

### THE RAM A SUBSTITUTE

Plainly the ram was a substitute for Isaac. Now it might be argued that this was merely a consequence of the fact that God never intended that Isaac should die. Yet, if that were all, was it not enough for Abraham to have proved his devotion to God's will, without the substitution for

Isaac of an immensely inferior offering? Surely the offering of the ram was entirely irrelevant? Yet we cannot think that its presence just then discovered was accidental, or that Abraham erred in sacrificing it.

Thus if we ponder this part of the sacrifice carefully, we shall see that we can scarcely escape the conclusion that *substitution* was what God intended Abraham to learn from this (not that he grasped it then, but by later thinking it over). Isaac's life was spared, and another life was offered instead. The truth thus was revealed that the coming Deliverer was not merely to suffer in conflict with the Serpent, but He was to die *instead* of man.

### GOD'S PROVISION

Next let us consider the undoubted fact that the ram was not Abraham's offering at all. He had found it there. Yet certainly it was there by God's provision. How clearly then does the Spirit point out to us the full, underlying meaning (in God's mind if not in Abraham's) of Abraham's saying to Isaac, "My son, God will Himself provide a lamb for a burnt offering," and also of the name he chose for the mount, "Jehovah Jireh," the Lord will provide.

Here was an offering unparalleled, one in which God, not the offeror, provided the sacrifice. It leads us straight on in thought to the words of John Baptist, "Behold! the Lamb of God!" In the light of this all future offerings became merely token offerings, acknowledging the need for God's Lamb to come and die, and confessing the hope that He *would* come in due time.

Let us now return to the beginning of the story. We have seen that God Himself indicated what the offering was to be, and though, in the end, it was impossible that Isaac should be slain, yet it is in Isaac that we see what was in God's mind. The terms in which He made His will known to Abraham reveal this. He says, "Take now thy son, thine *only son* Isaac, whom thou lovest . . . and offer him up for a burnt offering."

Thus, if God Himself was to *provide* the sacrifice, and not Abraham, whose son would the promised Saviour be but God's? Thus clearly, whether man's faith was able to discern it or not, did God declare what sacrifice *He* would make for the blessing of His fallen creatures.

Reading the chapter in this light, how full of meaning do its words become! "Thine only-begotten son, whom thou lovest." No lamb or kid from the flock, no slave from his household, but his own son, the one in whom his hopes were centred, the one on whom his delight rested, such did God delineate as Abraham's burnt offering. And in this way did God reveal that no creature, whether lowly or exalted; no angel however pure or holy; no one but the Only-begotten Son of the Father, could be the true sacrifice. We seem to hear already the Father's words: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight."

God always speaks to men in their own language, graciously coming down to us and revealing Himself in human symbols, in order that we may be able to understand Him better. Thus to disobedient Israel He says, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me" (Isaiah i. 2); and again, "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is My fear?" (Malachi i. 6).

When Israel forsook His worship, and went after false gods, He spoke of Himself as a jealous husband: likewise He recalls their earlier faithfulness in the words, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jeremiah ii. 2).

With such examples before us, we may be sure that we are not finding something in scripture which God never put there, when we understand that He is helping us to see, by what we can all understand were the feelings of Abraham, something of the heart of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a clue which scripture itself gives us, to the fuller meaning of the words, "God

so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." His love is measured by His giving — it has no other measure. What it cost the Father to give — to give His only-begotten Son to suffer upon the cross — we cannot know; but it is hinted at in the cost to Abraham as he journeyed towards Mount Moriah.

We need to ponder this, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, remembering always how infinitely far above man God is, yet having our own hearts open to receive what our God would graciously communicate of Himself.

At least three days' journey lay between Abraham and Mount Moriah, so that the trial was a prolonged one. "So they went both of them together," says the scripture, as the servants were left behind, and the words tell us of the communion between the Father and the Son as the time of Calvary's sacrifice drew near, a communion which no creature could share. Only, never again can any one who has learnt from this scripture, believe the philosophers' teaching that God is "impassible", or incapable of suffering. The philosophers' god is not our God, neither could human imagination ever have conceived those things which are the very basis of the Gospel. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.

One last point. In the face of such a scripture, can any Christian believe that the Father-Son relationship only began in time, and was not in the fullest sense eternal?

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### XV. Chapter xvii.1-26

#### *(The Son communing with the Father)*

This portion consists of the utterance to His Father by the Son, Who was in His bosom, the mighty God who became man for us, when He was about to die and to leave His own who were in the world. It was probably spoken in the hearing of the disciples (verse 13). The Lord unburdened His heart about them. Though much

of it refers directly to the apostles, we can also gather from it what concerns ourselves.

The Lord's language is simple, deep, and absolute. We call John xvii. a prayer, but the actual word uttered by Him was "ask" or "request" (verses 15, 20). The use of "I" is noticeable (e.g., verses 4, 9, 14, 16, and emphatically in verses 22, 24). The Lord "prays" as no man could or should: though man, He asks or requests His Father as an equal, because He is God. This claim of what is due to Him is expressed by His will (verse 24). Such language would not befit other lips, but it shows that a divine Person was speaking.

The Lord stood, as it were, upon the threshold of glory, with His sufferings behind Him. He made no mention of the cross nor of His sufferings, though He said His work was finished (verse 4). The Lord did not kneel, as in Gethsemane (Luke xxii.41), but lifted up His eyes to heaven (verse 1). Here He is not speaking as a suppliant. (1) *The Lord's words concerning Himself* (verses 1-5).

The Lord, as the Eternal Son, addresses the Father, but speaks also as the perfect Servant, obedient and dependent. His first thought is the Father's glory. Previously, He had taught His disciples to pray to the Father, and say, "Hallowed be Thy Name" (Matthew vi.9). Now He Himself says, "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." He does not claim His original position as His right, but speaks submissively as one dependent. Though "very God," He asks to be glorified. He desires to re-enter the glory, not only as Son of the Father, but as the One who had glorified God on the earth; this desire was in order that then and there in that glory He might glorify Him. He seeks this glory on the ground that His work on earth is finished (verse 4). This One, loved before the foundation of the world, will be in His own glory as then, but He will have this glory as man.

The Son is given authority over all flesh, but He gives eternal life only to those who are given to Him. He gives them a nature fit for glory, and brings them there; for

eternal life is more than immortality: it is knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom the Father sent (verses 2, 3).

The Lord presents His service on earth, as completed to the Father's glory, saying, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have completed the work which Thou gavest Me that I should do it." On this ground He asks to be glorified along with the Father with the glory He had with Him before the world was (verses 4, 5).

(2) *The Lord's words concerning His disciples then*  
(verses 6-19)

The Lord presents to the Father as the fruit of His ministry the men whom the Father had given Him. They had learned the secret, hidden from the world, that He had come out from the Father (verses 6-8).

The Lord was not making request for the world, but for those whom the Father had given to Him, and in whom He Himself was glorified. Since they would still be in the world when He had left it, His desire is that the Father would keep them that they might be one as the Father and the Son (verses 9-11).

The answer to this desire was seen in the company of the disciples when the Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost; then they became one in truth and thought, in purpose and testimony.

While the Lord was on earth with His own He kept them in the Father's name, and gave them the Father's word. The world hated them because they were not of it. But He does not pray that they may be taken out of the world but that they may be kept out of evil (verses 12-16).

Next, the Lord desired that His own should be sanctified by the truth — the Father's word. He would sanctify Himself by leaving the world and returning to the Father. This was for the sake of those whom He was sending into the world. By Him, their personal Object on high, they would be sanctified by the truth (verses 17-19).

(3) *The Lord's words concerning those who would afterwards believe on Him* (verses 20-26)



The Lord then enlarges the scope of His requests to embrace those who would believe on Him through the word of apostolic witnesses (verse 20).

For these He desires unity also, but in another aspect from that in verse 11. For these He requests that "they may be all one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us." This oneness was to be a testimony to the world in order, the Lord said, that "the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (verse 21).

This oneness in grace was exhibited after Pentecost in the power of the newly-descended Spirit. It was the communion in virtue of the Father made known in the Son, and of the Son the object of the Father's love and delight, into which we are brought by the Holy Ghost.

Then the Lord looks onward to a third oneness — the future perfection of His own united in glory. This consummation of unity in the glory that the Father gives the Son will cause the world to *know* that the Father loved them as He loved the Son (verses 22, 23).

The Lord further desired that those whom the Father had given Him should be with Him to behold His given-glory. This portion with Him on high would satisfy the devotion to Himself implanted in their hearts by the Holy Spirit (verse 24).

Finally, the Lord appeals to the Righteous Father, not for the world that did not know Him, but for those who did know the Father, that even in this world they might have the consciousness that the love of the Father for the Son was in them, and that He Himself was in them (verses 25,26).

## **WHAT IS DUE TO THE LORD ON HIS DAY?**

*"I John, your brother . . . I became in (the) Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard . . ."* (Revelation i.9,10, New Tr.)

One of Malachi's searching questions to the apostate Jews of his day was, "Will a man rob God?" (Malachi iii.8). They were guilty of appropriating for their own use the tithes and offerings due to Jehovah according to the Levitical law. Their selfish neglect of these divine claims barred

up the windows of heaven and prevented the outpouring of Jehovah's blessing upon them.

Let us consider seriously whether we too may not be guilty of similar neglect of the Lord's claims upon us, and especially of withholding from Him what is His due upon His day. And is it not a fact, that in consequence, the gracious activities of the Holy Spirit are withheld from us? We certainly have to some extent, at any rate, despised the Lord's day, and the prevalent lethargy and declining interest in spiritual matters have come upon us as a result.

### THE LORD'S OWN DAY

The unique feature of the first day of the week for the Christian is indelibly stamped upon it by its inspired designation. It is called "the Lord's day" (Revelation i.10), and by this description it is separated from every other day of the week in the same degree as "the Lord's supper" (1 Corinthians xi.20) is distinguished from every other supper.

By this exclusive title, a sacred character is imparted to it: "the Lord's day" is a continual reminder that this day belongs to Him. In the Mosaic institutions, whatever Jehovah described to Moses and Aaron as His own was to be held most sacred. The tabernacle itself was the Lord's; its vessels were the Lord's; certain offerings and sacrifices, or some specified parts of them, were the Lord's. And the sin of sacrilege was to debase what was the Lord's to the ordinary use of man. Belshazzar profaned the holy vessels at his idol feast in Babylon (Daniel v.2), but the Jews themselves were not guiltless of similar iniquity in their holy things.

For the Christian, the first day of the week is marked off as the day which is exclusively the Lord's. This character is expressed to us incidentally in the narrative of John's visions in Patmos, showing how thoroughly it was understood under that name in the early church. And the special sanctity of the Lord's day as an institution is in no sense diminished because it is not enforced by a stern command, accompanied by terrifying signs of the divine

majesty as when the sabbath was ordained at Sinai (Exodus xix., xx.; Hebrews xii.18-21).

Under the law of Moses, the hallowed nature of the sabbath day was maintained by imposing severe penalties upon sabbath-breakers. For example, a man was stoned to death for gathering sticks on that day (Numbers xv.32-36). Are we then to do as we please on the Lord's day because no similar penalties are attached to its non-observance? "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" Let us rather render a greater devoted obedience to the will of the Lord as to His day because of that grace.

### **THE WITNESS OF THE LORD'S DAY**

The regular observance of the Lord's day is a weekly witness to the world that the Lord has His absolute rights in the disposal of our time, and that we gladly recognise those rights in the matter of this day. Owing that Christ died for us, and that He lived again on the first of the week, we own Him Lord of both the dead and the living (Romans xiv.9.), but specially as our Lord on the day of His resurrection.

Under the old covenant, the observance of the sabbath was a sign to the idolatrous nations around that Jehovah was the God of Israel, and that He had so commanded them. His other nine commandments were concerned with man's moral relations to God and to his neighbour, including robbery, murder, and the like; but the command to abstain from all labour on the seventh day was a test whether they would respect Jehovah's bare word or not. But Israel polluted His sabbaths in the eyes of the heathen (Ezekiel xx.24), and they were sent into captivity. And after their return from Babylon, the markets in Jerusalem were still busy on the sabbath (Nehemiah xiii.15-22), provoking Jehovah to pour out fresh wrath upon them as despisers of His will.

If Israel was thus culpably guilty in respect of the sabbath, is the church of God less so in respect of the Lord's day? Is not the Lord being robbed of His day, in

whole or in part, now more than ever? The most casual observer must have noticed the increased desecration of this day since the social upheaval of the recent Great War.\* Let our readers face the question of its effect upon themselves personally.

There are twenty-four hours in the Lord's day, as in all the days of the week; therefore His name is attached to the whole period from midnight to midnight in Western reckoning. Every one of those hours is His, not merely those that may be spent in public religious services. How are they used? Allowing an average of eight hours out of the Lord's allotted portion for our sleep (say, 12 a.m. to 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. to 12 p.m.), the period of no less than sixteen waking hours (6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) remains of the Lord's day, concerning which we need to pray very earnestly, Lord, what wilt Thou have me do during all these hours which are thine?

Every reader will, no doubt, have his own time-table for the Lord's day, and who would deliberately rob the Lord of one of the hours? Yet it is often done unwittingly, therefore each one who loves the Lord should be clear before Him as to the proper apportionment of these precious hours. No expensive chronometer is necessary to discover that by rising two hours later and retiring two hours earlier the waking hours of the Lord's day are reduced to twelve, and the Lord receives four hours less on His day. Is He not defrauded thereby? Of even these twelve, only an hour or so is devoted to the breaking of bread, the rest being spent in social and selfish pursuits, and the Lord's rights are utterly ignored.

We condemn no one; each one must examine himself before the Lord, to whom he is personally accountable. The Lord is not a "hard" Man, reaping where He has not sown. He makes full allowance for exceptional cases and circumstances of invalids and others requiring extra

\*This piece was written in February 1932: the 1914-18 war is therefore referred to.

rest. He Himself said of some who slept, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

But the Lord, though infinitely merciful, will not justify the self-indulgence of the appetites, the habits of indolence, the unnecessary occupations easily transferable to other days, which are so prevalent upon the Lord's day among those who bear His name.

### **HOW THE WORLD JUDGES**

Slackness at home in the Lord's things, however grievous to the Lord Himself, may not appear to the public eye. But there is, also, at times among us, a great inconsistency of behaviour upon the Lord's day which the world is very quick to note, and the name of the Lord is in this way dishonoured by us.

The world, as most of our readers know it, regards the first day of the week as a general holiday, wisely and happily provided by civil law and custom for relaxation from physical and mental labour with a view to maintain a higher level of efficiency in the industrial sphere at large. Now the Christian who uses the Lord's day for like purposes of physical recuperation has evidently sunk down to the level of the worldly estimate of Sunday.

It is a bitter reflection that many a professed believer provides the worldling with an excuse for his gaming and hiking and sight-seeing on the Lord's day. For if the Christian is seen mingling with the crowds of pleasure-seekers, the man in the street cannot be blamed for assuming that the Christian really thinks no more highly of the Lord's day than he himself does. Why then, he argues, should he respect the Lord's name on His day, if the man who reads his Bible omits to do so?

### **THE MATTER OF TRAVELLING**

Travelling on the Lord's day often presents problems which are most easily solved if the honour of the Lord's name is made the first consideration. Some persons are physically unable to be present at the breaking of bread

without the aid of some conveyance, but this fact soon becomes known in the locality, and is seldom liable to misconstruction. But when long journeys are taken by cycle or car on the Lord's day, how can the public regard these excursions differently from the pleasure jaunts common on all the highways and byways of the country? They only look at what meets the eye.

In such cases, however satisfied the individual consciences of the travellers may be as to the legitimacy of the journey, it is undeniable that the valuable time so spent on the Lord's day affords no testimony to the unconverted that the Lord has appropriated that day as His, and that His followers differentiate between the first day and the rest for that reason. Apart altogether from what the world may judge, the crucial question arising in such cases is, will the Lord approve of such abandonment of principle in His great review of our conduct at His judgment-seat?

A brother travelling to a distant place by public conveyance on the Lord's day for the ministry of the word or for preaching the gospel may be distinguished from a tripper by his Bible, if by nothing else. But if a brother is travelling for such purposes in his own car, accompanied by several relatives or friends, the case is altered, and so is more difficult of justification, unless the presence of the whole party is essential to the performance of the service.

Some persons, who would never dream of driving a horse on the Lord's day, have no scruples whatever about using a motor car. They are, indeed, so lax in their ideas of what is befitting to the Lord's day that they would not hesitate to travel to and from a holiday resort in order to extend their absence from home a little by this means. Is not this robbing the Lord of the whole or of a part of His day? They greedily take the extra time for their own pleasure, instead of using it for the praise and service of the Lord. Self rules in their hearts, and not the will of the Lord. What fruit for God is there in these abuses

of the Lord's day? Can the blessing of God be expected to attend such behaviour?

### **THE TAUNT OF SABBATARIANISM**

During the War, it was taught by many that it was patriotic, and even pious, to cultivate allotments on the Lord's day. The war ceased, but this practice continued, even by some who have not otherwise abandoned outward marks of respect for religious matters. And the man who forgoes his gardening and regards the day as to the Lord is taunted with being puritanic and a sabbatarian.

But it is no "sabbatarianism" to serve the Lord wholly on His day. And it is an ignorant person who thinks so, for he does not know the Spirit of Christ Who makes us love to obey Him; moreover, it is a foolish person who says so, for the Lord condemned it in the Pharisees who were full of sabbatarianism. We, His followers, have been delivered from the law of the sabbath, and we now serve the Lord, "not in the oldness of the letter, but in newness of spirit."

The Lord's day, when rightly observed, is one full from beginning to end of activities of the spiritual life. Every hour is thrilling and throbbing with the harmonies of heaven. It is necessary for us like our brother John in Patmos to become in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and then we shall hear the voice of the Lord behind us as he did. For the Lord will never disappoint those who seek His face on the Lord's day, just because it is the Lord's day.

We did not in these remarks set out to lay down any rules for the Lord's day: there are none. We only desire to emphasise its central feature and what that feature involves. We need, however, to be careful of two points of view especially with regard to our behaviour on the Lord's day. We should guard against any error in (1) our internal motive, and (2) our external conduct. Remember that the Lord, not man, sees (1); but both the Lord

*(Continued at foot of inside front cover)*

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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OCTOBER, 1967

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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### "GROUNDED AND SETTLED"

(Note on Colossians i.23)

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? Which 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. G. F. COX

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

John is recorded here only (xix.25-7). How exquisitely beautiful is the Lord's care for her at such a moment!

The Lord's cry, "I thirst," was uttered, "that the scriptures might be fulfilled" (xix.28).

The language of verse 30 is in perfect harmony with the Lord's own declaration of His authority to lay down His life and to take it again (x.18).

His cry, "It is finished," referring to the atonement accomplished by His death, is peculiar to John's Gospel.

At the burial of the Lord (xix.38-42) the prophecy of Isaiah, He was "with the rich in His death" (liii.9) was fulfilled. Joseph of Arimathaea, a secret disciple and a man of wealth, with Nicodemus, came boldly forward, and together they shared the honour of carrying the Lord's body to the new tomb (see Leviticus vi.11) in Joseph's garden.

*(To be continued, D.V.)*

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

*"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"* (John v. 17)

In His devoted activity, as the Divine Worker, the Lord Jesus had healed the multitudes gathered in the plain, and had spoken the clear precepts of His Father's kingdom. Albeit He had addressed a mixed company, for there were those who *heard* (Luke vi.27), to whom He spoke again (Luke vi.47), as having rock secure foundations, and others who thought only for their own bodily wellbeing.

In continuing his service of ministry to his friend Theophilus, the beloved Luke shows the movement of Jesus from the plain of abundant healing to the city of Capernaum where dwelt, no doubt, so many representatives of the medical skill of Israel. Capernaum, "exalted unto heaven" (Matthew xi.23), a city of renown, most prosperous, yet profane and hardened in pride and self interest, was where Jesus lived and worked so often — where Matthew was called from his customs station, and Peter and Andrew had their home. It was to the synagogue in this city that John went, in affectionate memory, to record, long after, the ever-living word "I am that Bread of Life . . . whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath ETERNAL life, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John vi.). If we reverently emphasize the word "eternal" we shall find comparison between CAPERNAUM LIFE and that ETERNAL LIFE which endures while no trace whatever of Capernaum remains!

(Luke vii.2). Here is one "ready to die" in the midst of the wealth of medical resource of Capernaum! Jesus enters the exalted city, but all its wealth and all its knowledge is bankrupt of power in the presence of the dying servant of the Centurion benefactor who loved the nation and had built them a synagogue.

There is, surely, refreshment of spirit for the Divine Worker in this episode of His life of service. The beneficent grace in the new order of approach by the Son of God was not restricted. As a Gentile, Luke exults in recording its overflow to Gentiles, and Theophilus, himself a Gentile,

must have rejoiced to read the clear evidences of the same grace wherein he stood (Romans v.2) in association with the whole family of faith.

At the entering of the proud city Jesus met the elders of the Jews seeking this same grace on behalf of a Gentile! What clearer demonstration to them of the real condition of Capernaum than to plead for the dying servant of the Gentile Centurion for whom there was no hope — no life — apart from the all-enveloping grace that extended even to the representative of the Roman power. Thus did the perfect Worker perform His Father's will. It had been demonstrated in sight and experience of all the sufferers who crowded the plain, and now Capernaum would appeal for that compassionate grace where death defied the resources of man.

The approach of the representative elders of the Jews may have been the outcome of their gratitude to the Centurion as well as a diplomatic desire to retain his favour as Caesar's representative in their midst. The response of the Lord Jesus was to faith — that living faith untrammelled by theory and human reasoning — that results always in the abundant outflow of grace in which God manifests Himself. "The promise . . . is of faith that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Romans iv.13,16).

Faith is always beautiful — always simple — ever humble. The man "under authority" saw the Jewish people as under the favour of God, notwithstanding their subject position and their spirit of rebellious pride. Through them, as God's people, he made his approach. They come announcing his "worthiness" by virtue of his work on their behalf. His faith soars above the assessment of his ambassadors, though they were, for him, an approach to God. He insisted he was *not* worthy either to come to Jesus or to receive Him in capacity as host. There was only his great need — and this on behalf of his servant — so that he was devoid of all resource save that which he apprehended in Jesus Himself.

Through his friends he tells his simple path of thought: "Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also

am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it" (verse 8). Yet there is, in this simple analogy, the realization of a truth most profound. It was not alone the wonder of unfailling healing for which Jesus was adequate. He was acting in pure GRACE under the supreme authority of God! "Say, in a WORD" — O WORD of might omnipotent — O command, that principalities and powers must obey! **From Capernaum, the proud and self-sufficient, comes this first-fruits of the harvest of Gentile faith exceeding any found in Israel.**

There are ruins on the disputed site of Capernaum, and none may say with authority what is the true location of that once "exalted" city. The "city called Nain" may be seen today on the north western edge of Little Hermon where the ground falls into the plain of Esdraeldon. It would be at least twenty English miles from the neighbourhood of Capernaum. The Lord Jesus made this journey on "the day after", and "many of His disciples went with Him, and much people" (Luke vii.11).

Nain had its wall and its gates, and was thus a city. The Lord Jesus would have come by the steep ascent from the plain from which, on the western side, could be seen the rock sepulchre — the caves of the many dead of the city whose name means "beauty".

The thought of bereavement is emphasized. From the gate a veritable stream of mourners flowed in support and comfort of the widowed mother to whose home death had come again. Her only son was being carried to join the number of those who once had lived in the city. A passing observer could not but be moved with compassion. But all would be helpless in the presence of death.

The coming of the Lord Jesus at that time would not be by chance. His was no journey without purpose. His compassion portrayed the very heart of God for His people, whilst seeing in the sad cortege a presentation of Israel desolate and bereaved of hope. It was a gate of sorrow and

loss, but there moved toward it One who could stay the stream of sorrow even at the gates of death. His word "Weep not" conveys more than compassion: there is also promise in it, potent with fulfilment. He touched the bier — He became associated with the need of His people though it be the outcome of their sin. Was not the touch an assurance, too, that He would, in person also, overthrow the power of death!

In this episode, the overflowing grace of the Divine Worker is evident again. His aid was unsought. Indeed it would seem that, while His healing power was known, it was not thought He could do more than this. Yet His compassion was immediate, and His power wrought without delay to set aside the might of death. At His word the youth is restored to his mother, and the weeping company raises tear-dimmed eyes in wonder and thanksgiving that a great prophet had arisen among them and that God had visited His people.

It is not difficult to imagine the abiding wonder of that little city. There was one among them who had just returned from the dead — a daily witness to a Power unknown before — a living testimony to the purpose of God in making clear to them all that His love and care for His people was available to them, and was displayed in the Person of His Son.

Shall not we, also, remind ourselves that, unchanged, His love abides? His "weep not" still has power. We may know the poignant sorrow of death among our dear ones, but our faith may see His hand upon the bier, and know His compassion and the power of His promise, for "His compassions fail not. They are new every morning" (Lamentations iii.23).

EDWARD T. WOOD

## **WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION**

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil. ii.12,13)

Emphatically this is a scripture which must be studied in its context in order to be understood rightly.

Paul writes to the Philippians as one immensely concerned for their spiritual welfare, yet unable because of his imprisonment to do more than write to them (and of course pray for them). He was anxious especially, as his letter shows, that they should present a united front to the enemy. He was afraid lest strife in the assembly should mar their testimony to the grace of Christ.

He presents to them as he writes not only exhortations, but the example of the Saviour Himself. He reminds them of how He who was so exalted had humbled Himself in order to fulfil the will of God and bring about the blessing of men.

Then he says, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

How he would have loved to be able to visit them, to advise on their difficulties, to encourage them by his presence, to warn those who might be tempted, and by his own example of lowly service to shame any who were succumbing to the danger of self-exaltation! Yet being absent, he must rely on the love which he knew they had for him, that it might lead them to give as much attention to his written exhortations as they would have done to his personal ministry.

As much attention, or even more. For as his words were read to them, could they help remembering that the writer was now in prison for Christ's sake, yes, and for their sake too? His very imprisonment was for daring to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

With these powerful motives — the example of the blessed Saviour, and their love for his servant Paul — it remained for them to put into practice, with the utmost diligence, the teaching they had received. Thus they would work out their

own salvation. This Paul could not do *for* them. Nor can anyone do it for us.

The same necessity occurs in other spheres. Parents may instruct their children in what is right, and may also set them a good example. But the time comes when the children must stand on their own feet and put into practice what they have learned. A teacher may instruct his pupils ever so well, but he knows that unless they are given the opportunity to work out problems on their own, without any assistance, they will never master the subject.

But if Paul felt keenly his absence from the Philippians, he could exhort them with confidence to work out their own salvation because he knew that God was working in them. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Thus God was using the very absence of Paul to accomplish His purpose for the Philippians. Left to themselves, they were the more cast upon God, by whose grace alone they could carry out the apostle's exhortations.

If we have shown that the words "your own" refer particularly to the absence of Paul, yet the principle of working out our salvation with God's help applies to every believer.

Working out our salvation is then a working *with* God, who has given us His Spirit for this very purpose. He wants us to become morally what He has already made us in Christ. He is shaping the stone to the pattern which He has in mind. And our part is to obey His word, not in a legal spirit, but as seeking to realize that which His love destines us to be.

The Spirit of God, whenever we will allow Him, directs our thoughts to Christ, our living heavenly pattern. Hence it is by our hearts' occupation with Christ rather than with our own spiritual progress, that true growth is attained. Growth is always an unconscious process, and its results are always more evident to the onlooker than to oneself.

Thus though in one sense our salvation is complete from the moment our faith rests in the finished work of Christ, yet in another sense it is being wrought out day by day.



But it is important to hold fast to this simple truth, that salvation in both senses is *God's* work.

Only, because we are living, responsible beings, not robots, we are called upon to co-operate with God, yielding ourselves to the guiding and controlling influence of His holy Spirit, that our very *wills* may be made conformable to His. This is what He means when He says, speaking of the New Covenant, "I will write my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."

Hitherto we have passed over the words "with fear and trembling," which actually precede the exhortation to work out our own salvation. That the words in no way refer to any fear of being lost, should be clear to every instructed believer, for God's word elsewhere assures us that the believer has an eternal salvation. We ought to take it for granted that one part of God's word cannot contradict another, for it is all God's word. What then do the words mean?

If I am a believer, God is working in me. What a stupendous fact! But then, if this is so, knowing how weak and liable to fail I am, I may well fear to hinder His working. If He is fashioning me as He wants me to be, I may well tremble lest I spoil His workmanship. It is to be feared that many of us know little of this reverent fear. We are careless in these momentous matters. Because our eternal salvation is assured, we do not tremble lest fleshly indulgence should grieve our divine Indweller. Most of us are all too apt to be content with a low standard, content to walk at a distance from our Master. We are satisfied with a bit of communion with Him every now and then, instead of dwelling constantly in His love.

In contrast, let us see how Paul speaks of *his* salvation in chapter 1. He rejoiced because Christ was preached in Rome, whether by men of goodwill or those who, "preaching Christ of contention" sought to add affliction to his bonds. But whether sincerely or otherwise, Christ was preached, and in that he rejoiced.

"For I know," he goes on, "that this shall turn to my

salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

Now it has been supposed that by “salvation” Paul meant his acquittal in his coming trial before the emperor. The Standard Revised Version translates it “deliverance”. But that this is not what Paul means is shown by the next verse, where he continues, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”

It is plain then, that Paul was very little concerned with the result of the trial, but he was anxious that his behaviour during the trial should be to the glory of Christ.

Utterly taken up with this, he felt that the widespread proclamation of Christ's Name in the imperial city would ensure that it would be plain to everyone for whose sake he was being tried. Thus inspired to make a bold confession, and supported by the prayers of the saints, and by the grace of God's Spirit, he was sure that he would not fail however severe the ordeal. That he should be saved from any yielding to the weakness of the flesh or the deceits of the enemy — that he should be faithful to Christ's Name, come life, or come death — this was the salvation Paul sought.

He also says, “Be ye imitators of me, even as I am of Christ.”

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## A GREAT THIRST IN THE LAND

*“And Judas (Barsabas) and Silas, being themselves also prophets, exhorted the brethren with much discourse, and strengthened them”* (Acts xv.32, New Tr.)

“Alas, we have no prophets today! We have no one to speak to us in the name of the Lord. In the words of an Old Testament prophet, there is a famine amongst us of hearing His words” (Amos viii.11). Thus many are thinking, and some are saying. And is there not a cause? For there is, indeed, an obvious lack of living and life-giving ministry. Saints are languishing for spiritual refreshment. In the

meetings everyone seems apathetic, and everything seems dry and dull, monotonous and formal. Over and over again, the same prayers, the same hymns, the same scriptures! Oh, the dreariness of it all!

What is the cause of this lassitude? And many answer, "Lack of ministry." No doubt ministry is an appointed means of strengthening the saints by the word, as we find, in the scripture quoted above, Judas and Silas doing at Antioch (Acts xv.32). But in actual practical experience, it often comes about that those who want ministry do not get it, while on the other hand those who get it do not want it.

In any case, why complain against the ministers when you feel weary and dreary? Why murmur against the servants of the Lord when you are without refreshment? In so doing you are forgetting One Who cares for you far more than any "minister." It is not His will that your spirit should go thirsty and unrefreshed week after week. Have you told the Lord how dismal you feel about matters of fellowship?

You thirst? Yes, but after what are you thirsting? Is it for the exhortations of some Judas or some Silas, as in Antioch of old, who shall cause you to feel afresh that "God is indeed amongst you?" Three times, if not more, the psalmist spoke of his thirst after God (see Psalm xlii.2; lxiii.1; cxliii.6). Is it a fact that in your yearnings you have also said to the Lord, "O Lord, I thirst; and I THIRST AFTER THEE?" Or, is your "thirst" only the murmurings of discontent? Mere dissatisfaction with your lot?

### WHOSE FAULT IS IT?

Our disconsolate friends may be surprised to hear that their unhappy condition is their own fault. It must be due to one of three causes: (1) to the Lord Himself, (2) to the servants of the Lord, or (3) to yourselves. It cannot be the Lord, for He will never allow His own to suffer lack. It cannot be the servants of the Lord, for they do His will, going where they are sent and doing what they are bidden. It is therefore yourselves; you are tempting the Lord by

doubting His love and denying His power; as a consequence you are parched with drought.

Was it not selfish unbelief with Israel at Rephidim (Exodus xvii.)? Who led them there? They followed the movement of the pillar of cloud. Had Jehovah previously shown any special interest in them? He brought them through the Red Sea, and had destroyed their Egyptian enemies. Had He cared for them at all during the two months they had been in the wilderness? He had sweetened their bitter waters in Marah; He guided them to Elim where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; He had given them quails to eat in the evening, and manna from heaven in the morning.

Feeling thirsty now in Rephidim, they at once blame the servant of the Lord. They murmur against Moses, and revile him, and are almost ready to stone him. They look to Moses to give them water to drink. Yet it was not Moses who divided the waters of the Red Sea; he did not bring the quails into the camp, nor provide manna at every tent-door. Nevertheless, their eye was upon Moses only, and they were faint and miserable, and they murmured against the Lord's minister: "Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

### TEMPTING THE LORD

Now these words of the people showed the state of their heart. They were unbelieving. They forgot how Jehovah had made bare His arm for their deliverance, and also His promise that He would bring them safely into the mountain of His inheritance. They were even blind to the pillar of cloud then visible in the midst of the camp. Was not this the cause of their terrible thirst? They had brought this discomfort upon themselves by their want of faith. Moses told them the truth: "Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?"

To "tempt" the Lord is to doubt His love to think for us, and His power to provide for us. It was a fearful sin for

a redeemed people thus to tempt Jehovah. But have we not tempted the Lord? Have we not doubted His love to comfort us and His power to preserve us? Have we not turned away our eyes from the pillar of cloud in the midst? No wonder so many are camped in the valley of Baca, and complain they find no well there. There is a well there for the pilgrim (Psalm lxxxiv.6), but only faith can discover it.

It is clear enough that the secret of the parched lips and swollen tongues in Rephidim was that the people closed their eyes to the presence of their Almighty Saviour God. They harboured the wicked thought that they had been brought out of the house of bondage by Jehovah to die in the desert. They mistrusted the Lord and abused Moses. They had Massah in their hearts and Meribah on their lips.

There was no prayer in their tents; no recital before the Lord of the promises made to their fathers, to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; no calling upon I AM, God's wonderful name given to them in Egypt. They only went like poor silly worldlings to Moses, and said to him, "Give us water that we may drink." The Lord of the hidden springs and the brimming waterbrooks was forgotten altogether. It was the "provocation," the "day of temptation in the wilderness."

The people appealed to Moses for water, but he had no power to obtain it. Perhaps some who lack spiritual refreshment are not supplied because they are seeking it in the wrong quarter. Their expectation is from the servant, and not from the Master. Can Rephidim teach us anything further with regard to this matter? If the Lord will, we may, on another occasion, learn what is the remedy for thirsty souls.

W. J. HOCKING

(From "The Bible Monthly", April, 1932)

## STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

XVI. Chapter xviii.1 — xix.42.

(Christ's TESTIMONY among men ended)

The apostle John's narrative of our Lord's betrayal, His

trial, His crucifixion, His death, and His burial is contained in these two chapters.

John was an eye-witness of most, if not all of these things, and the many details in his account indicate this. Those accustomed to weigh evidence know that a person who is a faithful witness will include small details in his evidence which a false witness would disregard as unessential to his purpose. Such a detail occurs in chapter xviii.18, where John records that the officers stood warming themselves by the fire they had kindled, and that Peter was with them; also in chapter xx.5, where John mentions that he stooped down to see the linen clothes in the sepulchre. Of what historical value are these details if they do not accurately describe what took place? Do not such details authenticate John's narrative? At the same time we must remember that the Holy Spirit reveals as well as recalls.

The opening scene is a garden. A garden saw the fall of the first man: a garden witnessed the suffering of the Second Man. There Judas betrayed the Lord, after the devil had put the wicked scheme into his heart. Also, the Lord's tomb was in a garden.

The Gospel of John makes no mention of the agony in Gethsemane, nor of the three hours of darkness when the Lord suffered on the cross as the sin-bearer. However, distinguishing marks of the Lamb of God (see chapter i.29,36) are noted, namely, the shedding of blood (xix.34) and no bone broken (xix.36). By John, the Lord Jesus is from first to last set forth as the Son of God in His lonely and unapproachable dignity.

The glory of the Godhead shone out for a moment in the garden, and the crowd fell back at the Lord's utterance of the words, "I AM" (xviii.6-8). This answer was an assertion of His own ineffable Name, the power of which they felt in their bodies; but its witness to His Person was, like every other, rejected. It was withdrawn immediately, and their refusal to accept it added to their guilt.

The Lord's intervention for His own in the garden

(xviii.8,9) is a sign of His coming intervention on the cross — between His sheep and their foe.

Peter's striking off the ear of the high priest's servant (xviii.10) was an exhibition of carnal energy by a devoted but impulsive disciple. Contrast the Lord's calmness, and His willing acceptance of the cup in meek submission to the Father's will (verse 11). He could have escaped from His enemies (cf. Matthew xxvi.52-54), but in obedience to His Father He gave Himself into their hands.

The refusal of the Jews to enter Pilate's praetorium lest they should be defiled (xviii.28) shows how man can be meticulously careful in religious ceremonies and yet be an enemy of God's Son.

John makes no reference to the high priest's adjuring the Lord Jesus to confess Himself the Christ, the Son of God (as Matthew xxvi.63).

In the judicial inquiry Pilate was made uncomfortable by the conviction that the Lord Jesus was a holy person. But the Roman governor was swayed by the will of the people whom he was responsible to rule. He was of the world, worldly. Three times he declared he could find no fault in the Lord (xviii.38; xix.4,6).

The Old Testament prophecies foretold details of the Lord's sufferings, but nothing appears to refer to the crown of thorns. This seems to have been used in mockery of His royal claims rather than for the infliction of physical suffering.

The cry of the chief priests, "We have no king but Caesar" (xix.15), was not only a denial that the Lord was the Messiah, but an abandonment of all hope of deliverance of Israel from Gentile supremacy. What an example of the human heart, bent on getting its own way, and plunging itself into details of infamy it never contemplated!

No mention is made that Simon the Cyrenian bore the Lord's cross. In this Gospel, the Lord Jesus is seen to be the strong Son of God right to the end. On the other hand, the Lord's committal of His mother to the care of the apostle

*(Continued at foot of inside front cover)*

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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NOVEMBER, 1967

No. 11

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# WORDS OF HELP

**A Monthly Magazine for Believers**

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## **GOD'S VIEW OF THINGS GIVEN IN HIS WORD**

We cannot overrate the grace of God in giving us the Holy Scriptures in which He has revealed His mind, and in counting upon our appreciation of them. Abraham of old was called the friend of God; and concerning him God said: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do . . . for I know him" (Genesis xviii.17-19). And similarly the Lord said to His disciples: "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you" (John xv.15.).

We ought then to appreciate the Holy Scriptures, because they testify of Him Who is God's Beloved Son and in Whom we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies (cf. John v.39; xvii.24; Ephesians i.3). And God desires us to know the things that are freely given to us of God and has given us the Spirit which is of God, for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God (cf. I Corinthians ii.9-12).

We ought to value the Holy Scriptures also, because we need them. We have been begotten by them, the living and ever-abiding word of God (I Peter i.23) and this life is maintained and nourished by that same word, as the Lord Himself declared, man lives "by every word of God" (Luke iv.4) and we grow by it unto salvation (I Peter ii.2). By it we are kept from the paths of the destroyer (Psalm vii.4), enabling us to keep our way clean (Psalm cxix.9); walking with all confidence in a dark world, for that word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm cxix.105), meeting every assault of the enemy by the word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians vi.17), making us perfect and thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy iii.17). And finally, our hope that we shall be for ever with the Lord is founded on the word of the Lord (I Thessalonians iv.15).

O.H.

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

*"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"* (John v.17)

Luke vii.16. In a fortress prison, 3,600 feet above the Dead Sea, a man waited for news of the redemption of Israel. The Jewish historian, Josephus, writes of the stronghold of Machaerus and the walled enclosure of mountain ridge, a mile in extent, which Herod the Great had fortified, and in which Herod Antipas had built his palace. Here, writes Josephus, John Baptist was held prisoner. The fearless man, the last and greatest of the prophets, had reproved Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch, for divorcing his wife in order to marry Herodias, his own sister-in-law. It seems that Herod allowed him contact with his disciples, and, in course of time, the news from Nain reached him — "they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people" (verse 16). "This rumour of Him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about." It reached the prisoner of Herod Antipas.

There is no doubt that a genuine upsurge of grateful appreciation of the mercies of God reaches wider spheres than human measure knows.

We are not told of the months of waiting in the rock dungeon of Machaerus. From early childhood until "the day of his shewing unto Israel" (Luke i.80), he had dwelt in the desert. The energies of his life had been directed to the announcement of the coming of the King. "He that cometh" was an expression well known to every Israelite. With what controlled energy John the Baptist had proclaimed the immediate fulfilment of that hope. Looking back over more than thirty years of purposeful life, there is little wonder that he sought reassurance. He would recall his own declaration — "He must increase — I must decrease," and the wilderness where "the word of God came to him" (Luke iii.2) was within sight of his prison. The "decrease" was very real to him, but what of the "increase" of which he had spoken by direction of the Spirit of God! How

he desired to learn of the proclamation of the King, and to know the beneficence of His reign!

“Art *Thou* He that is coming, or are we to wait for another?” (verse 20.J.N.D.). It was a cry from the dungeon where despair sought entry. “And in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight (verse 21). The evidence of God manifest in the flesh was before the eyes of the two messengers: “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard” (verse 22).

The perfect sympathy of the Divine Worker was comfort to the captive in a way specially suited to his anxious soul. Divine power was displayed in the Person of whom he had been the forerunner. His character and power had been the deep conviction within John’s message — “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah xl.3; Luke iii.4). “The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (Isaiah xxxv.5,6). The words added by the Lord Jesus go further to show His beautiful ministry of grace: “Blessed is whosoever shall not be offended in Me.” A path of blessing opened for John and for any who, though they might not understand, would hold their simple trust in Him who was showing Himself to be the Author and Minister of the new system of GRACE.

Two workers are before us in this passage, but only One was divine. How full of protective esteem and clear appreciation of John Baptist in all his years of exercise and fulfilment are the words of the Divine Worker! He addresses those about Him who had journeyed to the wilderness. “What went ye out to see?” They had gone, as many go today, but the purpose of their going was not universal in character, or even national in its object. But they saw no “reed shaken by the wind.” It was no vague message of mysticism carried by a wind of chance, nor was the person robed with impressive ritual to overawe the common man. Here was a

prophet, "Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet." Malachi, himself the last of the prophets, had written of him, "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me" (Malachi iii.1). They had beheld and heard the immediate forerunner of Christ.

The Divine Worker bears testimony to His messenger! He had known the refusal of Pharisees and lawyers to acknowledge in baptism the rightness of God's verdict upon them. He had found, too, the submission of the true hearers and the publicans who were among the "wise" in acknowledging their failure before God. They were the children of wisdom, "which is justified of all her children" (verse 35). As to those who turned from the forerunner, the Lord likens their behaviour to that of the children who, calling to one another in the market place, did not get from their playmates the desired response, whether they played the music of joy or mimed the actions of weeping. To them, John was too demanding of righteousness, and Jesus was too abundant in grace. "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept" (verse 32). The use of this expression, linking the experience of John, the forerunner, with Himself, the Christ King who followed, accords with His character of grace — "WE have piped . . . . "WE have mourned." How truly He still enters into our labours and disappointments! The growing antagonism to His message of the Kingdom of Heaven moved toward the final refusal of the Messiah Himself, and John Baptist, the herald of the King, lay in prison drawing near to death.

There is a solemn significance in Malachi's prophecy, and time moves on to its fulfilment, for the refusal of the King precedes His coming as Refiner who will purge away the dross (Malachi iii.). The centuries may lie between, but His first coming is linked, in the prophecy, with His coming to earth the second time, and, in our present day, the nations are already moving into groups — their thoughts and policies concerned with Jerusalem.

John Baptist, the workman whose task was done, had been used to herald the approach of the only One who could

bring into being that ministry of GRACE and TRUTH — the Kingdom of God. Thus, "he who is a little one in the Kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke vii.28). To have part in this Kingdom is to be in advance of the former order. Every activity of the Divine Worker moved toward the exposition of its glorious principles, whilst, before Him, was the cross — the sure foundation of its eternal fulness.

EDWARD T. WOOD

### "UNTO MY NAME"

*"For where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew xviii.20).

A person's name distinguishes him from all other persons, and is expressive of all his qualities and characteristics. And if the term, "Name," is used to denote our blessed Lord and Saviour, it will not surprise us to find that scripture presents His Name to us in so many different ways and aspects. For there is a necessary connection between the living Word of God and the written word of God, inasmuch as the latter describes the former. The Lord Himself said of the scriptures, "They are they which testify of Me" (John v.39). They speak of both His Person and His Name.

It follows that the more we have Christ before us as we read the scriptures, the more clearly and fully shall we perceive the mind of the Holy Spirit Who reveals Him therein, and the better shall we be prepared to discern the rays of Christ's glory which shine forth from every page. Moreover, to regard the scriptures as the display of Christ and of God as He is revealed in Christ is a sure preservative against errors of interpretation as well as a sure antidote to the rationalistic teachings of the day. At the same time this recognition of Christ in the scriptures tends to produce in the soul of the reader that reverence and adoration without which it is impossible to receive and retain those divine communications which the scriptures supply concerning Him.

Before considering the use of the phrase, "unto My name," in Matthew xviii.20, we purpose to select two or three examples of its use elsewhere in illustration of its significance

in this case, and also to point out how this phrase brings into prominence the Person of our blessed Lord, whether as Object, or as Leader, or as Centre.

### BAPTIZED UNTO THE NAME

First of all, we take the expression, "Baptized in (unto) the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts viii.16; xix.5). In both instances the phrase, *eis to onoma*, is in our translation rendered, "in the name," but in the New Tr. we have "to (unto) the name."

The accuracy of this translation of *eis* can be seen by reference to other instances. Thus in Acts xix.3, the apostle asked some at Ephesus, "To what then were ye baptized?" They answer, "To John's baptism." After listening to Paul they were "baptized to the name of the Lord Jesus" (verse 5). In these three instances, *eis* is properly translated "to" or "unto." Similarly, in 1 Corinthians x.2, where we read of the fathers of Israel that they were all "baptized unto Moses," the same word, *eis*, is used in the original text.

It is, therefore, abundantly clear that "unto the name" should be substituted for "in the name" in the two passages cited above (Acts viii.16; xix.5). And it is the more necessary that this change should be made, owing to the fact that "in (en) the name of the Lord" is found in connection with baptism in Acts x.48. In this case, the meaning is that those who baptized Cornelius and others who with him "heard the word," acted under the direction of Peter on behalf of and under the authority of the Lord Himself.

Having elucidated the more exact form of the phrase, "unto the Name," its meaning may now engage our attention. And the similar expression in 1 Corinthians x.2 may help us to ascertain this. There can be little question that those who were "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" were symbolically brought into association with Moses and made subject to his authority as their leader through the wilderness to Canaan. In like manner, to be "baptized unto the name of the Lord Jesus" brings those who are baptized on to the ground where His authority is supreme,

and into the company of those who own that authority. Thus, the "name" of the Lord expresses, in this connection, what Christ is as the exalted and glorified Lord; while the baptized by their act confess Him as such, and also own His claims upon, and His authority over them.

This is not the whole truth concerning baptism, for Paul teaches that as many as were baptized "unto (*eis*) Christ Jesus" were baptized "unto (*eis*) His death" (Romans vi.3,4). But we do not enter upon this now, as we desire to confine ourselves to the passage before us (I Corinthians x.2), and to call attention to its meaning. It implies the absolute authority of Christ as Lord, and the responsibility of those who have been baptized to confess and submit to that authority. In this day of profession and declension it is well to inquire whether souls who have been formally led on to the ground of Christianity are aware of the responsibilities they have assumed of allegiance to Christ. Surely, the Lord might say to many of us, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke vi.46). For there never was a time when the spirit of lawlessness was more prevalent, even in combination with a confession of the name and authority of Christ. If the first duty of a soldier is unquestioning obedience, surely a professing Christian should be marked in the eyes of the world by his unqualified obedience to the authority of his Lord as expressed in His word, and by his devotedness in maintaining at all costs the honour of His blessed name.

### SHOWING LOVE UNTO HIS NAME

Another example of the use of this phrase may be cited from the Epistle to the Hebrews. There we read, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have shewed toward (unto, *eis*) His name. in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Hebrews vi.10). This passage is remarkable for the precious truth it contains. It will be observed that here the "name" is the name of God. In this Epistle, Christ is seen as the High



Priest at the right hand of God, representing and interceding for His people. Still, it is the name of God as revealed in Christ, for in chapter i. we are reminded that the Son is addressed as God (verse 8).

This being so, let us seek the meaning in this passage of the words, "unto His name." First of all, it is plain that the apostle is alluding to ministry among the saints. These Hebrew believers had been doing good, and "communicating," that is, sharing what they possessed with their fellow-saints who were in need, knowing that with such sacrifices God was well pleased (xiii.16). By thus caring in true brotherly love for the needs of the saints of God, they had been, and were, the apostle says, shewing love, "unto His name."

But this requires further explanation. It must be remembered that our blessed Lord fully identifies Himself with His people, and that His name is called upon them to bear and to maintain in honour before men. On account of this intimate association, to receive a Christian in the name of Christ is to receive Christ Himself; and further, to receive Christ is to receive Him that sent Him (Matthew x.40; John xiii.20). God is thus identified with Christ (not now to speak of Their essential unity), and Christ makes Himself one with His own.

Turning now to the other side with this in mind, it will be at once understood that whatever is lovingly ministered to His own is regarded as kindness shown "unto His name." The Lord has Himself declared this close identification in the ever-memorable words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matthew xxv.40). So, too, the Lord said, in a still deeper sense, to Saul of Tarsus, who was the bitter and relentless enemy of His disciples, "Why persecutest thou Me?" It is, therefore, a great encouragement at all times to remember this oneness between Christ and His own, and also that the Lord regards what is done to His saints as having been done to Himself.

## GATHERED UNTO THE NAME

We now refer to the instance in Matthew xviii., and we quote the whole passage, "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in (unto) My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew xviii. 19,20). The phrase here is "*eis to onoma*," as in Acts viii.16; xix.5.

To understand rightly the significance of this important passage it is needful to bear in mind that the Lord is speaking of a time when He will be absent from His own; they would be on earth, and He in heaven. He makes known these provisions for them during His absence, that, during the period which precedes the establishment of His kingdom in manifested glory, as seen in vision on the mount of transfiguration (chapter xvii.).

But, in the structure of the Gospel, chapter xviii. takes up the two subjects introduced in chapter xvi. 18,19, viz:— the church and the kingdom, which should occupy the place of Christ on the earth during His absence and His session at the right hand of Jehovah until His enemies be made His footstool (Psalm cx.1.). It may be pointed out here that in connection with the mention of the assembly in this chapter (xviii. 17), the Lord made provision for three matters: first, the question of trespass against a brother; secondly, the administration of discipline by binding and loosing, with its divine ratification when done according to God; and, lastly, what more immediately concerns us in this paper, the condition of prevailing prayer.

It will be noticed that verse 19 opens with the words, "Again I say unto you," which indicate that they introduce an additional instruction, though we cannot doubt that the company (the "two of you" and the "two or three") is connected with the assembly named in verse 17. What is now added is the teaching concerning agreement in prayer, rather than anything which regards the church, except, indeed, the revelation of the wondrous grace which associates the Lord's

presence with any two or three who may be gathered "unto His name," whether for united prayer or other purpose.

Viewing the passage in this sense, it will be perceived how much depends upon what is meant by being "gathered unto His name." Speaking generally, it may be said that as the "name" expresses the truth and reality of the Person named, the Lord Himself must be the Centre and Object of the whole gathering, the Centre around Whom they are gathered and the Object for which they are gathered.

But then it must also be remembered that His full name is the Lord Jesus Christ. And His name, as such, speaks therefore of His authority as Lord, of His Person as Jesus, the Son of God, and of His work as the Christ Who suffered for sins. Thus, to be gathered "unto His name" implies that those "gathered" are subject to His authority as Lord; and accept His atoning sacrifice and priesthood as the Christ. These and many other truths are inseparably associated with the "Name," and the promise of His Presence is to those who are gathered "unto My name," not to a creed or list of Bible doctrines.

No doubt the ultimate power of gathering unto Christ's name is the Holy Spirit. Indeed, is not this evident from the fact that He is here to glorify Christ, as the Lord said, "He shall glorify Me"? (John xvi. 14). This being so, those gathered by the Holy Spirit will be those who confess the supremacy and glory of Christ. Nor can we believe that the Holy Spirit would sanction any assembly or gathering where the supremacy of Christ is not owned and His word obeyed; or where there is indifference to the glories of His Person or to the revealed character of the atonement made upon the cross. This, therefore, is the test of every company claiming to be "gathered unto His name."

### THE NAME AND THE PRESENCE

One condition only does the Lord lay down for His presence in the midst: He said, "Where two or three are gathered together **unto My name**, there am I in the midst of them." He did not say, There will I be, but There am I. We

learn therefrom that to be gathered unto His name ensures His presence. The **realisation** of that presence may and must depend upon the state of soul of those forming the company. But the Lord's presence in the midst is contingent upon the fulfilment of the condition of gathering embodied in His promise — "unto My name."

What grace is this promise of the Lord! What a fount of blessing and power is the Lord's own presence in the midst of His own! Indeed, an example of such a result precedes this promise (verse 19). There the Lord tells us that He Himself, present in the midst of His saints gathered after this manner, is the power to produce agreement in prayer, and He gives the assurance that every such petition will be answered by the Father. Similarly, He is the power in meetings for worship and the breaking of bread.

In the light of these scriptures, what need there is for serious heart-searching with regard to the character of our gatherings! And what a call they make to examine the state of our souls individually, even if we are truly gathered unto His name! One of Satan's snares is to lead us to take it for granted that our behaviour in the presence of the Lord is all it should be, so that we may lose the benefit of our privileges. To avoid the devices of the enemy and the deceitfulness of our natural hearts, let us be in constant communion with God, submitting ourselves, our ways, and our associations to the searching light of His holy presence and to the testing truth of His written word. So, and only so, shall we prove within ourselves the immeasurable value of the Lord's own words, "Where two or three are gathered together **unto My name**, there am I in the midst of them." E.D. (1896)

## STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### XVII. Chapters xx.1-xxi.25

*(Christ's Resurrection and Manifestation to His own)*

Chapter xx. opens with an account of the Lord's first appearance after His resurrection on the first of the week. Altogether John records four of the post-resurrection appearances of our Lord.

Why was His first appearance made to Mary Magdalene (Mark xvi.9)? Her greeting of the Lord shows she was not the most intelligent of His followers. But she loved Him, and her love had drawn her to the sepulchre early that morning. She could not forget that the Lord had brought peace and joy into her life of discord and sin. As this loving disciple tarried at the empty tomb, the Lord revealed Himself to her.

Mary Magdalene saw or observed the stone taken away from the tomb (verse 1). Peter, coming later and entering the tomb, saw only the linen clothes with the napkin (verses 6,7). John followed, and again (verse 5) saw the linen clothes lying as before, but he now "saw and believed" (verse 8).

The Lord's first words after being raised from the dead were addressed to Mary. "Woman, why dost thou weep?" (verse 15). The inquiry prepared her for His words of consolation, which would quickly follow, and dry her tears.

(It is interesting to notice, in passing, that the first words of the Lord recorded by John are "Come and see" (i.39), and almost the last are "Follow thou Me" (xxi.22).)

The Lord's injunction to Mary, "Touch Me not" (verse 17), seems to indicate that the new character of the disciples' association with Christ would be perceived by faith rather than by sight or touch. It was a corrective to Jewish hopes for earthly blessing under a Messiah present on the earth. This character is shown in Matthew xxviii.9, where we read that the disciples "held Him by the feet."

The commission Mary receives (verse 17) is another example of special communications given by the Lord to women. On another occasion He revealed the central truth of Christian worship to a woman (John iv.21-24). Here Mary conveys tidings of the new and heavenly relationship established by the Lord with His disciples, whom He now calls His brethren.

Mary recognised the Lord by His use of her own name, Mary (verse 16). The Good Shepherd called His own sheep by name. Mary heard His voice and recognised Him (chapter x.3,4,14,27).

The delivery of Mary's message was followed by the gathering of the disciples together in the evening with the doors shut for fear of the Jews (verse 19). The truth properly conveyed always gathers the sheep of Christ; it is error which scatters them.

The Lord entered with the familiar salutation, "Peace be unto you," but His words on that day bore a new meaning. Peace of conscience for sinful men had been made by the blood of His cross, and the manifold fruits of His toil, the spoils of His victory, are to be made over to His own.

The Risen Christ not only gave them peace, but the Holy Spirit also in a new measure (verses 22-23). The Lord breathed on them breath of a better life. They would receive the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Romans viii.2). He had come that they might have life "more abundantly" (see chapter x.10). The Lord also gave them a mission into the world; "As the Father sent Me forth, I also send you" (verse 21).

The gathering was of the Lord's disciples, not of the apostles only, so that the authority to remit or to retain sins (verse 23) was not confined to the apostles, but was conferred upon all believers in Christ. Mary the mother of Jesus was possibly there (cp. Acts i.14); certainly the two who had journeyed to Emmaus earlier in the day were present (Luke xxiv.13-35).

Of the apostles, Thomas was not present. He was good-hearted but an intellectualist, and his unbelief in the evidence of his brethren kept him waiting a week for further assurance that the Lord had risen. His confession, however, when he saw the Lord was a grand one. His unbelief until he saw gave occasion for a new beatitude upon those who believe without seeing (verse 29).

The character of the Gospel of John is described (verse 30) and then the cause of its being written (verse 31). The credentials of this Gospel are stated at the end of the next chapter (xxi. 24,25).

Verse 14 of chapter xxi. shows that this chapter forms part of the original design of the Gospel, and is not an appendix. The incident on the sea of Tiberias (xxi.1-14) probably took

place before the Lord's appearance to "above five hundred brethren at once" (I Corinthians xv.6).

The three disciples named had confessed the deity of Christ, viz:—Simon Peter (Matthew xvi.16), Nathaniel (chapter i.49) and Thomas (chapter xx.28). These three with others returned to their fishing. The Lord's miracle would awaken the memories of the apostles. On two other occasions the Lord had exercised His authority over the fish of the sea (Luke v.1-11; Matthew xvii.24-27).

The two final chapters of John illustrate the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee" (Psalm xxii.22).

(Concluded)

## RECEPTION

(Note on Acts ix.26-8)

In the matter of reception, the greatest possible care should be exercised by the brethren to guard the holiness of God's house, the assembly of the living God (I Timothy iii.15). It would be an evil act to admit to the Lord's table one who did not bring "the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 10); and it would also be contrary to the will of the Lord to refuse admittance to one of His little ones. In the former case, the practice is too *broad*: an enemy of Christ is received. In the latter, the practice is too *narrow*: a friend of Christ, doing what He commands (John xv.14) is refused. The saints are responsible to the Lord to avoid both extremes. The Lord has instructed His own how to distinguish between a good tree and a corrupt tree: "by their fruits ye shall know them," He said (Matthew vii.16,20). In the time of "The Acts," this test was used in reception. When Saul sought admittance to the assembly in Jerusalem, the disciples were afraid of him, knowing only his former evil fruits. But Barnabas made inquiry and learned of his good fruits at Damascus. Saul was then received. This incident is still of the utmost value as a guide to the method of receiving according to apostolic practice.

W. J. HOCKING

(From The Bible Monthly — March/April, 1946)

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(continued from inside back cover)*

duced, if necessary. They undoubtedly show that thanksgiving at meals should be cultivated as a regular Christian habit. (2) It is true that all God's gifts, such as fresh air and sunshine, for example, should be acknowledged thankfully, but food is placed by God in a special category, and we are admonished not to overlook the giving of thanks for this mercy. (3) It is also true that the act of thanksgiving may be performed mechanically sometimes, but this is equally true of our prayers and Bible reading. A lapse into dry or dead formality does not provide an adequate excuse for occasionally abstaining altogether. It would be better to seek to overcome the tendency to legalism by recalling our direct indebtedness to God for the nourishment of our bodies.

It may be added that the above principles should be carried out in practice, not in a spirit of irksome bondage, but in the spirit of happy liberty "wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Galatians v.1). In every one's daily practice, problems are sure to arise, calling for individual exercise of heart and conscience. Food may be eaten under a variety of conditions, ranging perhaps from a glass of water or a biscuit or a bar of chocolate to a multi-course dinner. We may eat alone or in company, at home or at a public table, with fellow-believers or in the presence of unbelievers. One may say one's own grace silently, or give thanks aloud for others. In all cases God looks at the heart and accepts the simple, real, earnest thanks rendered to Him. But where grace is said as a parade of piety, in a bold and conspicuous manner with the evident intention of being seen of men, it incurs the Lord's condemnation of the hypocrites in their prayers (Matthew vi.5). Let us heed the words of the Psalmist: "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good . . . Who giveth food to all flesh: for His mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm cxxxvi.1,25).

W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly" March, 1929)

## THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

The constant and ever bolder attacks of Satan against the sacred person of the Christ, referred to in the April issue of Words of Help (pages 42 and 43), seem to call for a fuller exposition of scripture teaching on the subject of His sinlessness.

### MAN'S SINFULNESS

In order to understand this fully, it is necessary to refer first to what the Bible teaches about the inward corruption of man.

In the Old Testament we find not only a dreadful record of human wickedness, but a clear pointer to the underlying cause — the sinful *heart* of man. The prophet Jeremiah says in chapter xvii.9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

The New Testament abundantly confirms this. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children,” said the Lord to His disciples, distinguishing thus between the inherent evil of the human heart and natural love. And again, “From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.” (Mark vii.21.22.)

Even the converted man, who has received a new life from God by faith in the Saviour, still has the old, corrupt nature within him, as Paul explains in Romans vii. He sums up in verses 22,23: “I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”

### THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION TO SIN

Popular religion has little understanding of the truth thus clearly stated in the Bible, and it is equally at fault on the question of temptation to sin. It supposes that all temptation is from without, and that there is nothing wrong in being tempted, only in yielding to temptation. Let us examine this in the light of God's word.

The apostle James warns us "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (James i.13-15.)

This scripture traces the beginning of such temptation to a man's own evil nature. Certainly, instead of going on to sin, as James describes, he may resist, and finally, refuse the temptation, but even so he cannot escape the defiling effect of evil desire. If we are honest, we shall all admit the truth of this. The struggle to resist does not prove him sinless, for if he were he would reject the temptation immediately.

Another form of temptation is the desire to escape unpleasant consequences by some sinful act, e.g. by a lie. Here the lie itself is not attractive, but as a means of escape it is. Were the heart pure, no such solution would even be thought of. The enemy of our souls knows what is most likely to cause us to sin.

It is not implied that all temptation has this character, for the trials of life may be used by Satan to tempt us from the path of duty, or persuade us to distrust the goodness of God. If then our hearts are abiding in dependence upon the Lord, we shall overcome the temptation and may suffer no defilement in the struggle, though our hearts may easily deceive us here.

## **THE HOLINESS OF CHRIST**

The witness of the scriptures to the holiness of the man Jesus Christ is full and unvarying in character. It begins with the announcement of the angel Gabriel to Mary, in answer to her question how she, a virgin, could bear a son. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, wherefore also that which it to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." (R.V.)

This revelation, couched in terms which defeat further inquiry by prying minds, yet gives us to know unmistakably that this Child, though coming in David's line, would be unlike those of Adam's race. He would be *holy*. Not just innocent, as a baby too young to know good or evil, but in which the fallen nature would soon show itself in sinful ways. He was holy, and God's Son from His birth. This in no way conflicts with His eternal Sonship. It is just that when the eternal Son became man, the eternal Father was Father in relation to His humanity also, and that in a unique way, true of no other man.

It is important to notice, if only because men raise doubts about it, that His only recorded utterance before His public life began shows clearly that, as a boy of twelve in the Temple, He was fully conscious of His divine Sonship. When Mary said "Your father and I have been searching for you" He replied "Did you not know that I was bound to be in My Father's house?" (Luke ii.48,49. N.E.B.)

Positive statements of scripture as to His sinlessness are like a fortress constructed so that every angle of attack is guarded. The three greatest apostolic writers all join their testimony. As to His nature, John says "In Him is no sin" (I John iii.5). As to His life here, Peter says "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (I Peter ii.22), and Paul that "He knew no sin" (II Cor. v.21) — was unacquainted with it in His personal experience.

He could challenge His enemies "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" and Himself claim "I do always those things that please My Father." Twice the Father broke the silence of heaven to bear witness to His delight in His Son — once at His baptism and again at the Transfiguration.

## TWO MISCONCEPTIONS

It is sometimes argued, firstly that the Lord's identifying Himself with man would have been incomplete if He had not to struggle against temptation as we have to, and secondly, that He could not enter into our real difficulties

or sympathise in our struggles if He had not experienced evil impulses. The statement in Hebrews iv.15 "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," is quoted to maintain this.

Now first of all the Authorised Version here is misleading. The word "yet", added for the sake of smoothness, is better omitted, and then "apart from sin" gives the meaning more unambiguously. It is not that sin did not result from His temptations, true though that is; but that, though tempted in all other ways, He was not tempted in *that* way, by sinful desire. A similar meaning of the same phrase can be seen in Hebrews ix.28, "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without (or, apart from) sin unto salvation." The writer is not saying that He will appear without sin, which was always true, but that His coming will be apart from sin, that is, He will not come to atone for sin, as at His first coming.

There was nothing, then, in the holy nature of the Lord Jesus that could possibly give rise to any desire that He had to contend against. All His testings came from without — from the suggestions of Satan in the wilderness, or from Peter's "Be it far from thee Lord" when He spoke of the cross, together with the countless trials of His spirit through His contact with faithless and sinful men.

In truth the idea of His "identifying" of Himself with men in His life here is wrong. It is not just by example or teaching that we are saved: our need is far deeper. The life of Christ among men only made their ruin more evident, for it manifested the hatred of their hearts to God. No, Christ's *identification* with man was only on the cross, where "God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made God's righteousness in Him" (II Cor. v.21). Again in Romans viii.3,4 we read "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be

fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

Mark the words “likeness of sinful flesh”—outwardly Christ was like other men, but inwardly there was perfect holiness in contrast to man’s sinfulness. Mark, too, that “sin in the flesh” was condemned at the cross, not forgiven. Not strengthening, or uplifting is God’s cure for man’s fallen nature, but *death*. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Rom. vi.6.)

This effect of Christ’s death the believer appropriates by faith, seeing in the death of the Saviour the end of all that he was naturally, in order that the risen Christ might dwell in him.

So then, in his struggles against indwelling sin, a believer is called upon to “mortify” its impulses, recalling the cost to his Saviour of putting away sin, and seeing himself — the old self — as one who has died with Christ, that he might now live to God.

To live to God in a world like this, where everything is against us and we are so weak — this is where the help of our great High Priest meets our need. For it was conflict like this which He endured in full measure. And weakness too, did He not know it? In Gethsemane an angel appeared to Him, strengthening Him. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He was in all points tempted like as we are — sin apart.

It should perhaps be stressed that in the Lord’s prayer in Gethsemane no question of sin arose at all. For He had fulfilled in all perfection the will of God as to His life in this world, and thus could righteously have *claimed* deliverance from His foes. Instead, He prayed, in perfect subjection to His Father’s will, that the dreadful cup might pass away from Him *if it were possible* — if there were any other way for the will of God to be accomplished.

“All the path the saints are treading,  
Trodden by the Son of God;  
Sorrows too which they are feeling,  
Felt by Him along the road;  
All the bitterness and trial  
From around and borne within,  
All the joy and all the triumph,  
He passed through, apart from sin.”

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## THE ROMAN CENSUS AND THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

*“A decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census should be made of all the habitable world . . . And all went to be inscribed in the census roll, each to his own city; and Joseph also went up from Galilee . . . to David’s city, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David” (Luke ii.1-4)*

The second chapter of Luke opens with a political but providential event which we find nowhere else in the Four Gospels, yet it is one which explains a fact found in the First Gospel as well as in the Third — Jesus was born in Bethlehem. His parents were in the habit of living in the province of Galilee. How then, if the ordinary residence of His parents was at Nazareth, which was at one extremity of the land, could He be born at Bethlehem, which was almost at the other? But God secretly intervened through “the powers that be,” and by reason of an imperial edict from Rome the promises and prophecies relating to the birthplace of the Messiah were accomplished.

### THE CENSUS DECREED

Caesar Augustus was reigning as Emperor of Rome, the fourth and last of the Gentile empires foretold by Daniel the prophet. The Holy Land was put in subjection to each of



these successive ruling powers. And now the pagan emperor in Rome exercised his despotic power by the issue of a decree demanding the presence of every man in his own or native city, there to be officially enrolled for state purposes. The decree indicated that the whole habitable world must bow to the sceptre of Caesar. Nazareth as well as Babylon and Athens and Alexandria was bound to obey the mandate from Rome.

The exercise of universal dominion will in due time be according to God when the Lord Jesus is manifestly exalted upon the throne of supreme sovereignty in the earth. Being Himself a Divine Person as well as man, the Son and Lord of David will govern the world with absolute power as man without derogating in the smallest degree from the rights and authority and will of God.

In the idolatrous and tyrannical reign of Caesar Augustus, however, conditions were far different. Even the people of God were placed in abject servitude to the "fourth beast" with his "great iron teeth," which destroyed and devoured and shattered everything before it (Daniel vii.7). Rome brooked no resistance. Wonderful to say, the pious mother of the Messiah, as well as His legal father, was among those who had to pay obedience to the Roman Emperor.

Accordingly, Joseph and Mary for the census journeyed to their own city, the city of David, Bethlehem, thus accomplishing the prophecies that had gone before concerning the birth of Jesus, Whose kingdom would in due course as "the stone . . . cut out without hands," pulverise the four great Gentile world-kings (Daniel ii.), including the then existing one of Rome. Now Micah's words would come to pass: "And thou Bethlehem-Ephratah, little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall He come forth unto Me, Who is to be Ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity" (Micah v.2). The decree of Jehovah preceded that of Caesar, which thus became the unconscious instrument of its due fulfilment.

## THE CENSUS DELAYED BUT GOD'S WILL DONE

Moreover, this historical fulfilment of the prophecy is rendered still more remarkable by Luke's explanatory note in verse 2: "The census itself first took place when Cyrenius had the government of Syria." From this statement we learn that the actual compilation of the statistical details for the official census was carried out at a later date, when Cyrenius (Quirinus) was governor of Syria.

The first step was the enrolment or registration of adults in their own towns. And it was at this preliminary stage that the purpose of God was fulfilled in causing Joseph and Mary to leave their home in Nazareth and travel to Bethlehem, some seventy miles or so away. The Christ must be born in Bethlehem. And "the powers that be" which are "ordained of God" contributed to this end.

We therefore learn incidentally from the Gospel narrative that in His inscrutable wisdom and omnipotent overruling, God was pleased to use the political regulations of the Roman government without any conscious co-operation on its part to the furtherance of His purpose and the accomplishments of His designs. There was a widespread re-arrangement of the inhabitants of Palestine, but only two of them are before the mind of the Holy Spirit in Luke. "And all went to be inscribed in the census roll, each to his own city; and Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth to Judaea, to David's city, the which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be inscribed in the census roll with Mary who was betrothed to him as his wife, she being great with child" (verses 3-5).

In this journey, Joseph was accompanied by Mary, his "betrothed wife." From the time that a woman among the Jews was espoused she was considered legally the wife of him to whom she was betrothed. Thus the Lord Jesus, while really Son of His mother Mary, was legally of Joseph; and by descent both Joseph and Mary were of the royal line in Israel. The Lord Jesus, therefore, represented David

on both sides; but as the law required He was the lineal descendant of Solomon on the legal side. For no matter how unquestionably Jesus might have been the Son of Mary, descended from the Nathan stem of David, He could not, according to the law, have been the Messiah as long as there was a living representative of the Solomon branch. But the Lord, being the legally reputed Son of Joseph as well as Mary's child, was precisely so descended as to be in every required respect "David's Son," the Messiah. This is said quite independently of His divine glory, which was also demanded for other and far deeper reasons.

### **THE ORDAINED HOUR AND THE ORDAINED PLACE**

The appointed place was reached; the moment arrived for the Son of God, Creator and Saviour, to enter His own world. "And it came to pass, while they were there, the days of her giving birth to her child were fulfilled, and she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling-clothes and laid him in the manger, because there was no room for them in the inn (verses 6,7).

Joseph and Mary, though of the house and lineage of David, seem to have been friendless and without a welcome in Bethlehem, the city of David. Though of royal blood, the pair were given no precedence at the inn; for them there was "no room." Nor did Mary receive compassionate sympathy and aid in the sorrows of child-bearing. She brought forth her Firstborn; she wrapped Him up; she laid Him in a manger. Like the first mother of mankind, she was alone in the moment of her maternity.

### **THE NABAL-SPIRIT AT THE INN**

It is an instructive intimation that the Lord of glory when born into the world was laid in the manger, not even in the inn, where there was no room. What a picture of the state of the world! Wrapped in selfish and sinful interests and pursuits, convenience and comfort, there was no room in the world for Him who was God! Men of the world according to their station and means found place in the inn as it

sued them. Those with money commanded the accommodation for which they were willing to pay. But the parents of our Lord were in such poverty as to be thoroughly despised and neglected at the inn; and the only shelter they could find for the Babe was a manger. Yet it was thus that He Who was rich became poor for our sakes that we through His poverty might be made rich. For the fulness of the time had come, and God had "sent forth His Son, come of woman, come under law, that He might redeem those under law that we might receive sonship" (Galatians iv.4,5).

W.K. (adapted)

## THANKSGIVING AT MEALS

Is there any scripture which guides us as to thanksgiving at meals? Do not all the good things we receive call equally for thanksgiving? As we sometimes give thanks so mechanically that we are afterwards uncertain whether we have done so or not, would it not be less displeasing to the Lord if we gave thanks less frequently and more earnestly and consciously?

It may be helpful, in the first instance, to say something upon the general subject of thanksgiving to God before dealing with the specific points raised in the query. We are bound to offer our thanks to God continually because we are entirely dependent upon the bounty of Him who "giveth to all life and breath and all things" (Acts xvii.25). The world generally ignores this elementary truth relating to human existence, but the believer in Christ is taught of God to own it fully. Moreover, because even he has a tendency to forget his indebtedness to divine mercy for "all things," he is definitely enjoined to give "thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians v.20). Thanksgiving is not optional on our part, for the apostle declares that "it is the will of God in Christ Jesus" that we should "in everything give thanks" (I Thessalonians v.18).

But in addition to this habit of general thanksgiving, we find that a meal is to be considered a particular occasion for the giving of thanks. In partaking of food for the support of our life we are, or should be, reminded of our Great Benefactor Whose poor pensioners we are. Ignorance on our part of this obligation is inexcusable, because from the beginning God by special revelation, both before and after the fall, showed that vegetable and animal food alike are His gifts to man for his maintenance (Genesis i.29,30; ix.3). He has never failed to send rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling men's hearts with food and gladness (Acts xiv.17). What a perennial cause for thankfulness to Him! But, alas, it is recorded as a signal mark of men's sinful departure from God and forgetfulness of His mercies that "they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful" (Romans i.21). Thus, despising the riches of God's goodness in the things of nature has been true of sinners from earliest times. This is deplorable, but it is still more so if found in the children of God.

When the redeemed people of Jehovah were settled in the good land of Canaan they were warned not to forget God Who brought them there. In their worship of the One living and true God they were to be an example to all the nations around them "that forget God." The Israelites might, and should, rejoice in every good thing the Lord their God gave them in the land flowing with milk and honey, but they were not to omit to bring the firstfruits to the Lord of all the earth, and worship before Him in grateful praise (Deuteronomy xxvi.10,11). When they thus came before the Lord to "eat the fat and drink the sweet," the inspired words of thanksgiving for their lips would be, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits . . . Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalm ciii.1-5). Now it is the believer who is called to show an example to all men of what is due to God for all His benefits, receiving them with thanksgiving according to the word of the apostle regarding

foods "which God created to be received (that is, eaten) with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth" (I Timothy iv.3).

The New Testament gives us the Lord's own teaching and example. He taught His disciples to say, when they prayed, "give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew vi.11). He taught the poor of His little flock not to be over-anxious concerning what they should eat and what they should drink, because their heavenly Father knew they had need of all these things (Matthew vi.31,32). The Lord Himself, at the outset of the meals He provided for the multitudes, blessed and gave thanks (Matthew xiv.19; xv.36; Mark vi.41; viii.6; John vi.11). The importance of His public thanksgiving may be gathered from John's subsequent reference to the miracle: "The place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had *given thanks*" (John vi.23). He emphasises, not the multiplication of the loaves which we think so wonderful, but the Lord's giving of thanks at the beginning of the meal. There was blessing as well, as there was at the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matthew xxvi.26,27). But it must be noted that in no case does the Lord bless the bread (there is no "it" after the verb in the original in Matthew xxvi.26: compare Mark xiv.22). The Lord Jesus, as the obedient Man, blessed God the Giver, not the inanimate food.

Another instance is after the Lord's resurrection. At the evening meal in Emmaus, He "took bread, and blessed" (Luke xxiv.30). On this occasion the meal was private, not in public; in the house not on the hillside; with perhaps only two beside the Lord present not a great multitude. It is specially helpful to note this in connexion with the query before us. The Risen Lord gave thanks at a little cottage meal!

What do we learn from Paul? On board ship, during the storm, he advised the passengers and crew to take some food after their protracted fast of a fortnight. Setting them an example in more ways than one, he "took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all" (Acts xxvii.35).

Writing of eating special foods on religious feast days, the apostle, in view of the believer's liberty, says: "He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks" (Romans xiv.6). Mark that thanks were given in both circumstances. Again, in another Epistle, speaking of eating things sacrificed to idols, he says: "If I partake with thanksgiving, why am I spoken evil of for what I give thanks for?" (I Corinthians x.30, N.T.). From these scriptures it appears that thanksgiving at meals was a recognised habit in apostolic days.

Further, Paul, condemning an unnatural abstinence from certain foods on pseudo-religious grounds, laid down the fundamental truth that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (I Timothy iv.4,5). Again, it is implied that thanks to God is an habitual accompaniment of receiving or eating food. Like the Pentecostal believers, we should eat, or receive, our food (meat) with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God (Acts ii.46). Note that every "creature" good for food is already sanctified or set apart for this purpose by the word of God in Genesis, as we have observed above. The commonly-used grace before meat, "Sanctify these creatures to our use. and us to Thy service," prays for something to be done which, according to this passage, has already been done. The formal "grace after meat," which, in practice, is mostly omitted altogether, would be more appropriate at the beginning of the meal, when the thanks due to God should surely be made the first consideration.

It would be as well to take notice that, according to scripture, our thanksgiving should be rendered to God the Father "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians v.20), or "by" (through) the Lord Jesus (Colossians iii.17).

We will now refer briefly to the particular points of the query. (1) Some scriptures have been cited which afford guidance on the general subject, and others could be pro-

*(concluded inside front cover)*

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