

# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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Vol. LVII

JANUARY 1969

No. 1

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(continued from inside back cover)*

(a) The word "age" is often used to signify a period having some characteristic feature, as the ice age, the stone age, and the like. In scripture "age" is used mostly in an evil sense, being characterized by antagonism to God. Naturally, we walked according to its course (Ephesians ii.2), but Christ has delivered us out of it (Galatians i.4). Now, therefore, we are not to fashion ourselves according to it, avoiding all contact with its subtle debasing influences. Demas is an instance of failure in testimony through love for this age (2 Timothy iv.10).

(b) But besides standing aloof from this age, we are to cultivate a growing transformation into inward excellence. The mind is to be renewed, and the process of accomplishing this gradual development is to have a constant aim — to *prove* what is God's will by learning it, and finding by experience that it is good and acceptable (or well-pleasing) and perfect. In the discovery that the will of God is delightful to us, we most closely conform to Christ Jesus, Whose delight was to do God's will (Psalm xl.8). Compare also the reference to Christ's sacrifice as an example for us (Ephesians v.2). Note the correspondence of (a) and (b) with the negative and positive precepts in Isaiah i.16, 17: "Cease to do evil; learn to do well."

The unreserved presentation of this living sacrifice to God involves the complete absence of selfish claims and the presence of a spirit of lowliness and meekness. If each believer were free from self-exaltation, the relations of believers in their intercourse one with another would work harmoniously and for the mutual benefit of all the members of the body of Christ, and for the good of men generally. Self-seeking hinders the operation of the Spirit of God among the saints.

(Extracted)

## NEW YEAR, 1969

From one point of view, a new year is nothing to a Christian. For years, and seasons, and days, belong to time, and to the earth; but the Christian belongs to eternity, and to heaven, where Christ is. Yet this is by no means all the truth, and it is a mistake to belittle our very real ties with things of time and sense. If a burglar should invade our home and relieve us of some of those earthly possessions which burden us, there are few of us who would rejoice at it. However, our heavenly Father knows that we have need of such things, and real faith enjoys what He gives, and does not pretend to despise them.

Of what, then, shall the New Year speak to us?

*First* — that, earth-bound as we are by reason of our links with the old creation, the time of our liberation has drawn nearer. We see the Day approaching (Heb. x.25). It is a happy thing for the believer who has learnt from the word of God what the destiny of this present evil world is, to be able to see that the very decay of our society, the rejection of those moral teachings which once were valued, the turmoil among the nations, the dark trouble clouds everywhere upon the horizon, only combine to emphasize that God's word is being fulfilled (Matt. xxiv.38; 2 Tim. iii; iv.3,4). The night may grow darker for the world, but it is the rising of the Sun of Righteousness that will end it, not the gloomy prognostications of unbelieving men. And before the Sun, the Morning Star will appear: the Lord Jesus as the glorious hope of the Church, coming to take His bride to Himself.

It is well to pause and ask ourselves, to what extent do we really look for Him? We may truly long for our liberation, the redemption of our bodies (Rom. viii.23), but do our hearts desire to see His face?

His coming will mean the end of present troubles and perplexities, but what is this compared with the joy of really meeting Him, whose love and goodness we know so well?

*Second* — of the immense debt of gratitude we owe to our God, not only for the salvation of our souls, but for keeping our feet in the heavenly pathway for yet another year.

Some who once walked well have given up their profession, and others by their conduct bring dishonour on the name of Christ. Our own hearts are as deceitful as ever; our adversary the Devil as cunning and determined as ever: it becomes us then to let gratitude for past deliverance lead us to increased watchfulness for the coming year.

*Third* — that in the year that lies ahead our constant refuge and stay must be the *abounding goodness of God*. This must be so, whether we are concerned with spiritual matters or with the day to day affairs of our life in this world.

This was David's cry as he thought of Doeg's attempt to destroy him: "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually" (Psalm lii.1). This was not said in peaceful circumstances, but when David was not only in danger of his own life, but when, through depending upon deceit instead of God's power and love towards him, he had brought immense suffering upon his faithful friends (I Samuel xxii.22).

Nevertheless he was sure that the goodness of God remained unchanged, and would remain, and would infallibly bring him through to final triumph and kingship.

This confidence in God's goodness must be ours in the coming year. We are unworthy, as David was. We fail, and sin, as he did; we may let others down, who depend on us, as he did. We may also find, as he did, that those we thought were friends have betrayed us (I Samuel xxiii.12). We know for certain that Satan is busy, both in the world and in the church, and that there are those who boast of the mischief they can do to the cause of Christ. But the goodness of God is unchanging.

Men say, if God is good, why does He allow so and so? forgetting that the power which they invoke against the wickedness of others is restrained only because of His goodness in leading all men to repentance. When the time for

repentance is past, His power will judge every form of wickedness.

Let us have confidence in God's goodness, and let us proclaim it when others question it. In the scriptures, if we read with diligence, we find it shining out in unexpected ways. Its supreme test, and its glorious victory, was of course at the cross. It is to this that we must return if ever Satan tempts us to doubt. And let us not only have confidence in it, but let it fashion our own ways towards others. "Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Instead then of dwelling upon the depressing scene around us, or on the difficulties of our path and our inability to cope with them, let us have confidence in our God, and let us dwell with gratitude and rejoicing upon the amazing goodness which bears so patiently and graciously with us, that goodness which endures continually.

E. H. Chamberlain

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

Luke ix.18. Luke refers often to the prayer life of the Lord Jesus. Moral glories follow one another in fulness and beauty as he continues his record of "perfect understanding of all things from the very first." So, we see Him "praying apart" — "His disciples were with Him."

Praying was not a ritual with Him — it was a reality. All about the beloved Worker was unbelief in its selfish pre-occupation with national place and power. The shadow of rejection was deepening — lengthening into death. "And it came to pass, as He was alone (apart) praying"! He is about to disclose His coming death — and how He was concerned for those about Him! They had announced the Kingdom, but they were to learn of the coming death of the King. He seems more concerned for them than for Himself. The moral glory of His dependence is vividly before Luke as he writes the words "He was alone (apart) praying." So opposite from

the mind of man was the mind of Christ. For Him — subjection, dependence, surrender to the paramount will of God. There was no other path, no other thought. For His disciples — disillusionment, the collapse of Jewish hopes!

Observe the careful record of His opening to the subject as He rises from prayer. “Whom say the people that I am?” (verse 18). Can it be thought that He did not know! Was not the very atmosphere, in which His sensitive soul moved, polluted with a spirit of unbelief? Of what use any more to announce the good tidings of the Kingdom? The *king* they envisaged was not lowly — devoted solely to the righteous requirements of a holy God. “Whom say the people that I am?” It was His way of opening to them the dreadful truth that He had come to His own things, and they “received Him not.” So their answer, faithfully reported: “John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again” (verse 19). This was a correct presentation of contemporary thought. Israel had imbibed the error of those about them. It was the modern concept of their time — the belief in re-incarnation of man that had brought fear to Herod.

Let us listen to His next question: “But whom say ye that I am?” Did He look for some comfort amid His awareness of the superstitious errors of those to whom He had come? Would there be some affirmation of the truth from a remnant who believed? For Peter and his companions it was a moment of declaration. To put into words that which they had believed and had preached was strengthening for them all! Was not this His purpose also? How far-reaching are His designs! How full His provision for those whom He had chosen! “Peter answering said, The Christ of God” (verse 20). There are times when our love and loyalty are uplifted by a gracious impulse which uses even our poor human reactions to bring joy to Christ!

For an unbelieving — and thus unrepentant — people to be told again the great message of the Christ of God in their midst would but add to their sin. “He straitly charged them,

and commanded to tell no man that thing." He was not among those who would cause insurrection against Caesar. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street" (Isaiah xlii.2). The Barabbas voice of sedition was always to be heard. This notoriety for public leadership was utterly repugnant to Him. "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day" (verse 22). Thus was the true and eternal salvation of Israel, and beyond, laid before them — together with the cost, beyond human measure, and the overwhelming response of the mighty God of Salvation.

"The Son of man must suffer many things," He told them. He uses the title associated with the cross. His crucifixion would be the measure of man's guilt. But God would reverse the evil intent of the Jews in crucifying their Messiah by raising Him the third day. The foundations of the Heavenly City must be laid.

How patiently, yet firmly, Jesus tells them that the Kingdom condition could not yet be introduced. Suffering in discipleship would be their path: to follow after Him would be to take up each his cross daily (verse 23). Far outstanding among all the events of the world is the death of the Son of man — the central point in the history of mankind over its whole span of past and future days! The Jew was concerned with "length of days", but the cross of Christ was the death scene of Jewish ideals. Eternal Life was in clear contrast with mortal life. To be ashamed of Him and His words was to lose the flickering life that man had been so careful to save in the world.

"But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (verse 27). They had been into the villages and among the people. The depressing spirit of unbelief was all about them. "Some say" this, and "some say" that — He could have been just any one of "the old prophets risen again"! So He would take them into the heights from which earthbound

men and things appear insignificant. They will find them unusual, and beyond their comprehension at the time, but it is there they shall have a vision of the Kingdom of God — the ultimate goal — the future Realm where all shall be brought into subjection to the will of God as the outcome of the death of the Son of man — the Messiah King, so soon to be crucified.

“And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” Luke joins the portions of the days that precede and end the six day period referred to by Matthew and Mark (Luke ix.28). It is as though he sees a new week beginning — beyond man’s week of six days — a commencing period of God’s new delight in His Son, for on that mount, all heaven is aware of His near departure (exodus) “which He should accomplish at Jerusalem”, while earth lies below in unbelief.

It would seem the day was declining. The three disciples are oppressed with sleep. The Glory of His Kingdom is about to appear, but man finds no human reserve to enable him. It would be so again in the Garden of Suffering. Jesus would find them heavy with sleep. They are in His company — but not with Him in spirit. How man, though he have life from God, fails in communion with Him! Such is the contrast before us. We see the only truly dependent Man transfigured as He prays. What a glory envelops His subjection — what but the glory that was all His own!

Would we live at all in the light of His kingdom? The primary elements of it are subjection and dependence. The surrender of the will — that process to which we are so unused — that the will of God may be paramount and prevail in reality. A man who prays is one who is without human resource — with empty hands outstretched he shows alike his poverty and his need. Luke alone of the evangelists writes of Jesus’ prayer upon this mount and the changed aspect of His countenance.



For those of us who follow Him there comes the question, to what extent is our countenance affected by our prayer experience? Can we make true approach to God and remain unaffected by His grace, His compassion, His patient love — by ALL that He is? There could be no moral inadequacy or imperfection in the Lord Jesus, but if we would be transformed (transfigured), then the outshining of God in the Lord Jesus will be our central thought, and, as we dwell upon it in the presence of God, we shall know, as Paul knew, the progress of this changing from glory to glory. “We all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit” (2 Corinthians iii.18. New Tr.). Is not this available to us “all” — and may we not be imperfectly comprehending it, as Peter — “not knowing what he said”?

The answer is heard, as the Shekinah glory cloud enfolds Moses and Elias, “This is My Beloved Son: hear Him.” It is the glory of all that God is in GRACE through His Beloved Son — the presentation of the divine purpose of justification, of peace with God, of means of approach in the assurance of His LOVE, reconciliation and eternal life. The workers who wrought in a former day are seen no more, for the Father will now be revealed in His Son. “And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone.” Edward T. Wood

## “EARNEST — EXPECTATION”

The Holy Spirit has given us, in many parts of scripture, certain words and phrases which recur with such frequency as to give their character and emphasis to whole passages; sometimes, as with the words “joy” and “all” in the epistle to the Philippians, to a whole book. But He has also chosen expressions equally important, occurring only once or twice. Thus “earnest expectation” (one word in the original Greek) is found in Romans viii.19 and Philippians i.20, and nowhere else in scripture. Paul’s use of the same word in such strikingly different connections seems to give an added interest to both

passages. It may be rendered "anxious", "eager", "constant looking-out"; it means literally "watching (for some expected object) as with outstretched head".

## I. THE HOPE OF CREATION

In Romans viii. the apostle concludes his great unfolding of the gospel of God. From chapter iii.21 to v.11, he has set forth the efficacy of the blood of Christ in respect of sins committed, so that the believing sinner, now justified and reconciled, can joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. From chapter v.12 onward he deals with the deeper question of indwelling sin; and as he climbs to a second triumphant climax he enlarges upon the present and future blessings bestowed upon those who are Christ's co-heirs.

Now the coming glory, in its millennial aspect, is to include the lower creation, and Paul pauses to look around and contemplate it in its present state of "vanity" to which the fall of man, not its own will, has reduced it. He sees it groaning and travailing in pain together until now, all its energies bent towards survival. It is like some creature, marooned on a small desert island, scanning the horizon for that which will bring deliverance. The very law of the jungle, the ceaseless struggle for life — "nature red in tooth and claw" — vegetation lush or hardy according to soil and climate, all express a hope, however instinctive and unintelligent, that the creature (or the creation) itself shall be freed from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

In the New Testament as in the Old, we see God introducing some new order of things with mighty signs and wonders, yet always with remarkable economy of miracle: they are rather samples of that which will characterize the millennial age to come (Hebrews vi.5). When the Creator and Sustainer of all things had become a Man, He told of the Father's concern for the very sparrows; the wild beasts of the desert\*

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\* The word rendered "with" in Mark i.13 is said to denote "association" and "companionship with."

and the untrained ass owned His Lordship and felt His companionship, but their material condition remained unchanged. The world of nature cannot enter into the liberty of grace, although it may experience some of its effects. (For instance, where the fruits of divine life are brought forth, there will be a new attitude to God's creatures: they will not be ill-treated, neither, it may be added, will they be idolized.) But as glory is an outward and visible thing, the material creation is to partake of it.

How the prophets delight to describe the blessings of that day! "The wolf dwelling with the lamb — a little child leading them — they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" (Isaiah xi.6-9, lxxv.25). It will be part of the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints (Ephesians i.18) when He takes possession of the universe and enters into the enjoyment of it, as it were, through His people. As regards the creation, we should be humbled by the thought that our fall has dragged it down; we can groan in sympathy with it, and rejoice at the prospect of its restoration when we are manifested with Christ in glory. What a day it will be for this world, after the horrors of the Great Tribulation, when the sons of God (all their personal matters forever settled at the judgment-seat of Christ, and they themselves seen at last as "one" in the Father and the Son, according to John xvii.23) are revealed for its enlightenment and healing!

But while at the Lord's coming we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, this millennial blessing, it would seem, will be introduced *gradually*, and while very far-reaching, it will come short of what God has purposed for eternity. Furthermore, there will evidently be an inward, moral declension, prefigured perhaps by the decreasing number of bullocks offered during the feast of Tabernacles (Numbers xxix.12-32), as the age rolls on with millions of souls born into the world who will never experience the new birth.

But we should "love His (i.e. Christ's) appearing," for He

will then make good His rights as Creator, Redeemer and Messiah in the scene of His rejection. The indwelling Spirit is the pledge and earnest of the coming glory; but His very presence makes the soul feel what a burden the "tabernacle of clay" is — how closely it is linked with the groaning creation around. Yet it has a more immediate, a far more blessed hope. The creature longs for our revelation, when God's judgments in the earth have run their course; *we* look for that which will take place long before this — our being conformed to the image of God's Son at His coming — the purpose for which we were predestinated; when our sonship will be fully realised; when *He* shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied; when *we* shall be satisfied, awaking in His likeness.

This passage intertwines, in a very beautiful way, one of Paul's special themes — "sonship by adoption" — with John's — "children of God by new birth." Sonship expresses the believer's place of privilege and dignity, in contrast with slavery; "children" implies a new nature reproducing the very character of our God and Father, and the blessed intimacy of the relationship, in contrast with strangers.

## II. THE HOPE OF PAUL THE PRISONER

When we come to the Philippian epistle, we do indeed find echoes of some of the great themes in Romans; but how striking the difference in other respects! The apostle is not now addressing those he hopes to visit in the mighty capital of the Gentile world: he is there himself, a prisoner, though in his own rented lodging and not in prison. Officially Nero's prisoner, he was in reality the prisoner of Christ Jesus for us of the nations. It is not now a logical unfolding, with its undertone of triumph, of God's dispensations, but an outpouring of his heart to his spiritual children, of whom he has only the happiest memories — simple, honest, forthright, warm-hearted folk living in a small country town, albeit a "colony" and so a "miniature Rome."

The miracles here are not those of the age to come, but

miracles of grace wrought here and now by the rich supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. One of these wonders is the bond of loving interest between Paul and the Philippian saints. By nature there could indeed only have been mutual suspicion and contempt between the fanatical Pharisee, the "insolent overbearing man," and Pagan Gentiles inordinately proud of their Roman citizenship. But the constraining love of Christ had broken down all these barriers. And it also enabled the apostle to bear with joy circumstances which, had he experienced them in his unconverted days, he would have found intolerable: beside the tension and anxiety of awaiting his trial, the sustained mental torture of being chained to a Roman soldier, even though the chain was long and light and only one hand was manacled.

It is precisely here, however, that he reveals his "earnest-expectation," and it is a very present thing: not the deliverance of creation at the appearing of the glorified saints, nor yet the rapture. For while at the end of chapter iii., he looks forward to it, at this point he is not occupied with it. He is concerned with every moment of the "little while" of his stay on earth, through the long hours of enforced inactivity, and maybe sleepless nights, for in ancient Rome the noise of traffic was much greater after sunset; maybe (at least until Epaphroditus brought the generous and welcome gift from the assembly at Philippi) prolonged periods of fasting in order to meet his commitments; in all this his consuming, all-engrossing desire is that here and now, as before, Christ may be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death.

Thus every fresh soldier sent from the Praetorian camp is to him a new opportunity for Christ to be magnified. Instead of sinking into boredom and frustration, his heart is exercised as to how to be "all things to all men" — how to meet every man just where he is; how and when to speak, how and when to keep silence. "With all boldness," he says. To one of his sensitive temperament, such boldness did not come naturally. He had been nervous and fearful

among the conceited Corinthians. And these palace guards in Rome, the finest body of troops in the Empire, would be fully conscious of their unchallenged prestige. So the apostle feels his need of the prayers of the Philippians, while taking them for granted. How gloriously they were answered; The judgment-seat will reveal how many Praetorians heard the word of life during those two full years, and how they responded to it.

We can picture soldier after soldier telling open-mouthed hearers, in the Praetorian camp, in the taverns, in the public baths, in the Forum, or elsewhere, of this extraordinary man, so insignificant in appearance, yet with a dignity and a moral ascendancy not to be found in the noblest Romans. Above all, they would tell of the Christ Whom he preached by life and lip. How many visitors he received during this time we cannot tell. But Christ was indeed magnified in his body in life, as He would yet be in a martyr's death, though not until perhaps six or seven years later.

If we look at Paul as the apostle to the Gentiles we see the chosen vessel, the wise architect, a unique gift from the ascended Christ. But in writing to these faithful friends at Philippi he does not even need to mention his apostleship, and this makes his outlook and hope all the more challenging to us.

In his first letter to the Corinthians he had twice closed one subject and introduced the next with the words "Be my imitators" (adding the second time "even as I am of Christ"). So in this epistle he presents himself, in chapters iii. and iv., as a model to be imitated.

May we be exercised to have the same earnest expectation, however different our circumstances may be from those of the prisoner of Christ Jesus. We may be encouraged by the thought that, even as a small lens can be of some use to magnify a star or a planet, so Christ can be magnified through the "earthen vessel" of the humblest believer.

A. C. McCann

## DEDICATION TO GOD

(Note on Romans xii.1, 2)

The apostle bases his exhortations upon the review of the great mercies of God displayed in the gospel. Justification and salvation and glory, whether individually or nationally, whether for Jew or Gentile, all depend upon the outflow of the compassions of God (cf. Romans ix.15). And at the conclusion of his exposition of these marvellous ways of divine wisdom, Paul relieved the pent-up emotions of his soul by the fervid doxology in chapter xi.33-36.

For the same cause — the mercies of God — as evoked his own sacrifice of praise, he calls upon his readers to present to God the continual sacrifices of devoted lives. They had already been invited to present or yield themselves and their members to God (Romans vi.13, 19). Here the “*body*” is specified, implying that the whole person, including the physical frame, is to be viewed as a consecrated thing, set apart for God, presented once for all to Him. Shadrach and his two companions “yielded their bodies” to God’s service in martyrdom (Daniel iii.28).

This sacrifice is “*living*” in contrast with the Jewish sacrifices, which were slain. It is “*acceptable to God,*” in contrast with those under the law in which He had no pleasure (Hebrews x.8). It is the devotion of a willing mind, offering itself with all its powers to God, and not unconsciously as a bull or a goat, but as an “*intelligent service.*” The mercies of God should impel us to this sacrifice, to full and final surrender of the whole self, keeping back no part from Him.

The whole-hearted dedication has to be made once for all, and not to be revoked; but the apostle next names two ever-recurring habits, which will contribute to the value of the sacrifice. (a) Externally, there should be a nonconformity to this world (age), and (b) inwardly, there should be a continuous transformation of the mind into conformity or agreement with the will of God.

(Continued inside front cover)

## CALENDARS 1969.

Please Note than "Gleanings of Gladness" has been discontinued and as this calendar has in the past two years carried the "Cheering Words" block we are happy to recommend this excellent calendar.

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*from the Scripture of Truth*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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### EDITORIAL

We offer our readers this month reprints of two articles from *The Bible Monthly* magazine which have in measure a common theme. But the importance of the subjects dealt with is our reason for doing this.

The writers of these articles have long since departed to be with Christ, but many alive today will recall their lines of ministry and confirm that these pieces are characteristic. May the echoes of what they both ministered years ago reach us today, and prove stimulating.

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*(continued from inside back cover)*

But while there is "raising up" and putting down of things of man, the Eternal God reigns supreme in the glory and majesty of Godhead, the everlasting hope of His people.

Thus we may emulate the faith of Habakkuk, as expressed at the close of chapter iii—

Although the fig tree shall not blossom,

Neither shall fruit be in the vines;

The labour of the olive shall fail,

And the fields shall yield no meat;

The flock shall be cut off from the fold,

And there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

E. A. PETTMAN

## **CHRISTIAN ARMOUR FOR THE HEAVENLIES**

(Read: Ephesians vi.10-20)

The first three chapters of Ephesians bring before us the position into which we are brought by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. God in His great love has taken us up from the very lowest place, "dead in trespasses and sins." and has raised us up with Christ, and seated us in Him in heavenly places: that is, we are viewed as already in heaven. True we are not there actually, and that the day is coming when we shall be with Him where He is; but even now we are regarded as being in Him in heavenly places. The Lord Jesus is our representative, and we are there in spirit, because He is there. We have passed the Jordan and are now in the land of Canaan.

After the third chapter there comes what is practical. The early chapters speak of what grace has done—and let us always remember that our position in Christ is entirely of His grace. Now the question comes, What is our responsibility? What should be the worthy behaviour of a people so richly blessed? The remaining chapters deal with this question, and bring before us that which is exceedingly practical, concerning our walk and conduct down here.

### **OVER JORDAN**

It is commonly held that Jordan is a type of death and that Canaan is a figure of heaven. This is true in a sense, but it is also true that we, as this Epistle teaches, are already across the Jordan, and are already in heaven. After Joshua had led the children of Israel across the desert and across the Jordan, they came typically into heaven, but they found the enemy of God in possession, against whom they had to fight. Similarly, as we learn in this Epistle to the Ephesians, though we are looked at as in the heavenly places, we are called upon to fight. And we have to fight, not with flesh and blood as Joshua and the Israelites did, but against principalities, against powers, against

the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

The power of Satan can be viewed in two ways, which are represented by Pharaoh and Amalek. At the Red Sea, God brought low the power of Pharaoh who is a figure of the god of this world. But Satan also attacks in the wilderness as well as oppresses in Egypt. Amalek is a type of Satan as the enemy of Christ and of His people on their way to their inheritance. The death and resurrection of Christ have brought us into our inheritance in the heavenly places, and in consequence, this world is now a wilderness to us. Satan attacks us in the wilderness, and he has the advantage of knowing just where our individual weakness is. There are things in this world which may be no temptation to you, but yet they may be to me. Satan knows these weaknesses and makes use of them in his attack upon us. We are called upon to fight him, the Lord Jesus being our leader in the battle.

### THE BATTLEFIELD

When the children of Israel came into Canaan, they met with a different kind of fighting. The one effort of the enemy then was not to cut off the hindermost as they journeyed, but to keep them out of the land which God had given them. This is the fighting we have to face, according to the truth of Ephesians. It is not that other kinds of conflict have ceased. They continue; but God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. And while this is true, there is the danger that we may be slothful, and allow the power of Satan to prevail against us. We are to oppose him, that we may take practical possession of what God has given us.

It is true of every Christian that these blessings are his. They are not the result of any experience he may have gone through. God has blessed us all, and there is no exception. We are called in this Epistle to be a heavenly people. We belong to heaven, and we are responsible to enter into that place by faith, and rejoice in it. We are to possess it and dwell there, and enjoy it in our souls.

## SATAN'S OBJECTIVE

Satan's object is to prevent this enjoyment. Satan and his hosts are fighting to keep us from entering consciously into that heavenly place. We may be righteously and morally perfect, and yet Satan may succeed in hindering our possessing the land.

This warfare is a very real thing. We are warned, not against flesh and blood, but against wicked spirits in heavenly places. The time is coming when God will turn Satan out of heaven, as we see in Revelation xii., but when that time arrives the Lord Jesus will have already come for the church and will have taken it to be with Himself. Michael and his angels are then instructed to purge heaven of the rebel hosts of evil spirits. It is against these enemies that we now have to fight. We find it a hard matter to fight against ourselves, but besides this we are faced by all the powers of darkness—against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.

## GOOD SOLDIERS

Brethren, let us be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. In order to fight effectually against Satan we cannot afford to be slothful or careless. Just as truly as in the beginning of this Epistle God's wondrous grace is brought before us, so here the apostle deals with our responsibility. God has provided a perfect and complete armour for us, and we are responsible to put on every article of that armour. When a man joins the king's army he is given full equipment, but he himself has to put it on; it is his own individual act. We have God's equipment, and we must put it on.

We are not called to be idle. This is not the time to rest. The day is coming when we shall share the rest of God. But now we need to be on our guard continually. We are called to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and so it is treason on our part if we give our energy to other things. As Paul wrote to Timothy, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Timothy ii.4). If a man enlists in the army it would

be no good for him to plead for special consideration, and say, "I have just opened a business, and therefore you must make allowance for me." The two things could not go on together. It is the same with us in our Christian life. We are not to turn aside voluntarily, and we are not to take up duties in the world when it could manage very well without our services. We have to please Him Who has called us to be good soldiers.

### **THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH**

Verse 14 should read, "Stand therefore, having girt about your loins with truth," rather than the Authorised rendering "Having your loins girt about . . ." The girding is what we are called intelligently to do. So far as our acceptance before God is concerned, nothing can be added to make it more complete, for "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." But we are not to go into the battle unfurnished. The first thing before putting on the armour is to see that our loins are girt about with truth. In Eastern countries where men wear long flowing robes, the danger would be for the feet to get entangled; so if a man desired to serve or to fight he must gather up his garment and gird himself round the loins. Similarly, our loins should be girded about with truth. It is God's wish that we should know the truth, not to remain as it were at the "A B C" all our lives. God has given us a wealth of truth in His word, and it is His delight in His grace and by the Holy Spirit to commune with us of His thoughts concerning His Son, and to bring His glories before our hearts. We ought to know His word, and thus answer to this description, having girt about our loins with truth. Let the truth have hold of our affections and minds; let us not hold it loosely, but have clear and distinct views, so that the truth may have power over our consciences.

### **A BREAST PLATE BUT NO BACK PLATE**

Then, having girt about our loins with truth, we are to put on the breastplate of righteousness. This righteousness is not that which is spoken of in Romans iii., the righteousness which is on

the ground of the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is that which we are responsible to have in our conduct. It is practical righteousness. We are weak, indeed, if we have a bad conscience: we need to have on a breastplate of practical righteousness if we are to fight Satan successfully. If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God (I John iii.21).

### **SHOES, SHIELD AND HELMET**

Also, our feet are to be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. The feet being shod implies movement, and we are to move in the enjoyment of peace. We should be dwelling in an atmosphere of peace, and we should carry peace wherever we go. It is indeed a sad thing if the older we grow the more quarrelsome we become.

Besides all these, there is the shield of faith; that is, of confidence toward God. It is not the faith which justifies us before God, but the faith which, after we have been justified, causes us to have unbroken confidence in God. The path that we have to tread is not an easy one, and the difficulties are real which try our faith. The devil seeks to get an advantage over us by bringing us into despair, but let us have implicit confidence in the unchanging love of God. There is great danger of getting under the power of Satan, but to combat this we are to take the shield of faith with which we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one.

We are also to take the helmet of salvation. We are not to despair or falter, for a Saviour God is ours. We are to know Him in the character of a Saviour God, Who is actively interested in every one of us, and Whose power is ever exercised on our behalf.

### **THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT**

Now we come to the armour which is for offensive warfare, for it is not only defensive warfare in which we are to engage. We are to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. This is what the devil cannot meet. The Lord Jesus in the

wilderness met the devil with the word of God. "It is written . . .," He said. So should it be with us in this warfare. We have at our disposal the word of God, which is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews iv.12). Our need is to be well furnished with the word of God, that it may dwell in our hearts, and that when challenged we shall be able to answer, as did the Lord Jesus, "It is written."

These are the things which we need if we are to stand in the evil day, and having done all still to keep our ground. If it was an evil day at the time of this Epistle, it is even more so now. Though we are not surrounded by the filth that the Ephesian saints were surrounded by, a horrible state of heathenism, we are living in a day of peculiar difficulty. It is a sorrowful thing today that while there are few agnostics directly attacking the word of God, there are those who once knew the word of truth but have given it up and become its chief enemies. Then let us see to it that we put on all the items which make up the whole armour of God, which God Himself has furnished for us.

### ALWAYS PRAYING FOR ALL

Let us ask ourselves, Have we been diligent in the things of God? In verse 18 the apostle says, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." This is not simply an exhortation for more prayer, but we are reminded not to pray always for our own interests, but to pray for one another, to pray for the Lord's servants, to pray, in fact, for all saints. How easy it is to get out of touch with God! Many profess to hold the truth, but they allow things to come in to mar their communion. There is no remedy like prayer. Let us then take full advantage of this great privilege that we have, for it is possible to be neglectful even in prayer. Unless we have definite times of prayer, the tendency is to neglect it.

Moreover, our prayers and supplications are to be in the Spirit. The Spirit will enable us to judge if we pray aright. Much



prayer is not supplication in the Spirit. One great blessing attaching to prayer is the realisation that we are in the presence of God, and controlled by His Spirit. The apostle also speaks of "watching thereunto." Even the apostle found on his part the need to watch, to guard against slothfulness.

### PRAYING FOR ONE ALSO

The apostle adds, "And for me . . ." What love is expressed in these few words! The apostle would not be independent of their prayers, but he solicited their prayers on his behalf: "And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." Nothing but love will lead us to such prayer as this, but still it is within the reach of every one of us. Blessed a service as prayer is, it is not a thing for which a gift is needed. The apostle laboured in devoted service for the Ephesians, and he in turn desired their prayers that he might be enabled to continue his labours.

Let us, then, cast ourselves upon the Holy Ghost, and look to Him to supply not only our own individual need, nor even that of the local assembly, but the ultimate blessing of the whole church of God.

G. F. Cox

*(Reprinted from "The Bible Monthly," November 1930)*

## THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF JOSHUA

### IX. VICTORY AT JERICHO

(Chapter v.13-vi.27)

At Gilgal the children of Israel were taught what was necessary on their part to secure victory over their enemies in the promised land. Their principal lesson was that there was no dependence to be placed upon themselves. They were to "put off" what was natural to them as men in the flesh, and consequently to rely implicitly upon God. They must learn their own weakness in order to be successful in the coming battles

with the strong and warlike inhabitants of the land. The people had crossed the Jordan, but it was at once evident that they were utterly incompetent to overcome the strongly fortified city of Jericho which barred their further progress. They had no knowledge of military matters and were powerless in themselves to capture this stronghold of the Canaanites. All the men of war that came out of Egypt had died in the wilderness (v.4,6). Therefore, it was undeniable that they were dependent upon the power of Jehovah to give them their first victory.

### **JEHOVAH FOR HIS PEOPLE**

Before the account of the phenomenal destruction of Jericho, we read that Jehovah Himself appeared, to lead His helpless people (v.13-15). "Joshua was by Jericho," no doubt surveying the formidable defences of the city, when "a man" holding a drawn sword stood over against him. It was Jehovah, the One Who appeared to Moses in the blazing bush at Horeb. It was Jehovah Who destroyed Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea. It was Jehovah Who as the Angel conducted His people safely and lovingly through the trackless wilderness. It was also the Angel of Jehovah, with the drawn sword, Who intercepted Balaam on his way to curse the people of Israel. Jehovah was always for His people. He now comes to Joshua standing outside the walls of Jericho.

The faithfulness of Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, was the first lesson that Joshua, as representing the people, was made to learn before anything whatever was done in respect to the siege of Jericho. Jehovah had already unsheathed the sword of conquest. He Himself would be their Captain. They were the Lord's host. So long as He was for them, nothing could stand against them. But they were, as we are, distrustful of the unseen power of God, yet ready enough to trust in ourselves, and rely on such help as is before our natural eyes, and approved by our own judgment. Hence we often suffer dishonourable defeat, because we do not trust with the simplicity of children in the infinite wisdom and power of God.

The Angel seen by Joshua was a man with his sword drawn. It was the sword of excellency, of which Moses had reminded

them before he passed away (Deuteronomy xxxiii.29). The people had no sword to defeat their enemies, but Jehovah had His sword outstretched, and the mighty sons of Anak would quickly fall before Him. At the sight of the Angel Joshua fell on his face, a posture of utter dependence. A man prostrate on his face upon the ground is bereft of all strength to fight. And it is always our sure means of safety to acknowledge before God our weakness and to own that we have no sufficiency in ourselves.

### UNSHOD FEET

This interview was a private one between the Angel and Joshua. When the Lord said, "As Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come," Joshua fell on his face and did worship. "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" he enquired. And the Captain of the Lord's host said, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." Moses received a similar command from the Voice that spoke to him out of the bush (Exodus iii.5). Both men were standing unawares upon holy ground.

The holiness of God was the second lesson to be learned. Association with Jehovah in His judicial destruction of the Amorites, whose iniquity was now full, was incompatible without holiness on the part of Joshua and the children of Israel. If Jehovah brought them victoriously into the land and planted them in the mountain of His inheritance, in the place where He would dwell, the Sanctuary established by His own hands (Exodus xv.17), they must be a holy people remembering that no defiled footwear must come in contact with the holiness of His presence.

This great lesson of holiness we too must learn in connection with our appropriation of those spiritual blessings God has bestowed upon us in the heavenly places (Ephesians i). In order to appreciate their character and value, and to make them a present possession, it is necessary that we should walk worthy of the calling wherewith we have been called. God has in His grace given us priceless favours. But He is not unobservant of evil in our ways nor of what is opposed to His own nature. The

children of God must confess their sins in order to be cleansed from all unrighteousness (I John i.9). We must remove from our feet what is contrary to Him; thus we shall be able to walk around our Jericho, and secure the victory. The unshod feet of holy men and women walking in obedience to the simple directions of God's word is the fundamental rule for success in heavenly warfare.

### THE ARK AND THE TRUMPETS

The Captain of the Lord's host gave directions to Joshua of what He wished done in connection with the conquest of Jericho (chapter vi.). Bye-the-bye, it will be observed that the first verse of the sixth chapter is parenthetical, and that the second verse continues the conversation that Jehovah had with Joshua (verses 13-15). Thus we see the identity between the "man" whom Joshua first saw (verse 13), the Captain of the Lord's host (verse 14), and Jehovah Himself (vi.2). In Exodus (xxiii.20,21), speaking of the Angel of the covenant, Jehovah said, "My name is in Him." It was the second Person of the Trinity, the Word, Who appeared as that Angel, Jehovah Himself, Who promised Israel that He would "keep thee in the way, and bring thee into the place which I have prepared." The last clause of this promise was about to be fulfilled.

Now Jehovah gives His orders for the conduct of the assault of Jericho. The men of Israel were to parade round the city in the manner He prescribed, the ark of the covenant being the principal feature, as it was at the crossing of Jordan. The holy ark of the covenant of the Lord, with its blue covering, was the centre of that procession. Armed men were in the van, and immediately before the ark were seven priests blowing with trumpets. Following the ark was a rearguard. Once a day for six days, the ark was borne round Jericho in this manner. On the seventh day, the people rose at dawn and compassed the city seven times. Then the walls fell flat, and Jericho was overcome.

The ARK brought up out of Jordan is a type of the Risen Christ and a symbol of victory (Numbers x.35). And the ark was carried in view of the people of Jericho, many of whom

would mount the walls and look with scorn upon the daily procession round their city. Was that their idea of a siege? They had heard great things of Israel—that they had come through the waters of the Red Sea which drowned the Egyptians, and that they had overcome Sihon and Og and others in the wilderness. Now these Israelites seemed to be walking aimlessly around their city, day after day! Such conduct might appear foolish to the Canaanites, but “the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” They were carrying out the instructions of the Captain of the host of the Lord. They were doing what they had been told to do. The youngest amongst the children of Israel could obey orders. Their task was within reach of all. It was no question of giant-like strength. It was no question of skill, experience and wisdom. It required the child-like character of unquestioning obedience. And the children of Israel followed the word of the Lord, and walked with the ark in the presence of their enemies until victory was given them.

An obedient walk is the key to success in the heavenly warfare. There are many references in Ephesians to the walk of believers. For example, we read, “I therefore,” the apostle says, “the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.” The vocation wherewith we are called is to share the heavenly glory of Christ, to share with Him that place that God has given Him in the heavenlies; and when all authority and power is visibly put under His feet, the church will sit with Him in that place of dominion and glory. Such is our calling, and we are to walk worthy of it in the presence of our spiritual enemies.

But besides carrying the ark with its cherubim of glory, the symbol of judicial power and government, the seven priests before the ark were to blow their trumpets loudly and long. What do these trumpet blasts signify? The trumpets appear to have been similar to the jubilee trumpet, which announced the great festival of liberty for the people of Israel (Leviticus xxv.9,10). Every fiftieth year set forth the time when all Israel

should enter into the full blessedness of the millennial kingdom that God had promised them. Then every enemy will have been put down, and Israel will be the head of all the nations. Then mercy and truth will have met together, and righteousness and peace will have kissed each other. That era of earthly blessedness will be introduced with trumpet blasts. Here the trumpet blasts announced that the Lord of all the earth was about to take possession of the land of Canaan for the good of His own people. His enemies were about to be destroyed, and idolatry abolished. And every day seven priests were blowing the trumpets, signifying that Jehovah had come to His inheritance, and the wicked city of Jericho was on the verge of its doom.

We have a similar testimony to render in this day. The trumpets of the sons of Aaron warned the inhabitants of Jericho that Jehovah with His drawn sword of justice was before their gates. We must warn men everywhere with a clarion cry, "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door" (James v.9). We must not ignore the truth of the coming kingdom because we belong to the church. Every time we look to our Lord Jesus Christ crowned with glory and honour, we should be reminded that all things are put under His feet. Although we see it not as a fact, we believe it; and we believe that the Lord Himself is coming to set up His kingdom and to bring about righteousness and peace in this evil world. The hope before our souls is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, first for us, and afterwards with us when He comes in glory at the appointed day to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness. All believers by the manner of their daily walk before men should create an impression upon the onlookers that Christ is coming. Their priestly service is to announce to the world by trumpet-blast that Christ Himself is coming to punish the unrighteous and the ungodly. The world will not believe the testimony. Not a man in Jericho believed that the destruction of their city was at hand, except those in the household of Rahab. All Jericho was obsessed with the idea that they were absolutely safe. They had no idea of Jehovah's righteousness and omnipotence. And on the seventh day, the inhabitants of Jericho perished in their unbelief.

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

## ART THOU NOT FROM EVERLASTING . . . ?

(Read Habakkuk i.12)

Undoubtedly what prompted the utterance of the prophet Habakkuk which opens with the words quoted above, was Jehovah's revealed intention to "*raise up* the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation etc." (verse 6) to chastise His own people Israel for their persistent defection to idolatry. Later, having carried out Jehovah's discipline, the Chaldeans were themselves to suffer divine judgment because they would attribute their success against Israel to their own false god (verse 11).

The "raising up" and "putting down" of both nations and rulers has been one feature of the government exercised by the "Judge of all the earth" for the achievement of His purposes. By such means men and peoples have been kept in their place through centuries of human history. The great Pharaoh was *raised up* as God declared to him, "that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Rom.ix.17). Nebuchadnezzar too had to learn by humiliating personal discipline that those who walk in pride the Almighty is able to abase (Dan.iv.37). Little wonder that the apostle Paul closed his review of God's dispensational ways with the outburst of worship: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom.xi.33).

Much that is happening in our own generation, man's amazing scientific achievements, coupled with the throwing aside of moral restraints; the rising tides of nationalism and violence—these things may well cause concern on the part of those who know man's incurable arrogance. What is to be the resource of those who wish to live by faith (Hab.ii.4)? Where shall such turn for comfort and assurance?

Let the words of Habakkuk ring out their message. "Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die, O Lord, Thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, Thou hast established them for correction."

(continued inside front cover)

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

equally loyal, amidst all the conflicting creeds and theories of church government with which Christendom's Babel city of religious confusion is cursed, to one's own denomination and theological opinions. But truth, because it is truth, is incorrigibly intolerant of, and refuses to accommodate itself to, human theory.

"If ye know these things happy are ye if ye practise them." Another point needing emphasis is that even believers unfettered by an ecclesiastical system need the reminder, that, as was indicated by Joshua, and the Psalmist in Psalm i., and by James in the New Testament, and the Holy Spirit, the pathway of true spiritual prosperity is obedience to the word of God. So today, if the written word of God is pondered with a view to actually and practically carrying it out in conduct, character and conversation, then will the vitality, virtue and adaptability of the truth be increasingly evident to the soul. The best Christian evidence is the Christian in evidence. "Sanctify them by thy truth. Thy word is truth."

May we then see to it that we give such attendance to reading and meditation upon these things that our real profiting may appear to all.

For the word of God reverently read, with an ever-growing sense of need of dependence upon the Holy Spirit for true insight into its meaning, will lead to such self-searching and comparison of the actual practice with the holy precept therein contained, as will effectually guard the believer against the misuse of revealed truth; and, at the same time, will assuredly lead to a right use of that which is divinely declared to be to the obedient soul "a lamp unto the feet, and a light unto the path." We need increasingly to be girded to serve our Lord; girt about the loins with truth, while in the day of conflict we seek to cleave to His name and word.

W. G. TURNER,

(Former Editor, *Words of Help*).

(Reprinted from *The Bible Treasury*)

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

*"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"*

(John v.17)

The Voice from within the Glory Cloud of Jehovah's presence had ceased, and the hill took again its earthly form. One Person alone remained — divinely declared the Son of God — beloved, and revealing that relationship purposed in the mind of God to be made known to us. "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," writes John, as one who, with only human faculties, saw and heard and retained this treasured memory over the years — "full of grace and truth."

But, in the life of the Divine Worker, day followed day inexorably — each hour crowding its demands upon Him, each labour taking toll of His strength — for this gracious Man was moving voluntarily in that "likeness" to man that was not mere resemblance! So, we read of "the day following" — that day of sad contrast, at the foot of the mount. "A great crowd met Him and a man from the crowd cried out" (Luke ix.38). The glory of the Kingdom was succeeded by the distortion of Satanic usurpation. Let us endeavour to conceive the bitterness of this contrast — from the heights of a glory beyond the intellect of man to apprehend down to the depth of degradation wrought by the adversary of mankind. "Master, I beseech Thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child" (verse 38). To the supremely sensitive soul of Jesus this Satanic presentation was calculated aggression. He was taunted with the despoiling advance of Israel's disfigurement — and, indeed, of mankind. The "only child" of the poor man — the last of the line — torn and crushed, foaming at the feet of Jesus.

We are apt to regard these events as preludes to conflicts with the evil powers of darkness which must end in victory for the dependent Son of Man. It should not be overlooked that each one demanded more and more from Him. "Power hath gone out from Me" (Luke viii.46 JND) was no mere

form of speech. It is unthinkable that He was but little affected, in view of His power. The Divine Worker was Servant in His Father's work. Power flowed through Him, but, would we know its Source, we must read of His prayer in the night times when the sin-weary sought sleep — or see Him “apart praying” while His followers wondered and waited. He knew the need for replenishment of power from that divine Source which is available even to ourselves, for we, too, “wrestle not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against universal lords of this darkness against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavens” (Ephesians vi.12. JND).

The failure of His disciples is recorded, for Luke was an instrument under control and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This was an additional grief to Jesus, for He had drawn them into the current of His work — given them power unknown before. They were not ignorant of the devices of the foe, and had seen his work overthrown at the word of power given to them, yet this exhibition of demon possession so appalled them that it filled their human vision to the exclusion of *faith*. “I besought Thy disciples . . . and they could not.” Is there not a wordless cry from the world of our own day, that beseeches disciples to show the way to that liberty known only to “the children of God” (Romans viii.21) — from the poor world that “lies in the wicked one” (I John v.19)?

It was the absence of FAITH that left them helpless. Faith is not unreasoned lack of assessment of the problem — it has a keen understanding of it and, as it realises its immensity, so it reaches out the more for that unflinching power which is inexhaustible and ever available to faith. “O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and suffer you?” — so is the Divine Worker faced with the perversion which is the outcome of unbelief. It characterised the generation, and His disciples were affected by it. The whole of the national thought was perverted to retrieving a kingdom that excluded the only King who could

establish it in righteousness. Time was running out — it was nearer, now, to His departure — “How long shall I be with you and suffer you!”

There seems no doubt but that this Satanic intervention was stronger and more unusual than before. Yet, as Man in dependence upon God, “Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and gave him back to his father” (verse 42). The amazed wonderment of the people gave evidence of their lack of realisation that, present before them, was One who as Man and servant, was the channel of divine power — His human perfection available for them to behold, and for us to follow.

Great as was the power at which they all had wondered, an even more wonderful and all embracing act was the purpose of the Divine Mind. “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men” (verse 44). He who, in exercise of power divinely transmitted, had delivered others from the possession of the demon world, would now submit to being delivered into the hands of men! How He desired His disciples to understand the eternal import of this — the central event of earth’s sad history! The divine answer to Satanic overthrow of mankind. “Let *these* sayings sink down into your ears” (verse 44). Let them not be drowned by the wonder cries of the multitude. An only son has, indeed, been restored to his grief stricken father, but, within a short time, another Father will give HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON into the hands of men to suffer the most cruel and ignominious death devised by man.

There are glories associated with the manhood of Christ that will fill eternal days. How simply He speaks of His impending humiliation and death! There is no unnecessary word — no enlargement upon the event — no self pity. “But they understood not this saying.” There were vast depths in it — none but He could descend into them! There were heights also — eternal heights — but the depths were the path to them. Matthew refers to them and adds, “And they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again”

(Matthew xvii.). Matthew also tells of their sorrow. It was the sadness of disappointment — the perplexity of self will. A dead Messiah made no appeal to them. The overthrow of Roman autocracy, the setting up of themselves in positions of authority — these were the goals before them. "They understood not" — and so, "it was hid from them . . . they perceived it not." Their prophets had foretold it, and the reason for it, as well as the outcome of it, yet, as with ourselves, when the will of man is opposed to a truth of God which he finds incompatible, only perplexity remains, and truth withdraws to companion with humility and simple faith.

They heard His clear forthright statement, as we, in our day, read the inspired word, but the understanding of both is not concerned with language, for discernment is the treasured reward of the spiritual mind which is never entrammelled by prejudice and self will. Sensible of our poverty of thought, we may repair to the very Fount of Wisdom, and, though the way be through the valley of true lowliness, it is there that the Spirit of Truth will, Himself, guide us into all truth (John xvi.13).

"They feared to ask Him concerning this saying." They were concerned only with matters they hoped would arise for their advantage as the outcome of being His disciples. It is sad to think of the hurt to Himself in this. They would fain leave a subject so alien to their earthbound desires for Jesus — and for themselves. There are times when we, too, do not understand — when, holding our own views, received, perhaps, by tradition from others, we decide to leave the matter. There is a theoretical awareness of His love, but it is not that full confidence in Him that holds us, waiting till He gives us understanding. This is His desire — more strong than can be told — for, to those who love enough to wait and confide, He reveals the hidden things — those intimate precious things concerning Himself.

EDWARD T. WOOD

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

## THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF JOSHUA

(Chapters v.13 to vii.26: *continued*)

### SAFE AMID THE RUINS

There was one exception to the general destruction of the city of Jericho. One house did not fall with the walls. That house had the scarlet line in the window. It was the house where Rahab was. She had faith in the God of Israel, as the scarlet line proved. Therefore she did not perish with the inhabitants of Jericho, who believed not. At the command of Joshua, she and all her household were brought to a place of safety (vi.22-25). Rahab is a remarkable example of God's sovereign power and mercy at the very time He was pouring out His judgments upon the iniquitous Canaanites. She was an abandoned woman, but she was saved, because she had faith in God, like the people of Israel, who, in obedient faith, walked round her city daily for seven days. Rahab's faith saved her, and she dwelt in peace among the worshippers of Jehovah; and she is honoured of God in the New Testament records (Matthew i.5; Hebrews xi.31; James ii.25).

### THE HUMILIATING DEFEAT AT AI

The sequel to the great triumph over Jericho is very sad. The miraculous destruction of the fortified city was an earnest of what Jehovah was ready to do for the children of Israel to subdue the Canaanites and their great cities "walled up to heaven." In the hands of Jehovah, the overthrow of the foes of His people was an easy matter. Judging by Jericho the conquest of all Canaan seemed to be an easy matter. But in the apparent ease of the victory lay the snare, which faith would avoid, but into which flesh would fall. Faith saw Jehovah with a drawn sword directing the siege and gave Him the glory of conquest, but flesh marched over the ruined walls, saying, This is mighty Jericho which

we have easily captured! On account of this spirit of boastfulness and self-confidence, the victory at Jericho was followed by the defeat at Ai.

Ai was but a small town. Its name means "a heap," suggesting that it was unwallled and without defences. It had but a small population compared with that of Jericho. Joshua, however, sent men to spy out the place, as he had previously sent two men to Jericho for a similar purpose (chapter ii.1). But those who viewed Ai judged after the sight of their eyes. They made their report as men in the flesh. There was no mention in it of Jehovah, nor any reference to their experience at Jericho. They said to Joshua, "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand go up and smite Ai; and let not all the people labour thither; for they are but few" (vii.3). They had forgotten the solemn lessons taught at Gilgal. So had Joshua apparently, for he adopted their report. Faith had vanished, and flesh prevailed. Carnal confidence took the place of spiritual humility and dependence; and a shameful defeat of the host of the Lord was the result.

Joshua had about six hundred thousand men capable of bearing arms. He sent only three thousand to Ai. They were put to flight ignominiously, and thirty-six were slain. They had forgotten the arm of Jehovah which gave them the victory of Jericho; they trusted in the arm of the flesh, which failed them, and put them to shame, as it always does. "The hearts of the people melted, and became as water"; they were no better than the Canaanites and the Amorites (cp. vii.5 and v.1). The Israelites turned away from God Who was "the strength of their life," and He had humbled them before their enemies at Ai.

### **HUMILIATION BEFORE THE LORD**

The defeat of the three thousand at Ai brought Joshua into the valley of humiliation. He "rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord until the eventide." The elders of Israel were with their



leader, and they all "put dust upon their heads." Here before the Lord Joshua expresses their feelings in the language partly of faith and partly of flesh. Faith owned the power of the Lord Jehovah that brought the people over Jordan, but the flesh blamed Him for their defeat and feared their entire destruction. Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? . . . the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall . . . environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth" (vii.6-9). Clearly, the chief burden upon Joshua's heart while he is upon his face before the ark of Jehovah is the shame brought upon himself and the people by their defeat at Ai. Only at the close (instead of at the beginning) does he think that Jehovah had been dishonoured there. Then Joshua inquired of the Lord, "What wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?"

### SECRET SIN IN THE CAMP OF ISRAEL

But Jehovah told Joshua to "get up." The attitude of his body did not correspond with the condition of his heart. Those who would worship God in the spirit must have no confidence in the flesh (Philippians iii.3). Let Joshua stand on his feet and in his soul learn the truth about Ai, for God desires "truth in the inward parts," not error nor deceit in the lips of those that serve Him. They had taken no counsel of Jehovah whether they should go up against Ai or not. They did not seek that He would be with them in their enterprise. The ark of His presence was not at Ai, nor the priests, nor the trumpets. This was culpable laxity after the great victory at Jericho. They had forgotten Jehovah and His mighty works. But he looked deeper than the outward act of negligence and self-sufficiency. He saw the hidden sin of transgression in the camp. Deceitful disobedience was the root-cause of Israel's reverse at Ai.

This was the truth revealed to Joshua. Jehovah's word was, "Israel hath sinned." Joshua had said, "Lord, what

shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?" Jehovah's answer was, "They have taken of the accursed thing . . . therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies (vii.9,11). There had been among the people flagrant disobedience to Jehovah's express commandment with regard to the spoil of Jericho. This was accursed, that is, devoted to destruction. Everything was to be burned, except the gold, the silver, and the copper and iron utensils, which were to be put into the treasury for the service of Jehovah's house. The people were warned against looting. Joshua had said to them, "Ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it" (vi.18). The taint of idolatry was upon Jericho and all it contained, and would be upon those who took the unclean things for their personal use and possession, defiling themselves and the whole camp of Israel. This word of the Lord had been disobeyed, and the nation was guilty in His sight. They were defiled with the defilement for which the curse came upon Jericho and for which the city and all within it was destroyed.

### THE MAN THAT MADE ISRAEL SIN

The culprit was unknown to Joshua and the elders of Israel, but Jehovah knew. He ordered that the whole nation should pass before Him in their tribes, their families, and their households. The revealing light of divine holiness searched the consciences of them all. Jehovah indicated that Achan, a man of the tribe of Judah, was the secret offender. Achan then made confession to Joshua. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life had overcome him, and he transgressed the covenant of the Lord. Achan saw a beautiful mantle from the land of Shinar (Genesis xi.2), and he coveted it, thinking it too choice to be burned. He saw two hundred shekels of silver and a gold bar or ingot weighing fifty shekels; they would

not be missed from the treasury of the Lord where they had never been! Achan took them all, hiding them in the earth in the midst of his tent, for he knew he had done what he had been forbidden to do, and the whole nation would in God's sight share in his act of disobedience. So by one man, sin entered the camp, and Jehovah said to Joshua, "Israel hath sinned."

### THE UNITY OF THE NATION

It was the purpose of Jehovah that the children of Israel should take up their residence in the land of Canaan as one nation, one people, one kingdom. In the wilderness He said, "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus xix.6). There were twelve tribes, each of which consisted of many families, but all shared a common descent from Abraham to whom Jehovah made His promise, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Genesis xii.7). Unity was in the divine purpose, for He had said, "Unto thy seed," not "seeds as of many" (see Galatians iii.16). In numbers, the promise was that the seed of Abraham should be as the stars in the heavens and the sand on the sea-shore, but they were to be of one heart and one spirit to serve Jehovah and render a united witness against the idolatry of the surrounding nations.

At the crossing of the Jordan, this national unity of the Israelites was seen, for the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half of the tribe of Manasseh entered the land with the rest. Outside Jericho, the national unity was exhibited in the appointed marches of the people round its wall for a week. Inside Jericho, the national unity was marred by the secret sin of Achan and his household, which spread defilement and guilt throughout the whole camp. In Jehovah's eyes the act of Achan was the act of all Israel. He said to Joshua, They have transgressed, they have taken of the accursed thing, they have stolen, they have dissembled, they have put it away among their own stuff (vii.11). Therefore Jehovah did not go with them to Ai; "they were

accursed." The children of Israel were one nation to serve God as one man, but one man's disobedience had already marred that unity.

### **MEMORIAL STONES AT ACHOR**

The camp of Israel had been "troubled" by the sin of Achan. Jehovah had hidden His face from His people. The cloud could only be removed by the judgment of the one who had "wrought folly in Israel." By lot, the identity of the offender was discovered. He and all his possessions were taken to the valley of Achor, and stoned with stones and burned with fire. The judgment that fell upon Jericho and all in it befell Achan, the transgressor of the covenant of Jehovah, and all his (vii.24,25). The sentence was carried out by the whole nation, for all were involved in his sin. Hence we read, "All Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones" (vii.25).

Then another monument was raised. In the valley of Achor a great heap of stones covered the body of Achan, the man who made Israel sin. It was like the pillar of salt in the cities of the plain. Our Lord said, "Remember Lot's wife." Each memorial was a solemn warning. Neither was an example to follow. Both were examples to fear. They spoke of the consuming fire of God's holiness, a truth to be remembered in the dispensation of grace as well as in that of the law.

### **LESSONS OF VICTORY AND OF DEFEAT**

Without considering further this instructive narrative, let us recall the lessons taught at Jericho and at Ai. The victory was due to the implicit obedience of the people to Jehovah's commands which seemed strange to their intelligence and experience. But they acted in faith, and by the power of God the walls fell. We too must remember that we do not war "after the flesh." "For the weapons of

our warfare are not carnal (fleshly), but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians x.4). In our spiritual warfare, it is faith that overcomes always, for faith waits for God to act in His own way and at His own time.

If we suffer defeat as at Ai, and our spirits are in consequence overwhelmed within us, let us remember that there is a hidden cause in ourselves or amongst us. The unclean thing has been touched. "Covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians iii.5), has been indulged. The deed of darkness must be brought to light, and ruthlessly judged. Then the holy and gracious God will be for us and with us. And then who can defeat us?

W. J. HOCKING

## THE USE AND MISUSE OF TRUTH

Truth may be used in an untruthful way; it may also be used truthfully, but in such a manner as to negative the real object of its revelation.

Against the truth, our arch-enemy, who is a liar from the beginning, is unceasingly active in his efforts to hinder the development of its legitimate fruit; either by altogether preventing its entrance in the heart of man, or perverting it should an entrance have been made. These are the tactics uniformly pursued, and, unhappily, often with a signal measure of success.

St. Paul affirms the former in 2 Corinthians iv.4, where, describing the policy of the god of this age, he writes regarding those who are lost that he "hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." This is the initial effort of Satan — a policy of prevention. His secondary effort is that of perversion; and, in proportion as this is successful, the real end for which revealed truth was permitted to us, is frustrated, usually from one of two causes.

It is a human instinct to make truth either a means of satisfying curiosity, or of extending the boundary of one's

knowledge, as an end in itself. But neither of these is the object for which truth has been revealed. Yet one age-long evil has been this tendency to use divine truth for the satisfaction of spiritual curiosity — a mere mental exercise. Hence have arisen multitudes of ingenious theories based upon certain passages of holy scripture. Men led away by imaginary discoveries, inflated by self-importance and governed by an insubject spirit, have drawn away unstable souls, striving about words to no profit, but tending, as the apostle says, to the subverting of the hearers (2 Timothy ii.14); and effectually playing into the hands of the enemy by wasting invaluable time and starving souls through making speculation and not Christ the object of the heart. As surely as He is the Way, so emphatically is He the Truth, and such speculations as make unfulfilled prophecy, ecclesiastical order, or even distinctive dogmas such as predestination and election, or baptism, an end in themselves to which the mind constantly reverts, lamentably miss the mark, because the objective is, as we have said, not Christ, but the satisfaction of curiosity, even though it be of a spiritual kind.

Yet even cursory observation reveals the undeniable fact of the possibility of such a state through a failure to apprehend the reason of revelation. Any use of the written word which fails to bring the soul into the immediate presence of Him who is the Word incarnate, either to worship or for encouragement, instruction or reproof, is a perversion of the divine intention, and a misuse of truth, however gratifying to a pseudo-spiritual curiosity. A second, and apparently far more innocent method of the misuse or perversion of truth needs to be specially guarded against, namely, the modern craze in some circles for Bible study, and Bible analysis, or — as one divine has unhappily phrased it — a “mastering of the Bible”!

The exponents of this method are professedly accepters of the divine inspiration of scripture, but the apparent outcome of all these analyses and so-called masterings of the Bible, is but the extension of the borders of individual knowledge

of the sacred writings. This would be both desirable and delightful, were the end in view a more perfect acquaintance with the revealed mind of God for the purpose of translating it into practice. But so subtly does the enemy of souls labour for the perversion of that which was given for the purpose of forming the conduct and shaping the course of the believer, that it has now become possible to quite satisfactorily master, say the church epistles and yet to remain sectarian; to hold and teach the truth of the one body of Christ because it is so obviously revealed in the written word, and yet to recognise no practical obligation to carry it out; to hold and teach the absolute lordship of the Lord Jesus in the assembly, and yet to submit cheerfully to man-made regulations in the conduct of worship and service; in short, to so misuse the truth that, while intellectually assenting thereto and admiring the beauty of its proportion, to remain quite at liberty to ignore its practical implications and applications. This is certainly an anomalous state of things, and a total misuse and even perversion of God's intention.

To study to know the will of the Lord more accurately, that one may do it more perfectly is far removed from using truth merely as a means of enlarging the range of one's Biblical knowledge. The former is consonant with the mind of the Lord; the latter is risky and deceitful, akin to handling the word of God deceitfully, for knowledge is privilege, and privilege entails responsibility. We read of those servants who knew their Lord's will and did it not. "And to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Satan's end is gained, if by any means souls are deterred from carrying out in every day life and duty the word of the Lord, and the clearly defined trend of much of the present day orthodoxy, popular, pleasing, and palatable, is that one may be a loyal student of revealed truth, accepting the scriptures as the inspired, infallible word of God from cover to cover, evading no difficulty, welcoming all the truth which normally has a separating effect from evil, and yet remain

*(Continued inside front cover)*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

appalling that we must live when all that we have ever seen, earth, sun, stars, have passed away. For the things that are seen are for a season: the things that are not seen are eternal. What can meet the need of our hearts? For our hearts always will have a need. In the Lord Jesus Christ will be found the only answer to our heart's hunger. Great as our need is, long as eternity is, here is One Who is sufficient for all. How blessed to know Him thus! He says, "He that cometh to Me shall *never* hunger."

And so we have Christ as our continual food, now and for ever. May it be ours to feast upon Him more. Nothing else will keep us from worldliness and coldness of heart. Not only have we eternal life through partaking of Him once dead for us, but He says, "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in Him." Only so can we get strength and refreshment for our souls. May He give us purpose of heart that in the consciousness of our need and dependence we may daily feed upon Him Who has said, "He that cometh to Me shall *never* hunger."

"O Lord, of Thee we ne'er would tire:  
The new and living food  
Can satisfy our heart's desire;  
And life is in Thy blood."

G. F. Cox (1929)

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

In the preceding passages of Luke's record we have heard the plaudits of the crowd — the expressions of wonderment at the miracle of power over Satanic possession. But, "while they wondered every one at the things which Jesus did" — while His popularity with the crowd was at its height — the beloved Worker heard that other cry, when He would "be delivered into the hands of men." (ix.44). With affectionate urgency He impresses upon His disciples the warning truth of this coming sorrow to the Son of Man. Observe His anxious care lest they should be carried away, by the popular cry of the moment, so far as to think of themselves as great, in the reflected greatness of Him who had called them to discipleship. "Let these sayings sink down into your ears."

Mark tells us that, from this point, they continued their journeyings and passed through Galilee on their way to Capernaum (Mark ix.30). "And He came to Capernaum; and being in the house He asked them, what was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest" (Mark ix.33.34). The grouping of these events in Matthew and in Luke presents the same picture. The Son of Man, who had "made Himself of no reputation" and was now on His way "even to the death of the cross," was conscious of a reasoning and disputing among His own disciples. It is well to see how forcibly the Holy Spirit contrasts the self-seeking of man — his pride of place — with the lowly character of the Man of God's delight. Has He not taken us to stand in the crowd and wonder at the humility of Jesus as He comforts the distraught father of that demon possessed son! "I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not." The poor man is hysterical with frustrated hope. The crowd, too, is with him in an upsurge of sympathy and disappointment, for the disciples

were known to have performed this work of power in the towns where they had been sent to preach the gospel of the Kingdom. Their present impotence was incomprehensible — bringing discredit upon the whole mission. Mark takes us even closer to the scene. The multitude that had “come running together” are silent, and we may hear the questions of Jesus as, with wonderful sympathy, He invites the unburdening of the poor man’s sorrows. He GOES ALONG WITH HIM IN HIS GRIEF till He brings him to the open DOOR OF BLESSING with the cry—unuttered till now — “Lord I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” “In all their afflictions he was afflicted” writes Isaiah (ch.lxiii.9). It is the same Jesus who goes along with *us* in *our* grief — inviting the telling of the cares of our lives — assuring us “He careth *for* you.” It is not without purpose, indeed, that the Holy Spirit brings these episodes before us in sharp contrast.

“And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by Him” (v.47). A consideration of the *manner* in which the Lord Jesus worked draws out our worship as well as our wonder — for worship is not in words, except they be an expression of an awareness of the glory of His person and work. There is glory to be seen in the *power* of His working among men, but there is also a glory evident in the *way* that He worked — the beauty of the *manner* in which He approached and performed the work that His Father gave Him to do. Consider the individual application in each case — the lack of sameness and routine. He was confronted with human lives in all their variety of age and circumstance. His disciples had failed both in prayer and in fasting from all that ministered to self — He had shown them the way of service in humility and grace. Yet, as they left that scene, He perceived the thought of their hearts. It was not just a thought passing in their *minds*. There was an obsession in their *hearts* — they were held by a concept of the Kingdom and of their places of importance in it. The outcome was that His cross and His atonement for sin, as

well as the glory of a Saviour God, was "hid from them and they perceived it not" (v.45). It is a principle with God — let us reverently observe it — that "he that is least among you, the same shall be great" (v.48). So we may see a little boy standing by Him—not a child at a distance, to be viewed as a mere exhibit — one nearer to Him than them all — a little child with no self-important thought.

It is beautiful to see His care and patience with the disciples as He sets before them this young life without a thought other than childhood dependence upon his parents and awareness of their love. It was His special approach to them. To those who saw him, the child was of no real importance; yet, if they would become aware of Jesus Himself, in His character of dependent submission to God, they must discard their ambitions and open their hearts in simplicity to receiving Him, and Him alone, for what He was to God, and not as a means to their importance in the Kingdom. In so doing they would become aware of the divine purpose, unseen by the world, flowing as "the pure river of water of life" in place of the barren hopes of a kingdom without a cross. To receive Jesus as the despised and rejected One, is to receive God Himself — for the believer, to be least is to be truly great. In a day that we all know is coming — the day of "the regeneration" — when the creation will be delivered into a state suitable to Christ — animals once fierce and carnivorous are seen in company with gentle cattle and "a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah xi).

But it was sadly true that their sense of importance remained. Who knows how it grieved Jesus! Who knows the immeasurable extent of His patient love! The approach by John emphasized the honour of being among those called to discipleship. It also proclaimed a select and exclusive circle within which none were to be admitted who "follow not with us." "Master, we saw one casting out demons in thy name; and we forbad him because he followeth not with us" (v.49). Perhaps, it was hoped, regard would be given to the desire to protect the use of the Name of Jesus by

unknown and unauthorised persons. So many replies spring to mind in answer to this subtle attempt at entrenched privilege. But let us hear the divine word — “Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us.” How simply and humbly that precious Man owned whatever was of God! Satan was cast out — it could not be by other than the power of God.

In the history of those called Christ-ones first at Antioch this sectarian spirit of pre-eminence has continued to show itself. In the religious world of Christianity, rivalry and bigotry have produced suffering, torture and death in the name of Him whose words to John and his companions were “he who is least among you all, he is great” (v.48). The partisan spirit of the religious world invades the ranks of those who declare that they “know they have passed from death unto life because they love the brethren (1.John iii.14), but “he followeth not with us” is the voice of one dangerously near to the condition of him “that loveth not his brother” — “and abideth in death” (1.John iii.14).

In his treatise to Theophilus Luke is led to present the moral order of events, not the chronological sequence of occurrences. It is as though the beloved physician gives a diagnosis of the moral health of the times in which the Son of Man came among men. Thus we read, in verse 51. “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.” The passage through Samaria brings further emphasis to bear on the wrong of the same partisan spirit that was evident in the disciples. “The village of the Samaritans . . . did not receive Him because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem” (v.53). These people had been recipients of His grace, they had experienced His power, yet they allow their political jealousy of Jerusalem to refuse Him hospitality. The test of what we really think of Jesus comes when other objects, capable of diverting us, present themselves. There are men who occupy themselves with the discovery of doctrinal weaknesses in other believers.

There is the lure of superior separation. There are others attracted by worldly authority. There are still some who would be "lords of God's heritage" (1.Pet.v.3). The germ of place-seeking and power still works. It is the cause of spiritual poverty in a day of declension. Real FAITH looks only to JESUS. It is not occupied with ecclesiastical regulations having no Scriptural warranty — nor with private interpretation of passages having no relevance to the subject. With eyes turned from Jesus there is always danger. We may even plead, as a precedent, the action of Elias, and, forgetting the character of GRACE, desire judgment upon those whom we should love. There can be no word so sad to hear as that recorded for our warning — "Jesus turned, and rebuked them, and said Ye know not of what spirit ye are" (v.55).  
Edward T. Wood

## BEGINNINGS

The Bible speaks of three important *beginnings*, and they all concern the Lord Jesus Christ.

1st The Beginning of All Things. Genesis i.1, and John i.1.

2nd The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark i.1.

3rd The Beginning of the Creation of God — the New Creation. Revelation iii.14.

### THE FIRST OR OLD CREATION

Astronomers in our day speak of trying to find out how the universe began, but theirs is a vain quest. Studying the universe as it is may yield much information as to its past history, but never can answer the question of how it began to be at all. To this, God's revelation is the sole answer, and faith accepts this, and is wiser than the wisest scientist who refuses faith in God's word. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

This beginning was the beginning of *time*. Time is so much a part of our own make up that we are apt to think of it as something existing on its own. But no, it is part of creation. The Creator is not bound by time. One day with Him is as a thousand years, *and* a thousand years as one day. So while Genesis tells of a beginning—the beginning of divine *activity* — the first verse of John's gospel tells of the divine *being*, of Him who had no beginning.

We cannot penetrate further back than the beginning, but we find, looking back there, the Eternal WORD in all His glorious majesty, the source of all that then came into being.

“In the beginning *was* the WORD, (that is, already He was there)

And the WORD was with God, (that is, a distinct Person)

And the WORD was God, (that is, one with Him)

Verse 2 adds that He was in the beginning with God, that is, that He did not then *begin* to be distinct, but was so eternally. This contradicts the notion that the WORD was a kind of emanation from God.

Next, “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” This is better rendered “All things came into being through Him” — in contrast to the Eternal WORD whose being had no beginning.

The first creation, because of the entrance of sin, became subject to corruption, so that the next beginning introduces the *Redeemer*.

## **THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST**

As the young Church grew and spread, it became needful to recall to her what had been established “at the beginning.” Thus we find this phrase of frequent occurrence in the New Testament.

First, the life and teaching of the Lord Himself were recorded in the gospels. Luke traces the origin of things “from the very first” (Luke i.1), and tells of those “who from the



beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the WORD" (i.e., attendants upon Him). The words of our heading form the first sentence of the Gospel of Mark. Later, the apostle John in his epistles reminds believers of the fundamental commandment to love one another, which was not new, "but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning." (I John ii.7, II John 5), as indeed the Lord Himself had given it to His disciples "at the beginning."

Then also antichrists came in with their false teachings, and John had to remind even the babes in Christ "of that which ye had from the beginning" — the vital truth of the Lord Jesus coming in flesh. (I John ii.24).

These first two beginnings, however, are linked together in the introductory sentences of John's first epistle. The aged apostle looks back to those wonderful days of the beginning of the gospel when he with the other apostles had gone in and out with the Lord Jesus. Then he looks back further, in faith though not in memory, to that beginning of all things, proclaiming Him as "That which was from the beginning — that which we have seen and heard, and our hands have handled, of the WORD of Life—that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

Yes, from the beginning He "was", but, as we have seen, *He did not begin* then, or ever. But that in due time He should be manifested so that men could see and hear and touch Him, yes and know Him as the Father's delight, sent here that we might be brought into that same divine fellowship of love and holiness, this was a truth to fill with joy both the apostle as witness and all those to whom he wrote. "These things we write unto you, that your joy might be full", he writes. If our hearts are full of care instead of joy, is it not because we do not sufficiently dwell upon the graces and perfections of the Saviour?

This divine purpose could not be brought to pass, as we know, except by way of the cross, and this leads to our third beginning.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW CREATION

“These things saith the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God” (Rev. iii.14). Thus the Lord Jesus introduces Himself to the church in Laodicea. Yes, He had been to the cross, He had passed through death, and now was raised by the glory of the Father. As the Risen Man, He becomes Head of the New Creation. It is not here the old creation, though He was the *beginner* and also the sustainer of that. No, that creation was ruined by sin. Here it is the New Creation, where, as we learn from II Cor. v.18, everything is according to God. Thus it is called, for distinction, “The Creation of God”. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.” The believer in the Lord Jesus is “created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. ii.10); he is “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” (Col. iii.10).

Of this creation the Lord Jesus is not only the beginner, but as the Risen Man He is the *Beginning*, for every saint partakes of His resurrection life. He is both the Beginning of the New Creation, the Firstborn from the dead (Col. i.18), and also the Pattern, to which everyone, created in Him, will finally be conformed (Phil. iii.21).

How suitable is this description of Himself which the Lord gives in speaking to the assembly in Laodicea! Representing, as Laodicea does, the church in its last declension, she has forgotten altogether the truth of new creation. We can see only too clearly how often this is true today. Reform this present world, yes; but any thought of a power to raise men to a condition beyond this evil age altogether is in some quarters completely unknown. The Lord speaks of Himself as the faithful and true witness, itself a rebuke to a faithless church. “Wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked”, she is lacking in all the blessings her Lord could

give, because she has never really had to do with Him at all.

At the close of the Galatian epistle the power of new creation is contrasted with the unprofitableness of nature — of either circumcision or uncircumcision — in producing godliness. “As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” Paul adds. This phrase “Israel of God”, reminds us of “Creation of God” in Revelation iii. It speaks in both cases of what is *according to God* — the Israel of God being that part of Israel which was not merely Israel by natural birth, but also by new or divine birth; and the Creation of God not the first creation now ruined by sin, but the new creation wherein everything is of God. And there as in everything else, the Lord Jesus Christ has the pre-eminence.

E. H. Chamberlain

## THE PASSOVER LAMB, THE MANNA, AND THE CORN OF THE LAND

(Read: Joshua v.10-12; John vi.32-35; 48-58)

We cannot be Christians at all without feasting in some measure upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet we may be half-starved Christians and spiritually weak, because we do not avail ourselves of the provision that is in Him for our souls.

There are three ways in which we may feast upon the Lord Jesus Christ: two of them we shall continue in eternity. We may feast upon Him (1) as the Passover Lamb, (2) as the Manna, and (3) as the Corn that has been into the ground, has died, and has been quickened (John xii.24).

We shall never cease to feast upon Christ as the Lamb slain for us. As glorified with Him we shall look upon His glory, and ever feast upon Him. But in heaven we shall not feast upon Him as the manna; this is our provision now.

One young in the faith will say, "What do you mean by feasting upon Christ?" It is a figure, of course, and taken from what we are doing all our lives. What you put in your pocket you make your own, but what you eat becomes yours in a special way; it becomes part of your very self. It nourishes and sustains your body. So in feasting upon Christ; our minds, our souls are occupied with Him and what He is, and what He has done we make our own.

We begin by feeding on Him as the slain Lamb at the very first. The Lord said, "Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk His blood, ye have no life in yourselves" (John vi.53, New Tr.). Many people think that this verse refers to "the sacrament". A high churchman, for instance, will tell you so. This shows how carelessly learned and able men read the word of God. For the Lord Jesus says: "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life" (John vi.54). There are no exceptions, and no conditions. No high churchman, however, believes that everyone who takes the sacrament has eternal life, but that faith and worthiness are necessary in the one who partakes. As a matter of fact, the Lord's Supper is a figure of the very same thing. It brings home to our souls that we do feed upon Christ. The Holy Spirit has said nothing in the Gospel of John about the Lord's Supper, foreseeing what men would say.

### **THE PASSOVER LAMB**

Now it is of the first importance that we begin here. In Joshua v., in a small compass, we have the Lord Jesus brought before us in three distinct types; the passover, the manna, and the old corn of the land. The passover must come first in the soul's history. To eat the manna without having eaten the passover is the effort of human religion, which says that the Lord Jesus became flesh, and He left us an example. We are to copy His life, to try to walk as He

walked. But it is utterly impossible to feast upon Him as the Living Bread unless we have first partaken of Him as the One whose body and blood have been separated, that is, as the One who has died.

The children of Israel in Egypt were no better than the Egyptians. Before God brought them out He was going to act in judgment, and when God acted in judgment, there was no safety for any soul of man at all. It matters not what you and I are, it matters not how holy a man may be: if God meets him in judgment there can be no doubt about the issue. "In Thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psalm cxliii.2).

God commanded Moses to tell the children of Israel to take a lamb, to kill it, and to sprinkle its blood upon the lintel of the door and the side-posts. Sheltered by that blood they were safe, and feasted upon the roasted lamb. What were their feelings? Were they people who were happy in God's presence and the assurance of His favour? On the contrary, they were a people between whom and the God of righteousness the blood of the lamb had come, and had shut out the judgment. Then they feasted.

So it is with the blood of God's appointed Lamb. If a guilty sinner is sheltered under that blood he can then feast upon the Lord Jesus Christ. I look to the cross and contemplate all that He suffered there, and say, "It is just what was due to me. What He endured was what I deserved." I thus appropriate to myself the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. I eat His flesh and drink His blood. For the flesh and blood to be separated is a token of death.

Now God was not satisfied with only delivering the Israelites from judgment. A little further on He says, "Stand still, and see the *salvation* of the Lord." Accordingly, at the Red Sea, they were delivered from all the power of their enemies. In type, the power of Satan was broken by the death of Pharaoh.

Now although the children of Israel kept the passover again they never sprinkled the blood again. In this they had more spiritual intelligence than many Christians. When they came into the land, they encamped at Gilgal and kept the passover. But how different were their feelings and circumstances now! Caleb and Joshua were the eldest sons of their families; they could look back to that night of fear, but now, free from bondage and the terror of the destroying angel, they ate the passover in the land God had promised to their fathers.

The passage through the Red Sea is significant as a type of resurrection. The Lord Jesus was not only delivered for our offences, but was raised again for our justification. He was raised that we might be justified, that we might share His triumph Who was the victor over death and judgment.

### THE MANNA

But now we find ourselves in the wilderness, with nothing to minister to our souls; and we are sorely troubled, too, at what we find in ourselves. What is our resource? We turn to the Gospels to learn of the Lord Jesus in His pathway through this world. We feed upon Him as the manna. The Lord Jesus is presented in the sixth of John as the Living Bread that came down from heaven to satisfy all our soul's need; "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger."

Who but He could say this, in view of all the varied needs and desires of our souls? No servant of God, no apostle could do so. So we must turn to the Gospels, where we can contemplate the Lord Jesus as God contemplated Him in Whom was all His delight. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." We meet with things that try and vex us; where can we learn patience? We must study the patient, gracious ways of the One Who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself. "Take My yoke

upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."

## **THE OLD CORN OF THE LAND**

Now we come to the third way in which we can feast upon the Lord Jesus, and that is as the risen and glorified Man. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we see the heavens opened that we may look up and see the Lord Jesus sitting upon the throne of God. It is our joy to know Him as the Sinbearer Who accomplished all to the glory of God, and to know that He is now crowned with glory and honour. Thus shall we see Him throughout the ages of eternity.

This is what is brought before us in these verses in Joshua. The Israelites had come to the end of their journey. Throughout the wilderness they had partaken of the manna; but now this ceased, when they had eaten of the old corn of the land of Canaan.

When we enter into the typical Canaan, into heaven by faith, what do we find? We find evil spirits there (Ephesians vi.12). But the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Satan tries to make us forget that our portion is in heaven: he would have us set the world right. But the Father has called us on high, and it is ours now to enter heaven, for Christ is there. When the Israelites entered Canaan, there was fighting before them every foot of the way. But first they partook of the old corn of the land. It is feasting upon Christ, Who has died, risen and is now glorified; He is the Corn of wheat that had fallen into the ground.

When we are actually in heaven we shall feast upon Christ as the Passover Lamb, the One Whose flesh and blood have been separated on our account, and also as the old Corn of the land. Throughout eternity we shall feast upon Him. Eternity! Even to the Christian the thought is often

*(Continued 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)*

evident that the "violence" the Lord speaks of could not *in fact* obtain entrance to the kingdom for anyone, and therefore His words seem to refer to the attempt at "gate crashing" the kingdom by those who had no true title to enter.

The coming of John marked the end of the time of testing for Israel, during which the law and the prophets represented God's voice to His people.

Now Messiah Himself was announced, and the kingdom as being "at hand". Many supposed that all Israel's troubles would now pass away, and that her sons (apart of course, from the "publicans and sinners"), would automatically pass into the kingdom. The Pharisees, above all, took *their* title for granted. They had not learned the lesson which the law and the prophets combined to teach, that they were helpless in face of the law's demands, and that their righteousness was as filthy rags (Isaiah lxiv. 6).

Yet, the Lord insisted, it was easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail. They could not ignore its claims because of their descent from Abraham (Matt. iii. 19), and to refuse to repent was but to try to force their way into the kingdom. They refused Him who was the "friend of publicans and sinners", but *repentant* publicans and harlots were going into the kingdom of heaven before them, because for such the gates were wide open.

E. H. Chamberlain

## THE GIBEONITES: FAR-REACHING GRACE

(Read Joshua viii. to x.)

In the valley of Achor a great heap of stones marked the death scene of Achan, and, from defeat and dishonour, the army of Israel marched to the final overthrow of Ai. They had, but lately, fled before the men of war of that royal city, but, now, since the sin of Achan had been judged, they were led by direction of Jehovah whose promise to Joshua was announced — “I have given into thy hand the king of Ai, and his people, and his city, and his land”.

The patience, and instructive grace, of God may be seen in that, where, previously, they had *fled* before the city garrison, they are directed to *flee again!* This reminder of their failure when they went *without* God emphasized the change into success under His *direction* as the ambush rose at Joshua’s signal. It was no haphazard plan. There was no element of chance — there never is, in the ways of God. The signal of the outstretched spear in the hand of Joshua was directed by Jehovah. The ambush rose at His command, at the place appointed, “and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire” (ch. viii. 19). Ai, “The Heap”, became an heap indeed!

“Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord commanded the children of Israel” (v. 30). A very beautiful scene is presented. The “altar of whole stones” — untouched by human craftsmen — “and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings”. They offered that which spoke of atonement for the offerer, that he might be accepted, a type of Christ’s perfect offering of Himself. The sacrifice of the peace offerings, too, founded upon the burnt offering, expressed the reaction of the believing heart to the condition of being so blest — the response of the soul to the devotion of Christ. “And Joshua wrote there upon the stones

a copy of the law of Moses which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel."

We are thus permitted to visualize the scene of this solemn gathering. "All Israel, and their elders, and officers, and their judges, stood on this side the ark and on that side before the priests the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, as well the stranger, as he that was born among them; half of them over against mount Gerizim, and half of them over against mount Ebal; as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterwards he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law". (Joshua viii. 33.34). The two mountains were, for them, an established witness of the outcome of obedience to and departure from the expressed mind of God. The message of the divine principles resounded across the great valley from Ebal to Gerizim as Joshua "read all the words of the law . . . before all the congregation of Israel". The outreaching of grace and welcome into the safety and joy emanating from this altar embraced all who gathered there. "All the congregation of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers that were conversant (Halak — 'to go on') among them" (v. 35). None was excluded — the little children were specially named and even the strangers who journeyed with them were gathered into that company! Travellers may, today, hear the voice of a friend calling from Gerizim to Ebal, but, as we read of that day, and think upon the little ones and the strangers gathered there, shall we not stay to give thanks to Him who made our own welcome possible — bringing us as strangers, with the simple faith of children, into fellow-citizenship with the saints and of the household of God!

Joshua ix. "When all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the

Jebusite, heard thereof, they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord." There is opposition, both representative and comprehensive, arising from the building of the altar to the LORD God of Israel in Ebal. It is unanimous and far reaching. The kings in the hills, in the valleys and in all the coasts of the great sea combine in this confederacy.

It may be thought that it was not unreasonable to resist the advance of so great a migration directed toward their country. Not their food resources alone but their lives were in jeopardy. Yet it is clear they had been told that God had commanded His servant Moses to give the land to Israel (v. 24). The unimpeachable righteousness of God is such that no unjust command would have been given. Furthermore, the reactions of God in regard to sin were known. In the history of nations of our own day there are various references to the flood. Among the inhabitants of the land of Canaan the story of the great Deluge was part of their family history, for Canaan was grandson of Noah. The names of the six peoples are recorded and all, even the Perizzites, a people scattered in villages over the land, were related to Noah (Gen. x. 1-6, 15-20). The Amorites (the "mountain dwellers") were most dominant — and most corrupt, but the general departure from all divine precepts known to their forefathers had left them open to the abominations that accompanied idolatry. Indeed, the foreknowledge of God had announced the character of Canaan (Gen. ix.) at the time of his father's wrong behaviour, and, in process of time, the divine promise to Abraham was to be fulfilled and judgment executed upon those who held the land in enmity against God.

The approach to God by our *own* means and on our *own* terms is exemplified in the behaviour of Gibeon. "The inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai" (v. 3). They were Hivites and confederate with the six kings in alliance against the declared purpose of God for His people. They began in open opposition. The six kings

had all heard of the destruction of Jericho and Ai, but only Gibeon "feared" (v. 24). One is reminded of the two malefactors, crucified, "one on the right hand and the other on the left" (Luke xxiii) — Jesus is in the midst, and death is beyond. Suddenly one of the malefactors leaves the partnership of railing and abuse. "Dost not thou *fear* God seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly;" — "The *fear* of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom" (Ps. cxi. 10) Gibeon *feared* — while armed opposition gathered its forces.

Now Gibeon was a royal city, greater than Ai, "And all the men thereof were mighty" (Joshua x. 2), yet they sought escape from judgment by the craft of human wisdom. The pretence of being innocent strangers is not restricted to Gibeon. How many have adopted the outward behaviour of those who gathered among the worshippers, hoping they may be regarded as inoffensive strangers. "They made as if they had been ambassadors ("wanderers") and took old sacks upon their asses and wine bottles old and rent and bound up and old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy". With elaborate pretence they made their approach "to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal and said unto him and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us". How many would continue to represent themselves as "wanderers" in the sense of having no links with an irreligious world, and yet have never disclosed their real identity as sinful people in need of pardon!

These men had four cities — only three days journey from death! They did not deserve shelter, or a covenant, or life, yet, as in our own case, grace overflowed to them. The men of Israel were deceived by what they *saw*. Outward appearances affected their judgment. "And the men took of their victuals and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD" (v. 14). "And Joshua made peace with them and made a league with them to let them live and the princes of the congregation sware unto them" (v. 15). This passage has often

been quoted in solemn warning, for divine counsel is available to us from the inspired Word of God. Have we never taken decision under the impulse of our own purposes or been influenced by our own prejudices? How easy to interpret for ourselves the counsel that will fit with our own views! Had Israel asked counsel of the LORD, what would have been His command? And who shall have the effrontery to reply on His behalf! Gibeon had come in fear of Him — they had left the alliance of evil which was in opposition to His will. Yet Israel was without excuse. They acted without recourse to the LORD. “So great is His mercy toward them that fear Him”. (Ps. ciii. 11.)

Let us mark the development of events in the path of mercy. “Israel came unto their cities on the third day (v. 17). And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes (v. 18). And the princes said unto them, Let them live: but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation: as the princes had promised them” (v. 21).

The deception was disclosed, but Israel’s part in the covenant, made in the Name of the LORD, must not fail. The honour of that great Name must never be impugned. In all approach to the things of God, however, there is unflinching discernment. The principle obtained in that day, as in the day when the Son of Man rested for a brief time by the well at Sychar and read the hidden life pages of her book to the woman of Samaria.

“And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us? Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God” (vs. 22-23).

So, under the scrutiny of this discernment, they are brought to complete confession and submission — even to the placing of their lives in his hand. Their words were spoken so long ago, yet, as we read them, do we not hear an echo of our own admission of guilt, and sense again the awareness of life from the dead? “And they answered Joshua and said, because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing. And now, behold, we are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do. And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day in the place which he should choose”. (Joshua ix. 24-27)

“Joshua delivered them”. For generations the behaviour of this people had shown a character that sprang from Canaan the grandson of Noah. Though they had withdrawn from those who would shed the blood of Israel and had confessed their purpose and means of deception saying “We have done this thing” they needed that Joshua should deliver them. They stood before him without excuse and without defence, and Joshua delivered them.

If the warlike terror of the children of Israel be considered as a type of the punitive power of the law, one may rejoice in the contrasting deliverance pronounced by Joshua as foreshadowing, in type, the Lord Jesus as Saviour. There is, too, a wonderful progress of GRACE in this path of deliverance. The princes make the Gibeonite servants to “all the congregation” (v. 21). In verse 23 Joshua tells them of their inherited condition under the curse (Gen. ix. 25) and that they are bondmen — hewers of wood and drawers of water — “for the house of my God”. They are being drawn nearer — their



service, however indirect, is "for the house of the God of Israel".

But GRACE takes them onward for, following their full confession and their deliverance, Joshua extends the scope of their servitude to include "the altar of the LORD" (v. 27). They had pretended they came "from a very far country". Considered in relation to their present condition this pretence was truth indeed! There was death and resurrection in the "three days" of their experience. "And ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13).

The record of Gibeon continues with their experience consequent upon their new life of service. "The inhabitants of Gibeon" are in "peace with Israel" and "among them" (Joshua x). The world of their former associates hates them, and the five kings of the Amorites "gathered themselves together, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon and made war against it" (Josh. x. 5).

We are reminded of the words of the Lord Jesus spoken in warning and in sympathy, to those whom He loved. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John xv. 18).

The men of Gibeon were mighty. Theirs was a royal city and greater than Ai (v. 2). Yet, in keeping with their conviction that the power of God was with Israel, they had no confidence in themselves. "And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us. So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour. And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee" (vs. 6, 7, 8). To read the passages that follow is to realise that "the LORD discomfited them before Israel and slew them with a

great slaughter at Gibeon" (v. 10). "In the going down to Beth-horon" — that precipitous mountain road between upper and lower Beth-horon, that led to the plain, "it came to pass that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword" (v. 11).

It was "the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel (v. 12). And the sun stood still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies (v. 13). There was no day like that before it or after it that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel" (v. 14).

The purposes of God were unfolding and, within them, was His grace and protection for the Gibeonites. Their approach had been in error, their confession and submission had been brought about by the same grace that lengthened the day of victory and destroyed the enemy — both Israel's and their own.

This grace and care of them never changed. In 2 Samuel (xxi. 1-14) "There was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD" (v. 1). This three-fold indication of divine displeasure demanded humble inquiry, for the finger of God was upon the life-line of the people who professed His Name. Saul had slain some of the Gibeonites, and God condemned his house as a house of blood. This political act, to curry favour with Israel and Judah, broke the covenant made in Joshua's day, and "David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD? (v. 3). And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you" (v. 4). Seven men of the sons of the house of Saul were delivered to the Gibeonites and hanged "in the hill before the LORD . . . in the beginning of barley harvest." (v. 9).

Again, in 1 Chron. xii, among the thirty mighty men that came to David when Saul sought his life was "Ismaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty" and, in the sad later days of the remnant left of the captivity, when Nehemiah "wept and mourned and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven", Melatiah the Gibeonite worked to repair the walls and gates of Jerusalem with other faithful men who had united "portion and right and memorial" in that City where God had been pleased to place His Name (Neh. i. 4; iii. 7).  
Edward T. Wood

## A MESSAGE OF GRACE AND PEACE

*Revelation 1. v. 4-9*

These words are written from the Apostle John, the "Apostle of love" as he has been called. He occupied a very special place: he it was who leaned on Jesus' breast, who had the secret of the Lord. When the other disciples wanted to know they asked John to ask Jesus. I am sure that we all want to know the secret of divine love, the love that every true believer has.

The Apostle was no longer a young man. All speech derives its importance from the one who speaks. Here in this Book it is the *Spirit of God* speaking through the Apostle John, the human vessel designed and fitted by the Lord to be one of His witnesses here in this world. He is now an aged man, and the words of an aged man are often very important; and we may well listen always very carefully to what an aged man has to say.

With the Apostle John everything was behind him. So far as he is concerned he is a prisoner, banished and away from all that he loved. He no doubt looked back to those days when he had traversed with the Saviour the shores of Galilee and the streets of the great City. He had looked upon the fields which were ripe and ready to harvest. It is a beautiful sight to see these thirteen men — the Lord occupying His own place — moving along through the cornfields —

they were the men who were going to carry the gospel to the world!

Now, however, he is in isolation. He might have looked across the water from the place of his captivity, and he might have seen Ephesus and Smyrna: but he was not there amongst them to partake in the privileges of the Church of God.

There may be some who in a certain sense may be saying, "Everything is before me if the Lord leaves me here": well, the very thing that sustained the Apostles is the very thing that will keep such today. Others there may be who are backsliders who once knew the love and communion of the Lord Jesus, but they have strayed. John comes with this word to give you fresh encouragement. Does he say, "Well, it is all over now for me . . . those days I spent with the Lord are all over and far away". No! No! Christianity is not of that kind: the Apostle did not sigh and pine away. On this Lord's Day morning on the Isle what does he say to them whom he loved as his own soul? "Grace be unto you"; and grace is that which everyone of us needs daily — to abide in the sense of Christ's grace. You cannot pine away when the streams of grace flow into the very depths of your soul! Grace is needful to us all. God's grace is also His love flowing out; it is His favour to us, to those who have not a claim to it whatever.

You might say, "Well, I should expect something more, I should expect some special parting word as a result of your experience, John". No! The Apostle has the secret of it: he knows that to abide in the sense of Christ's grace is the true home of the Christian. In this world full of chaos, hatred and trouble it is Christ's grace which shall keep me. Let Christ's grace mould your heart: you who are young, keep your hearts open to Christ's grace, just as a flower opens itself to the sunshine.

The Apostle says not only grace, but "peace". We need peace: we do not grow more because we are not peaceful.

There must be peaceful conditions for growth. If you examine your lives you will find that perhaps you are not sufficiently peaceful. It is a blessed thing that we have the very peace of heaven here on earth, from the eternal scene where there is nothing but peace!

Well, where are "grace and peace" to come from? To come from "Him which is, which was, and which is to come". From Him who knows no decay. It flows from heaven itself, into your heart and mine. It is not an abstract thing, not just head-knowledge. The soul that is in the sense of God's grace has the enjoyment of His peace: and it is that which is going to strengthen us marvellously to meet the darkest day. He will not let anything come upon us to break us down, to break our lines of communication, so that the promise of grace from the throne of God should never reach you.

It is not only "grace and peace" from God the Father and our Lord Christ, but also "from the seven Spirits which are before his throne". The seven Spirits refer to the Holy Spirit of God, and speak to us of the fulness of power.

How good of God that there is peace and grace if only we are ready to receive it! God has given to every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ His own Spirit, and our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. God has secured the power: grace and peace He will give me if I walk obediently to Him. The Spirit has come unseen; how soon we forget Him. When we cannot ask for what we need He has given us the Holy Spirit who helps us: so what we cannot do in our own strength is given to us through the grace and peace that flow from God Himself and come to us secured by the gracious ministry of the Spirit of God, One that has come to abide with us forever. Not only from "the seven Spirits" but from "Jesus Christ". The grace and peace come from the eternal God and His Spirit, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. It is as we have Him before our hearts that we know the power of His grace. In our daily lives we are perhaps given to hastiness, but it is not so in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't feed upon the pride and imagination of the world; be in the secret of His presence, and have your heart filled with the grace which He alone can give.

The Lord Jesus was the "faithful witness" in this world, and none could turn Him from that path. He walked here with God, being in every way truly devoted to God's will. He was truly faithful, truly lowly throughout His life from first to last; and not only in life, but in death. "The first begotten of the dead". None will ever know the powers of darkness which amassed themselves in the final trial of God's Faithful Witness. But He comes up out of death, having glorified God, and is now gone on high and seated at the right hand of God. He is there ministering to us, and His ministry is made good to us by the precious working of the Holy Spirit.

Beloved saints of God, there is no reason why we should succumb to the unfaithfulness around us today. If we have been unfaithful in the past we can come to Him as the One who is God's Faithful Witness. This scripture is written to us from the man who leaned on Jesus' bosom — this message of grace and peace — this is what he says today to us!

But we not only view Him thus: He rises after with all glory, He is "the prince of the kings of the earth". Keep this picture before your souls and it will break the power of temptation. Keep Him before you as the One who has come up out of death and who is gone up into the Glory. Everyone is going to see that glory soon.

There is now the outflow of praise and adoration "unto Him", not to the eternal God or the seven Spirits, but to the Lord Jesus Christ —

The mention of Thy Name shall bow  
Our hearts to worship Thee.

Well, may our hearts burst forth in praise to Him, for the love of Christ furnishes us with the motive to thus serve Him. Oh! that there may be in greater measure this response to

the heart of Christ. "Unto Him that loveth us": He loves us now and He is set apart to serve us that we may be maintained to His glory and for the pathway down here, which He desires. And we are now made "a kingdom of priests unto God and His Father: to whom be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen".

May God grant that these golden and gracious words written to us give fresh encouragement and cheer, for they all find their answer in the Lord Jesus Christ. J. P. Bull

## DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES

It is proposed, if the Lord will, to attempt from time to time the exposition of some of those portions of the word of God which cause difficulty because of apparent obscurity or sometimes seeming contradiction of other scriptures.

It is of course likely that readers may not always agree with the interpretation offered, and correspondence suggesting alternatives, or bringing out additional points, will be most welcome. It has often been the writer's experience to get light on such scriptures at a Bible Reading; even when at the beginning no one was clear, the true meaning became evident, through the gracious teaching of the Spirit, as each one made his contribution.

Perhaps it is as well to state clearly, that there is no suggestion of order of importance attached to those scriptures considered first.

### THE VIOLENT ENTERING THE KINGDOM

(Matt. xi. 12, 13)

"From the time of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John". Similarly Luke xvi. 16: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it" (or, forces his way in).

Luke tells us that this was addressed to the Pharisees, who derided the Lord's teaching about the use of riches. Now it is

*(Continued 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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### DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES — (2)

“If ye then have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.”  
I Cor. vi.4.

The apostle Paul begins this sixth chapter by sternly rebuking the practice, of which some of the Corinthian believers were evidently guilty, of going to law in the heathen courts against fellow christians. Seeing that, in the coming Kingdom, the saints were destined to judge, not only the world's affairs, but even those of angels, were they not fitter persons, he argues, to judge petty disputes among their brethren than the heathen judges were? After this occur the words quoted above.

We might perhaps put his appeal in this way: Would you, if you were letting your brethren judge your affairs, choose the very least esteemed of them to carry out the task? Of course not, yet in allowing unbelieving men to do it, you are going much lower.

That he writes ironically, and not as positively recommending this course, is confirmed by the next words, “I speak this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.” The alternative explanation, that Paul was showing how unimportant these earthly matters were in his eyes, only meriting, therefore, the attention of the least estimable of the saints, seems quite contrary to such words.

Of course, his rebuke goes far deeper than the charge of inconsistency. If only they really valued the grace of God that had bound them together as brethren of Christ, love would have enabled them to accept wrong, and to forgive one another. In every way they were acting unworthily.

E. H. Chamberlain.

## THE SPIRIT OF SONSHIP

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption (i.e., of sonship), whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Rom. viii.14-16.

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” Gal. iv.4-6.

That spiritual renewal which a man undergoes when he comes to God in faith is spoken of as a new birth in some scriptures (John iii.3; I Pet. i.23; I John v.1), and as a new creation in others (II Cor. v.17; Eph. ii.10). **The first emphasizes** that it is the beginning of a new life, a new *kind* of life indeed, entitling him to be called a child of God. The other reminds us that he is the same *person* that he was before, but re-created in a new mould, “after the image of Him that created him.” It identifies his new life with the risen, victorious life of Christ. “God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (or, made us alive) together with Christ” (Eph. ii.4,5).

In all his epistles, Paul does not speak of the new birth of the believer; but that his teaching is in fundamental agreement with that of the other apostles is shown by his use of the expression “children of God” in Rom. viii.16, 17, 21. This is in every way equivalent to those “born of God” in John’s writings.

## BONDAGE NO LONGER

The great theme of the gospel which Paul preached was the liberty into which believers are brought by faith in the

work of Christ, a liberty flowing from complete justification by His death and resurrection. For Jewish believers, this liberty was in marked contrast to their former condition of fear and bondage under the law. Even to-day many Christians are uncertain as to their salvation, supposing that no-one can be certain about the matter in this life, so that fear instead of joy possesses them when they ponder the future. But it is only by faith that we can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is by faith that we are justified (Romans v.1), resting solely on the work of Christ and not on our own merits.

In Galatians iii.23-iv.3 Paul compares this former bondage of Jewish believers with the state of tutelage, in those days, of a child, a minor, who though perhaps heir of large estates was under tutors and governors "till the time appointed of the father." We may with advantage note that two different words are translated "children" in this passage, neither of which is exactly equivalent to "children of God" in Romans viii. In Gal. iii.26 it is better read "sons of God", and in iv.3 it means a minor, or one under age.

But now that the Redeemer had come, and His atonement was accomplished on the cross, perfect deliverance from sin's condemnation was the portion of the believer in Him, the state of bondage and fear being a thing of the past. Instead of feeling that we were at a distance from God, we are given to know that we are members of His family with an assured place that nothing can destroy. We may rightly say "we", for Paul goes on to point out that Gentile believers had been brought into the same place of blessing and security. As chapter iv.4,5 expresses it, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Then he adds, "And because ye are sons," meaning now Gentile Christians such as the Galatians were.

The word *redemption* invariably has the sense of bringing into a state of liberty, as a slave might be redeemed by the

payment of a redemption price and so receive his liberty. Now Jewish believers under the law no doubt possessed divine life, but had no title (save in a national sense, Deut. xiv.1) to call themselves "children of God." They trusted in God's goodness to them, but also feared His judgments; they looked for the Saviour to come, but could not look back upon an accomplished salvation. But now they had received the privilege and dignity of sonship, because God's Son had borne the curse of a broken law for them upon the cross. They were free men, free from fear, free to approach God as a loving Father, free to look forward to a future of certain blessing. Free also to serve Him as only those can who know their own acceptance.

### SONS OF GOD IN WEAKNESS

This assured place of being sons of God is ours now, and faith accepts it, and rejoices in it, but there is nothing outwardly to show it. Yet the day is coming when the sons of God will be displayed in the glory of their Saviour before the eyes of an astonished world (Rom. viii.19). So in a similar way John says "Now are we the children of God, but what we shall be has not been manifested. When He is manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Our bodies then will be transformed by His mighty power to be like His own glorious body.

Yet though at present our bodies are subject to weakness and mortality, they are the abode of the mighty Spirit of God. The body, moreover, is to be redeemed from the bondage of corruption, and the Spirit of God Himself is the guarantee of this. See Romans viii.11. Our bodies, again, are the temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. vi.19). But in this fourth chapter of Galatians Paul speaks of something rather different. He says, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." When he says your *hearts* we all understand that it is not the literal heart that he means, but some little care is necessary to discover exactly what is intended. For we cannot assume that

Paul meant just what a modern writer would by the figure. With us, the heart is indicative of the affections, whereas the Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees "Why *reason* ye in your hearts?" Again we get such phrases as "a troubled heart", "comforting the heart", "believing in the heart", and finally that word spoken to Samuel, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." We might perhaps sum these up by saying that it symbolizes the thoughts and feelings of the inner man.

### THE SPIRIT OF HIS SON IN OUR HEARTS

If we now ponder the fact that scripture never says that the Spirit of God dwells in our hearts by faith, though Paul does pray for the Ephesians that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," we may understand the importance of using words as scripture does. Thus to have Christ dwelling in our *hearts* is a blessing to be sought after; but the Spirit dwelling in our *bodies* is an unchangeable *fact*, entirely due to God's grace. A believer falling into sin will grieve the Spirit and lose his communion with the Lord, but he will not lose the Spirit. By Him we are "sealed unto the day of redemption."

It is plain, then, that when it says that God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, it does not *merely* mean that our bodies are indwelt by the Spirit of God, great as that blessing is. Nor is it for nothing that it says "the Spirit of His Son."

It is not enough for our God to have forgiven our sins, given us new life in His Son, and the place and privilege of being sons ourselves. No, He wants us to enjoy the closeness and intimacy of sonship, the sense of happy obedience and dependence which the Lord Jesus Himself knew and walked in during His life here. Therefore He has sent forth the Spirit of His Son *into our hearts*. Thus it is an experience for us to know and enjoy, but of course it is founded upon the presence of the Holy Spirit, by whom alone such feelings could be produced. Moreover, the very words which the Lord Jesus used in His prayer in Gethsemane, where His obedience was

tested to the uttermost, are the words which *we* are invited by the Spirit to use — “Abba, Father.”

### WALKING AS SONS OF GOD

Well may we ask ourselves how much we know of this intimacy and dependence. God wants us to know, to experience day by day, and hour by hour, what it is to walk closely with Him, as a son with a father.

We may gather something of what He desires us to know by the words which the Lord Jesus puts into the mouth of the father in the parable. He says, “Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.” That is God’s pattern of fatherhood. When we read in Romans viii “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God,” it is this sense of belonging to Him, of being precious to Him, that He wants us to realize. As the Lord Jesus prayed to His Father, “I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou has loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

This is the place into which the Lord Jesus has brought us by His work on Calvary. As the eternal Son of the Father He has a unique place, infinitely superior to all creatures, but as man He is also Leader of a heavenly company, the First-born of many brethren, the Captain of our salvation. “For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.” (Heb. ii.10-12).

“Thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine.” All that the Father has is Christ’s, and we are in Him, accepted in Him the Beloved. Having given His Son for us, He will with Him freely give us all things. Not necessarily all things now; but we don’t want to be like the elder son indeed, who supposed that good things were being withheld from him;

if we truly believe the gracious love which has been shed so abundantly upon us, we shall be content with a place of rejection and suffering even as our Captain was rejected. We shall want to wait to be glorified with Him. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

But meanwhile, it is our privilege to walk here in the consciousness of the Father's love, to come to Him at all times with all our needs, with the assurance of His unceasing care for us. We shall desire to know what His will is for us — that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom. xii.2) — that will which is working all things together for our good — our highest, ultimate good.

An earthly father usually desires to give his children the best he can in every way; much more does our Father God. Above all He wants us to increase in the knowledge of Himself. The Saviour says, "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." The more we know of the Lord Jesus the more we shall know of the Father, and the more our ways will glorify Him.

E. H. Chamberlain.

## **THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE GROWTH OF THE SAINTS**

*(Notes of an address on Colossians i.1-29)*

The Epistle to the Colossians is very remarkable because it is the meeting-place between two very different doctrines, which at first seem irreconcilable.

You know that in the Epistle to the Romans a man is looked at as alive and active in sin. The only way of deliverance for him is through death. The best thing that could happen to a man in the Epistle to the Romans is that he should die. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, instead of our being looked at as being alive in sin we are seen to be dead



in trespasses and sins, therefore there is no thought of death coming to us. We are already dead, and God has come down to us, and He has quickened us together with Christ and raised us up together and seated us in heavenly places in Christ.

Both doctrines are of course true. We have only to think of ourselves to feel how true that is. We were dead in trespasses and sins. There was in us no answer to anything that God might say to us; no power, therefore we were in death. But it was also true that we were very much alive. We were alive and active in doing our own will; therefore in the Epistle to the Romans we have death brought in for our deliverance. And we have more teaching as to baptism in that Epistle than anywhere else in the Word of God.

### **BAPTISM A FIGURE OF DEATH**

Baptism comes at the end of my career as a man in the flesh. I was alive in sin and I have to die and be buried. In baptism a Christian goes off from his old standing and he comes into a new place. Let me say here, to die with Christ is a matter of experience. I know there is a hymn that says, "When He died, then we died with Him"; but what is not sense is not scripture. We cannot die before we live. When scripture speaks of dying in Christ (1 Thess. iv.16) it means falling asleep. But scripture does also speak of our dying with Christ (Col. ii.20), and this takes place in our personal history. It is not the result of our striving; therefore we are not told to work to die to sin, to mortify the deeds of the flesh until we at last become dead; but it is true of a man the moment he identifies himself with the death of Christ.

I come as a poor guilty sinner, and I see in the death of Christ the very thing that by right was mine — the death and judgment into which He came. So the Lord Jesus speaks of this in a figure as eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John vi.53-56). I come and partake of Him; I make His death my own, and the result is that I have died with Him. Having died with Him, there is the end of that old man that was under condemnation.

Now, in Colossians, we are said to have "died with Christ" (ii.20, N.Tr.). If we have died with Christ, how can we put ourselves under ordinances? They have to do with this creation, and we are brought out of it. We are become dead to the law and dead to ordinances, to feast days and fast days, and to everything that the flesh can enter into.

### RISEN WITH CHRIST

Then he says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above"; set your mind on things above (iii.1). It is the very basis of his exhortation to right behaviour and holiness in the Epistle to the Colossians, that we are here in this world and we have risen with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not taken, as we are in the Epistle to the Ephesians, up into heaven. There we are raised and seated *in* Christ (Eph. ii.6). In Colossians we died with Him and we are risen *with Him* but we are *not seated with Him*. We are to enter in spirit into things above, where Christ has gone.

Now, the Epistle to the Colossians brings before us how we ought to walk in this world as people who have been raised from the dead. These are very wonderful words, words that humble us as we think of them, in which the apostle describes here, what, I may say, is the normal walk of the Christian. The exhortation is not anything exceptional; it is what the Lord desires for every one of us. God would have all of us to be walking as those who have been raised with the Lord Jesus Christ.

This desire is a wonderful thing when we come to think of it. When we think of Who God is, and when we think of what we are, poor wretched sinners, that God should be interested in our behaviour, that He should care how we turn out, that He has not only taken us up and blessed us, but that His eye is ever upon us. It is no matter of indifference to God if we should be careless and slack. There is nothing that changes His love; that is true; but what ought we to be in answer to such love and such interest! Surely we ought to

desire that His word may have such an effect upon us that we shall become what He describes.

### **FILLED WITH KNOWLEDGE**

Turning now to Col. i.9, the apostle tells us of his "desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding". Supposing I have just been converted, I have everything to learn. I am not to sit still and be satisfied with the fact that I have passed from death unto life and that I have forgiveness of my sins. God has given me His word. He has not only given it to those who minister it, but to every believer. He has given me His word and also His mind concerning it. There is always room to grow in the school of God as long as we are here. God would have us to be making progress in our knowledge of Him and to enter into that which He has given us in His word, to be filled with the knowledge of His will.

Not only so; this knowledge is not sufficient in itself. Its practical result is "that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." This is what ought to be true of us, beloved. God has given us enough to fill our hearts with joy, even if we are in tribulation and trouble and weakness and sorrow. What are they but opportunities to learn the love and faithfulness and grace of God as we would never learn without them! Therefore we are entitled to be joyful and happy even amidst all the difficulties and trials of our pathway.

### **MADE MEET FOR THE INHERITANCE**

Then we have something very beautiful in the next verse: "giving thanks unto the Father, Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son (or, the Son of His love)".

This is God acting towards us. This is what He has written, and what is true of us now.

He has "made us meet"; He has fitted us even now. Our bodies are not fit it is true; we wait the Lord's coming; but such is the work of the Lord Jesus, that we are made meet by it to be partakers of the portion of the saints in light — in that light, in that glory, that makes manifest all things. So perfect is the cleansing that we have through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that we, once guilty sinners, are now made meet to be partakers of the portion of the saints in light. He has delivered us from that place in which we were, from that power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

We owe everything to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have redemption and forgiveness through Him, and not only that, we have come under His government. We have come under the government of the Son of God's love, the One Whose love we know, Who gave himself for us. It is a definite kingdom that is spoken of — not the kingdom of God, still less the kingdom of the Son of man. We have come under the government of the One Whom God loves. We know the Lord Jesus Christ, not as Creator, but as the Object of the Father's love, and we are the objects of His love; and it is under His rule that we have come.

### **THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD**

After saying all these things about us, the apostle has some remarkable things to say about the Lord Jesus Christ. He tells us what He is, and what He has done and he tells us what our Lord Jesus Christ has become. He came down into this world. He took His place in the creation, and what then? Here he was the image of the invisible God; to say He was in the likeness of God would be blasphemy. We read He was "in the likeness of men," but not of God, for He was God.

God did to man what He never did to any angel. He put him in the place of government over the works of His hand.

An angel is only a servant sent forth to serve those who shall inherit salvation. But though He was put below the place of angels, the Lord Jesus was the image of the invisible God, the One upon Whom man could look and learn what God is in all that He spoke, whether it was righteousness or grace that He brought before them in all His wonderful compassion, that compassion that would not send the people away hungry, lest they should faint by the way. We see Him weeping beside the grave of Lazarus. We see the manifestation before the eyes of God and man of what God is. Thus He is "the image of the invisible God." And then, in addition, coming into this creation, what could He be but the Firstborn of it all? "Firstborn" is the place of pre-eminence which the Lord Jesus must have as His personal right, always and everywhere.

### THE FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION

You remember that God, when He sent Moses to Pharaoh, said, "Israel is My firstborn" (Exodus iv.22). Israel was not one of the first nations but one of the last. Peoples were established over the face of the earth long before Israel became a nation at all, yet God said, "Israel is . . . My firstborn." This was the place of priority that Israel had in the sight of God; so the Lord Jesus coming into creation, what could He be but the Firstborn?

Having stated this precedence, the apostle gives us the reason for it too. The Lord Jesus was the Creator, for all things were created by Him, "visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." Here we have the Lord Jesus brought before us as the Creator of the universe. And not only was it created by Him, but *for* Him as well. The whole universe — not only this little earth — but the whole universe was created for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One Who is before the universe, and

by Him the universe goes on and holds together.

G. F. Cox.

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

## **GOD'S MERCY TO A SINNER**

*(A true story)*

Very late one evening, almost exactly one hundred years ago, a young man might have been seen making his way stealthily and dejectedly towards the seaside cliffs of the town where he lived.

Though he was organist of a local church, and had a promising musical career before him, his inner life lacked one thing necessary to his soul's harmony: he did not know peace with God.

For a long time our young friend had been under deep conviction of sin from which he could find no relief. The thought of having one day to appear before God to answer for his sins was a burden which rapidly became insupportable, until at last he decided upon a desperate measure to put an end, as he thought, to his misery.

That night, after the remaining members of the household had retired to rest, he crept noiselessly out of the house and made his way to the edge of the cliff. Climbing over the railings which should have served as a barrier, he paused a moment before taking the final plunge to death. But God's restraining hand was upon his shoulder, though he knew it not. At the very moment of hopelessness and despair something most unusual and unexpected happened.

Out from a nearby public house rolled a well-known local character nicknamed "Australian Jack," shouting at the top of his voice: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God." Wholly unaware of what he was doing, this drunkard was, in the sovereign providence of God, a messenger of hope to the man in distress on the cliff edge.

The words uttered by the drunkard, quotations from Psalms 42 and 43, may well have been part of a portion which as a

child he had learned by heart in Sunday School. They hardly form a familiar text; many may be unaware that the Bible contains such words. Nevertheless, these words were stored away in the man's mind, and at the behest of a Power greater than himself, he was made to utter them aloud.

One never ceases to marvel at the resources of God's grace where the blessing of one who seeks Him is concerned. Without any doubt at all, the thing happened in the way it did by the over-ruling providence of God. For such words to be proclaimed over the midnight air, in such circumstances, with such an audience to hear them, was entirely beyond the wit of man to arrange. Dare anyone call it coincidence?

The effect upon the wretched man who was about to destroy himself was instantaneous. In a flash he realised the mistake he had made in looking for comfort within his own heart. In a moment it was clear that he must look upward to God for help. And as he did this by the gracious enlightening of the Holy Spirit, the burden of his sins rolled away, and he retraced his steps a new man — in Christ Jesus. Like the Ethiopian who had found Jesus to be the key to his understanding of the scriptures, the young man "went on his way rejoicing." He had found the Saviour: or, to speak more truly, the Saviour had found him!

For nearly fifty years after this, the man whose conversion took place in this remarkable way bore unceasing witness to the grace of God that met him in his dire need. Indeed, on Sunday afternoons for nearly forty summers, he held gospel services for young folk on the beach below the cliffs not far from the spot where God had saved him — soul and body.

He has long since passed into the presence of the Saviour, and one is left wondering how many other remarkable stories of God's grace will be told when the day of glory dawns.

E. A. Pettman.

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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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### OUR LORD, OUR REST

*"Come unto Me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls"*  
(Matthew xi. 28,29)

Jesus, I rest in Thee,  
In Thee myself I hide;  
Laden with guilt and misery,  
Where can I rest beside?  
'Tis on Thy meek and lowly breast  
My weary soul alone can rest.

Thou Holy One of God!  
The Father rests in Thee,  
And in the saviour of that blood  
Which speaks to Him for me:  
The curse is gone—in Thee I'm blest;  
God rests in Thee—in Thee I rest.

The slave of sin and fear,  
The truth my bondage broke;  
My happy spirit loves to wear  
The light and easy yoke:  
Thy love, which fills my grateful breast,  
Makes duty joy, and labour rest.

Soon the bright, glorious day,  
The Rest of God shall come;  
Sorrow and sin shall pass away,  
And I shall reach my home;  
Then, of the promised land possessed,  
My soul shall know eternal rest.

J. G. Deck

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

Luke ix.57. In his presentation of events in their moral order Luke shows Theophilus three human approaches to Jesus, each having its individual characteristic. It is very beautiful to consider the divine control to which the writer is submissive. For the three men are not mere passing incidents in human experience — they present human reactions known to us in *our* day, for Jesus still touches the lives of men and their response has eternal consequence.

The man, in verse 57, is a Scribe. He would be considered a learned man — a writer and teacher of the Law. Matthew records the Lord's verdict upon the whole class of the Scribes and Pharisees “they sit in Moses' seat . . . but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matt. xxiii. 2-3). The holy teaching was denied by unholy lives. Thus it would seem that the man's words were as empty of true purpose as his life was full of false behaviour. He presented himself as *fit* to follow Jesus — and as *able* so to do. This element of self-deception is not confined to the day in which he lived. There are many who, in this present day, approach with phrases correct and even beautiful in expression, while, to the speaker, they have no personal association with truth — no power in themselves to enable them to follow.

“The foxes have holes and the birds of the heaven have roosting places: but the Son of Man hath not where He may lay His head.” The scribe had come uncalled, as one caught up in the self-confidence of his own approach. He was told there could be no personal benefit from his type of following. The reply of Jesus is so perfect — so adequate in view of the man of learning to whom it came. The fox had his secret den, though every man's hand be against him. The birds of the air were vulnerable to storm and tempest as well as to marauders of air and land, yet they had their “roosting places” — not their Spring-time nests alone but where they were comparatively safe at all times in their “roosting places” (JND). The Son of

Man was without possessions. Grateful hands prepared His lodging, but it was not His own! Never once did He use His power for His own needs.

“And He said to another, Follow Me.” The man addressed is the opposite of the Scribe. He had a hidden desire to follow, and is called at a point of testing. Let it never be doubted that our every secret thought is known to God. The psalmist writes “Thou understandest my thoughts (desires) afar off” (Ps. cxxxix. 2). Jesus was certainly aware of this man’s mental conflict. A theoretical follower has no such test — no awareness of the reality of taking the path of following, but, where faith is genuine, there is a soul sensitive to the things that hinder. “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father” (v. 59). It was a duty not to be delegated in a Jewish family. The Law given by Moses required honour to be shown to parents. The ritual of burial and the days of mourning must be observed. The nearest of kin was in strict responsibility, and failure in this solemn observance would entail ostracism from family, from friends, from the Synagogue itself. It would be a path of solitude comparable only to a living death. “Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” Face to face with the dead things of the world and the living Christ of God, this man presents the experience of every real follower of Christ. The call to follow is a call to faith to leave every hindering tie — though it be human and close — for the answer to this call is to be in the world, yet giving no allegiance to it — to belong to Christ, here, and hereafter.

One cannot but think of the sympathy of the Lord Jesus with this man and, also, of that enabling power that flowed so surely from Him — as though the new born faith reached out in all its weakness to find the warmth of His re-assurance and so begin its growth into the reality of Life in Him. For he was called, not alone to follow, but to witness — to “announce the Kingdom of God.” Here, indeed, was a mission removed in character “as far as the east is from the west” from all that had

spent its life and become subject to death. He was to announce the glory of an Eternal Kingdom where death could never intrude, and where all would be in accord with the Mind of God — a scene where the perfection of His character of holiness would be displayed and reflected in the subjects of His grace and love. His was a privileged appointment — among the heralds of the King of Kings!

Shall we not remember that when Jesus calls us to follow Him — and to continue in our following, more and more closely as we know Him more — it is to higher planes of spiritual experience and to better service for the glory of His Name.

The third man accosts Jesus with a declaration in the same form as the first. His is the casual character that does not feel this “following” differs much from an ordinary act of support for one of the many things in life demanding attention. It is not a wholehearted dedication to a Person but a religious support for an ideal with which he is in superficial agreement. This is clear from what, in his opinion, comes first. These are the courtesies and amenities of life. He would keep the Son of God waiting while he bids them farewell, which are at home at his house (v. 61).

If we ponder the response of the Lord Jesus to each of these men it will be a means of revealing still further His sensitive awareness of the condition of each of them. The imperfections of each vary in degree but His response to each is at once a correction and a revelation. Who shall approach Him and be able to screen the purpose of his coming behind a form of words? Who, indeed! Yet many still seek to do so. It is no light thing “to lay one’s hand on the plough.” The backward look, like that of Lot’s wife, shows no fitness for the Kingdom of God.

Edward T. Wood

## DWELLING

Not only does the inspired word speak much of a dwelling-place for God, and a dwelling-place for man, but the twin themes of God dwelling with man, and man dwelling with God,

run like golden threads through the warp and woof of Scripture, and they are in many ways the highest and deepest revelation of the unspeakable blessedness given to fallen but renewed creatures. They shine in the gloom of man's day of pride and self-will, and lead the heart on to the glorious ultimate fulfilment of God's eternal purpose.

It has been said that a fugitive is one who is running away from home; a vagabond is one who has no home; a pilgrim is one on his way home. All these are found in Scripture; but it dwells far more on the wondrous reality of the home itself. The account of God's preparation of the earth for man, and His placing him upon it as His representative, is followed immediately by the drama of man's failure and disobedience in that responsible position. And the solemn sentence of death as the wages of sin makes fallen man — apart from its more tragic aspects — a stranger and a sojourner on the very planet formed to be his habitation. Youth is often restless and foot-loose, and such races as the Gypsies and the Bedaween are nomadic from choice; but for most people, particularly when in the prime of life and past it, there is deep down an earnest desire for a settled place and an atmosphere where their heart can rest; and in a fallen creation this cannot be found in perfection.

## GENESIS

In Gen. iv., where sin against God has been followed by sin against his fellow-man, the murderer tried to frustrate as far as he could the divine sentence that he should be a wanderer by building a city on the earth which had drunk his brother's blood. Such has been the tendency ever since, and it will yet find its fullest expression in those described in the Revelation as the "earth-dwellers".

But apart from the special sentence upon Cain, we see man, whether godly or ungodly, compelled ultimately to leave the scene of his sojourning, even though he may be, like Jared and Methuselah, given almost a millennium of years to live. In the renewed earth after the Flood, Noah's descendants attempted to

settle in a man-made centre; and then in the scattering which followed God's judgment on this scheme men travelled farther and farther to find a home for themselves; and at the same time, alas, travelled farther and farther away from God in their religious inventions, and were given up to their own devices, apart from the standing witness of creation and conscience. But then God acted in sovereign grace by calling a man out of the very centre of this idolatry; and how it refreshes the heart to view Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, faced with the constant temptation to return to Mesopotamia, or else to build houses and settle among the Canaanites, content to own themselves strangers *and pilgrims* on the earth — not merely strangers willy-nilly like the rest of mankind. What this meant to God is shown in Heb. xi. 16: "Wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city." How striking the contrast with Lot settling down in Sodom!

But rich and varied as are the types in Genesis, the thought of God dwelling with man does not characterize this book. God visited Adam; Enoch and Noah walked with Him; Abraham walked before Him. Jacob does indeed speak of the house of God, but the leading idea in his history is rather *government and discipline*.

## EXODUS

How great is the difference when we come to Exodus! There we see God coming down, not merely to deliver, but to dwell among His ransomed people (the very sign that attracted Moses' attention at Horeb speaks of it — "the goodwill of Him that dwelt in the thorn-bush" — for if, on the one hand, the fire symbolized the iron furnace in which a people, worthless in themselves but beloved, were found; on the other it spoke of a changeless God, a consuming fire, dwelling in their midst. See Mal. iii. 6).

The children of Israel, redeemed by the blood of the lamb on the night of Egypt's judgment, and by the power of God brought through the Red Sea, look back to see their enemies

dead on the sea shore. Then (in chap. xv.), and not till then, three things are brought out. Firstly, human beings celebrating deliverance in *song*; secondly, God owned as *glorious in holiness*; thirdly, the desire to prepare Him *a habitation*; all this, the result of an accomplished redemption — though as yet, earthly and typical. Jehovah would guide His people to His holy habitation. He could bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance, the *settled place* (lit.) that He had made His dwelling.

In the meantime, under the covenant of Sinai, the tabernacle is constructed, and the people take their journey to the promised home.

Their unbelief results in 38 years' wandering; this chastening gives rise, as I believe, to two most remarkable psalms — xc. and xci. The first is a poignant lament over the desert generation and, in a larger sense, over the first man; the second is God's glorious answer to it, bringing in the Second Man. Both psalms are governed by the thought of "dwelling". Psalm xc.1 may be rendered "Lord, Thou hast been a *dwelling place for us*" — and alas, man has not availed himself of this habitation; those long years epitomize, as it were, his fallen condition.

(The 70 and 80 years of verse 10 may refer particularly to the men who came out of Egypt: under such ideal conditions, with all their needs met by Jehovah Himself, their life span should have been much longer, but the hand of the Lord was against that generation).

Psalm xc. is throughout the prayer of the man of God; but as regards the divine answer to it in Psalm xci., in the light of New Testament revelation three speakers can be discerned. In verse 2 we have Messiah; the Spirit of prophecy (in vv. 9-13 at least expressing Himself through the godly remnant of Israel); then Jehovah's pledge to Messiah in the last three verses.

The promise of physical immunity may have been fulfilled in measure to Joshua and Caleb; but while Satan cunningly misquoted vv. 11 and 12 in seeking to induce the blessed Lord to



leave the place of absolute trust and dependence, he at any rate realized that in its fulness it was a promise to Messiah.

### **MOAB THE EARTH-DWELLER**

As the chosen people near the end of their pilgrimage, they encounter the type par excellence of the comfortably settled earth-dweller. The Moabites may not have been as savage and cruel as their kinsmen the Ammonites; but eight centuries later, when their national life had run its course, God gives us this assessment of their character: "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and hath settled on his lees; he hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste hath remained in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore behold, days come, saith Jehovah, that I will send him pourers that shall pour him off, and shall empty his vessels, and break in pieces his flagons" (Jer. xlviii. 11, 12). They are also notoriously proud (Is. xvi. 6; Jer. xlviii. 29), and they seek to bring about the downfall of the pilgrim nation, first, and vainly, by enchantments, then by guile with a measure of success (Num. xxii. 6, xxv. 17, 18).

The frightful ruin and anarchy that follows Israel's settling in Canaan is explained in the last chapter of Judges (xxi. 19, 25): the tabernacle had been so utterly neglected by the nation at large that its very locality was forgotten.

In such a state of things, what a relief it is, as we go on to the next book, to see the young Moabitish widow deliberately leaving the security and the idolatry to which she had been accustomed, to find rest under the sheltering wings of the God of Israel.

A. C. McCann

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

## **SOME REMARKABLE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE**

In all ages the people of God have found in prayer the answer to the many problems and difficulties that beset them. Moreover, a study of the prayers recorded in scripture shows in

a number of cases a remarkable similarity in their essential features, in spite of the diversity of their subjects, and making all due allowance for the difference of dispensations.

All these things written aforetime were written for our learning, and it is God's way to teach us more by these examples of His people and His ways with them, than by definite precepts. Let us then seek such instruction by examining some of the great prayers of the Bible.

### **NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER**

In the first chapter of the book of Nehemiah he tells us, in his simple, direct way, how he came to pray, and to act, in the way he did. Nearly one hundred years after the first return of the captive Jews to their own land by the permission of Cyrus, and after the consolidating work of Ezra, the condition of the people and of the city of Jerusalem, as reported to Nehemiah by his relative Hanani, was such as to cause him intense concern.

Nehemiah was cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes — a position of honour and trust, but like Moses in the court of Pharaoh, his concern was for the people of God in their affliction. Why he was in the Persian capital Shushan, and not in Judah, we do not know, but evidently he had been brought up in Persia, and it is very likely that the original free permission to return was not extended by the later rulers of the Persian empire. But Nehemiah seized the opportunity to enquire about the state of the province of Judah, as it was now known, and what he heard disturbed him greatly. "The remnant that are left there in the province are in great affliction and reproach; the wall also of Jerusalem is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire."

### **COMMUNION WITH GOD**

We may remark that he does not immediately pray to God for their relief. His first reaction was to sit down and weep, and then to mourn for some days, with fasting, and finally with prayer and confession. As he pondered the matter, as he

asked himself the question Why, if they were God's people, should they be in such a sad plight, the sad story of Israel's rebelliousness, so fully told in the scriptures, gave him the answer. After the first flush of enthusiasm and piety as they returned from captivity, declension had set in, and they had gone their own ways instead of putting God first. How often it has been so in the history of the church also!

But if their affliction was an evidence of God's chastening, it pointed the way to the remedy. Nehemiah's prayer is evidence of how he entered into God's thoughts about the matter, in acknowledging God's faithfulness and goodness towards His people and confessing their utter failure to honour Him or to be obedient to His commands.

### **HE BEGINS WITH GOD**

The majesty and the faithfulness of God! What a theme to lift the mind above our own miserable selves! How admirably calculated to set our prayers in the right key! For all our hope must be in His love towards us, in His faithfulness to His promises, in His mercy and compassion. So Nehemiah acknowledges, and entreats God to remember His word to Moses, saying, "If ye transgress I will scatter you among the nations: but if ye turn to Me, and keep my commandments and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there."

Now in mentioning this particular word of God Nehemiah had in mind the return under Cyrus as an evidence of God's exact fulfilment of His word. And is it not this very experience of our God's faithfulness in the past that gives us confidence to trust Him for the future? For faith grows as our knowledge and understanding of Him increases. This is indeed one important reason for praying, that by its means we should know God better.

### **GOD'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE**

"Now these are Thy servants and Thy people, whom Thou

hast redeemed by Thy great power, and by Thy strong hand." In thus continuing, Nehemiah realizes that his own concern about the welfare of Israel was only the reflection of God's, and perhaps it was at this point that he realized that God wanted *him* to go and devote himself to the task of rebuilding their city.

It is evident that the prayer as he records it represents a more or less gradual development of his praying over a period. For when he prays that God would grant him mercy "in the sight of this man," it is in the month Nisan, as we read in the next chapter. It was perhaps about four months since he had received the news from Hanani. Thus we get a clear example of how through prayer God leads His people to understand what His will is, and of how also, He leads them to co-operate with Him in the work which is so near His heart — that of forwarding the welfare of His people.

### WAITING GOD'S TIME

If the work be God's, then He can show both how and when He wants it done. And though Nehemiah had prayed that God would prosper him that day, yet he waits, in quiet confidence as he serves at the king's table, for God to show him when to make his request.

Probably he did not realize that his face was sad that day. Hitherto he had managed to hide his feelings, for no-one was allowed to be sad in the presence of the king. He had good reason to be sore afraid when the king noticed his sorrow of heart. But this was just God's way of bringing the matter to the king's notice. For how could he otherwise have intruded *his* affairs on the attention of the Great King? And courageously Nehemiah grasped the opportunity which God had given him. From the beginning he had gone along with God, and now he was experiencing that most wonderful feeling—that he was but an instrument in the hand of Almightyness. So boldly he claims that there was good reason for his sadness, and with silent wonder he sees God working for His glory and the accomplishment of His purposes. He does not have to *ask* — the king asks

him! "For what dost thou make request?"

Then another thing comes out. Nehemiah had learned the secret of "praying always" — to lift up his heart to God continually, and the presence of the King made no difference. "So I prayed to the God of heaven," he tells us. Have we learned to do this? It is not just a matter of praying to God in our heart when we are in a difficulty, but of lifting up our heart to speak to Him, in acknowledgment of His goodness, in thanksgiving for His blessings, in conscious leaning on His grace and power, and desiring to know His will and be conformed to it.

We notice that, though everything was going smoothly, he does not trust to his own judgment, but prays again for the right words to reply to the king, and for a favourable answer to his request. This is the prayer of a man who had learned to "trust in the Lord with all his heart, and not to lean upon his own understanding; in all his ways to acknowledge Him" — knowing that then He would direct his paths.

But if he prayed for a favourable response, we need to remember that the king was the more ready to grant his request because Nehemiah had already commended himself to him by his diligence and trustworthiness. This can be said with confidence, for we know how faithful and diligent Nehemiah was when he was made governor in Jerusalem. It is not enough to pray to God unless our ways are also commendable. Thus the king has no hesitation in letting him go to fulfil his heart's desire.

### GOD'S INITIATIVE

Finally, lest our occupation with Nehemiah's exercises of heart should give a wrong impression, let us note how all this began with God. Surely it is always so. Nehemiah himself was very conscious of this, and tells of "what God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem." Prayer does not then consist in persuading God to do what we want, but in seeking to learn, by communion with Him, what His will is, and seeking the grace and strength to carry out our own part in it. It is not meant to imply that all prayer has precisely this character, but

the Lord Jesus reminds us that our Father knows what things we have need of before we ask Him. We do not have to persuade Him to love us, or care for us, or for our dear ones. And if we pray for men, we may well remember that our God has loved the world and has given His Son to die for it. We love, because He has first loved us.

E. H. Chamberlain

## THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE GROWTH OF THE SAINTS

Notes of an Address on *Colossians* i. 1-29

(Continued)

### THE HEAD OF THE BODY

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

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

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

## THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD

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

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

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

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

G. F. Cox

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

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

Vol. LVII

AUGUST 1969

No. 8

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

appear to the ordinary person, the non-specialist, in this case the non-scientist. For even if the wheat grain is germinated in the manner referred to, the grain itself becomes emptied of its content so that only its husk is left, in order to provide food for the young embryo. It is this emptying which represents death. For if a green, unripe grain is sown, no such emptying takes place, and no shoot comes from it. In the Lord's words, it has not "died", and it "abides alone", bearing no fruit.

An alternative explanation, which does not seem so simple and therefore so satisfactory, is that the ripening of the grain, which has all the appearance of drying up, constitutes the "dying". However, the ripe grain, though dry, is in no sense withered, and does not so readily suggest death.

E. H. Chamberlain.

## **SOME REMARKABLE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE**

### **ABRAHAM'S PRAYER**

(Genesis xviii.23-33)

The story of Abraham's prayer for Sodom begins with God's revelation to him of His intention to punish the cities of the plain for their wickedness. When three men appeared to Abraham as he sat in his tent door, he realized at once that they were no ordinary strangers. And very soon the distinction between "they" and "he" which we notice in the narrative showed Abraham that Jehovah Himself was there, accompanied by two angels.

With the first message about the birth of Isaac we are not now concerned. But as they were departing, they "looked towards Sodom", and it was then that the Lord disclosed His purpose to Abraham. But first we have a remarkable tribute to Abraham's integrity and faithfulness. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blest in him? For I know him, that he will command his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him."

We are so accustomed to read of the unreliability of all that is of man that these words are refreshing to read. If only his posterity had followed his steps! It was as though the Lord knew that Abraham, by reason of his own uprightness, would understand the dreadful necessity of executing judgment on the guilty cities. But is there not also this, that God would draw from Abraham that intercession for the righteous in Sodom which is the subject of our study?

It is very evident that Abraham's main, if unexpressed, anxiety was for Lot and his family, and we may be inclined to wonder why he did not ask God directly about Lot. There are two possibilities here.

First, is it so certain that Abraham's concern was limited to his own kinsmen? What of other worthy ones who might be there?

Second, he may have hesitated to bring his own concerns into the affairs of God's government of the world. But of one thing he was quite sure — of God's righteousness. And he bases his petition on this. "Wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: SHALL NOT THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH DO RIGHT?"

Here was a sure basis for his prayer. And if God knew Abraham, Abraham knew and had confidence in God. His boldness in so speaking was not displeasing to God, far from it. It is indeed far from God to slay the righteous with the wicked, and this is enough to show that the calamities which befall men, good and bad alike, are not, in general, God's special judgment. When God had an earthly people, He judged them and the nations which meddled with them, and always He speaks to men in the vicissitudes of life, reminding them of that eternity which is so readily forgotten. But His dealings with men now are in patient grace, not judgment. That is not to say that there may not be exceptional cases, as was the flood, and as surely Sodom was.

The Lord answers, "If I find fifty righteous in Sodom, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

Does it not seem that Abraham was surprised at God's readiness to accede to his request, as, with growing awareness of the unlikelihood of there being so many righteous in the city, he asks again and again for Sodom to be spared if only forty-five, then only forty, then thirty, twenty and finally ten righteous were found in it? Was he not amazed at the patient

grace which his persistence received? As indeed, we all must be.

The truth is, surely, that God needed *no persuasion* to extend His mercy so far. Abraham might have begun at ten righteous, if his faith and understanding had grasped the full extent of God's mercy and longsuffering.

Moreover, does it not seem that Abraham was expressing what is really God's own problem, if we may so speak? How far should His patience reach? How far, indeed, without compromising His righteousness? With Sodom's iniquity crying out for judgment, His long-suffering was stretched to its utmost limit.

The visit of the two angels to Sodom (the two who accompanied the Lord when He appeared to Abraham), seems to have had a double purpose: not only to rescue Lot, but also in God's mercy to make a final test of Sodom. "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto Me," expresses this. And as a result, we find in chapter 19 how the *whole city*, young and old from every quarter, pressed upon the two "men" to indulge their lust. Thus the doom of the city was inevitable, and could wait no longer. Such corruption must be rooted out. And apart from Lot, and perhaps his family, there seem to have been no righteous people there.

Moreover, there was iniquity everywhere among the Amorites, but it had not yet reached its limit (chapter xv.16). By the time Israel came out of Egypt, things had become far worse. The land "spued out" its inhabitants because of their dreadful behaviour (Lev. xviii.28). What is the case to-day? Is not wickedness mounting up to a fearful pitch? Yet the longsuffering of God waits, to gather as many as possible into the glory and blessing that Christ has purchased for men. For divine righteousness has been vindicated at the cross, and however bad things may seem to us, we need to beware of thinking that *we* are able to judge when iniquity has become intolerable.

As we remark Abraham's boldness, in his prayer, we ought also to note his real humility. How could he, who in his own sight was but dust and ashes, presume to seek to alter God's declared purpose? Thus he reasoned with himself. But as we have already suggested, in reality God was leading him on to ask for what was according to God's own mind. This is what real communion with God leads His people to, and it is the best kind of prayer, prayer that God will always answer.

We should also note Abraham's complete unselfishness, remembering how Lot had grasped the best portion of the land for himself. Moreover, after Abraham had rescued him from captivity when Sodom was overrun by Chedorlaomer, Lot had returned to Sodom — ignoring the warning that God had given Him. It was God's own character of love. Such a spirit in one who approaches God in prayer is what is most pleasing to Him.

### GOD'S ANSWER

We find then, that the two angels sent to destroy the cities first bring out Lot and his daughters to a place of safety, though his wife, disregarding the warning not to look back, was overwhelmed and turned into a pillar of "salt". This is a notable instance of how God may answer our prayers rather than give us exactly what we ask for. If Abraham could not conceive of any way for Lot to escape the destruction of Sodom, this was no difficulty for God. He knew how to punish the guilty cities *and* to deliver righteous Lot. "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that *God remembered Abraham*, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt."

Finally, how instructive it is to notice, that God's answer to Abraham's prayer was set in motion before Abraham prayed — before he even knew of the need. The very messengers of wrath for Sodom were the messengers of deliverance for Lot. "And it shall come to pass, that before they

call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear."

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. Can we not learn much for ourselves from this prayer of Abraham?

E. H. Chamberlain.

## GRACE AND GOVERNMENT

Amos iii.1,2; iv.4-10

The basis of all God's dealings with His people is love, whether for Israel or ourselves as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. To Israel of old God said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love"; to us the word by the apostle reminds us that "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." This love it was that counted nothing too great to redeem us and bring us back to God righteously, so that we are enabled to enjoy communion with Him as the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, and with one another, upon a righteous and therefore eternal basis. It overcame every obstacle that stood in the way, even the supreme obstacle of sin — for He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." His love won our hearts and drew us to Himself. And not only that, but He brings us to know that "Where once the Lord His love bestows, He loves unto the end." The mercy of God endureth for ever; the love of God is eternal; and the one indestructible reality of life is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This love is, as we have remarked, the basis of all God's dealing with us, being so clearly seen because revealed fully in the Lord Jesus Christ. This love has placed us in the light, and we now live and walk always in it; but do we walk according to the light in which love has put us? For the grace of God teaches *us* that grace and godliness go together, that calling and conduct run parallel, and also, in I Peter, that grace and government blend in God's dealings with His saints.

We are apt to be tempted to take liberties with God, to act sometimes as though God were not fully aware of our thoughts; as if He knew no more of us than our brethren do.

But, "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (I Peter i.17); for grace and government go together.

We sometimes imagine that God dealt in a sterner, stricter fashion with His erring people in Old Testament days than now, but the word of our Lord Jesus is "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation iii.19). How solemnly this should speak to our hearts, for are we not among that "many"? He has loved us and given Himself for us. The "I" here is emphatic. We are in His hands and no other's, for "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." How tenderly stern, and sternly tender, is the One Who is here speaking! In the inspired word of God we have the major portion, the Old Testament scriptures, written, not to give us precepts for our Christian life, but yet plainly enunciating principles on which our conduct may be moulded and formed, for "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." The wise man takes the whole word of God, and humbly seeks by the guidance of Him who inspired it to enter into the meaning of what was written aforetime, and in this prophecy of Amos we find some very pregnant, pungent truths.

There is an idea abroad that when the Old Testament prophets appeared on the scene they were days of special spiritual progress; it was nothing of the kind, but entirely the reverse. They appeared on the scene always at a time of growing darkness, and national departure from God and His word; when the priesthood had become corrupt, and the service of God mechanical and formal, and when, although the name of Jehovah was upon the lips of His worshippers, He Himself had to complain, "This people draweth nigh to Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." Yet God is love, in His very being, and He wants the hearts, the love of His people. Hence the lament of His loving, holy, blessed heart.

The period in which Amos prophesied was about seven hundred years before Christ, when politically things were



flourishing for Israel and Judah. It was at that time the Spirit of God witnessed by Isaiah also as to their new moons and solemn feasts and heartless religious observances generally, that God could not bear them. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit." This is not quite the same as a penitent spirit. One who has never known God and is brought to know Him comes as a penitent sinner; a contrite person is one who *has* known better things but has backslidden in heart, if not outwardly; when such an one has been broken down again by the Lord's own love, against which he sinned and the heart that he slighted, he becomes truly contrite in spirit. From whatever social rank they came, the prophets always addressed their message to the heart of the nation, to let them know that God could no longer be trifled with, and that it was a real thing to be in relationship with Him. Whether it was the princely Isaiah, or the priestly Jeremiah, or the peasant Amos, the same stirring note is sounded. Amos iv.4-10 shows the condition that had arisen owing to the conduct that had sprung out of forgetfulness of God. They were in the places that were holy places; they came to Bethel, that had once stood for the revelation of God's grace; there their first father had learned the wonderful grace of God; they went to Gilgal, where the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away, and there they multiplied their transgressions. The corruption of the best is ever the worst, and idolatry had taken hold of the people, so that even where they did not literally go and bow down to the calves (as in the case of Israel) they were yet morally far from God, and now God's hand is upon them, as we have it in the words of our Lord to erring saints today, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

God loves to have His people in happy communion with Himself, and He takes all measures to secure this. In our case as believers He has taken the first measure by the death of Christ to make it possible upon a righteous basis for ever; but when we forget, and our hearts go after other things, what

then? Can His loving heart remain unaffected by our declension? No. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

We often are tempted to take the line of least resistance; it is so difficult to speak plainly to a brother or sister who may be straying away, and to love them enough to speak the thing that hurts them for the sake of the Lord. To do so is the way to get a bad name, and to be dubbed uncharitable and narrow-minded; yet it is the way of love, the way the Lord acts; He never passes over that which is wrong; "I rebuke and chasten." If one set of circumstances fails to bring you back, then another set of circumstances is ordered by God for this purpose. The sad thing is we are so slow to realise our own condition; we can see failures in everybody else, but not so patently in ourselves; that mote in the eye of another obscures, strangely enough, the beam in our own. To bring us to a real sense of what we are in His sight because we are His is why our gracious Lord deals with us in this sternly tender manner. We get occupied with one another, their peculiarities, and eccentricities, or become envious one of another. The Lord has given a gift, perhaps, which we are not prepared to recognise because it was not given to us. The Head of the Church is displeased by such low, mean, unworthy thoughts on our part, and He says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." It is because He loves us that He lays His hand upon us. How applicable some of these descriptions are to present conditions. Are there not those who know what it is to have cleanness of teeth and want of bread in their meetings, and no satisfying food for their own souls? Some who refuse it unless it comes, forsooth, by some special channel; some who know what it is to have rain withholden until their little patch is withered, and they lay the blame at the door of their brethren, or lack of gift, or lack of money, or circumstances? The Lord says, "As many as I love, I rebuke." Blame yourselves before the Lord, and see what will surely happen.

“So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water; but they were not satisfied.” Is it unknown even now to wander from one meeting to another to get satisfaction and help which is denied at home, and to fail to receive it? They cannot understand it; but if we take our way into the secret place, shedding bitter tears because of conduct and sin unworthy of, and dishonouring to, the name of the Lord, how different will be the result! That is where the Lord would lead us all. To come together and sing many hymns, and to be in great haste to hear our own voices, is not what the Lord means when He says, “Return unto *Me*.” How often in our trouble we go to some brother, forgetting that the best of men are but men at the best, and the best thing out of its place is always misplaced. It is not that the Lord would not bless you through the very brother that you seek, but it is the turning unto *Me*, “I have redeemed you,” which is the burden of the word of the Lord through the Scripture of truth. “Return unto *Me*, I have redeemed you.” “As many as I love,” said the Lord, “I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent.”

We find the very things that come to us are the things the prophet Amos rebukes. Self-indulgence, that is what has kept the Lord out; and not only is there self-indulgence, but there is self-assertion. We become most self-assertive when we have least ground for it; and there is also the utter selfishness which could live in ivory houses and feed on lambs, while their brethren could starve and dwell in hovels. All the emphasis lies here in the fact that relationship regulates responsibility. The relationship to God was forgotten and responsibility to Him and for their brethren consequently was ignored. “You only have I known . . . therefore I will punish you.”

My brethren, “If ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as

silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ." Because He *loved* us He died for us; because He *loves* us He rebukes and chastens us, that He may recover us, and restore our souls. There may be between our souls and Him that joyous, simple outgoing of praise and thanksgiving that there was when first we knew the Lord, but there should be a thousandfold more now we have known Him so much longer. If they were rebuked for self-indulgence, self-assertion, utter selfishness, and God's disregarded warnings, He used His chastening in governmental dealings to rouse their consciences, recover their testimony and restore their recognition of responsibility.

May what was written aforetime for our learning be graciously used in our profit to the glory of the Lord!

W. G. Turner

(Reprinted from "*The Bible Monthly*", September, 1925)

## THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE GROWTH OF THE SAINTS

(Continued)

### THE RECONCILIATION OF THE UNIVERSE

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

This governmental reconciliation is not going on now. The enemies of the Lord Jesus are not being put under His feet. This waits the time of the power of the Lord Jesus, and it will then continue until the great white throne judgment. Then there will be no more government. There will be no sin left, no wickedness, nothing to govern or keep down. When the

Lord Jesus has accomplished all this work of reconciliation His last act as Son of man will be an act of subjection — He gives up the kingdom to His Father (1 Cor. xv. 24-28). Then God will rest; everything will be ordered according to God's mind; the fulfilment of His will by the Son all heads up in this complete reconciliation.

### **THE RECONCILIATION OF BELIEVERS**

But that is not all. God has anticipated in us what He is going to do with the universe. He has not yet reconciled the universe, but He has reconciled us. We were alienated and enemies in our minds by wicked works, but now we have been reconciled. A Christian is a man who has not to wait for God to perform publicly what He has spoken in His word. God has taken us up, and He has already accomplished in us what He is yet going to accomplish in the world generally. He has reconciled us, and we are — at any rate, there is in us — a new creation (2 Cor. v. 17.); though the time is a long way distant when God will make all things new (Rev. xxi. 5.).

### **HOLY, UNBLAMEABLE, UNREPROVEABLE**

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

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

If I want to be harmless and without rebuke in this world, where can I find anyone to answer to that but the Lord Jesus? And how unlike Him I am! But he will give the needed strength to follow Him and be like Him. Strength does not come by trying to walk up to a standard, like those under the law. Strength can only come to us when we have an object before us in whom there is power, and Christ is the Object Whom God has set before us: "beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, (we) are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

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

### **GROUNDED AND SETTLED**

Then, we find, there is a condition attached to this presentation: "If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled." There is no condition attached to our present salvation. God acts freely towards us, according to what He is in His grace, and blesses us fully. But supposing I profess to be a Christian, what is the proof of my being real? What is the proof that I am not like those spoken of in Matthew xiii., who received the word with joy, but soon withered away? There is one proof — that we "continue in the faith grounded and settled". The true believer not only starts right, but continues right, though he will meet things to grieve over and lead him to judge himself.

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

G. F. Cox

*(Concluded)*

## DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES (3)

“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”  
John xii.24.

The spiritual meaning of this verse is not obscure, though doubtless in its fulness it is most profound. The Lord Jesus was evidently referring primarily to His own death and resurrection. Only by it could His coming be fruitful for God's glory and the blessing of multitudes — otherwise He would abide alone in His own perfection. In a smaller measure it doubtless has its application to every believer, as His next words imply: “He that loveth his life shall lose it; he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” Death to self, and the surrender of all to God's will, is the only way to real fruitfulness in the Christian life.

The perplexity in this verse, however, lies not in its spiritual meaning, which is more or less generally agreed, but in reconciling its statement with the facts of nature.

There are two points which seem to need explanation.

First, that when a wheat grain is germinated out of the ground so that its growth can be studied at every stage, nothing corresponding to “death” seems to occur; but a continuous growth of stem, seed-leaves and root.

Second, if the falling into the ground and dying is a figure of death and burial (i.e., of the Lord Jesus), it is in the reverse order, for death of course comes before burial, not after it.

Now the second difficulty is answered if we accept the New Translation of J. N. D., “Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die”, in that the falling into the ground is then merely incidental, and the chief and only significant thing is the fact of *dying*. The first difficulty, however, remains.

This is a good example of the importance, in studying illustrations taken from nature, of looking at them as they

*(Continued inside front cover)*

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*from the Scripture of Truth*

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## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

and none can be found. He again, in this connection as in verse 18, strikes the note of personal conviction. "*For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God that (is) in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (verses 38,39).

In this universal survey, there is no power to part us from God's love. All things work for good, none work for harm. He considers them in pairs, except "powers." *Death and life*, covering all existence (cp. I Corinthians iii.22; Philippians i.20; I Thessalonians v.10); *angels and principalities*, invisible beings; *things present and to come*, all time relations; *height and depth*, all space relations; "*any other creature*" covers everything not enumerated.

In verse 35, the question is asked concerning "the love of Christ"; in verse 39, the assurance is given in a fuller phrase, "the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Verse 1 teaches "no condemnation"; and verse 39 "no separation," "Christ Jesus" being the basis in both cases.

The conclusion of the first main section (chapter v., verse 11) is that we joy in God through Christ Jesus our Lord; here that we rest in God — the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. God's righteousness revealed in the gospel thus leads us to abide securely and sweetly in His love, while we await the day of revelation and glory.

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

Luke X. Tracing the moral order of events in the perfect ministry of the Son of Man, Luke writes of the sending forth of the seventy messengers to the cities to which He would come in Person. It was customary among the great ones of the earth to send before them those who would proclaim the importance of their overlord and demand suitable reception for him. The lowly and dependent One, of whom Luke writes, "appointed" His "other seventy" upon principles already shown in the preceding passages of his letter to Theophilus. They were not those who offered themselves, but those who, being called, obeyed, and so were "appointed." With what care of the Holy Spirit were the activities of the Divine Worker grouped so that the perfection of His character and work might be emphasized. Luke, alone, presents this record of the sending of the seventy.

They went, utterly dependent upon Him that sent them. They had no human reserves — "carry neither purse nor wallet nor shoes and salute no one on the way." They were sent "as lambs among wolves." There was great urgency, and a sense of danger, but the word to them was, "Go: behold I send you forth." There was profound emphasis upon the authority of the Sender.

So they went at His charge — freighted with unseen resources in Himself. There was power unequalled in His Name — the very demon world would recoil at their approach. The cities of Israel were to be put under test. The kingdom of God had "come nigh unto them," and they were to be told so. The reception or rejection of the "appointed ones" was of eternal consequence: it was acceptance or rejection of the King.

"Two and two before His face unto every city and place whither He Himself would come." Grouped thus they were journeying *witnesses* to that great overflow of grace that would

spread throughout the dwelling places of Israel. Invitation was linked with power evidences of Messiah, and refusal of those sent was a despising of the "Sent One of God," and of God who sent Him! It was fraught with danger so real and inescapable that haste was never more urgent. No man has ever taken up responsibility toward God as did His beloved Son. This precious Person, "found in fashion as a man," showed before *men*, as before the challenging powers of darkness, so perfect a devotion to the divine desire for man that it gave delight to the heart of God. Hence the expanded "seventy" as compared with the "twelve" sent as representative of that Israel which, though scattered then, as now, would be called and gathered in a later day. The "ten" of human responsibility may be seen once more enfolded by the "seven" of divine completeness. "This thing was not done in a corner," as Paul declared to Festus in presence of King Agrippa (Acts xxvi.26).

Verse 17. "The seventy returned again with joy." The evidences of divine power were manifested through Messiah. The faithful in Israel had looked for this. Far and wide His messengers had gone carrying power from Himself — casting out demons in His name — freeing the captives of Satan's dominion. The joy of the seventy was understandable, but it was not the joy that sustained the One who had sent them. The new experience of unfailing power that flowed through them gave them a joy of accomplishment — even of importance; but this was the concluding test of Israel, and there was no sign of national upsurge in favour of the Son of Man — no repentance from hearts still far from Him. It was through His rejection and death that the demon world would be finally overthrown: He saw the near approach of Calvary. The fall of man had given Satan power over man. Signs of his power for evil were everywhere evident — and they remain. Yet *we* may hear, as they heard, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," and we, too, may be assured of His gift of power over the enemy and hear Him say, "Nothing shall by any means hurt you" — "your names are written in heaven"; ye

belong to ME. Here, indeed, is rejoicing!

The Lord had His own source of joy, even in face of mounting rejection of Himself. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (verse 21). Their names were written in heaven, yet they were members of a ruined race for which the Law had no provision. Just and good in itself, it depended, for its perfect operation, upon human administration. It was GRACE that had reached out to them, at the cost of the rejection of Jesus, and it is He who rejoices in this GRACE of God.

There could be no claim; only a great need. This GRACE was revealed to babes, not to the intellectuals, for wisdom and prudence could not attain to knowledge of divine Persons. The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. The law showed ONE GOD — Jehovah of Israel — veiled, and approached only through the maze of the Levitical system. GRACE revealed the Father, hitherto unknown.

So, the joy of the seventy was not the same as the joy of the Lord who had sent them. His was the joy of heavenly places where evil was for ever excluded — their names were written there; their citizenship too would be there as a conscious reality. The foundation of *His* joy was not the present subjugation of demons but the fruits of His coming victory over sin and death at Golgotha. Do we realise it is grief to Him should our joy be centred upon the passing scene when His love would have us share that joy which has the same basis and character as His own!

It is a wonderful antidote to the pretentious grandeur of the world to appreciate that the Son of God is so great that only the Father can know Him. The Son is pleased to reveal the Father, supreme as Lord of heaven and earth, to whomsoever He will, but "no one knows who the Son is but the Father." Being in the form of God and equal with God, the divine Per-

son came into a perfect manhood. Imperfect humanity is baffled by this unfathomable mystery. There were those who companied with Him, and one, writing of those days after years of spiritual maturity, tells us "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a father), full of grace and truth" (John i.14). The imagination of men, their changeable conjectures, all their futile fulminations, leave them earth-bound in ignorance, while GRACE makes revelation to "babes." These are the subjects of God's mercy. They make no pretensions to self-importance, and so become the objects of His sustaining love. To them, the glorious family relationship is known, for the Son Himself reveals the Father in response to simple faith.

Aware of the signs significant of the twilight of the day of God's grace, the believer will be conscious of attacks and even calumnies against the Person of Christ. Let us hold fast the truth that, though our Saviour came in fashion as a man, though He humbled Himself even to the obedience of an out-cast's death, God has so guarded His relationship to Himself that no human intelligence can discern it; no creature curiosity can enter this holy sphere. It is ours to believe. In so doing, faith grows into an awareness which has no roots in man's philosophy, but knows a relationship with the Father which, being revealed by the Son, is eternal. EDWARD T. WOOD

## DWELLING

*(Continued)*

In I Samuel the ark is taken captive and the sanctuary overthrown because of the wickedness of the priests. When the ark does return it is not enquired at; the tabernacle is later found at Nob, and Saul orders a massacre of the priesthood for having helped David.

The second book ushers in a brighter day: whether we consider David's history there and in the I Chronicles, or the outpourings of his heart in the Psalms, we meet with deep exercises and longings concerning the place where God's honour

dwells (Psalm xxvi.8). He lays himself out in his closing years to prepare the materials for the house which his son is to build, but in his beautiful prayer in I Chronicles xxix. he freely owns mortal man's strangership and evanescence — all must come from God's hand.

Solomon is to have the glory of building the temple; but while at its dedication he prays that God may own the house, he repeatedly refers to the heavens as the settled place of His dwelling, and with divinely given largeness of heart he exclaims: "But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, the heavens, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built!"

The rapid moral decline of the divided nation of Israel gives rise to the prophetic warning that possession of the house of God is no safeguard unless He Himself is sanctified in the heart: the high and holy One who inhabits eternity delights to dwell with the humble and contrite. The warning having gone unheeded, the sanctuary is plundered and destroyed by the Chaldeans, the people are carried away to Babylon, Jerusalem ceasing to be the place of God's throne on earth, and dominion is given to the Gentiles.

### **AFTER THE RETURN FROM BABYLON**

Even then, in the midst of this ruin, God promises the ultimate restoration of a repentant remnant, and meanwhile He promises to be Himself a little sanctuary to them in the lands of their exile (Ezekiel xi.16-20).

When the returned remnant begin the rebuilding of the temple it is under the aegis and at the expense of the second world empire, though through the prophet Haggai God still owns it as His house. Haggai's fellow-prophet, Zechariah, speaks of the city rather than of the house, but in his Messianic prophecies he looks on to the day when the Man Whose name is the Branch shall build the temple of the Lord (Zechariah vi.12,13), and his book closes with the promise that there will no more be a Canaanite (or merchant) in the holy house when God acts in open judgment and blessing.

The Old Testament canon ends with the house completed and its services restored, but with the descendants of those who rebuilt it in deplorable moral condition. They were marked by irreverence, admiration of the proud and successful, estrangement between the older and the younger generations, easy divorce and marriages with pagans, a seared conscience and an insolent, gainsaying spirit. Yet still Jehovah reasons with them, mingling gracious promises and prophecies with solemn warnings, pleading His own sovereign, unchanging love (Malachi i.2; iii.6), encouraging the feeble remnant (iii.16,17) that sought His things rather than their own. He reminds them of the law given at Horeb, but looks on beyond the future 400 silent years, to the mission of John the Baptist — to Messiah coming to His temple — to the day when the nation's offerings will again be acceptable, when His name will also be known among the nations.

### NEW TESTAMENT DAYS

The fulness of time having now come, the New Testament opens with God's fulfilment of His ancient promises.

Luke gives us the circumstances of the Incarnation, the Lord's true humanity, also the godly remnant that looked for redemption; Mark, One Who, having emptied Himself of the form of God and taken the form of a slave, stands ready to serve, as it were, from the outset, although Son of God and invested with full prophetic authority; but Matthew and John are of special importance in connection with our subject.

To unbelieving Ahaz had been given the sign of the virgin's son — God with us (Isaiah vii.14); marvellous privilege granted to Israel, blind though they were to it! The fulfilment was now come: but still higher and more blessed the fact that the God of Israel Himself, not now dwelling in thick darkness, was actually living in their midst and accessible to all.

But what was His position among them? The very first occurrence of the title "Son of Man" (Matthew viii.20) is significant: the One who had in perfect grace taken that place



owns that, while the lower creatures have homes of some kind, He Himself is a homeless stranger. He had grown up in the home at Nazareth; the Holy Spirit has drawn a veil of silence over the long years spent there (except for the glimpse in Luke ii.); but when He leaves it to fulfil His public service, His brethren after the flesh are as unbelieving as the rest of Israel: at one point (Mark iii.) they even think Him out of His mind and set out to restrain Him, Mary herself accompanying them.

In Matthew is unfolded the story of the nation's rejection of the Sent One; but in chapter xvi., when owned by His disciples as the Christ, the Son of the living God, He reveals that which He is going to build — His assembly — a habitation for God here on earth. The cross had to precede this. As the nation had rejected Him, so His public ministry in Jerusalem closes with the declaration that *their* house is left to them desolate: the nation is set aside for the time being, and to His own He foretells the destruction of the temple. The divinely rent veil at His death signified the ending of the old order of things and the bringing in of the new; but in chapter xxviii. 9,10, the Lord foreshadows the renewing of His links with the nation in the coming day, though now in resurrection.

### THE ETERNAL WORD DWELLING WITH MEN

Blessed as it is to see the Lord as the Yea and the Amen of God's promises, in John's gospel we behold His Person, preceding and transcending all dispensations. The promises have been described as "measured grace": measureless, fathomless grace and perfect truth subsist through Jesus Christ. The eternal Word, the Creator of all things, has become flesh and tabernacles among men in the conditions of time and space. Divine life, divine light, divine love are told out in the Only-begotten Son. God's time-phases are indeed noticed as occasion requires; but this manifestation of Himself, as it shines out above and beyond them, comes down, as it were, to deal with *individuals* in their varied needs.

The teacher is taught the vital necessity of being born anew; the outcast hears, from a stranger in Samaria and on earth, of

a well of living water to meet her deepest soul-thirst; the great mass of professed followers in Galilee are drastically tested and sifted and reduced by what to unbelief is a hard saying; the woman in the temple, the blind man outside, hear words of grace and truth. The Son of man does indeed gather a company around Himself; even so, their individual characters are briefly but strongly painted.

### THE SPIRIT PROMISED

In His closing words to them before Gethsemane, preparing them for the time of His absence, as He tells of the other Paraclete Who already dwells *with* them and shall be *in* them, He speaks of things which they will realise in a personal way; and to the disciple who proves the reality of his love to the Lord by keeping His word, the wondrous result will be the Father's and the Son's coming to dwell with him.

And now the Son of man goes forth to accomplish, and set His own seal upon that glorious work of atonement, in virtue of which alone a holy God could dwell amid the praises of Israel, and which is the theme of that new song already begun and destined to fill a renewed universe through endless ages.

### THE CHURCH AS GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

The ancient feast of Pentecost is now crowned with the fulfilment not only of Leviticus xxiii.17, but of the promise of the Father: the new and stupendous fact of God's dwelling *in* and not merely *with* men.

When the Lord Himself tabernacled among men, the zeal of His Father's house devoured Him, but His holy body was the true temple, in which the whole fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell. Now, as the answer to His glory on high, the Holy Spirit had come down to dwell on earth, and that in a twofold way, both in the *bodies* of individual believers (Romans viii.11; I Corinthians vi.19), and in the *house* of God composed of *living* stones (I Peter ii.5), in contrast with that lifeless building of inanimate materials which had so long stood as the symbol of God's dwelling with His people.

The holiness which becomes this new house is established

in Acts v. Israel's unbelief results in the Samaritans, the proselytes, and finally the Gentiles afar off, being brought into it (Acts viii. et seq.).

The converted persecutor, now a wise architect, labours to lay the foundation of God's building (I Corinthians iii.10-17). Here the building is indeed something committed to man's responsibility, and the work of each one will be tested; but in Ephesians ii., Paul speaks of that which God Himself is building — the temple composed of all believers in verse 21, and in verse 22 the local expression of it.

What a position for saved Gentiles, once strangers from the covenants of promise! Whereas in Zechariah ii., Jehovah had said that in the coming day He would be not only a wall of fire round about Jerusalem, but the glory in the midst of her, the long-hidden mystery that Paul could reveal to the Gentiles was — Christ in (or among) them, the hope of glory (Colossians i.27).

### NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

Peter, in his second epistle, insists on the vital importance of the prophetic word at the present time, and looks on to new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness; and John in his Patmos visions gives a brief glimpse of it. His descriptions of millennial blessing do not exactly speak of God's dwelling with man (Revelation vii.15 should read, not "shall dwell among them", but "shall spread His tabernacle over them"); it is to be a reign of righteousness; but in chapter xxi. the marvellous reality of God's eternal dwelling with men is insisted on, and forms the central and supreme feature of those haunting eight verses.

Here we come to the glorious fulfilment of God's age-long purpose, brought to fruition by the work of the Lamb in taking away the sin of the world, and by the activity of the Spirit here below; God now all in all (I Corinthians xv.28), and resting in His love (Zephaniah iii.17); and redeemed creatures, holy and blameless before Him in love, sharing His rest.

Such is the prospect which the God of all grace has placed

before His children: a prospect that may well fill their hearts with joyful anticipation.

But meanwhile let us not forget that, notwithstanding the untold ruin that the wiles of the enemy and the weakness and folly of man have brought in during the long centuries of the Lord's absence, the Holy Spirit's dwelling within redeemed and sealed human beings, and in the house of God, is just as real today as it was on the day of Pentecost. May we be enabled in our measure to experience more and more of the blessedness and power of this, as we await the Lord's coming.

A. C. McCANN

## GOD'S GUARDIANSHIP OF BELIEVERS

(Notes of a Bible Reading on — Romans viii.31-39)

In this final division of the chapter, the apostle surveys the whole field of evil agencies from the standpoint of the justified believer predestined to glory. Securely entrenched in the fortress where grace reigns through righteousness, faith defies all forms of opposition and every kind of foe. We are delivered out of the hands of our enemies that we may serve God without fear (Luke i.74; Romans xii.1).

### (1) WHEN GOD IS THE FRIEND, WHO CAN BE THE FOE?

The apostle draws out the practical results of the great doctrinal truths enunciated. Who can oppose those that are "in Christ Jesus," seeing that God is for them? *"What then shall we say to these things? If God (be) for us, who against us? He at least that spared not His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely grant us all things?"* (verses 31, 32).

The sum of the things declared was that God is our Helper. The apostle adopts the language of those blessed in the coming millennium (Psalm cxviii.6, New Tr.), but even in a broader sense, for we have spiritual enemies in the heavenlies (Ephesians vi.12). But we can say, Who dare hinder us when God helps?

## GOD FOR US

Joshua asked in doubt, "Art Thou for us, or for our adversaries?" (Joshua v.13). Need we doubt whether God be for us? He foreknew us, He fore-ordained us, He called us, He justified us, and in our daily sorrow and tears and conflict He is "for us" — for us who "love God and are the called according to His purpose." We can, therefore, boldly say, "The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews xiii.6). Compare Psalm lvi.9; 2 Kings vi.16; 2 Chronicles xxxii.7,8.

But there is yet further proof that God is "for us;" He delivered up His own Son "for us." Delivering up "for us" His own true Son is supreme evidence of the incomparable quality of God's love (cp.v.8,10). In the words, "spared not," or "withheld not," there seems to be an allusion to Abraham who offered up his loved son, Isaac; twice it is said of him that he did not withhold his son, his only son (Genesis xxii. 12,16).

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

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

### (2) WHERE IS THE ACCUSER OF GOD'S ELECT?

Whoever was so wickedly and falsely accused as Jehovah's Righteous Servant, His Elect One? His own people "esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isaiah liii.4). But He "committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (I Peter ii.23). God was concerned in every charge made

against His Elect. So the apostle, boasting in the foreknowledge of God, inquires, "*Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?*" (verse 33).

The defence of the saints against any and every charge is with God, Whose elect ones we are. There can be no more potent adversary than Satan, the arch-enemy. And when he opposed the ill-clad Joshua, representing the people, Jehovah's answer was, "Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee" (Zechariah iii.1-5). Israel is Jehovah's elect nation, and none can gainsay His will to deliver and redeem them.

God then will vindicate His chosen ones in the face of all their accusers, and show that they are vessels of mercy that He prepared beforehand unto glory (ix.23). He takes up their cause. Our Lord said, "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily" (Luke xviii.7,8).

### **(3) WHO CAN CONDEMN WHEN GOD JUSTIFIES?**

Paul passes from God's election to God's righteousness: both are on our behalf, and unite for our security whoever may be against us. "*(It is) God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?*" (verses 33,34).

The punctuation given in this translation brings out the force of the original more clearly than that of the Authorised Version. The passage in its context should be compared with Isaiah's prophecy regarding Jehovah's elect Servant, rejected by Israel, and counting upon His justification (Isaiah 1.7-9).

We learn in viii.1 that there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, speaking of the condemning act. Here accusing persons are in view: no one can condemn those who God justifies. No enemy can carry our case to a higher Court of Appeal.

### **(4) WHO CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST?**

But if we are secure against all condemnation, can some one or some thing sever us from the love of Christ? The

answer is to be found in Christ's death, resurrection, and present intercession for us. *"(It is) Christ that died, yea rather risen too, Who is also at (the) right hand of God, Who also pleadeth for us: who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? according as it is written, 'For Thy sake are we being put to death all the day long, we have been reckoned as sheep of slaughter.' But in all these things we more than overcome by Him that loved us"* (verses 34-37).

The apostle's argument is that we overcome everything that would separate us from Christ's love through Christ Himself Who loved us. Among men, a whisperer or a tale-bearer "separateth chief friends" (Proverbs xvi.28; xvii.9); but **God is love**, and the Lord Jesus, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii.1).

Christ's death and resurrection are past accomplished facts, but His intercession for us at the right hand of God is continuous. Hence though we meet a sevenfold enmity, ranging from "persecution" to the "sword," we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us and intercedes for us on high while we are struggling in the valley of conflict (cp. Exodus xvii).

The apostle applies to Christians, who are "alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians iv.11), a passage from the Psalms, referring to the faithful Jewish remnant exposed, as they will be, to the terrors of the great tribulation (Psalm xlv.22). They will be lying at death's door all day long, so to speak, and Christians resemble them in this respect.

### **NO SEPARATION FOR THOSE IN CHRIST JESUS**

In conclusion, the apostle searches the whole creation for an adversary capable of separating us from the love of God,

*(Continued 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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(Concluded from inside back cover)

### IMPARTED STRENGTH TO THE WOMAN TO STAND UPRIGHT

Luke tells us He laid His hands on her. Many of our Lord's acts of healing were performed without physical contact with the sufferer. Indeed, there were cases when the person healed was miles away at the time when Jesus exercised His power. Here in Luke xiii. we are told He laid His hands — both hands, it would seem — on the woman.

There is however the important implication that the woman was prepared to *submit* herself to Him. Picture the scene: there is the afflicted woman with her body "bowed together". The Lord has spoken the word to loosen Satan's hold over her. Now He Himself goes over to her to straighten her bent frame. By the strength He imparts she immediately stands upright, able now to look away from the things on which for eighteen long years her sight had been concentrated. She can now look up, and — marvellous to say! — she sees *Him*. Such was the blessing that came to her by yielding herself to His gracious hands.

The lesson of this is of cardinal importance to ourselves. Can we not learn to leave ourselves entirely in God's hands, believing that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans viii.28)? In the light of the last few verses of that wonderful chapter we have really nothing to fear. And we have Paul's further assurance (Philippians ii.13) that it is God Who works within the believer both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Finally let us notice the outcome of this woman's healing — she "glorified God" (verse 13). Thus was achieved the purpose for which God created man in the first place, and redeemed him after his fall through sin. Let us challenge ourselves as to this. Do we bring glory to God by our un-failing confidence and joy in Him?

E. A. PETTMAN

## SOME REMARKABLE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE III

### Hannah's Prayer. I Samuel i.

Individual needs, and individual experiences, differ widely, but every believer has known something of deep longings and unhappiness, even bitterness, such as those which gave rise to Hannah's prayer.

Her desire for a child was not only a natural one, but one which, as a faithful daughter of Israel, she had every reason to expect God to grant. It is evident that she had prayed to God often about the matter, but as the years went by, and no answer came, her sorrow was turned to bitterness by the provocation of Peninnah, who seems to have hinted, after the manner of Job's friends, that she had done something to displease the Lord. In vain her husband protested his love for her: Hannah could not understand why the blessing which Peninnah enjoyed should be denied to her.

This is Hannah's side of the matter. The problem of unanswered prayer is one about which very much has been said and written, but surely in this story we get a glimpse of God's side. It is the beauty and glory of God's word that it is able to reveal to us *His* thoughts and purposes, "that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." If we glance for a moment at the sequel to Hannah's prayer, can we not discern that it was God's purpose from the beginning to give Hannah the child she sought, *but to give her far more?* She desired a child — but it was the Lord's purpose to give her Samuel. She wanted a child for herself — for the satisfaction of her maternal longings, and even for the prestige it would give her — God wanted her to know the blessing of being an instrument in His hands for the accomplishment of His purposes.

In the state to which Israel had sunk, with the priests, who should have led the people back to God, utterly corrupt and

corrupting, a *prophet* was needed to effect a restoration, and to be the link between God and His people. Samuel was destined to be that prophet. In contrast to the wayward and faithless attitude of the people and the vileness of the priests, Samuel from his earliest years, and that by his mother's appointment, was devoted to the work of the Lord, set aside as a Nazirite.

We cannot suppose, perhaps, that Hannah wholly *understood* that God wanted her to offer back to Him the child she longed for, any more than she had any notion of what her son was to become; but this is what God led her to do. This was God's object in those years of sorrow. The prolonged time of barrenness was to school her to be ready to yield up to God what was so precious to her, and in so doing she was to learn that what was yielded to Him was not lost to her. Is it not always so? Rather, whatever we give up to Him becomes ours all the more as we ourselves are led into the current of His thoughts, and know ourselves sharers in His work, and in His joy. How Hannah must have rejoiced to watch the honoured career of her prophet-son! Of how little account did the waiting years then seem!

Thus, this time as she prayed she vowed a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thine handmaid, but wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." Praying at first in bitterness of soul, she ends her prayer in peace and joy. Now at last she began to understand, and with this understanding came the assurance that her request would be granted. Even the reproach of Eli the high priest failed to disturb her. "So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad."

She had gained far more than the answer to her prayer. For the child that was to be born would be hers not merely by a

natural process, but as a distinct gift of God — the fruit of His working on her behalf, the proof of His interest in her. But it is important to see that she obtained this proof by faith, before ever there was any evidence of it.

There was never any question with Hannah of the fulfilment of her vow, nor any feeling of loss. She gave to the Lord unreservedly, and her prayer in the second chapter, resembling in many ways Mary's Magnificat, shows how she was enabled to anticipate the coming and the triumph of God's Christ. Her mind was opened to understand God's purposes and ways. This was the result of ceasing to be occupied merely with her own distress.

Some of the lessons to be learned from this prayer of Hannah scarcely need further stressing. We need to ask ourselves more often, when we pray, and especially when our prayers are apparently unanswered, What is my real desire, is it at all selfish? Is it for the glory of God? What does God want me to learn? We ought, indeed, to hold firmly to the fact of His love for us, and of His intention to do what is for our own blessing. How easy for us to frustrate His intention! Just as Abraham, by giving way to Sarah's importunity and accepting Hagar as his wife, delayed the fulfilment of God's promise of Isaac by thirteen years, so may we ourselves hinder the answer to our prayers.

We may also too readily conclude that, for some wise purpose, our prayer will not be granted, when we ought rather to be enquiring whether there is some hindrance that we ourselves could remove, or some command which remains unobeyed. We think we are waiting for Him, but He may be waiting for us. Finally, as in Hannah's own case, there is the question, What shall I do with His gift when it is granted? To yield all to Him, myself included, is the way of blessing, of fruitfulness, and the sure path to the greatest blessing of all — the fuller knowledge of God Himself.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

## THE FIELD OF HANAMEEL

(Read: Jeremiah xxxii.)

The prophecy of the new covenant, referred to in the preceding chapter (verses 31-34), is followed up by a very striking incident in which the prophet's faith in his own prediction is tested. The Lord allows His servants to be tested constantly. If the Lord gives us to witness to some great truth we shall have to prove our own faith in that truth. Jeremiah was put to such a test in the following circumstances. "The word came to Jeremiah from Jehovah in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house" (verses 1,2).

The prophet was in a very bad case himself, and so was the city. Jerusalem was besieged and certain to be taken by the king of Babylon. Jeremiah was not only in danger from the Chaldeans but he was imprisoned in the city; that is, he was in double sorrow. He was in sorrow from the Jews even more than from the Gentiles.

Such a time one would suppose was most unsuitable for the transaction of business, but the transaction then undertaken was one eminently of faith, specially demanding the prophet's utmost confidence in the testimony that God had raised him up to bear. Accordingly, he purchased the field of Hanameel.

But at this time, Jeremiah had given a striking word and a very serious one concerning the king. "And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith Jehovah: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper" (verses 4,5).

The capture of the city was imminent, but Jeremiah said, "The word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth." What a time to buy a field! The city certain to be taken, the prophet himself in prison! There was no escape, according to his own word, from the Babylonian army, and, further, there was no escape from the hostile power of those that ruled in Jerusalem, for his testimony was dead against their pride and their false patriotism.

Yet, at such a juncture Jeremiah's uncle asked him to buy a field. What! when they were about to be all swept out of the land and carried into captivity! Should he then buy a field? What could be the ground for such a transaction? But it was Jehovah Who bade him do it. The purchase was a testimony of the greatest value, showing that in spite of the desolation, in spite of the destruction of the city, Jeremiah believed that the Jews would return to their possessions, and that land would still be cultivated and houses built there.

It is recorded in Roman history that at the time when the Gauls were encamped around Rome, the very land on which the Gauls had raised their tents was bought and sold, and this was considered one of the greatest proofs of confidence in the future destinies of Rome that this was done. There is no event, perhaps, in history, like it. I do not recollect that in any siege of any other place, except in this case of Rome, there ever was such a transaction.

But there is a weighty difference between the two events. The Roman magnified that deed and recorded it in his history as a proof of his iron will. They knew right well that there was more toughness in the Roman than in the Gaul, and although the Gaul might gain some little advantage for a time the Roman iron would prove stronger than the Gallic fire. They knew right well that although the Gauls might be impetuous and might gain the victory for the day, Rome would

rise again and would repel them and trample them under her feet. And so it was.

But how different was the spirit of Jeremiah! He was a sufferer from his own people, himself owning that the hand of God was stretched out against Jerusalem. Nevertheless, he, on the simple faith of God's word and not having the smallest confidence in his own power, and there being no display of confidence in Zedekiah or the people of the Jews, acted in this calm and striking fashion in the face of the overpowering weight of the Chaldean power that was raised up of God to trample down the proud and rebellious city of Jerusalem.

But Jeremiah bought the field of his uncle according to the provisions of the law of the Lord. He bought it because he had confidence in the restoration of Israel — not only the final restoration but the partial one after the lapse of seventy years. It seems to me, therefore, that we have a beautiful answer to the pride of Rome in the faith of Jeremiah.

“So Hanameel, mine uncle's son, came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of Jehovah, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of Jehovah” (verse 8). Jehovah had first told the prophet to buy the field, and then Hanameel came to offer his field for sale.

“And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open” (verses 9-11). All was done according to the custom of the law. The open document was for consultation. The sealed one was that on which all depended; it was the incontestable proof. There is often a similar practice in a



family now. A will is deposited in Doctors' Commons (now, of course, the Probate Office — Ed.), as we say, and there it always abides. It cannot be touched. It must not be removed. It is the legal evidence on which all turns. But, besides that, the family have a copy made by the solicitor for reference in case of any question regarding the distribution of the property.

And then according to the word of the Lord, Jeremiah committed the evidence of purchase to Baruch to preserve as a witness that property would be again possessed in the land. "And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land" (verses 13-15).

While it was quite true that because of the abominations of the men of Judah, Jehovah would give them over as captives to the king of Babylon, at the same time Jehovah says, "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in Mine anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good" (verses 37-40). This is an additional word of the Lord about the new covenant; it will be an everlasting one; He will never turn away from His people.

We know that the Jews have never yet inherited their land according to the new covenant, still less according to the everlasting covenant. They are to inherit under both titles; the new covenant to distinguish it from anything that ever was before, the everlasting covenant to show that the new

covenant will never be put out of date, or grow obsolete, but will always be effectual and valid for their possession and their blessing.

It has been asked whether these title deeds of Jeremiah's purchase will ever be recovered. But I cannot say. I should think they have perished long ago; still there is nothing too hard for the Lord. I am sure, however, the sense of them will never perish, and I have sometimes thought that they would yet come to light.

Jehovah will yet pour out His heart of grace upon His people. "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul. For thus saith Jehovah, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hands of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith Jehovah" (verses 41-44).

It may be noticed that unbelief shows itself in two ways that are exactly in contrast with faith. Before the threatened evil or judgment comes from the hand of the Lord men do not believe it. They are always hoping for a deliverance where there is no deliverance, for peace where there is no peace. This is the first effect of unbelief — a fighting against Jehovah's chastening. When the chastening comes, then they are all plunged into despair: then they think all is over with the people and that there never will be any blessing from the hand of the Lord. Now faith, on the contrary, believes the judgment before it comes, but believes in the goodness of the Lord and that mercy shall rejoice against judgment.

W. KELLY.

(From "Jeremiah" — by W.K.)

## CURE FOR DEPRESSION

(Read: Luke xiii. 11-17)

Many of our Lord's miracles were directed to the removal of purely physical disabilities such as loss of sight, hearing, etc., and the cure of diseases such as leprosy, where the mental powers of the victim do not appear to have been specifically impaired. In other cases, particularly those involving demon-possession, the derangement was primarily that of the mind. The tragedy of the woman referred to in these verses was that both body and mind were affected. Severe paralysis had resulted in acute mental depression. Distorted in body, she was crushed in spirit also, so that her life became increasingly frustrated, burdensome and hopeless with the passing of the years.

Most of us have known folk suffering from loss of limbs or faculties, even paralysis, who have been able to maintain a surprisingly cheerful disposition, so that life for themselves, as well as for those who had the care of them, was much less onerous than would otherwise have been the case. How distressing, therefore, when the breakdown is complete! It was so with this poor woman: both body and mind needed the Saviour's healing grace.

It will be worthwhile to consider the circumstances in some detail. First, there was that which everyone could see: the woman was

### BOWED TOGETHER

Instead of looking upwards, or even outwards, her gaze was downwards to the ground. When the Creator fashioned men and women He made them upright. And our first parents remained upright even after they had sinned in the garden of Eden. It was God's judgment on the serpent who deceived them that henceforward he should go upon his belly and eat dust all the days of his life (Genesis iii.14). This woman therefore shared, in some measure, the serpent's degradation.

Now her physical defect symbolizes a spiritual malady widespread today. Men and women are so completely absorbed with the material things of this world, or preoccupied with the frustrating problems of the day, that all too often they become victims of depression from which they cannot break free. Indeed, mental sickness has become a major problem in our midst. A recent radio broadcast appealing for help stated that thousands of young people commit suicide each year as a result of depression! Vastly greater, too, is the number of those who seek to stifle their uneasiness with drink or amusement, the latter made so easy by round-the-clock radio and television programmes. All these evils, where not due to physical defect, are the outcome of earthly-mindedness and failure to look upwards to God, Who has the complete answer to all human need and misery.

### UNABLE TO LIFT HERSELF UP

Another feature, less obvious maybe — the woman “could in no wise lift up herself.” She was not merely bowed together, but powerless to straighten herself back to normality. The expression implies that she had made efforts to do so, but had failed. Possibly others had tried to help. But all had been to no avail. What a pitiable sight she must have been!

This lack of strength also is characteristic of mankind today. Despite the prescriptions of psychology — which at best can only palliate man’s distress — there is no permanent cure for depression apart from acquaintance with the God of all grace and the knowledge of His plans, which none can thwart, for the ultimate blessing of all who submit to His holy will. The great need today is for men to know the *love* of God, manifested at Calvary, where Jesus died, and the mighty *power* of God which was demonstrated when He raised Him from the dead — a power by which God is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

## BOUND BY SATAN

Then there was a third element in the case — something of which we should not have been aware had our Lord not exposed the truth of the matter. The stupid objection raised by the ruler of the synagogue, whom the Lord sternly denounced as a hypocrite, led to His disclosing that the woman was bound by Satan, and had been for 18 long years! *That* was the root cause of her deplorable condition: she was in bondage to the devil. No doubt she was unaware of it herself: nor does anyone else appear to have suspected it. But the presence of perfect goodness, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, exposed the activity of Satan. (Compare the case of the man in the synagogue with an unclean spirit — Mark i.23-27).

Little as our fellowmen realize it, they too are in bondage to Satan. Paul writes categorically that the Ephesians, before the quickening power of God had changed them, “walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians ii.2).

In this dear land of ours the devil is rampant today. Make no mistake about that. Satan’s malicious activity is behind drug addiction. Is not the mass hooliganism with which we are plagued from time to time due to Satanic influence? Not only the uncleanness and violence, but the indiscipline of young people seeking to throw off every shackle of authority — all these things are sure marks of the lawlessness which Satan promotes in his hostility to the God of order. And if the work of Satan is thus manifest openly, are we to be surprised to find his clandestine activities within the minds and souls of men, disturbing them with persistent doubts and filling them with depression?

Our Lord also remarked that the woman was

### A DAUGHTER OF ABRAHAM

This may have been so not merely because she had been born a Jewess: she may have had a measure of sincere faith,

and attended the synagogue to obtain whatever comfort religion could afford. However that may have been, there are certainly folk today, christian at heart, who have backslidden from the exercise of true faith, and have become the victims of unrelieved pessimism which deprives them of the joy of God's salvation, and destroys all witness for their Saviour. Such a spirit of infirmity can quickly enslave a true christian if he is not careful.

Now the remedy for this woman's condition was twofold. First of all there was

### **THE LOOSING OF SATANIC BONDS BY THE WORD OF THE LORD**

Although our Lord exposed the Satanic cause of her misery only after the ruler of the synagogue had intervened in the proceedings, His first utterance shows He had been from the outset fully aware of the true state of affairs. For He called to her: "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity" (verse 12). LOOSED — implying that she was in the grip of bonds needing to be relaxed! These were, as the Lord subsequently revealed, the bonds of Satan himself. In announcing her release, therefore, our Lord claimed to exercise power superior to that of the devil. This claim was made on another occasion: see Matthew xii.22-30.

In his first epistle (Chapter iii.8) the apostle John wrote: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." Here in Luke xiii. we find Him doing exactly this, and doing it by the word of His mouth. At a later date the writer to the Hebrews declares "the word of God is quick and powerful", etc. Here that power was in operation to deliver a woman who had been Satan's captive for 18 years. Where can we find such power today? Only in the scriptures when applied to human minds and consciences by the Holy Spirit. The lives of the Thessalonians were permanently changed because when Paul preached to them they "received the word of God . . . not as the word of

men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which *effectually worketh* also in you that believe" (I Thessalonians ii.13).

At root, depression, whatever the immediate cause, stems from unbelief. The man of the world, having no faith, may well be cast down. The believer's citizenship is in heaven, as Paul writes, "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, *according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself*" (Philippians iii.20-21). What bliss this prospect holds!

It will be helpful to recall our Lord's mastery over Satan throughout His earthly life. During His childhood and early manhood, though compassed by defilement of every kind, such was His perfection that His Father announced from heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." In the course of His public ministry, how often did He cast out demons from men and women, thus despoiling Satan's kingdom! As Peter declared to Cornelius: "Jesus of Nazareth . . . Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him." And when at length the end came, and Satan returned to a final attack, our Saviour withstood every onslaught. As we sometimes sing:

But spotless, undefiled, and pure,  
The great Redeemer stood;  
While Satan's fiery darts He bore,  
And did resist to blood.

This is the glorious Victor over Satan, sin and death Who proclaimed deliverance to the captive woman: "Thou art loosed from thine infirmity." From other lips, such words would have been an empty mockery: from the Saviour's, they conveyed healing and new life.

Then the Lord did a second thing. He

*(Continued inside front cover)*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

life that had indeed become worldly, whether among the Jews as such, or among those truly His own, so that they might know His real will?

So far as we are concerned, any sovereign action of His may fail of its intention, or succeed. If the latter, not only will His way be followed, but love will be revived and stimulated; while, in the former event, the way of grace will be avoided, and bitter antagonism be exhibited towards those who take it.

Failing or succeeding, however, God's intervention to bless is never without its special significance. If this be disregarded, the energy of love is absent and no amount of so-called truth, not even its hairbreadth accuracy, can avail to save us from missing our way, and the greater our zeal for the "truth" (in opposition to Him) the farther shall we be diverted.

Love one to another is the hall-mark of genuine discipleship (John xiii.35). Some may condemn it as feeling, forgetting that love is a divine energy or affection and would fall naturally under the head of "feeling." It was wrong feeling, dislike of grace, that carried away the Pharisees. Tested by the presence of Christ, they were found wanting of love to God and man, and, after that, no amount of intelligence in scripture or zeal for "truth" could supply the fatal lack.

Therefore our hearts pray Him to keep us that we may never observe His way of grace, wherever He takes it, without seeking to learn from Him His meaning, however humbling this may be for ourselves. May ours always be a glad and holy reaction of love and praise and teachableness, when He would speak to us by His own out-poured blessing in some place that causes us surprise. Theo Davis

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

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

Luke x.23,24: "And He turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: 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 ye hear, and have not heard them."

The grouping of Luke's presentation of these precious episodes is very wonderful. No human mind, unaided, could have so assembled them. They were in the hearts, and stored in the memories, of those many who were of the household of faith, but Luke gathers them up like jewels for the setting of a crown so that his friend may have a vision of God manifest in flesh.

In verses 21 and 22, we have seen, in the Son, a revelation of the Father — and even the babes could know the great God in this character of family nearness. The little children share with the young men and the fathers in a knowledge that outstrips the mere thoughts of men (1 John ii.14), and now we may hear the "private" word spoken aside to those who were, indeed, more blessed than they knew. Their eyes were *seeing* the Son of God in His manifestation of the Father. Their ears *heard* words of Grace and Truth such as had *never* before fallen upon the ears of men. There were prophets and kings of the past — holy and devoted servants who had but the glimmering of a light to come, but "these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews xi. 39, 40).

Heavenly intelligences, too, pondered the purpose of the divine mind without discernment of that plan founded for ever upon the obedience of the one Man through whom alone many would be made righteous. We are more favoured than the prophets in whom the Spirit of Christ "testified before-

hand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things" (I Peter i.11-12).

A consideration of the truth that these "holy men of old" had not the vision of heavenly things that has been vouchsafed to us should awaken in us a deeper sense of gratitude to Christ. Shall we not come closer into that "private" circle where He tells of the blessedness of the eyes that see the heavenly things and the ears that hear the Father's voice in the words of His Son! Within this circle there is an awareness of Himself as a living Person. It is here that the world things fade into insignificance for we are called to an heavenly relationship — to all that is for the *pleasure* of the Father and the Son — there can be no higher calling.

Verse 25: "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Luke shows what may be learned in the presence of the divine Worker, the Lord Jesus, in "private". This awareness of Himself as a living Person *with resources beyond human knowledge* is a ministry to us that we may be enabled to minister to *others*. The contrasting presentation of the lawyer gives occasion for Luke to show the wealth of these resources side by side with the bankruptcy of the law. Here is shown the exponent and supporter of the very code which exhibits man as one without resources to live in accord with it. To be honest with his calling, if nothing else, the lawyer must justify himself. Both he, and his modern counterpart, must condemn the evils around them. Yet they are, alike, devoid of any resource capable of dealing with them. It was a public challenge to a dispute — or, at least, to a discourse. It may have been an attempt at self display on the part of the lawyer, but this does but enhance the amazing patience of the gracious Teacher.

"Teacher, having done what, shall I inherit life eternal" (verse 25, J.N.D.). Here is a presentation of right of inheritance as the outcome of capacity to fulfil the righteous re-

quirements of the law. In the presence of the only One who *could*, and *did*, fulfil the law, the man recites its principles and is told to carry them out — and live. That which he would demand of others he cannot, himself, provide! He is, in fact, dead. His inadequate justification is “Who is my neighbour?”

The folly and conceit of man is answered by one of the most beautiful and simple expositions of *mercy*, as opposed to the demands of *law*, that man has ever heard. There is no unnecessary word of emphasis or embellishment — no special pleading — only the story in simple terms that must have touched every heart in the crowd. Yet, within the phrases of the narrative, are truths most precious, as well as challenging to all the “Christ ones” of our own age.

Is there not a presenting of deep need as one reads of the man whose back was turned upon the place where God had been known and worshipped? From the environment where protection and love were known his movements are toward the city of man’s self-will. Deprived of this protection he becomes prey to powers beyond his strength to resist. The legal observer condemns while explaining the cause. The priest and the Levite are men, sincere, no doubt, and dedicated to a separation that takes a certain pride in freedom from contamination, yet they, too, have no resource. What great need there is within the Church of God! The Lord Jesus depicts Himself as a Samaritan — journeying. One of the despised imports of colonialism by the king of Assyria, yet He, and He only, had those heavenly resources which could reach down to the poor half-dead castaway and recover him and receive him and restore!

The message was very potent to the listening crowd. It was only “by chance” that the priest came down that way. His aimless perambulations had no purpose save in superior separation, since he had no means to recover the fallen. The Levite *observed*, but did not *see* the man as a neighbour, though he would have been a member of the same nation as himself. Yet both these, exponents of a system built upon

principles laid before Israel to bring home to them their need of **MERCY**, had personal responsibility to succour the neighbour in his dire extremity! The Samaritan "journeyed"! He had **NO** place in Jerusalem at all! His was the whole unrestricted world of men! He was neighbour, in **GRACE**, to one who had no claim upon Him whatever!

The object of the Divine Worker was to produce a Samaritan — even though the material be a lawyer. We are all lawyers by natural inclination. There is an inherent urge to apply, in a legal way, our knowledge — even as to divine things — with a view to exposing weaknesses and error in others. In such a state of mind we are without means to recover them. The Samaritan made **NO** demands — exacted **NO** promises. He **GAVE** with that prodigality of grace that *leaves no more to give.*

If we remember our own destitution and the **ONE** who poured in His oil and wine — who brought us by His own means to the Inn of welcome — pledged His care of us till His coming again — we shall become active, in **HIS** Spirit, toward **ALL** and find full resource in Himself. All is, indeed, dependent upon Him — Who came where we were in the death condition. Does He not look to us so to portray Him that the Inn of the Assembly presents that character of care and patient service which accords with His own most blessed Samaritan Self?

Edward T. Wood

## **SOME REMARKABLE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE**

### **A SERVANT'S PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE**

(Read Genesis xxiv)

Abraham's servant Eliezer had been given a most responsible and difficult task, that of choosing a wife for his master's son Isaac. Any such task would have been onerous, but this was much more so, for Isaac was no ordinary person, and this Eliezer fully understood.

When Abraham gave him the task the servant said, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?" This question reveals how completely Eliezer had entered into Abraham's thoughts and hopes. And Abraham, as he answered the question, not only forbade him to take Isaac back, but spoke freely to his servant (or slave, as he really was), of the divine promises that his heart treasured. "The Lord God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; He shall send His angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence."

We may be sure, then, that Eliezer understood the place that Isaac held in the fulfilling of God's promises, and that he appreciated the importance of a right choice for him. But though he understood it all, as a dutiful servant he kept his own thoughts in the background. Yet as we consider his prayer, it is vital to see how he entered into everything. If Isaac had been God's gift to Abraham, then the choice of the right wife for Isaac was of the deepest interest to God. This **Eliezer understood.**

The instructions he had received were clear so far — he was sworn to avoid the surrounding Canaanites, and to go to Abraham's kindred, those left behind in Haran, and seek a wife for Isaac from among them. What further guidance did he have? Only this, Abraham assured him that God would send His angel before him.

So we see the servant making all due preparations, of camels, of men, of provisions, and of gifts, and so making his journey to Haran, the city of Nahor, Abraham's brother. Up to this point he acts in simple obedience to his oath, and we hear of no prayer. But now the faith that prompted him becomes very evident.

Had he sought out Abraham's relatives, he risked being involved in all kinds of domestic and personal considerations,

such as those which Jacob encountered in Laban's house. Moreover, there was the likelihood of having to exercise his own choice where he had no ability to choose rightly, in a matter of such importance. Instead, he takes his stand at a place outside the city where he knew all the girls would come, and there commits all to God.

"O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for my master Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast shewed kindness unto my master."

He addresses the Lord as his master Abraham's God, thus underlining the fact that he was only a servant; he knew, too, what Abraham was to God. So our privilege, when we are engaged in the work of the Lord Jesus, is to ask in His name, seeing we are but His servants. (John xiv.12, 13).

The sign which he proposes to God was simple, and may be thought not very distinctive; but he relied on the Lord to make it effective, and not in vain! Moreover, it indicated a gracious and hospitable spirit, in itself a good augury in Isaac's bride.

"Let the same be *she that Thou hast appointed* for my master Isaac." These words reveal the spring of all his actions — he was not only Abraham's servant, but God's, and in everything his desire was that the will of God should be done, the purpose of God carried out, not only in broad outline, but in detail.

### GOD'S ANSWER

"Before I had done speaking in my heart", as he later tells Laban and Bethuel, Rebecca appeared, and fulfilled



completely the sign which Eliezer had requested. Wonderful it was to him to see it all come to pass (verse 21), until by enquiry he received confirmation that his mission was successful. So he bowed his head, and worshipped the Lord, saying, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, Who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren."

### GOD'S LEADING

Now we often speak of God's leading, and it is useful here to ask, at the risk of some repetition, what elements contributed to the Lord's leading Eliezer.

First he says, "I being in the way". How did he arrive there? Not by chance nor by human will, but first of all, because Abraham was completely subject to the mind of God in the matter, and would not choose, nor allow Isaac to choose, a wife from the idolatrous Canaanites.

Secondly, because of Eliezer's own faithfulness and obedience to his master's commands, and we may add, his own intelligence, which directed him to make his camels kneel down at the city well at the appropriate time.

Then, IN ANSWER TO HIS PRAYER, God led Rebecca and no other to come first to the well that day, and to act according to the sign. Of course, she began to come *before* the servant prayed, but what is time to God, Who knows the end from the beginning?

Thus there is no magic about God's leading; but where His people are fully committed to do His will, diligent in doing their own duty, and prayerfully dependent upon Him, they may count on Him to lead them aright. So often it is our own will which leads us in a contrary way.

There was no gainsaying that God's will had been made plain, and when he had recounted the whole matter to Laban and Bethuel, and had made his request for Rebecca, they could not but answer, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord.

we cannot speak unto thee bad or good." Again he worships the Lord, bowing himself to the ground (verses 49-52).

Thus in this story of Eliezer we have a remarkable synthesis of a servant's complete absorption in the interests of his master and his master's God, of diligence in executing his own part, and then standing aside to make room for God to bring all to fruition; and finally, of wonder and praise as he realizes that God was indeed, in it all.

E. H. Chamberlain

## IGNORING THE ACTION OF GOD

(Matthew ix.2-8; Mark ii.1-12; Luke v.17-26)

From the account in Luke's Gospel it may be gathered that something like a session of investigation was being held at Capernaum. Quite important representatives, Pharisees and doctors of the law, from the various towns of Galilee and Judea as well as from Jerusalem were present. Others were there also, but best of all the power of the Lord was present to heal them — to heal Pharisees and doctors of the law had they needed it, and applied by faith — to heal all, indeed, who were needy there.

But though many listened to His teaching, the crowd of hearers produced not one to apply. Would the power depart unused? It seemed not unlikely, yet suddenly a suitable subject was introduced from without, over the heads of the dense mass of people, and let down on his couch through the tiling into the midst before Jesus. Near Him, in front of Him, was the only place to be thought of by faith, for He was the Wielder of that power.

## A WORDLESS APPEAL

The Lord saw their faith, faith of the palsied on the ground and of his bearers on the roof, and spoke such a word as He could only speak where there was not only faith, but also repentance, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Because of

the hidden murmuring, the case of the paralytic does not seem to be enlarged upon, yet we may read between the lines.

The plea of dumb need is made. What would have been the reply had Jesus said, "What wilt thou that I do unto thee?" Perhaps the faith of the palsied would not have reached farther than to say, "Lord, that I might have strength and walk," yet there was before the Lord a contrite heart and broken. If the choice had been definitely offered, "Whether wouldst thou, that I heal thy body, or forgive thy sins?" can there be any doubt that such a heart was there as would have replied, "Lord, if forgiveness of sins may be mine, I ask no more; let me fall into Thy gracious hands"?

Yes, the Lord knew it all, and of His own fulness of grace granted the unpreferred desire, or ever the paralytic was aware. How his pulse quickened, and his soul rejoiced in His Saviour, while this Saviour met the unbelieving accusations of the sitters-by!

### DEALING WITH FAITHLESS REASON

These scribes reasoned, Why? questioning His motive; and He replied similarly, Why? bidding them trace back their own thoughts to the spring (Mark ii.7, 8). They reasoned, Who? discounting His claim according to His known human identity; and He answered, What? turning them back upon the subject-matter of their query to re-examine it in the light of what He was about to do (Luke v.21, 22).

Alas, within their hearts they said, "This man blasphemeth" — their settled conclusion, and He, accused of speaking evil against God, surveys their inward parts and searchingly inquires, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" (Matthew ix.3, 4). Then He proceeds, "For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

## THE ACTION OF GOD, THEIR KEY OF KNOWLEDGE

The result was immediate and unquestionable. "And he arose, and departed to his house." It was as though the Lord Jesus said, "I have professed to do what produces effects of a nature invisible to human eyes. You have no natural means of judging whether the profession is made good by a result in accordance with its words. I will pronounce words now which will be proved authoritative instantly by an effect of which you can judge by human senses and power. This healing shall vouch for that forgiveness."

This healing, easier in itself, and an inferior power as an angel might judge, seems the more difficult to men in a world of sight, where deception has its full field of action. Of his own direct perception none could at all discern the existence of authority to forgive sins. Yet any with faith might benefit by it, and learn to credit that the Lord Jesus possessed it. By the miracle, weak and awakening faith is given support, and even unbelief is proffered credentials which plainly bear the divine seal. Authority, and not power only, was needed for such healing — God's authority (Luke iv.36).

### ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

So runs the proverb, true in the relations of men with one another, and acknowledged by them here. Here the Sent One of God deigns to subject Himself to the same rule. What did this action of our Lord say? Two things, more loudly than unsupported words could ever say; that power was present to heal, and that this power accompanied the command falling from the same lips as the pronouncement of forgiveness, which to the Pharisees was blasphemy.

How came it to pass that they failed to learn the obvious lesson that the power could only be the Lord's, and that He Who so used it was both Jehovah's Servant and His Fellow? God's enemy, Satan, may be able to do wonders, but he has

neither power nor will to work this kind of wonder. Who but Jehovah, Whose mercy endureth for ever, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, Who healeth all thy diseases," could have intervened in this way to reverse the consequences of sin's entry into the world, and break the devil's oppression even in a single case?

The power was God's; it was also God's witness, the only competent witness possible, to the authority of this Man on earth to forgive sins, sharing with God this prerogative which indeed belongs solely to God. Who could He be but the Son of God? The very truth itself that none can forgive sins but God only, which they wrongly applied, should have hemmed them in to this very conclusion, the only right one, that here was Emmanuel, God with us. They broke through, however, in the violence of unbelief, neither valuing for its own sake the token of God's gracious power, nor inferring its significance as evidence of the Worker's identity. What a difference there **might** have been! Recognition would have bowed them all in tears and repentance before Him to seek the available forgiveness of sins.

### **OPPOSITION, NOT OVERCOME BUT, INTENSIFIED**

In fact, the scribes failed to learn the lesson. Natural dislike of grace was the secret of dullness. They were entrenched in their position as religious leaders of God's people. In holding this they fought against His Son. In disregarding the works of God by Him, and in maintaining "faithfully" their own decided views of the truth, they denied the Father and the Son. Deeming themselves uncompromising in zeal for God and His word, they decided themselves, and only proved they were in fact blind to the actings of divine power, and deaf to the true and faithful Witness. They could believe no wrong of themselves, and finally based the death-sentence of God's well-beloved Son on their misapplication of another, though intimately connected, divine truth, namely, that God is One.

## OPPOSITION TO GRACE CONTINUED

When the Lord Jesus ascended on high, a Prince and a Saviour, He was no longer subject to men's despite and Satan's malice in His own Person. Yet in His members He was. One and the same enemy stirred up persecutors from without to hunt them to death, and fomented troubles within to frustrate the working of God's purpose in the church. The difficulty raised about Peter going in to eat with men uncircumcised, and the teaching, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved," were instances (Acts xi. and xv.).

Happily in both cases grace wrought and the Holy Spirit enlightened. Let us note how large a place God's own action had in settling both these possible causes of dissension. In the one case He poured out the Holy Spirit on Cornelius and his friends "without hands," or laying on of hands. In the other, Peter's testimony to this very act, and the evidence of Paul and Barnabas to the signs and wonders which God had wrought among the nations by them, sufficed, together with the prophetic support of the Old Testament, to sweep away the restrictions and prohibitions that some would have imposed. There was no powerful exposition of the divine principles of grace and liberty such as Paul was so well able to have given, but simply his witness to the actual blessing bestowed by God where no circumcision was.

So were the scruples overcome of those who, in their zeal for every jot and tittle of the law, saw only departure from the truth in admitting the uncircumcised to the privileges of the gospel. That God had acted sovereignly, as it were opening the door, was borne in upon all, and full weight was given to His own evident intervention. The enemy was thwarted; great grace was upon them. How different it would have been if Peter, maintaining his prejudices, had said, "God is sovereign," instead of "What was I, that I could withstand God?"

Again, there were many in the assembly at Jerusalem, whose training under the law inclined them strongly to press circumcision for a Gentile as essential to his salvation. What result would have followed if they had simply remarked, "God is sovereign," while refusing to allow what they heard of God's action to influence their minds? Almost certainly a divided apostolate and a church rent asunder!

### **OPPOSITION TO GRACE PERSISTS TODAY**

One is reminded of a modern habit of mind which makes that comment, "God is sovereign," when unmistakably divine blessing visits unexpected and "outside" places. The natural thing is for His blessing to be poured forth among and by means of His praying and obedient people. What implications has it therefore when He takes a way of blessing where our state of mind would not have led us to expect it? Does not our state of mind require examination? If we dismiss the traces of such a way indifferently, are we not really heedless? And if heedless, can heedlessness exist without cause? What is the cause? Can it be pride of position, and a stumbling over His unfettered grace? Conscience must answer.

### **GOD'S ACTIONS ARE FULL OF MEANING**

What happened when Christ was here in fulness of grace and truth, and when the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church's beginning was with demonstration and power, is repeated on every occasion of the revival, great or small, of God's work. He blesses sovereignly, never arbitrarily, and often outside the circles which have acquired traditional importance and maintain credal rectitude. How frequently, alas, it happens that just these are blinded enough to dare oppose Him and persecute His saints!

For what purpose did God act in the sole grandeur of His own power in the cases of the paralytic, of Cornelius, and of the Gentiles of Antioch and elsewhere? Was it not to break the power of traditional habits of thought and

*(Continued inside front cover)*

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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### STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

*“That the power of Christ may rest upon me”*  
(2 Corinthians xii.9)

His “grace is sufficient,” sufficient for all things

Whatever my need as I journey along;

Though trials assail me, though sorrow may meet me,

The Lord is my Shepherd, my Strength and my Song.

His “strength is made perfect,” made perfect “in weakness”;

The Lord is my Helper, I boldly may say;

Through Him I can conquer, through Him I wax valiant,

The Lord giveth strength to His people to-day.

Infirmities therefore shall call for rejoicing,

That power from the Master may rest upon me;

And therefore through Him I will joy in my weakness

Who sayeth, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

Through Him I’d take pleasure in trials, distresses;

Because He upholds me, when weak I am strong;

Infirmities, weakness, shall not overwhelm me,

For still He is with me, my Strength and my Song.

Thus I can do all things through Christ who sustains me,

Who strengthens and helps me as day follows day,

He never will fail me, nor ever forsake me,

My Guide and Companion the whole of the way.

Then come with thanksgiving, be careful for nothing,

But let our requests be made known unto God,

For so shall His peace, beyond all understanding,

Keep guard in our hearts, through Christ Jesus the Lord.

B.

(From *“The Bible Monthly”*, February, 1926)

## CHRISTIAN JOY

(Read: Philippians iv. 4-9)

So much has been spoken and written on these verses that the present writer can scarcely expect to offer his readers anything new by way of exposition. His purpose therefore does not go beyond calling attention to what appears to be the apostle's train of thought in this section of his epistle.

At the beginning of chapter iii., Paul had begun to exhort the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord, but from this theme he had digressed to warn against the baneful influence of judaizing teachers, possibly because the harsh legality they sought to impose was destructive of the very real joy which should, and does, result from faith in Christ. How can anyone in bondage to the law of sin and death know the peace and contentment which flow from the knowledge of God's unconditional grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus?

Having disposed of that issue, however, Paul returns to his exhortation in verse 4 of chapter iv.: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Does not the thrice-repeated injunction show the importance of the place joy should occupy in the experience of the believer? It will be recalled that, in a time of some hesitation and weakness, Nehemiah told the people of his day: "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah viii.10).

There may well have been two main factors tending to gloom and heaviness in the church of Philippi at that time. First, the imprisonment of the great apostle himself at a time when his ministry in the spreading of the gospel and the unfolding of the "mystery" of the church was so badly needed. This may well have perplexed them. How strange that God should permit what looked to be so serious a blow to the advance of the christian cause! Secondly, there was disagreement within the church circle sufficiently persistent to evoke more than one affectionate appeal by the apostle for oneness of mind.

In our day the apparent success of the enemy both outside and within the church may well produce a sense of dismay. Bold witnesses for the truth are few enough, and those there are often seem hampered in their work, some even stricken down: whilst petty and senseless strife, even amongst those not divided by differences of essential doctrine and church order, persists. Reflection upon these unhappy things is wont to provoke language such as the psalmist attributed to some in his day: "Who will show us any good?" Where, the Philippians might well have asked at the time Paul wrote, is there any cause for rejoicing?

But the apostle, who was having to endure the hardships of the moment, still says: "Rejoice in the Lord," and he says it over and over again.

Now there are probably two main obstacles to christian joy: first, self-seeking; secondly, anxiety of one kind and another. In the writer's view it is these hindrances which the apostle has in mind in the verses which follow.

Determination to have one's own way in life, unless one is ruthless in the pursuit of it, must lead to frustration; and frustration breeds a discontented spirit. Not that ruthlessness will lead to joy, certainly not joy in the Lord; but frustration, especially when repeated and persistent, is vexatious and hard to bear. Hence the apostle says, "Let your moderation (or, yieldingness) be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." Do not make a point of wanting to have your own way all the time, he seems to say.

In the latter verses of chapter iii., the believer is reminded that, in contrast with those "whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame," his citizenship is in heaven, and that he awaits the coming of the Lord for the removal of the greatest of all frustrations, namely, the afflictions which beset him in his body during his pilgrimage on earth. But the power of God will accomplish this in due time, and in the light of this the believer is wise to be moderate or gentle in his outlook and ways, and, in moments of disappointment, to

console himself with the hope that the Saviour will soon appear to transform both himself and his circumstances.

Paul declares (in verse 11) that he himself had learned to be content in whatever state he found himself—to be abased, or to abound—notwithstanding that at the time he wrote he was confined within the bars of a Roman prison. Indeed, he had previously affirmed that his bonds had fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. So that after specifying some of the beneficial by-products of his apparent misfortune he is able to say: “I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice” (see chapter i.12-18). If therefore he could find grounds for rejoicing, why should not the Philippians!

Then there is the matter of anxious care, which we all know can so easily prove destructive of joy in the Lord. To this problem he gives a fuller answer.

What a beautiful remedy—and how potent!—verse 6 prescribes! To commit one’s cares to God by prayer (the general attitude of one’s heart), supplication (positive petition when one knows what to ask for), with thanksgiving, due indeed to God, but in the very act of rendering which one has the comforting reminder of what God’s grace and power have achieved in the past—this leads to the entry into heart and mind of the very peace of God, setting one free from “corroding care” here and now, thus making it possible to rejoice in the Lord.

For the perfect exhibition of selflessness and trust in God, we must of course look to the Lord Jesus Himself. His meat and drink was to do the will of Him that had sent Him. Even when misunderstood and defamed He could rejoice in spirit, saying, “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight” (Luke x.21). Then in the dire straits to which His soul came in Gethsemane, He could conclude His prayer to His Father with the words, “Not My will, but Thine, be done” (Chapter xxii.42). What peace! What perfection!

Yet in times of anxiety, though one may have committed one's care to the Lord, there needs to be some diversion for the mind in order to replace thoughts which tend to revolve ceaselessly in one's consciousness. Who has not experienced the weariness of going round and round a problem, only to return, time and again, to where one first began! Clearly it is helpful to be able to divert one's thoughts to something else.

Is it not striking that this is the particular point at which the apostle introduces his injunction, in the most general terms (verse 8), that the believer should be selective in what he allows to occupy his mind. For in circumstances of anxiety men of the world are apt to turn to questionable pursuits, sometimes to self-indulgence of the most evil kind, to, as they say, "drown their sorrows." Alas! by so doing they merely sink deeper into the despondency from which really they wish to be free.

Apart from meditation in the scriptures, than which there can of course be nothing better, are there not many pursuits such as, for example, tending a garden, reading wholesome books, even listening to good music, which will pass the apostle's sixfold test in verse 8? No one ought, or should wish, to lay down precise rules in such matters. The Spirit of God Himself, through the apostle, sets the standard by which each believer must decide for himself what is seemly in the sight of the Lord, and by the guidance of the same Spirit of God each believer may reach a sound judgment.

Paul then calls attention to his own ministry and way of life as something to which the Philippians should pay heed. There are folk who learn more from good example than by doctrinal precept. In the days when Paul lived, few could read even if suitable literature had been available, and it is probable that far more details of the apostle's eventful life and suffering in service for the Lord than are recorded in the scriptures we possess, would circulate orally amongst those who owed their conversion to him and loved him.

Undoubtedly Paul's teaching was backed by apostolic authority. In his habits and manner of life too, there was good example for all, though his exhortation to the Corinthians to be followers of Him *as he was of Christ* shows that he did not lose sight of the importance of considering the only perfect Example. Yet, when writing to Philippi, Paul did not deem it necessary to emphasize his apostleship, so that in this passage we have rather Paul, a man of like passions with ourselves, drawing attention to spiritual qualities of which his own personal attainments in the pathway of faith were an example. These were worthy of emulation because they exalted the grace and sufficiency of the power of Christ for every believer. It is well worth while to read such a passage as 2 Corinthians xi.16 to xii.10 from this point of view, and to recall Paul's earlier words (chapter iv.7), "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

The writer to the Hebrews similarly draws attention in chapter xi. to the lives and exploits of men and women who lived by faith in Old Testament days. Indeed, do we not all find the greatest profit in studying the inspired biographies of such stalwarts as Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, etc., which include their failures as well as their triumphs, but who earned nevertheless honourable mention by the Spirit of God in the New Testament for our benefit.

Along these lines, it is suggested, in this day when books abound and most of us can read, that much spiritual gain may be derived from the biographies of men of God living in generations nearer to our own.

If they followed him both in precept and example, the apostle assures the Philippians that the God of peace will be with them. How could Paul be so certain of this? Because he had himself experienced the tranquillity of the divine Presence. No one can read the apostle's letters without realizing that, despite the perplexities and frustrations with which he was continually beset, he enjoyed a serenity in which the Philip-

prians, as well as believers of our own day, would be very glad to participate.

E. A. PETTMAN.

(Summary of an address, August 1969)

## **SOME REMARKABLE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE**

Jacob's Prayer. Genesis xxxii.9-12.

Has this prayer of Jacob's any claim to be called remarkable? Yes indeed, it is remarkable for the contrast it displays between the gracious assurances of divine blessing and the faithless fearfulness of the suppliant. It is specially worthy of our close attention because *we* so often fail in just the same way that Jacob did!

Fear of his brother Esau, whom he had wronged, was the dominant emotion in Jacob's heart as he began his journey back from Haran. How should he meet him? And what attitude would Esau take towards him?

Now as a counter to all this, Jacob could call to mind the many proofs in his experience of God's purpose of blessing for him. Not only the wonderful promises in his dream at Bethel; not only the earthly prosperity which had so excited Laban's jealousy; but his very return to Canaan was at the express command of God, Who had promised to be with him (Gen. xxxi.3,13). Then Laban himself had acknowledged how God had forbidden him to interfere with him as he fled back (xxxii.29).

Most heartening of all, as he neared Esau's country of Edom, and his fears mounted, we read that "the angels of God met him." Their number must have been considerable, for Jacob says "This is God's host (or, army)." Shortly after, he was to get the news of Esau's coming towards him with 400 men, and who can doubt that the angels were sent expressly to assure his fearful heart that God's power to protect was infinitely greater than Esau's power to harm him!



Let us note carefully the *timing* of the angelic appearance. Coming as it did *before* he received the news of Esau, it was calculated to garrison his heart and provide food for his faith to rest upon. It should have shown him that his God knew beforehand what his dread was. But do we read that he lifted up his heart in thankfulness for the gracious assurance? Alas, no! Has this not a voice for us? We are enjoined to **mingle our prayers with thanksgiving, and the practice of this can do much to strengthen our faith to meet the trials that lie ahead, as we ponder the proofs of God's interest in us and care for us. Ought we not to be looking out for His help, counting upon it beforehand?**

It is sad to read that, when he received the news of Esau's coming, "Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed." Forgetting entirely the army of God, he takes panic measures of his own to meet the danger, and such measures as betrayed his complete lack of faith in God's promises to be with him. He divides his company into two parts, with the thought that Esau would only be able to destroy one of them!

And in this state of mind he prays. He says, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord Which said unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands."

Now these words are surely admirable. The God of his father Abraham! How vast were the promises He had given him, promises of which Jacob was the heir, as God had told him at Bethel! And the Lord who had told him to return, Who had undertaken to deal well with him! Were not these things the very guarantee that God would indeed help him in the coming crisis?

Then his acknowledgment of unworthiness of all the blessing shown him already, shows how he realized that God's grace

was the source of it all. His failures would not turn away God's mercy now, any more than they had done already.

In themselves, these words of Jacob are a model basis for a prayer for help. But alas! his actions hardly bore out his words.

He continues, "Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."

One thing which certainly enfeebled Jacob's faith was his failure to confess the wrong he had done to his brother. This prevented him getting as near to God as he might have done. For why should he fear his brother? Had he acknowledged his sin, his consciousness of God's grace to him would have been all the greater, and his confidence in praying to Him much increased. However, we may always bring our fears to Him without fear of rebuke, but Jacob cried "Deliver me," recited His promises, yet did not credit God with the intention of fulfilling them.

This prayer of Jacob's is thus exemplary in its wording, yet illustrates the futility of prayer devoid, or almost devoid, of faith. For the object of praying is not to move God to do what He otherwise would be unwilling to do; but rather to enable His people to enter into deeper communion with His thoughts and ways, in order that He may fashion both ourselves and all that concerns us in accordance with His will. But from this prayer Jacob seems to have gained no peace, no rest of mind, no assurance that God would indeed be with him in the coming encounter with Esau. The next day he continues his devious plans.

May the consideration of these things help us, when we pray, to remember that it is a living God we approach, Who is able and willing to do far more than we ask or think.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

## THE LORD HIMSELF IS COMING

(Read: Luke xxiv.36-39; 1 Thess. iv.15-17)

We can in some measure conceive how sweet these words must have been to the disciples—"It is I Myself."

They had lost the Lord Jesus for a little while, and their hearts had therefore been filled with sorrow. They had seen Him laid in the grave, and all the hopes they had connected with Him as Messiah had gone into the grave also. They said, "We trusted (hoped) that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." But Messiah's people were not gathered to Him; He was rejected by them. The rulers and the chief priests condemned Him and hung Him on the cross.

And now the Lord Jesus comes to Jerusalem where the disciples were gathered together in fear, and He stands in their midst. They think that it is only a spirit, not even His spirit. But the Lord said, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself." It was truly the Blessed One Whom they had known, Whose loss they had mourned, the One with Whom they had been privileged to company. He Himself was there in their midst. They heard His word, "It is I Myself." What joy filled those hearts hitherto filled with fear! "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

And beloved, we, by grace, look on to the day when we shall see Him. "The Lord Himself" are the words that the Holy Spirit uses concerning our hope. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven," the One Whom we have known. We have never been privileged to company with Him as the early disciples were; but we know Him as the One Who has loved us, and given Himself for us. We know His patience with us and His care for us; and it is this same One Who is coming for us: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven." And our future is described in these few words, Then "shall we ever be with the Lord."

Have you ever thought how little you could answer if anyone were to question you about heaven? What could you say?

We might say something about future blessing on earth. We ought to have a very great deal to tell of the glory of the Lord that will be displayed when His kingdom is set up in this world. God, by the prophets, has told us in page after page of the glories that will be manifested in this world. But what of heaven? We could say nothing of heaven nor of what heaven is like, but this, "We shall be for ever with the Lord."

When the Lord Jesus spoke to the poor dying thief upon the cross, what could he have known about Paradise? But he heard these blessed words, "This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." And so, beloved, is it with ourselves: we shall be with the Lord Jesus, and we shall be with Him, not for a few hours, but for ever. He is the One Whose grace we have learned; the One Whose ways and words it is our joy to remember: the One Who justified the poor sinful woman in the Pharisee's house, and said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; the One Who even in the agony on the cross turned to comfort the poor dying thief. We are going to see His face and to hear His voice.

To be with Christ is our comfort, too, if we are called to die; for to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. And, beloved, how worthy an object this is to engage our hearts! We are called to wait for the Son of God from heaven. This is the future, the only future that is set before us. We wait, not for this event or the other to take place, but we are waiting for God's Son. He will come from heaven with the rallying shout, and the dead will be His first care, that is, where the need is greatest. Then we that are alive and remain shall be caught up with them in one glorious company.

Beloved, how blessed it is to learn His love now, to learn the attractiveness there is in the Lord Jesus, and so to be able to look forward to His coming!

May He give us to walk in this world as those who have such a hope before them.

G. F. Cox (1930)

## THE LITTLE WHILE

*“Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Hebrews x.37)*

When Jacob sought a wife in Padan-aram, the love of his heart went out to Rachel, the daughter of Laban. According to the custom of the country, Jacob engaged to serve her father seven years that he might then claim her as his wife. And in the impressive terms of scripture, “Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days (or, as single days), for the love he had to her” (Genesis xxix.20).

Seven years is a long while, and seems unending as we watch the sands running through the hour-glass. But such was the strength, the fervour, and the constancy of Jacob’s affection for Rachel that the long years of toiling and tarrying seemed to him only as so many days. The very intensity of his love leaped the wide interval, and feasted itself upon the prospective joys. By the delights of anticipation, the impatient lover was preserved from wearing out the hope of his heart by incessant chafing and fretting at the fancied sluggishness of every passing hour.

And by nourishing their hearts with visions of the joys that await them, the saints of God today will exhibit that “patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ,” which is becoming to the possessors of such a hope. Love provides hope with eagle wings to mount up to the heaven of heavens where the loved One is. Our hearts are charged with the present enjoyment of His love, and then do we wait patiently for Him.

Paul couples together the love of God and our waiting patiently for Christ. “The Lord direct your hearts,” he says to the saints, whom he had very fully instructed as to the coming of the Lord, “into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ” (or, into the patience of Christ) (2 Thessalonians iii.5). In the love of God our affections are quickened towards our Lord Jesus, the Son of His love. In

the glow of an intense devotion, we contemplate with eager anticipation the bliss of that moment when we shall be transported into the presence of that One for Whom we wait. As we anticipate this full fruition of our hope, the thorns and briars of the pilgrim walk are all but forgotten, and the period of waiting for the Saviour becomes unto us but a very "little while".

The interval of waiting is so expressed in the faithful promise: "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Hebrews x.37). Clearly, the moment between the Lord's departure and His return is by inspiration regarded as a very brief one; and, having this significance, the passage is introduced in the Epistle to the Hebrews as a strong encouragement amid the many vicissitudes of a life of faith.

There the believer is viewed as struggling with the perils and difficulties of a wilderness way. His incentive to faithful endurance without relaxation is that his goal may be reached at any moment. A step or two more, and the wearied traveller will reach the haven of rest. Just gazing upward a trifle longer, and He Who is on the way to us will have arrived, and then—ah, yes—then "for ever with the Lord!" With Him—this is our haven; like Him—this is our heaven.

And as we think of the rapture of that eye's twinkling, the time of waiting for the Lord's return seems but a very little while to us, because our love for Him tells us He will not delay His coming. And should we still wait here, however long, counted in pilgrim days, what will such moments of watching be when compared with the vast eras of eternity to be spent in unclouded communion with the Lover and Redeemer of our souls? When presently we look back from the blissful abodes in the Father's house upon the dark hours before the morning broke, how brief they will seem to us then, viewed in the sunlight of heaven, the joy of our Saviour's face! Will not the hours of waiting then seem to us to have been a very, very little while? Truly, they then will.

But why not now? If Christ and His word of promise fill

our hearts now, we shall more fully grasp the true meaning of the assurance, "Yet a very little while: He that cometh will have come and will not delay." Regarding the "little while" as the language of the Holy Spirit, we shall not be saying, in actions if not in words, like the disciples of old, "What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again, A little while, and ye shall see Me; and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? We cannot tell what He saith" (John xvi.17,18). But however difficult the phrase might seem to those in the upper room who expected Christ to "abide for ever," we now know what it means in the power of the Spirit, Who teaches the Bride to say to her Lord, Come.

And since the Master has said, "A *little* while," and He "will not delay," it is only an evil servant who will say in the heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming" (Matthew xxiv.48).

Light of the better morning,  
Shine down on me;  
Sun of the brighter heaven,  
Bid darkness flee.  
Thy warmth impart  
To this dull heart;  
Pour in thy light,  
And let this night  
Be turned to day  
By thy mild ray.  
Lord Jesus, come;  
Thou Day-star shine,  
Enlighten now  
This soul of mine."

W. J. HOCKING (December, 1931).

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