

# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

Vol. LVIII

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Concluded from inside back cover)*

weep and mourn, but as we look to the Lord, He says to us all, "Do not weep, go your way; eat the fat, drink the sweet; send the sweet-scented portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; and the joy of the Lord shall be your strength."

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isaiah xii.2,3).

W. J. HOCKING.

(The foregoing is the verbatim report of an address given on the Monday evening of a Whitsuntide Conference in 1923.)

## THE BOOK OF BOOKS

Christ guides now by His word. The Book of books is always by our side. It is a present and a perfect chart. The upward path, the downward slopes, the hidden snares, the plains of safety, the meadows of repose, are all here pencilled with inspired skill. This is the blessed handbook of the blessed route. The humble pilgrim meekly prays, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (I Samuel iii. 9). The answer carries not, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isaiah xxx. 21). Is it not pledged, "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee; for the commandment is a lamp and the law is light" (Proverbs vi. 22, 23). The believer's daily walk attests the truth. When perils have been near, and pitfalls have gaped, and by-ways have enticed the steps, a beacon from the word has warned and saved.

Extracted.

## POSSESSED BY THE LORD

(Jeremiah xiii.1-11)

Jeremiah was called to prophesy during the last days of the kingdom of Judah, and his sorrowful message was to a people that had continued so long in rebellion against God that His calls to repentance had given way to prophecies of judgment. They were to be taken into captivity—the whole nation was to be transported to Babylon for seventy years. Yet again and again Jeremiah is given a message in which the love of God to His erring people is expressed in tender words.

The message given in the words referred to came in the form of a remarkable acted simile. Jeremiah was instructed to buy himself a "girdle," or "waistcloth," as the S.R.V. translates it. We are not to think of a crude "loincloth," but rather of a garment which would be worn as an adornment. Such for example were worn by Babylonian princes (or at least officers—S.R.V.) in Ezekiel xxiii.15.

Jeremiah was first told to wear the girdle, then to go and hide it in a hole in the rock by the river Euphrates. Later, after "many days," he was told to go and recover the girdle, but found it rotted and useless. Whether he actually went to the Euphrates, which was of course a very long journey, or whether he describes a vision, is perhaps not certain; but it makes no difference to the lesson derived from it.

The word of the Lord then came to him saying, "Thus saith the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. This evil people, which refuseth to hear My words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall be even as this girdle, which is good for nothing." Then follows the remarkable simile referred to. "For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto

Me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.”

### A PEOPLE FOR HIS PRAISE

Would any man, not inspired by God’s Spirit, have dared to use such a figure? Jehovah, the Almighty God, compares Himself to a man putting on a garment, wrapping it round and fastening it to Himself, so that it should be for *His* adornment!

Now there is nothing quite so personal as a garment, and the Lord made it quite clear to Jeremiah that it was just this *cleaving to the loins* which was the central part of the figure. Had He not made the prophet actually to wear it? Thus we must give full meaning to the thought of *His people* Israel being brought—such was His intention—into the closest possible association with Himself. What astonishing grace! They were to be to His praise, to manifest His glory.

Thus, indeed, had He declared to them when He brought them out of Egypt, “If ye will obey My voice, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure to Me above all people” (Exodus xix.5).

### RUINED APART FROM HIM

But this was dependent upon their being obedient, and now He has to declare to Jeremiah: “But they would not hear.”

The hiding of the girdle by the Euphrates was of course a warning of the coming captivity. He was going to mar their pride, and to show them by this most painful and humiliating experience, that they were *nothing in themselves*, and, severed from their God, would be good for nothing like the girdle—a people despised. We know from many other scriptures that one day God will take them up again and make them once more a people for His praise. How wonderful His patient grace! His unswerving purposes!

## GOD'S HEAVENLY PEOPLE

But if Israel is set aside for the present, God is gathering out of all the nations a people for the glory of His Son, and He speaks of the church in language which recalls Exodus xix. In Titus ii.13,14, we read of "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify for Himself a people of His own (S.R.V.), zealous of good works."

Hence we can take to ourselves the gracious words of Jeremiah xiii. Our blessed Lord and Saviour gave Himself for us, that He might obtain **for Himself** a people of His own; that He might cause us to cleave to Him like Jeremiah's waistcloth! That same *close personal possession* expresses the purpose of the Lord Jesus to identify His beloved people with Himself. And while an accomplished redemption gives the believer in Christ a certainty of salvation which Israel could not then know, it remains true that we, too, can only be to His praise if we are obedient to Him. Separated from Him we are nothing.

If this is what His love has done and purposes to do for us, shall we not seek to live now for His glory? Shall we not praise Him afresh for His grace, as we ponder His desire to have us near Himself?

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

## STRENGTH FOUND IN JOY

*"Then he said unto them, 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 is a sense in which the words I have read are particularly applicable to ourselves. The exhortation of Nehemiah was that the people who had returned from captivity should encourage themselves in God, and should give themselves over

to joy and thanksgiving. This injunction came at a time when things appeared to be very much opposed to any feeling of that kind. There was a great deal around them to discourage and to cause them even to weep, and to weep before God also; but the word of Nehemiah implied that, while there was a time for weeping, there was also a time for rejoicing; and now that time for rejoicing had come, and the people were to rejoice in God.

### THE WEAKNESS OF THE JEWS

The Jewish congregation had just heard the word of God read which had direct reference to themselves and to their forlorn condition, and they wept because they felt how woefully they came short of what God intended should be their portion. But there was another direction in which they might look. They first looked at themselves, and deplored their weakness; they were then told that in looking above there was room for the utmost joy in God. I think we shall see that in like manner, while there is much to deplore, we have abundant reason for rejoicing to the full in the things that God has given us.

We are as well off to-day in the possession of the rich confidence of God's grace, as the apostles were. It is quite right to feel how wrong things are, how rapidly they are drifting into more perilous times than have ever yet been known; but what we ought to have written deeply in our hearts is this: God is our God; the Lord Jesus is our Saviour, our Friend and our Guide; and we have the Spirit of God in all the blessed fulness in which He was given at Pentecost; while the word of God abides intact.

### THE RETURNED REMNANT

Now you will recollect that the history given in the book of Nehemiah has reference to the return of many of the Jews from captivity in Babylon. God had opened a way whereby the hearts of their Gentile oppressors were moved to relent towards them, so that they were able to leave their exile and

come back to their own land. Their return began many years previously to the date we are considering, and they had come back by instalments. The temple had been erected, and now there was a question of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

But while it was true that there had been a recovery from captivity, what a handful they seemed! Two millions had come from bondage in Egypt to the promised land, and where was that populous nation now? The greater part of the tribes were still lying under the heel of the Gentiles, and those who had now come back were comparatively but a small company. Only about fifty thousand returned at this period to the city of the great King, hardly enough to fill its streets. The feebleness of their party was in itself something calculated to discourage them. They asked themselves, Where are our brethren, who are as much the seed of Abraham as we are? Where are those who are co-heirs with us of the promises? Some are here, but most are there. Some are lost amongst the Gentiles; some are apostates, and are mixing or trying to mix up the worship of Jehovah and the worship of heathen gods. And we are still bitterly hated by the Samaritans and other Gentiles. But while we are exposed to the attacks of our enemies, and other people are ready to discourage and to oppose us in the work of re-building, we have the word of God to guide us in our difficulty, and to comfort us in the hour of oppression. Hence we rejoice amid our trials.

### THE EFFECT OF GOD'S WORD

Ezra had it clearly before his mind, that the thing to guide, to strengthen and to remind him and his fellow Jews of the Lord was God's word, that had not altered since it was first given to the fathers. They had not, it was true, a temple worth speaking about; they had not a city for the Messiah if, as promised, He came to the daughter of Zion. They had nothing really reliable, except God's word, and this remained as it had been given from the beginning.

Ezra stood on the pulpit of wood, and the people gathered around him and listened to the words of the Lord. The first effect of hearing that word was to make them feel more than ever how far short they were of inheriting the blessings God had promised them.

Take one of the scriptures, for example. What did God promise to Abraham? That his dominion should extend to the river Euphrates (Genesis xv.18). What! They had only just come from that quarter as liberated prisoners. There they had to "hang their harps upon the willows" because their conquerors mocked them. They could not sing the songs of Zion in the land of their captivity. They were absolutely astray from God. Instead of possessing those Eastern dominions, they had been exiled there.

If we consider, in the light of God's holy word, our own ecclesiastical position, are we not struck with shame at the contrast? Where are Christ's followers to-day? Mixed and confused, so that often times one can hardly tell what is of God and what is not of God. Many God-fearing men are utterly perplexed, and say, "God is Light; but where shall we go to find the truth? We go to one company for a few weeks, and then we go somewhere else, for we are dissatisfied with both, and go to a third, and so on. We can find no sure ground for our feet." But is this a just conclusion? Have we nothing solid and sure that our feet may rest upon? We look upon the various sects and parties among the children of God, and what are we to do in the confusion? Why, thank God, this Old Book stands true, as it was at the beginning; and therein you and I may read and learn to-day for our guidance the very same things that the apostolic churches heard from God through the lips of His servants.

The great enemy of souls is, however, seeking to snatch away from the followers of Christ the one thing they have left to them for guidance, that is, the word of God. Let none be misled, for God's word abides true and firm. The reason



why a good many followers of Christ do not read the Bible as much as they should is that the result of their reading is to make them say, "Here is a standard beyond me." They become disheartened, and accept the present disorder as inevitable.

These Jews wept because God's word came home to their consciences, and told them they were wrong. Depend upon it, you will get more help out of God's word when you acknowledge that it shows you where you are wrong than when you read it without your conscience being reached. God's word has its edge, and its keen edge cut the Jewish listeners to the quick. But God never wounds without meaning to heal, and while men and women were weeping, God's servant gave them this beautiful message, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared . . . for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Amid their tears they were to rejoice, and they were to rejoice because Jehovah was with them still. They had been overburdened with a sense of their own weakness, and the injunction given to them was to look away from themselves now, and look to God; then they would find strength in Him.

### EATING THE FAT

Let us look at the several clauses of this verse from the point of view of its encouragement.

*"Go your way, eat the fat."* What are we to understand by these words? We know from the Mosaic law relating to the sacrifice that the fat of the animal was considered its choicest part. Hence it was that in the instructions to the priests, there was the strictest injunction given that the fat of the sacrifice should be reserved to be burnt as God's portion. You can understand the purpose of this regulation, because if God is given anything He ought to be given the best. It is the selfish man who takes the best for himself, and gives the remainder to another. There should be no dispute that, if we give God anything at all, we must give Him the best.

## THE FAT OF THE SACRIFICES

An Israelite who was so full of gratitude to God that he wanted to offer a sacrifice, went to his herd or his flock, looked them over, estimated their value, and selected the choicest, the best, the one without blemish, the most valuable animal in his stud. He could not give to Jehovah more than his best, nor would he give less than his best. I ask you, Are we to be behind the Jews in this? If we give anything to God, what are we to give Him? Our best. You may say, My best is not much. Perhaps so. But do not give Him less.

Sometimes God tests our faith in this way. It was so with Abraham. God could not have asked Abraham for anything that was more precious than his son in whom was all his hope, his dear son, Isaac; and at Mount Moriah God proved the strength of the patriarch's faith. God comes to us all, at some time or other in the course of our lives, and puts His finger upon this or upon that, and says, "Give this to Me." Are we always ready to give Him our best?

You will find that even Abel in that early day offered his sacrifice to God with its fat. That part was given to God as a special indication that Abel would not keep anything back from Him. Later, it was particularly prescribed in the law that no one was to eat of the fat (Leviticus vii.22-25), but here the Jews were told by Nehemiah to eat the fat. I do not think this injunction referred to the fat of offerings made to Jehovah. In point of fact a different Hebrew word is used on this occasion, but we can easily see the general meaning of the phrase. The fat refers to the choicest foods or dainties.

Those that are called to God's feast are invited to eat of the best. The Lord in His parable mentions the King who made a dinner, and called many to the wedding feast for his son. The full invitation went to those in the highways who had nothing at all, and they were called to come and eat of the King's fatlings. You may say, "A little bread and cheese would be good enough for them"; but this would not have suited the

King. He must have fat beasts for the feast that his royal bounty might be adequately displayed.

What does it mean? When the gospel invitation goes out, what are sinners invited to receive? The Lord Jesus said, "Come unto Me." He is God's Son, the Only-begotten. It is He who is in the bosom of the Father, who receives the outcast. God's Son from heaven, the One in whose presence angels stand in awe, speaks in the gospel; and yet sinners turn away from Him in disdain.

I am now pointing out what we have frequently set before us in the most beautiful manner by our Lord. We see it again in another parable. Think of the prodigal, who despised his father's name, without a spark of regard for his father's feelings, but the father yearns for his return. He comes back, and what a welcome was ready! You see the man brought into the father's banqueting house. You see the glitter of the ring upon his hand, and the sheen of his gorgeous robes, and on the table, what? The fatted calf, the choicest animal, reserved for some very special occasion. Thus the father brings out his best for the banquet, where the father and the son eat the fat and are merry.

Have you perceived the point of all this? What is it that you and I are to feed upon as Christians? What must we appropriate for our new life? What do we regard as necessary to maintain our spiritual hope? If you want strength and joy, eat the fat; for both will be found in that blessed Person of whom this word is so full.

### **CHRIST IN THE SCRIPTURES**

Do you know why so many persons do not value the scriptures as they should? Why, because they turn to the scriptures to find something out about themselves, instead of about Christ; and so they are not so richly recompensed as they might be. I cannot find much about myself in the law, or in the prophets, but I cannot begin to read the first book of the Bible without at once finding out something about the

Lord Jesus, and when I come to the last book, His glory shines in every chapter and verse. Why does Christ pervade the scriptures in this way? That in reading them we may "eat the fat." Take it then to yourselves, my friends; take it to yourselves. Look out for Christ in your private readings. Why? Why, because He is the One who pleased God and fulfils His purposes. The Lord Jesus said, "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (John vi.56). Eating is for nourishment, and drinking is for refreshment.

### **DRINKING THE SWEET**

I cannot help thinking that many Christians do not get the sweetness out of this life of pilgrimage that they might. They seem to regard it as a matter of necessity that they must have many bitter pills to swallow; but there is a recipe in God's word for making every bitter thing sweet. There we learn to know Christ Jesus, the One who was Himself in the world as a Man of sorrows. He is now at God's right hand, but He is still the same Jesus. Is there not strength in this? I know that the Lord Jesus Christ is with me in my trials and sorrows to sympathise and to strengthen.

Is there not abundant solace in this knowledge? If I have Him with me, I know there can be no mistake. If Christ is in the vessel, it will reach the port, however the storm may rage; and all will be well. Thus Christ is the One who by His presence sweetens the bitter things in this world. The Lord Jesus Christ was once in the world, and if you feel your sorrows are great, I can assure you that His sorrows were greater still, but "He, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame."

### **SENDING PORTIONS TO OTHERS**

If we taste the fat for ourselves, if we drink of the sweetness that Christ gives to His own and not to the world, then we are in a position to send portions to them for whom nothing is

prepared. There are always lame dogs to help over stiles, and weeping children whose eyes you can dry, but to do such things you must have sympathy and strength for yourselves from the right quarter. You must have what God gives to *you*, before you can give portions to others. We are not here to be selfish individuals; we are here to help one another. We have been helped by the presence of our brethren and sisters in our meetings to-day, and the reason is that God has so ordered it in His wisdom that every member of the body of Christ is necessary to the wellbeing of other members, and those that can help most of all are those who are in touch with the Living Head in glory. May God help us all to send out portions to others.

### THE SECRET OF STRENGTH

There is a time for weeping and there is a time to be joyful; but Nehemiah says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." And here we learn what is the real secret of spiritual strength, and that is the joy that comes to a believer through a personal knowledge of communion with the Lord. What do we really know of this? Let us just face the fact now. What personal communication have you or I had with the Lord Jesus Christ during the last few days? Have we personally, individually, been in living touch with the Christ above? Have we touched, as it were, the skirts of His garments of glory? Have we heard His own gracious whispers to our souls? This is something that can be heard even in the din of London streets. It is something that can be known anywhere in this world, and I know there are plenty of persons here to-night that have often experienced it, but I am sure that every one of these will agree that he has not done so as much as he could or should do.

Nehemiah says, "You have not got your strong walls, or the beautiful temple of Solomon, but you have got Jehovah. He is for you: He has brought you across the desert from Babylon, and has brought you to Mount Zion for a purpose. Do you know why God has delivered you from captivity?"

Because you are such a good sort of pious people that you must not remain longer on the banks of the Euphrates? No, but because, according to the predictions of prophecy, Messiah must appear in Jerusalem riding upon an ass, and coming as a king to Zion, and the seed of Abraham must be here in David's city to receive Him. As He promised, God means to bring His blessed salvation to you. It is His joy to bless you. Let this assurance be your strength. Look forward to the coming of the Lord." Shortly after this testimony the Old Testament canon was closed, and God did not speak again in prophecy until John the Baptist came as Messiah's immediate forerunner.

### THE JOY OF CHRIST'S COMING

Do you know why God opened your blind eyes to believe in His Son? That you might be waiting for Him when He comes. He has called you out from the world for this purpose. Will you be found ready and waiting at the coming of Christ? Is it your joy that Christ is coming? If we were all to leave this room through the roof, instead of the door, would this be a joy to you? Would you rather He waited until next week? Be careful of disloyalty in your heart. Let us be ready for Him. He is coming, and the joy of the Lord's coming is your strength.

You know when you are climbing up a steep hill on a hot day, how oftentimes you climb and climb until your strength gets weaker, and your breath comes thick and fast. Can you hold on to the last? If you can only reach the top, all will be well. Hold on then. Jesus is coming, and if we can only maintain this hope brightly in our souls, depend upon it we shall be stronger than we have ever been before.

Beloved friends, we do surely wish to be strong; but let us remember that we can be strong only in the Lord.

You know that the apostle Paul ended his days very disastrously, so far as the worldly view of his life was concerned. It is always the mark of a promising career in earthly matters that a person goes forward from success to success; one step

forward helps the next. The older the man gets, the more honours the world showers upon him. But when we look at the apostle Paul, where are his honours? Where is the home of rest for his old age? Where is he to spend in comfort his last days? In a prison at Rome, waiting for the order of his execution. The foremost servant of Christ, the chief of the apostles, seemed to be a bright light extinguished in ignominious obscurity. And why was Paul put into this confinement? There were many reasons, but surely one reason was that he might write his epistle to the Philippians, that marvellous expression of Christian joy. If you yourself have a face as long as a fiddle, it is no use telling other people to rejoice. Paul rejoiced himself, and called others to rejoice in the Lord.

The apostle Paul was cast in prison to die, but there was Someone nearer to him than the soldier to whom he was chained. That was the Lord Jesus. What better companion could anyone desire than the Lord Jesus? If you have Him, you have enough. Paul had Him, and the joy of the Lord was his strength.

I would impress it upon you that in order to be a real help and service to others, we must set our own house in order. We have to discover for ourselves whether what scripture says is true or not, and whether there is enough power arising out of faith in God to make us rejoice always. There is one source of grace that never fails; that is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

If He does not come we shall disperse from this hall, and go to the several places where God has put us for testimony; but there is One who will be with us wherever we are. I know He has set some of you in very lonely places, though once there were much greater numbers there, standing shoulder to shoulder. Now there are very few indeed; only two or three perhaps, but is there not One with you who matters more than all who are gone? God has taken so-and-so, away. There is One He has not taken away. To whom then shall we look? If we are looking on the ones who are not with us now, we may

*(Continued inside front cover)*

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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*(Continued from inside back cover)*

conflict. This Blessed Man was preparing to meet death in the full awfulness of its power, but the perfect trust, which had left the maintaining of His lot to God in all the details of life, is still His, and He is ready to finish His journey in the same strength of dependence. He is quite willing to enter death's awful precincts, and to allow His body to be laid in the grave in the calm and certain confidence of resurrection.

Well may we say, Dependence is man's glory, for to meet death in this manner is the very majesty of manhood, and yet, observe, there is not one thought of self-confidence. Perfect peace is built on perfect trust in God. It will rest on no other basis. For man, the loftiest pinnacle of God's creation, is so formed that nought but God can sustain him in his eminence. Let him attempt to stand for one instant in self-sufficiency, and he falls to the lowest depth of degradation. This is exactly what the first man, Adam, and all his race has done: but in this Psalm we are shown a great contrast, the second Man, the Lord from heaven. And, while we bow at His feet in adoration of the King in His beauty (made very conscious, it may be, that the True Light exposes the sinfulness of our natural hearts) we must not be deaf to the Spirit's exhortation: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," trusting, not to our own efforts after a spurious sanctification but, in His assurance that it is "God which worketh in you both to will and to do His good pleasure."

The more our eyes are fixed upon Christ, the more our feet will follow in His path and the more we shall learn of the "goodly heritage" and the "pleasant places," which it is His own desire we should enjoy.

I.W.

*(Slightly curtailed)*

## AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR

(Read: I Peter i. 8,9)

In the introductory verses of this epistle, Peter uses four words to describe the response to the gospel by those from among the Jews who were converted to the christian faith. They *loved* the Lord Jesus Christ: they *believed* in One they had not seen: they *rejoiced*: and they *received* the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.

These expressions are of course applicable to all christians everywhere, in every age, no matter of which race, nation or kindred they were when converted. Nevertheless, they appear to have special significance in the case of converts from among the Jews. And we should bear in mind that it is specifically to such, scattered throughout Asia Minor, that Peter writes, though we ourselves may, and should, share the benefit of what the Holy Spirit is pleased to give in this way.

### THEY LOVED AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR

Had Peter been writing to converted Gentiles, he might well have begun with a reference to their faith, as Paul did when writing to the Thessalonians. But faith in Someone unseen was no new concept to the Jews, who professed an orthodox belief in the one true God. The nation stumbled over One presented to their sight—even Jesus, Whom they rejected as their Messiah because He did not measure up to their natural expectations. And when eventually they crucified Him, they were carried away by a bitter hatred which filled their hearts.

This hatred of the person of Jesus Christ continued to be a characteristic feature of Jewish opposition to the gospel in the days of the early church, and remains so today. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is to the reversal of this attitude that Peter draws attention when writing to converts. Their conversion was evident by the fact that former hatred gave place to love for Christ. What transformation!

Yet another contrast is apparent from these words, "Whom having not seen, ye love." Although the names of historical figures such as Abraham, Moses, David, etc., were deeply revered, Jewish faith centred round the written word—the law, the psalms and the prophets, known to us as the Old Testament. Behind these oracles there was of course the authority of the only true God, Whom they worshipped, but He Himself was remote in their thoughts, their religion being more a matter of subscribing to a code of behaviour rather than following a person.

On the other hand, christian faith gives pre-eminence to a Person, not an historical figure who has been and gone, but One Who lives continuously and can be known and loved as a personal Saviour and Friend. All-important as are the New Testament scriptures from the Book of the Acts onwards, which give us the teachings of those apostles and prophets whom the Lord appointed to establish believers in their new way of life after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the first place is given to the historical records of the life of Jesus which set before christians the varied glories of the Person Whom they follow. And it is in harmony with this that we find Peter concluding his second epistle with the exhortation to "*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

Christ's own love calls for an individual response of love from each and all of those who have been the objects of *His* love. They do not see Him as yet, though one day they will do so: for faith will give place to sight. Until then, this remains a true description of the believer's attitude: "Whom having not seen, ye love."

### WALKING BY FAITH

Seeing that Christ remains unseen for the time being, the christian must needs learn to walk by faith. He has to "believe" in order to become a christian; but then he has to go on "believing" day after day, and to the end of his days on earth.

It is interesting to note how the children of Israel, though taught from their earliest days to believe in a God Who was invisible, yet failed when put to the test, and went astray because of their reliance upon sight. After their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, God Himself came down to speak with them. Necessarily His presence on the mount of Sinai was accompanied by restrictions on the people's approach, and there needed to be wholesome evidences of God's majesty. In the event, so awesome was the experience that the people stood afar off and besought that God would not again come near them in the way He had done. "Speak thou with us, and we will hear," they said to Moses, "but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus xx.19).

To this proposition God agreed, for soon afterwards He called Moses up to Him in the mount in order to impart to him the commandments which he was to take down and teach the people. So Moses went up, and "a cloud covered the mount" (Exodus xxiv). Thus he disappeared from their sight.

What was the outcome? "When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Exodus xxxii.1). In consequence, the golden calf was set up, and Aaron built an altar before it, proclaiming, "Tomorrow is a feast to Jehovah." The following day the people rose up early and "offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

So much for their faith in One they could not see!

The great Apostle and High Priest of the christian faith has returned to heaven. The early disciples saw Him go up, a cloud receiving Him out of *their* sight. Now He lives on high to make intercession for His people. And it is concerning this very One, upon Whom salvation now and hereafter depends,

that Peter says, "In Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing . . . ."

The christian must, and can only, *live by his faith*. At times his pathway of pilgrimage may seem long and wearisome, but he is not to cast away his confidence (Hebrews x.35), seeing that "we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe (have faith) to the saving of the soul" (verse 39). Like Moses, he should endure "as seeing Him Who is invisible" (chapter xi.27), and spend his time while the Lord Jesus is away in pursuing those things which he knows to be according to His mind. The apostle John concludes his first epistle, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols"—the very thing Israel failed to do.

## REJOICING

Many New Testament scriptures could be cited to show what an important element in the christian way of life is joy. To quote but one, Paul says to such as would make much of material things, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans xiv.17). It is clear that the gracious Spirit of God was given that believers might rejoice.

How great the contrast of this with the Old Testament economy! It is true that when the children of Israel, after entering the promised land, brought to God their baskets containing the first fruits of their harvest, they were bidden to "rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house" (Deuteronomy xxvi.11). But being under law, with their blessing depending on their obedience, they could in fact know little joy. The great day of atonement brought again "the remembrance of sins" each year, and the people were specifically told to "afflict your souls." There is no mention of rejoicing over sins forgiven.

But, Peter says to these Jewish converts, you are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of

the blood of Christ"—that precious blood which cleanses from all sin. Further, he tells them, you are begotten again "unto a lively (i.e., living) hope . . . to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." And lest any should fear they might never reach that inheritance, as so many of the people of Israel failed to enter Canaan, Peter assures them they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

What grounds there were then for rejoicing! A spirit of heaviness might be unavoidable for "a season, if need be," by reason of manifold trials, but even these have their sublime purpose, "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

In view of all this, are we surprised that Peter should say of the converts from an almost joyless Judaism, that faith in Christ leads to *rejoicing*? Happy indeed are they that know their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Their joy is indeed unspeakable—beyond utterance now—and full of glory, i.e., having in advance the character of glory which will belong to believers when they are perfected, spirit, soul and body.

## RECEIVING THE END OF FAITH

However true it might be that they would have to wait for the inheritance reserved for them in the heavens, these believers received there and then the salvation of their souls. To quote one writer, "Soul-salvation, before our bodies are conformed to the body of His glory, is a worthy end of our faith to receive now; for beyond all controversy the outer man follows the inner, and God never disappoints the believer of his hope. Salvation "of souls" too by its restricted application fittingly lends itself to what the believer receives now; whereas for the future the apostle does not so qualify "salvation" (See page 41 of "The Epistles of Peter" by William Kelly).

From the point of view of these Jewish converts, the possession of something "here and now" was intended to offset the loss of temple, priesthood, land and possessions, which came upon their nation because of their rejection of their Messiah. Materially, those who followed Jesus, loving Him and believing in Him, might well lose everything that men count worthwhile: spiritually, their blessing was secure.

E. A. PETTMAN

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

### **DANIEL'S PRAYER AND THANKSGIVING**

(Read: Daniel ii.14-23)

Although Daniel and his three friends were numbered among the wise men of Babylon, for some reason unknown to us they were not present when Nebuchadnezzar summoned the wise men in order that they should tell him both his forgotten dream and its interpretation. Naturally enough they regarded the king's demand as unreasonable, and told him so; but he seems to have considered it a fair test of their boasted wisdom. Then, frustrated by his own inability to recall his dream (which he evidently felt to be of great significance), he vented his fury on his counsellors, and decreed they should all be put to death.

Not until he was met by Arioch, the captain of the guard, who was charged with the execution, did Daniel learn about the hasty decree, which nevertheless, included him and his three friends in its scope.

Faced with this sudden peril, Daniel did not hesitate, but at once sought the king's presence, and promised him that, given a little time, he would tell him both the dream and its meaning. Then he sought out his companions, and urged them to pray earnestly to God that He would reveal the secret to them and so save their lives.



## DANIEL'S FAITH

What remarkable faith Daniel displayed! We may be inclined to ask, what right had he to make such a promise to the king? But then, Daniel knew his God!

Had not God said long before, by the mouth of an unnamed prophet, "Them that honour Me I will honour" (I Sam. ii.30)? As one who had sought to honour God in that land of idolatry, in keeping himself from its defilements, Daniel counted upon God's faithfulness, and upon His love to His people, and His power to reveal the secret things, which indeed belong to Him (Deut. xxix.29).

In thus acting, Daniel was anticipating what the apostle John writes in his first epistle about prayer, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (I John v. 14,15).

Note, that our confidence is *in Him*, in what He is in Himself, and in what He is towards us. Such was Daniel's confidence. He believed that it was not God's will that His faithful servants should perish along with the idolatrous soothsayers of Babylon.

Then, in desiring his companions to pray also, Daniel was not only asking them to pray for what equally concerned them, but also seeking to make them sharers of his faith. Already he had got them to join him in his refusal to defile himself with the king's meat, thus sharing the ensuing blessing with them. Here, surely, is true leadership in the things of God. It is a happy thing to be able to stand alone when necessary; but a still better to persuade others to follow us in a good thing.

## GOD'S RESPONSE

So Daniel and his friends prayed. We are not told of the words he used, but he "desired mercies of the God of heaven," and God, Who always responds to faith, revealed to Daniel

that wonderful dream of Nebuchadnezzar, and the whole of its meaning.

Now it was evidently God's purpose to bring forward Daniel as His interpreter to Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. We may indeed say that God needed such an interpreter, and Daniel was the man of His choice.

Once more then, we can trace how through prayer God's people are brought into communion with Himself, to become instruments in His hands. Daniel's need, and Daniel's faith, were used to accomplish God's will concerning him. But then, how greatly was Daniel blessed in all this! Not only was his life preserved, but his mind was opened to know God's great purposes, and to reveal them for the benefit of His people.

## WORSHIP AND THANKSGIVING

Daniel's immediate reaction to the revelation of the king's dream is very striking. His first thought is not of his personal deliverance from danger, remarkable though that was, but of wonder at the greatness of God's power and wisdom. He breaks out in worship and praise to God as this dawns upon his mind.

Though His people had been conquered and led captive, it was God Who remained in control of events, both removing kings and setting up kings. Nebuchadnezzar might be the "head of gold", but his empire would pass away and be replaced by another, and yet another, until at last God would set up His own everlasting kingdom. What a theme to fill the mind of the exiled Israelite with joy and hope! Those expectations which are now the portion of every believer in the Lord Jesus who is at all instructed, were then distinctly made known for the first time. Is it not worth pausing a moment to put ourselves in Daniel's place, to share his exultation? He prays, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His: and He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he

giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him."

These future events—the "deep and secret things" hidden in the counsels of God—had been revealed by Him in the great monarch's dream. But having forgotten the dream, Nebuchadnezzar had no means whatever of recalling it. Only the One Who had revealed it could now make it known. Thus when all witness to the true God seemed to have been extinguished by Israel's failure, His wisdom had provided His own testimony, through his servant Daniel.

Daniel does not fail to add his thanksgiving for his own and his friends' deliverance, and for the wisdom and understanding given to him. "I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers, Who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known to me what we desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter."

It is right that we should bring our needs and difficulties, however great, to God in confidence in His un failing love to us. It is most important that we remember to give thanks also, and that not in any mechanical manner, but feasting our souls upon our gracious Father's love. What we may also learn from Daniel is to look away from our own concerns, even the answers to our prayers, to Him Who is the source of all, to ponder the glory of His grace and the grand sweep of His purposes, to anticipate the triumph of His Christ. Here is something to lift our minds above depressing circumstances which may surround us, and human failure and weakness. Some believers see no profit in reading the prophetic portions of scripture, and regard the book of Revelation as of little value, notwithstanding that a special blessing is attached to reading it. This is a great mistake, and can only result in spiritual loss.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

## “THE MIND WHICH WAS IN CHRIST JESUS” II

(Continued from page 24)

*“Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips”* (Psalm xvi.4).

Whilst there is this great delight in, and occupation with, those belonging to God, there is a decisive and total separation from all who turn away from Him to other gods. This, again, is the spirit of the perfect servant, for such must always disregard any who slight or wrong their master. Surely, of the many sorrows that filled the Lord’s heart as He trod this vale of tears, this ever was the most poignant—the constant sight of men hastening after other gods, or as the margin reads “giving gifts” to them. What real soul-agony it must have been to Him, knowing God in all the blessedness of His Being, and loving and adoring Him so perfectly, to see men, on all sides, hastening anywhere, and looking to anyone and anything sooner than the Giver of all good?

But it is striking to notice the holy moderation in the language of this fourth verse. Conscious of the character of His mission—not one of condemnation nor of judgment—He will refrain Himself from any outburst against the guilty, yet announce His own, holy determination to preserve absolute separation from their wickedness.

Oh, how different the history of the church would have been, if the disciple had been more “as his Master” in this respect! And we, particularly, dear brethren of this Laodicean age, do we not seriously need to pray for this spirit of holiness, which would not even take up the name of evil into our lips?

Surely, it is this part of His life and character that has rendered Him so fitted for His future mission, when He is to come forth—still the Perfect Servant—to tread “the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” Then, indeed, all shall see that hatred of evil is part of “the mind that was

in Christ Jesus." Occasionally, in the Gospels, this hatred flashes out, as a sword cuts the air, but it was then a sword, not used to slay, but kept sheathed in the scabbard of perfect grace; on the contrary, when He, whose name is Faithful and True, shall ride forth upon His white horse, a very evident part of His armour is "the sharp sword wherewith He shall smite the nations."

*"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot"* (Psalm xvi.5).

"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." Here is the great secret spring of that wonderful life, the unique life of all the ages. Jesus of Nazareth, alone of all the millions who have trodden this earth, lived a life of Perfect Manhood, a life entirely and absolutely pleasing to God, wholly to the glory of God; yet nothing around Him was, in any way, conducive to this. He had no heritage here, and He sought none.

Man is a dependent creature and our Blessed Lord had, in grace, become a Man, but He was entirely independent of, hence superior to, all and everything about His path. The physical fast He endured in the wilderness is typical of His whole spiritual life, for this world was a desert to His soul, which could yield nothing of itself that would be acceptable to His taste.

Never did He expect to be satisfied with "the swine's food of the far country" or to drink from the "broken cisterns" to which men around Him were turning for refreshment. Another Psalm gives us the constant language of His heart to the Father, "All my springs are in Thee." All that the heart longs for, He sought in God. He never dishonoured Him by seeking elsewhere; hence He ever lived, in spirit, above the things of this world.

*"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage"* (verse 6).

But, though this was true, our Blessed Lord was no recluse. He had come to live as a Man among men. He was not carried

through the cities of Palestine in an exalted isolation, but His blessed feet trod, often in weariness and hunger, the same paths that the jostling crowds were thronging; yet all the varying circumstances of such a life He takes as sent and ordered by God. "Thou maintainest my lot," He says and is fully satisfied—or shall we say—delighted to have it so. There were no "small happenings" of daily life to Him; for every circumstance, small or great, was the outcome of the purpose of God. There was not one moment of self-seeking or one single effort to arrange for self; everything in His "lot" was left to the maintenance of God; and what is His description of such a life? "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage." Again, I ask, are we seeking to follow Him into those "pleasant places," or do we doubt His word, and prefer to trust to our own efforts to obtain happiness where we see others seeking it?

If we look back with natural eyes we may see a man penniless, homeless, friendless, and when we hear Him talk of "pleasant places," and of "a goodly heritage" our belief is staggered. We think there must be a misuse of words, or a contradiction of terms. Faith, however, finds no mistake, but a divine truth and a new and wondrously blessed revelation of God.

*"I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved"* (verses 7,8).

As He told His disciples, He had meat to eat they knew not of, and then too He walked in the light and stumbled not, for, as the seventh verse of our Psalm tells us, counsel He also received from the Omniscient God.

Not only was God ever His source of strength, He made Him at all times His Counsellor and Guide. The many problems, great and small, of life and death require wisdom continually, but the earthly man in his flaunting pride rejects advice—except from Satan, his direst enemy.

The wisdom of God is foolishness to him (1 Corinthians ii). Moreover, he hates it, because it is coupled with the fear of the Lord. More and more, as we watch false science, spiritualism, rationalism and superstition advance with rapid strides, we see how men attempt to be self-sufficient in these things, while Satan flatters their efforts, subtly supplying any need they may discover for instruction in the hidden mysteries. Eagerly they grasp his proffered lies, like their first mother before them, and stubbornly refuse the truth of God, which is able to make them wise unto salvation.

How totally different was our Blessed Lord. He was meek and lowly in heart, and, like the wise son, of whom the preacher speaks, He ever attended to wisdom and bowed the ear to understanding. We read of Him spending whole nights in prayer to God, and we know He would not move to the death-bed of a friend till He had received guidance for His action.

Are not these things the secrets of a perfect life? Would there not be less anxious worry, less regret, and more happy service to God if we, in our feeble measure, sought counsel and instruction more continuously where alone true wisdom is to be found (James i.5)?

*“Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”* (verses 9-11).

What a beautiful crescendo of praise the last three verses of this “Golden Psalm” give us! Starting with a full chord of trust in the words, “I have set Jehovah always before me,” the music swells into a grand symphony of a glorious deliverance and “fulness of joy” and that before the icy portals of Death itself.

Of course, we do not get such words as those used by the apostle in 1 Corinthians xv. Victory comes not before the

*(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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### THE INCARNATION OF THE SON

In the word of God, the **incarnation of the Son is recorded, not as a creation, but as a birth:** we read that "the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise . . ." (Matthew i.18; ii.1). God created Adam the first man, but Eve gave birth to Cain and Abel (Genesis i.27; iv.1,2). In the case of Adam, **life in maturity** was directly bestowed by Jehovah upon the inanimate dust of the ground, of which he was formed by his Creator; but in the case of Cain and Abel, their **infant life** was received by transmission from their living parents. And the whole of Adam's race began to be in a similar manner.

Now the manner of our Lord's entrance into the world was by birth, not by special creation as Adam's. His imminent birth with its miraculous character was specially announced to Mary by the angel, who said to her in her virginity, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke i.35). In these words, the personal agency of the Holy Spirit acting in unspeakable power upon Mary is plainly promised, and also the consequent birth of the "Holy Thing" to be called the Son of God.

It is, however, a mere gloss upon this text to claim that according to its teaching the Lord's "holy humanity was created" — that it was "brought into existence by the creative act of the Holy Spirit of God." Nothing is stated or implied here or elsewhere in scripture, that the birth of Jesus Christ was "a creative act," that is, in the sense of a production of something from nothing. Such a theory rests upon the imagination, not upon revealed fact. W. J. HOCKING

(From *The Bible Monthly*, June 1933)

## SOME ASPECTS OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

To anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no need to emphasize the importance of His resurrection. It is the proof that His person and work are acceptable to God. It is the foundation of man's salvation (Romans iv.25). It is the guarantee also that believers will be raised to a life incorruptible (I Corinthians xv.).

It is what He had repeatedly foretold, both to the Jews and to His disciples, so that His whole claim to be believed rested upon it. When the Jews demanded a sign of His authority, He would only give them the sign of His resurrection. "Destroy this temple" (the temple of His body), He said, "and in three days I will raise it up."

Somewhat later, in response to a similar demand, He said that "the sign of the prophet Jonah" was the only sign He would give. "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew xii.39,40).

This "three days and three nights" has been a difficulty to some, but the Jews had no such difficulty. It did not mean, to them, three 24 hour periods, as any *part* of such a period counted as a whole. "Command that the sepulchre be made sure *until the third day*" was all they demanded of Pilate, in order to disprove that Christ had fulfilled His word (Matthew xxvii.64). Neither does "the heart of the earth" mean any more than the rock tomb, for we must not read "the earth" as meaning the globe, but what we commonly call "the ground".

Another important aspect of the resurrection is brought out in Acts xvii. Speaking in the Areopagus, Paul says that in raising Christ from the dead God has assured all men that by Him He will judge the world. For the crucifying of God's Christ was a challenge from man which God has taken up, and will answer in His own time and way. He has reversed man's sentence, in raising Jesus from the dead, and

exalting Him to His own right hand. To be in God's favour, every man must bow the knee to Him, and every tongue must confess that He is Lord. To all who refuse Him, He is the appointed Judge.

Let us now look at some difficulties and misconceptions which occur from time to time.

### **THE CHARACTER OF THE RESURRECTION**

It was not a mere reversal of the death process. That was true of those raised by the Lord in the days of His flesh. But they died again.

Neither did He appear to His disciples merely as a specially vivid spirit or "ghost". This was the first thought of the eleven, and His own reply to this was "Handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have." This He confirmed by eating before them.

Thus it was quite certainly a bodily resurrection, just as one fundamental evidence of its actuality is the disappearance of His body from the tomb. But inasmuch as, when risen, He appeared and disappeared suddenly, it is clear that in the resurrection state His body has quite new properties. In fact, the risen Lord is the beginning of the New Creation. As regards the body, this is an entirely new mode of existence, different also from that of the angels, who are pure spirits. Human science, dealing as it does with matter in the old Creation, cannot fit it in, and so seeks, in man's arrogant fashion, to deny it altogether.

### **HISTORICAL BASIS**

Now the Bible sets out to give us every proof of the resurrection of Christ as a *fact*. We have in the four Gospels four independent accounts of that first day; we have Paul's list of the chief appearances of the Lord, in I Corinthians xv.; and in Acts i., Luke tells us how during forty days the Lord showed Himself alive to His disciples "by many proofs". It is important to see that Christianity has a firm historical basis, unlike the religions of this world.

However, believers are sometimes perplexed by seeming discrepancies in the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But these can easily be reconciled on a closer examination, even though one may not be sure that a suggested order of events is the correct one. Such a possible order is as follows:—

1. The visit of Mary Magdalene and the other Mary “to see the sepulchre,” just after the close of the Sabbath, i.e., on Saturday evening (Matthew xxviii.1). J.N.D.’s New Translation reads “as it was dusk of the first day after Sabbath.”

Planning to bring spices and embalm the body at sunrise on Sunday morning, they came at the earliest moment after the Sabbath to look at the sepulchre (for their hearts were there), and then returned home for the night.

2. There is probably a break after verse 1, and next the angel came to move the stone and open the tomb for the disciples to go in, the Lord, of course, having already risen.

3. If Mary Magdalene, in the early morning, out of eagerness ran on ahead without waiting for the other women, this would explain John xx.1. *She came while it was still dark*, saw the stone moved, and ran to tell Peter and John.

4. The other women arrived at sunrise, when it was, of course, no longer *dark*, while the Magdalene was going back. They saw the tomb open and the “young man” sitting there. They fled in terror, and said nothing to anyone, as Mark records (xvi.8).

5. Peter and John came and saw the empty tomb and the linen clothes and returned home.

6. Mary returned more or less at the same time, but stayed when the men went away. She saw the angels in the tomb, and then, turning back, saw Jesus, mistaking Him for the gardener. Now Mark insists that she was the first to see Him (xvi.9). Hence this was *before* Matthew xxviii.9.

7. The other women and perhaps Mary Magdalene, unable to keep away from the sepulchre, yet affected in spite of themselves by the unbelief of the apostles, returned and

saw the two angels (Luke xxiv. 4). They went away, filled with joy, and the Lord appeared to them (Matthew xxviii.9).

We may note further that Matthew is concerned with the opening of the tomb and the guards. He does not say that the women (4) *saw* the angel sitting on the stone. But he combines (2) with (7), i.e., the angel who moved the stone appeared and spoke to the women *in* the tomb. As usual with Matthew, he gives a condensed overall picture.

Mark records (4) only; John (3), (5) and (6).

Luke gives (7), and also mentions Peter's visit to the tomb, without saying *when* he went.

### MODERN UNBELIEF

Something must be said of a recent attempt to deny the reality of the resurrection. Unable to disprove that a number of disciples on a number of occasions did see the risen Christ, some have argued that what they really "saw" was a God-given "vision". This vision was given to assure them that Christ was not really dead. This is claimed to be more "spiritual" than the belief in a bodily resurrection.

Now the reader must judge for himself whether it is likely that such visions should be given to so many people on so many separate occasions, but apart from this there are several things to be said.

(1) According to this, the Lord Jesus was no different from any other man. Man does not die, except as regards the body.

(2) This theory, like all the others, cannot explain the disappearance of the body of Jesus, which the Jews would have produced if they could. For if, as the Jews maintain, His disciples stole it, the vision theory collapses.

(3) This theory boils down to a claim that the believers were deceived into thinking that Jesus was risen — and deceived by a God-given vision! It involves that the Lord also deceived His own when He ate and drank with them to prove that He was risen. And the theory comes perilously near the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, of Whom Peter says that

He was a Witness to the truth they were proclaiming — that Jesus was risen indeed (Acts v.32).

To claim that this is a more spiritual belief shows the moral bankruptcy of its originators. And to a thoughtful mind, such desperate wriggling betrays the realization that they are fighting a losing battle.

Kravchenko, in his book "I Chose Freedom" mentions the case of an Eastern Orthodox priest who, on Easter day, in his Russian prison, would keep saying "Christ is risen!" So exasperated were his communist guards that they took him out and shot him. He probably knew but little "truth", but he had the kernel, and how victorious was he!

Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!  
E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

The Bible teaches **there is** — for all men — for the unbeliever as certainly as for the believer.

In a recent radio broadcast, a panel of four prominent persons was asked for their views on this question, and all four denied belief in life after death. To one listener at least it appeared that two of the participants spoke without full conviction. Nevertheless the team was unanimous in setting aside the plain teaching of Holy Scripture.

While it may be unlikely that any denier of life after death will read these pages, we consider it wise to reproduce for the benefit of those who truly believe a testimony of recent years giving "chapter and verse" for the christian belief.

In reply to the question — "There are many who argue that just as death is ceasing to exist, so the lake of fire, which is the second death, must imply total cessation of existence: is this reasoning sound?" — F. B. Hole wrote as follows\*.

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\*This and the following two extracts are from the chapter on "Future Punishment: its Character and Duration" in a book entitled "Foundations of the Faith", still obtainable from the Publishers of *Words of Help*, price 6s. post 10d.

Viewed as a piece of reasoning, it is about as feeble and fallacious as can be. Were we to reply in reasoning vein we should simply observe that if death *is* ceasing to exist then *there can be no second death*. You can't cease to exist in any proper sense, and yet exist so as to cease to exist in a second death! What strange things men will say in their efforts to overthrow the plain truth of God.

Yet, superficially, the statement has the appearance of being a real objection. This is derived from the giving of a false value to one of the great words of Scripture, viz. *death*.

The word occurs first in Genesis ii.17, and Genesis iii. is the record of how the death sentence fell on our first parents. Its use in the Bible is constant until we reach the last chapter of the New Testament, where we find "a new heaven and a new earth" where "there shall be no more death", and yet at the same time "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death". Now, right through, we affirm that death **never** means "ceasing to exist", but always has the force of *separation*; either, the separation of the creature spiritually and morally from God, in this sense men are "dead in trespasses and sins"; or the separation of soul and spirit from the body, which is death physically; or yet again the final separation of the whole man, if unrepentant and unsaved, from God and all that is good and bright and worth possessing, in the lake of fire, and that is the second death.

The first use of the word *death* in Genesis ii. and iii. clearly bears this out. God threatened Adam with death on the day of his disobedience. Adam disobeyed and lived on to the age of nine hundred and thirty years. Was it, then, an idle threat? Not at all. The day he sinned he died, in the first sense of the word, i.e., he became totally separated and estranged from his Maker, "dead in sins". His physical death was deferred inasmuch as the Lord brought death that day upon some other denizen or denizens of the garden and clothed the guilty sinners with their skins. Centuries after, physical death supervened. Adam then passed out of all touch with this



world, but he exists as regards God. As the Lord Himself said, "all live unto Him" (Luke xx.38).

We therefore repeat with emphasis: *Death, in Scripture, does not mean "ceasing to exist"*.

The teaching of the great Founder of Christianity, the Lord Jesus Christ, is referred to by the same writer in the following paragraphs.

With all the ingenuity that has been expended and wasted in this way (i.e., to deny that life and punishment are eternal—Ed.) only two alternatives to eternal punishment have ever been imagined. The one is that in some way or other all will be finally saved. This is known as "universalism". The other is that man naturally just dies as the beasts that perish and that endless being and existence are only his as born again and in Christ. This is known as "annihilationism" or the "conditional immortality" theory.

Now one verse of Scripture — John iii.36 — utterly destroys both theories. We read: "**He that believeth not the Son shall not see life**". The universalist theory is that ultimately, no matter how remote the age may be, he *shall* see life. The Lord Jesus says he shall NOT. He added, "**But the wrath of God abideth on him**". According to the annihilationist he is non-existent and therefore not there for the wrath of God to abide upon. According to the Lord Jesus he *is* there and upon him the wrath abides, without any hint of a moment when it ceases to abide.

The Lord Jesus thus, with Divine foreknowledge, negated these specious theories of a later age.

By the exhaustion of the two rival theories, therefore, we come back to the solemn fact, so abundantly stated in a positive way in Scripture, that there is such a thing as future punishment, that it is in the nature of solemn retribution for sin, and that once falling it endures for ever.

One further extract, dealing with the question whether the souls of men are immortal, is as follows.

In Scripture the adjectives "mortal" and "immortal" are applied to man's body, and we do not find the phrase "im-

mortal soul". Yet it is quite clear that the soul, or spiritual part of man, survives death. Our Lord said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matthew x.28). He used here a word of strong force, meaning "to kill utterly or entirely". A feeble man may easily thus kill the body of another, but the soul is immortal and eludes him. The Lord added, "fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell", and here He changed the word and used another, which means, "to mar or ruin, as regards the purpose for which a thing exists". It is the word used for perish in John iii.16, and for the perishing of the bottles in Matthew ix.17. It is also used in Matthew xxvii.20, when we read of the leaders persuading the multitude "that they should ask Barabbas and *destroy* Jesus". A very clear proof this that destruction does not mean annihilation.

The whole verse teaches, first, that the soul is not mortal like the body, and, second, that in hell God intends not to annihilate, but to bring down into ruin, the whole man, both soul and body.

The soul, therefore, IS immortal, for man has it in connection with spirit, receiving it by the Divine in-breathing as Genesis ii.7 records. Becoming a "living soul" in this fashion, man is not as the beasts which perish.

(By courtesy of *Central Bible Truth Depot*, London)

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

Luke xi. "And it came to pass that, as He was praying in a certain place." It is well known that, for the purpose of our easy reference, chapters and verses are used in presenting the inspired word. It would, however, be a loss to us to be unaware of the flow of Luke's expression — directed as it was by the Holy Spirit of God. It is, in reality, one vital unfolding of truth divinely set forth in the portrayal of a Man, real in the perfect sense, who moved in life in utter dependence and complete obedience before God — honouring Him, and being honoured by Him. To the achievement of this

unfolding Luke brings the activities of the Lord Jesus before the friend to whom he writes as man to man. The Father and the Son are seen working in the world of men. The beauty and power of these activities are astonishing, but there is also a purpose in the order used by the writer so that each event, as he tells it, contributes progressively to the whole message he wishes to convey. His "treatise" is not just a life story told — though it be of One incomparable among all lives since life began. It is a living exposition of the thought and purpose of God for us — for any who would seek to know it. "God . . . has spoken to us in the person of the Son" (Hebrews i.).

So the reader moves from the publicity of the lawyer's challenge, and the answer to it, on to the privacy of Martha's house and Mary's worshipping service in hearing His word. The Samaritan heart of Jesus brings Him to the telling of the way purposed for reaching fallen men by the giving of His own life. He tells it to one woman — the only one who would stay to listen!

But how to sustain this spirit of worship that so rejoices His heart and answers to His love? Luke leads us on to the answer. It is by the precious link of prayer — that welcomed approach into the divine Presence made possible by the divine Advocate and Mediator Himself! So it is that Luke shows the one to whom he writes the form of the Son of Man "praying in a certain place" (Chapter xi.1). Why did He not go "up into the temple to pray" — was this not the "house of prayer"? The silent group who watched may well have wondered. There were those who paraded their pious pretences in public places — who sought the praise of men. Jesus sought the presence of God. So perfect was His manhood, it embraced perfection of dependence — for prayer, if it be true, is the very expression of need on the part of the one who prays. Formalism has no place in prayer, and the lips of the proud cannot form its pleas. The man who prays is bankrupt of all other resource. Let us pause to think of the Son of God taking *this* position.

Luke is outstanding in his emphasis on prayer, but in the other Gospels there is arresting evidence of the abiding prayerfulness of the Lord Jesus. John gives a moving record of this. What a scene of sadness it depicts! It is the seeming triumph of death! The weeping people — the sobbing of the women — the stone four days upon the entrance of the tomb of His friend. "Lazarus has died" (John xi.15). The tomb is unsealed in presence of massed incredulity — Mary weeps. There are tears, too, in the eyes of Jesus, but His words to His Father are so simple, yet so pregnant with His dependent spirit. "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me; but I knew that Thou always hearest Me" (verses 41-42). His unfaltering dependence is expressed for us to know. Always the path of prayer was open — "Thou always hearest Me" — always He sought and received the power and wisdom from the Source which was ever open to Him.

His disciples had seen Him in prayer. They had begun to feel their need of prayer also. How unobtrusively the Divine Worker achieved the purposes of God for these men! "John also taught his disciples" to pray. Did they discuss it in whispered tones, waiting till "when He ceased, one of His disciples said to Him, Lord, teach us to pray" (verse 1)? One spoke for them all — his name was not significant — it was the need of all that he uttered. It was this that brought the immediate answer related by Luke without preamble. Luke had shown his friend Theophilus the faith that dwelt in Martha's house, and now, in Spirit led sequence, he passes on to prayer as that essential which follows. For "how then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed?" (Romans x.14). That which has flowed into the soul, of the beauty and grace of Christ, actuates the heart in its responsive approach of prayer.

Prayer is indeed the resource of the soul. It is only here — in the world that bears the impress of the wicked one — that we pray. *Without prayer, worship is not sustained*, and there is no greater privilege vouchsafed to man than the worship of God, for worship is the eternal Mind and employment

of heaven, and the believer may enter into anticipation of the heavenly theme *now*, "for the hour cometh and *now is*, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for also the Father seeks such as His worshippers" (John iv.23 — J.N.D.). Thus true worship is "in spirit and in truth". It is not in mere words — not in phrases "oft repeated". Nor is it a catalogue of blessings received. Only the worth of the divine GIVER Himself is before the true worshipper — and this, itself, is beyond telling! As a true lover, he garners the precious beauties of the Beloved against that holy hour when they may be poured — perhaps in silence — at His feet. But prayer remains until, in His presence, it ceases, and only worship remains.

"When ye pray, say, Father, hallowed be Thy name." Abraham and the patriarchs had addressed God as the Almighty in the days of promise — emphasizing His power to perform the promise — and then as Jehovah, expressing His relationship with man in that day, especially with Israel as His called out people — the eternal self-existent One. The believer, now, knows God as Father: in the beautiful simplicity of Luke, "Say, Father, Hallowed be Thy name." Imagine the astonishment of the men who had asked to be taught to pray, and who were now suddenly brought into that holy family relationship in which they were bidden to say, "Father, hallowed be Thy name." There is an intimacy which never oversteps the bounds of holiness. God gives lavishly. His giving accords with the immeasurable value of the death of Christ! It is for us to receive it with gratitude and humility — without presuming upon grace so undeserved.

The religious world uses its contemporary terms and so-called modern translations of the Bible with a view to creating an interest. For the believer, all that is associated with God should be holy — the Father's name is sanctified — hallowed and set apart from all that is contrary to His character. We are moving more and more into an era of so-called equality which does not exist in fact and has no

**Scriptural support.** This seeps into an approach to God that lacks respect in phraseology. A lack of subjection and dependence is apparent even in the tones of public presentation. The Son of God Himself pronounces, for His listening followers, the Father's Name, but links with it the character required of those who may use it — "Hallowed be Thy Name."

It is clear, of course, that the service rendered by the Lord Jesus to His own is in accord with the circumstances of their day and their need. It is also to be observed that the grace which presents the prayer in Luke's record is the same as that which gives the form of it in Matthew. The prayer is, of course, the same, though the words omitted by Luke are, under the Spirit's guidance, with intent that a Gentile may be enlightened and not confused by that which a Jew would understand. Thus, in Luke, the better translation is "Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us our needed bread for each day; and forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation" (Luke xi.1-4 — J.N.D., W.K.). The children of the family of God are to await with glad anticipation the coming of the Father's kingdom. This, indeed, is the Son's desire — the Father's glory. For the Father's kingdom is that heavenly sphere in which the heavenly ones, redeemed, "shall shine forth as the sun" (Matthew xiii.43). In Matthew, the added words of the prayer show that the earthly kingdom is to be characterized by heavenly conditions of holiness in accord with the divine Mind, but it is the kingdom of the Son of Man. From that earthly kingdom all that offends shall be cast out, and all peoples, nations and languages shall serve Him. At His coming, all shall be put under Him in heaven and earth, and the Kingdom will then be the Kingdom of God.

How like Himself, as the expression of dependence upon God, is the next phrase that He taught them, "Give us our needed bread for each day." Sufficient, without excess, as the morning bread that they gathered in wilderness days when "he that gathered much had nothing over and he that gathered little had no lack." To ask their Father for more would be

to doubt His sufficiency for the morrow. So were the needs of the body His gracious care!

The needs of the soul — here, too, is the daily need of that inner self. "Forgive us our sins." The word debts is not used, as in Matthew vi. This word is significant to the Jew. For the Gentile, the sins of the day have built up an hindrance to that sense of communion with the Father which can only be removed by an humble admission. Then, too, the genuineness of the confession of failure and prayer for pardon is tested by readiness to forgive indebtedness personal to himself. "And when ye stand praying, forgive if ye have anything against anyone, that your Father also who is in the heavens may forgive you your offences" (Mark xi.25). It is a principle with God for His children. As the daily bread sustains the body so does spiritual submission to awareness of failure restore communion with God. It is the forgiveness to a member of the family — to a child of God — not the forgiveness assured to the repentant sinner who believes in the efficacy of the death of Christ for his salvation.

"And lead us not into temptation." This is the last clause in the record by Luke. Is it not to be regarded, primarily, as a further admission of our weakness? Shall not we desire to be withdrawn from a testing in which we may fail ignominiously? In Matthew there follow the words "deliver us from evil." To the Jew, the sentence was full of meaning. He was responsible to know that evil, as an emanation, implied an author evil in himself. His prayer would be "deliver us from the Evil one!" The hour of final retribution would come to the Jewish nation before their great deliverance by the coming of Christ to reign — the mighty appearing in power of Him whom their nation had hanged on a cross.

The Divine Worker had taught His disciples to pray. There is, in their prayer, a wealth of teaching for His own today. Luke, writing to Gentiles, and to us in this day, leaves with us principles and truths appropriate to those who, beyond the confusion of the kindgoms of men, look for the KINGDOM OF GOD.

EDWARD T. WOOD

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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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### EDITORIAL

The main article in this issue of *Words of Help* is the reprint of an address given at a Whitsuntide Conference in 1922 by G. F. Cox. This will explain the references to remarks made by other speakers.

### SAVING A SOUL FROM DEATH

(Note on James v.20.)

The verse should be read in conjunction with the preceding: "My brethren, if any among you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James v.19,20, R.V.).

James desired the cultivation in the hearts of the brethren of that love for those among them who wandered from truth to error (cp. 2 Peter iii.17), which would seek their conversion (cp. Luke xxii.32). The love that gains this forgiveness and restoration of others covers a multitude of sins (Proverbs x.12); I Peter iv.8), because the sins of the offenders are by such means removed governmentally from God's sight (Psalm xxxii.1).

Such conversion brought about through the intercession and ministry of faithful and loving brethren would be the salvation of a soul from death (cp. James i.21), which is sin's sure wages (Ezekiel xviii.4,20; Romans vi.23; James i.15). The words of verse 20 seem to be general and to apply equally to the restoration of the backslider and to the conversion of the ungodly. And therefore "death" would mean both the infliction in the government of God of physical death upon the erring believer (I Corinthians xi.30) and the final sentence of the wicked to the lake of fire, which is the second death (Revelation xx.14,15).

W.J.H.

# CHRISTIAN HOPE AND EXPERIENCE

(Read: John xiv.)

## THE EXPERIENCES OF THE TWELVE

In this fourteenth chapter of John we have the introduction of Christianity. The Lord Jesus had gathered round Himself a little band of disciples, men with Jewish thoughts and feelings and hopes. They were looking for the Messiah to deliver them from their enemies, to make Jerusalem the metropolis of the earth, and to give them a place of glory with Himself in this world.

They had been privileged as no other men had ever been privileged. We may, I suppose, all of us, have envied them. What was it for men to be in the presence of the gracious Son of God, to know His love, to hear words fall from His very lips, to hear what kings and prophets had desired to hear and had not heard? They had seen proof after proof of His mighty power. There was never a case in this world, however desperate the need, that was beyond His power or His grace to meet, and now, as a brother was saying yesterday, all this gracious ministry was ending in disaster. The Lord Jesus was about to die, and they had at last believed it. He had often told them that He would be crucified, but they were slow to take it in. They never had believed His word, with the exception of Mary of Bethany. Apparently there was not one of all His disciples who believed that He would die; but now, at last, on the night of His betrayal, they did believe it, and sorrow filled their hearts, as well it might.

And sorrow, beloved, filled the heart of the Lord Jesus, too. It was not only that the cross was before Him, but one of those who had companied with Him was to betray Him, and the others, honest as they were in all their ignorance, were about to desert Him. Though they did love Him, they were about to desert Him in the hour of His need. Do you think He did not feel it? He felt it as no other could have felt it. He looked around upon that little company, and His spirit was troubled, and He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me."

We are apt to think that perhaps Judas was repulsive in his appearance, that his face betrayed the evil of his heart, but there is no reason to think so. He had apparently heard and delighted in the words of the Lord Jesus, just as the others. He seems to have been the very last whom they suspected. Everyone suspected himself, rather than Judas, and the Lord Jesus felt his betrayal. It was not an enemy that did it, but it was a friend and an acquaintance. The Spirit of Christ, speaking through the Psalmist, says, "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me" (Psalm xli.9). And when Judas had received the sop and gone out into the night, as he passed up the deserted street (for all the Jews were in their houses keeping the Passover), the Lord's eyes followed him, and His ear heard every step as Judas went on to keep his appointment with the High Priest.

Then there were the others; not only were they to forsake the Lord Jesus, but alas! they were to be stumbled that night as to Him; every one. The Lord Jesus said, "All of you shall be stumbled because of Me this night," and feeling all this, His own heart full of sorrow, He thinks of His disciples and He turns to comfort them, and says those words that have been a joy to all His saints ever since, "Let not your heart be troubled."

## **THE LORD'S COMING AND THE SPIRIT'S COMING**

There are two things that He brings before them here to comfort their hearts. The first was that He was coming again for them. If they were to lose sight of Him for the time, He was coming again to take them to His Father's house, and the second thing was that He was not going to leave them alone. He would send them another Helper, Who would be with them for ever.

They thought that they were losing Him. They had proved His care. It mattered not what enmity there was on the part of the scribes and Pharisees, there had been no one who could touch them while the Lord Jesus was there, covering them with His wing. That very night He could challenge them as to

whether they had lacked anything when He sent them out, and they said, "Nothing."

Now they were going to lose Him and to lose His care, but the Lord Jesus assures them that it was not so really. He would be taken from their sight. He was going to be no more in this world. But He turns their thoughts, He turns their hearts above. He was going to be in His Father's house, and in that Father's house He was to be occupied with them. He promises not to forget them; He was going to the Father's house in order to prepare a place for them.

### PREPARING THE DISCIPLES AND PREPARING THE PLACE

In the previous chapter we have everything that was necessary to prepare them for that place. We have the water that cleanses from defilement, and we have that wondrous work upon the cross in which the Son of man was glorified, and God was glorified in Him. But the Lord Jesus here speaks of preparing the place for them, and what does He mean by this? Why, there was going to be in heaven what was never there before, a glorified Man. He was going to heaven, but not to be there alone. He was going to heaven as their forerunner, and when He ascended into heaven and took His seat there, the place was prepared for His disciples.

And the Lord Jesus comforts them with this. It was an entirely new thing to them: their thoughts were connected with this world; they had fleshly thoughts as to Christ, thoughts that were shared by unconverted men, thoughts that were common to the whole Jewish nation. As the apostle Paul says, speaking of himself before he was converted, "We have known Christ after the flesh," that is, known Christ in a fleshly way, not as the One who would meet their need as guilty sinners.

But now the Lord directs their thoughts above. He was not going to be down here, He was going to be in heaven, and He was to be their object in heaven. They believed in God, though they had not seen Him. In their trouble they knew what it was to draw comfort from God. Soon they would not

see the Lord Jesus, He was to be invisible, He was to be taken out of their sight; but as they had believed God, so they were now to believe Him. And they were to remember that whatever difficulty or sorrow might be here in this world, they were not forgotten, nor had they a long period of evil or trouble to look forward to.

The Lord says, "If I go away, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." This is the blessedness of His love that could never forget them. They were His, and He was not going to abandon them to this world, and when the time came, such was His love for them that He was not going to send an angel or an archangel to fetch them. *That* would have been a wonderful honour, but He says, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

He is going to take us to the place of affection. He will not only take us to heaven; that is not how He puts it here. He will take us to His Father's house, and we shall be there the objects of the Father's love. And not only so; we shall see the Lord Jesus Himself there, and we shall not then need to envy those men who companied with Him and heard His gracious words for three years. We shall have Him, not for three years or thirty years, or three centuries, but we shall have Him in the Father's house for ever and for ever.

### CHRIST THE GLORIFIED MAN

We have heard more than once that there is a glorified Man in heaven. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not have come: there could be no church. The church did not exist when the Lord Jesus spoke these words. It could never have been, had He not as Man glorified God at the cross. He had glorified His Father during His walk through this world, He had finished the work He had given Him to do, but a deeper question than all still remained. Would He Who had thus glorified His Father in all His words and ways down here, now glorify God as to all our sins?

Beloved, the cross is the answer. The blessed Lord has been to the cross. God has been glorified by a Man as to everything in which man had brought dishonour upon God, and

what is the result? Why, the Lord Jesus has not had to wait until the Kingdom; God has straightway glorified Him. That is God's answer to His work.

If we turn back to the cross, what do we not learn? The Lord Jesus says to Philip, "I am the truth." The Lord Jesus not only tells the truth, He is the truth. If you want to learn what man is, if you want to learn what God is, where do you learn it but in Him? If you turn to the cross, there is the perfect manifestation of all that God is, all His infinite love for the sinner, and all His holy abhorrence of the evil that was ours. It was all displayed, and there God's love and God's infinite righteousness were reconciled and could be reconciled nowhere else, and by no one else but that One who was truly God and truly Man.

There was the display of all that man could be for God in that devoted One Who met suffering and rejection at the hands of man, but above all, met death and judgment in His devotedness of heart to God.

There was a Man in Whom God could delight. He was worthy of all the glory that God has given Him, or ever will give to Him, and God has exalted Him to His own right hand. There is a Man sitting today where no archangel could sit. He is seated upon the throne of God, and because He is there, because redemption has been accomplished, because nothing has been left undone that was necessary for the glory of God, God has come down to dwell upon earth. That is God's answer; His testimony to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Was the world better after than before Christ came? No, beloved, man had proved to the full, not only the evil but the enmity of his heart towards God, and yet such is the glory of Christ's work, that God the Spirit comes down to dwell upon this earth.

### **THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Now the consequence of the presence of the Holy Ghost here is this: that we know what the disciples never had known. They ought to have known, but they did not. We know the

Son is in the Father. The disciples, when the Lord Jesus was here, might profess to know His glory. I do not mean they were not perfectly honest in it, but their apprehension of the true glory of His person was feeble. You know very well that if you and I were in the presence of the Lord Jesus, with our knowledge of Who He is, if He was here bodily before us, we should never dare to ask Him the foolish questions that the disciples asked Him. Nor should we talk as they did to one another, nor quarrel as to who would be the greatest. But when the Holy Ghost came, this was to be the result, as the Lord Jesus said, "In that day ye shall know that I am in My Father." They would know then that the Lord Jesus was not only the Christ, not only the anointed, glorified Man, but they would also know that He is God, know that He is in the Father, and not only that, but "ye in Me and I in you."

The consequence of the coming of the Holy Ghost is this, that we have a true apprehension of the personal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that He is God over all, blessed for ever, but we also know what we are in relationship to Him as man; He is in us and we are in Him. We are united to Him, though we are down here in this world. We who believe in the Lord Jesus not only have eternal life and forgiveness of sins, but we are united to Christ. We are made one with Him. He dwells in us by the Spirit. He is in us by the Spirit, and we also are in Him.

The Lord Jesus has sent down the Spirit, having received the promise of the Father, and by that Spirit we are all baptized into one body. It is eternally true that the Lord Jesus is a Man. He is still a Man, though He is upon the throne of God, and the Spirit of God has come to indwell us. We are united to Him because the very same Spirit dwells in Him as a Man now in heaven; and therefore it is said that he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.

### **KEEPING THE LORD'S COMMANDMENTS**

Wonderful as it is, and passing all that we could ever imagine or desire, it is true that the very same Spirit Who dwells in the Lord Jesus as the risen and ascended Man, dwells in us. But



there is something else here in connection with the presence of the Spirit of God upon earth to which I want particularly to draw your attention. The Lord Jesus says, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." The time is coming when He will manifest Himself to the world. He will be manifested in glory, and we shall be manifested with Him; but this is what is true during the absence of the Lord Jesus. I say it is true, but it is for you and for me to ask ourselves how far it is true of us, how far we know, how much we know, day by day during our lives, of the presence of the Father and of the Son with us. This is not only the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, but it is the Holy Ghost bringing us consciously into the presence of the Father and of the Son.

You know very well that we have many things that we have cause to deplore. A brother was pressing this upon our consciences—or trying to do so—this morning. I do not know how far we were exercised by what we heard. We are only too much inclined to rest in the truth and agree with it when it would do us a great deal more good if a feeling of resentment arose in our hearts, and we felt troubled by it.

We look around, and what do we see? There is need and there is sorrow, and we know not anywhere we can look, either within or to one another, for any remedy or hope as to that state. We come together, and our coming together reveals to us our lack of spiritual power, and we know it only too well.

Alas! in our daily lives, how little spiritual power and enjoyment there is in us; how little we know of the power of the Spirit of God in us, bringing us into communion with the Father and the Son.

Now it is well that we should judge ourselves as to this. I do not want to say anything to depress anybody here—far from it. I want to point out to you the remedy for the present condition of things. You know the serious thing with Laodicea was that she was in a bad state and did not know it; and we are in the same danger now. If we face things as they are, if we

humble ourselves before the Lord, is there any hope for us? Here I am in all my need; it seems to me immeasurable: where shall I turn for an answer to it? The Lord Jesus in all the infinite fullness of His person, presents Himself to me, and He says to me in my need, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."

Beloved, shall we not challenge our hearts, shall we not ask ourselves how it is that rivers of living water do not flow out from us?

### DRINKING DEEP AND FLOWING FULL

Is it not a fact, that it is at the very best what I might call an intermittent dribble, and not rivers? And yet the Lord's mind about us is that rivers of living water should flow out from us. Why is it? It is because we are not driven by our need to the Lord Jesus. God has brought me in all my need and has set me down before an inexhaustible fountain, and He says, "Drink." And, beloved, you and I, so far from being depressed or giving up in despair because we are poor financially and intellectually, and still poorer spiritually, instead of letting our hands hang down and giving up because of this, have as much right, as much title to count upon all the infinite power and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ as His saints ever had in the brightest day in the church's history.

Do you believe that the same gracious Lord says to you and to me in our present need, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink"?

What is our need compared with His fullness? Now the Lord Jesus says here, rather strangely, "He that *hath* My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." There is a danger, not only of our being careless as to our obedience, but also as to our knowledge of His commandments. Our brother this afternoon said that brethren used to be noted for their knowledge of the Bible, and he said, "May that time come again." Is it true of you and of me that we desire to know what the Lord's commandments are? God has given us His word. Has He given us too big a Bible?

God has made His truth known in many various ways. He

has given it in the Law and Psalms and Prophets and in the New Testament. And the Lord Jesus Himself says, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." You say, "I have not the time; I have to work hard from morning to night; I have not time to study the Bible like some people."

The Lord Jesus presses *this* upon us, that what is necessary for us is that which He has given to us in His word. It is not the other; it is not that which has such an important place in our mind that He speaks of as necessary. He says, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

Beloved friends, is this our desire? Do we seek to learn from God's word what His will is? Do we seek to honour the Lord Jesus and to obey Him by learning His will and by keeping His commandments? Have we the manifestation of His presence? Is this a fact with us? Do we experience it? Do we know what it is to have the Holy Ghost now, while the Lord is absent in the body, manifesting to us the presence of the Lord Jesus?

### RESULT OF KEEPING CHRIST'S WORD

In the 22nd verse we get something else. His disciples ask, "How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" The Lord Jesus brings out something more. He says, "If a man love Me, he will keep My word." It should not be "words", for it does not refer simply to the sayings of the Lord Jesus. He says, "He that loves Me *not* does not keep My words." If a man does not love the Lord, he does not trouble to keep even those sayings which are distinctly His, but if there is love in his heart towards Him, he not only keeps His words, but His word; and what is the result? "My Father will love him."

You must not confound this with the gospel; it is not the sovereign grace of God which has led Him to love even a poor guilty sinner. It is the Father here dealing in government with His family; and the Lord Jesus says, "If a man love Me he will keep My word, and My Father will love him." If you

love the Lord Jesus, if you so love Him that you keep His word, that is the delight of the Father. If you would please Him, what have you to do? Exalt the Son, and as the Father looks down from heaven, He says, "There is a man who loves My Son, who honours Him and keeps His word." The Father loves that man, and makes His abode with him. It is the expression of the Father's satisfaction because His Son is honoured: "My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

Beloved, let us ask our hearts, I say, again, as to how much we really know of this. This is a practical thing; do we know what it is to have the Father and the Son come and make Their dwelling place with us? Do we know what it is to have communion with the Father and with the Son? the Son declaring unto us the Father's name, making known to us by the power of the Spirit the affections that are proper to that place in which He has brought us, bringing us into all the enjoyment of the Father's love; and the Father communicating to us that which delights His own heart as to His beloved Son, that our joy may be full.

We are going on to dwell in the Father's house. That will be our abode, but while we are here in the wilderness, the Father and the Son come and make Their abode with us. Oh, beloved, well it would be with my soul, and with yours if this were true of us. It is more to be valued than anything else in this world. We may be poor, we may be weak, unknown and unrecognized by this world, but what is it all compared with joy like this? If we honour Christ, if we desire to keep His word, the Father will love us, and the Father and the Son will come, and They will make Their abode with us. G. F. Cox

## **SPEAKING IN AN ASSEMBLY MEETING**

(Note on I Corinthians xiv.)

. . . . the profit of the saints as a whole is a cardinal principle which ever governs the ministration of the Spirit.

This truth, lying on the face of the whole chapter, is of primary importance. It is manifest that the mere possession of a gift affords no sufficient reason for its indiscriminate exercise.

And the rule is that all things should be done unto edifying, otherwise confusion will result, which is not of God (I Cor. xiv.33).

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE UNDERSTANDING**

Now it must be borne in mind that the Spirit works in conjunction with the understanding—that is, with the understanding (1) of the one who speaks and (2) of those who hear. And it is the latter consideration especially that affords useful guidance for the exercise of spiritual gifts in the assembly.

The Spirit would lead to the blessing not of a single individual only, but of each individual present. This principle is enunciated by the apostle to show that prophesying is more appropriate in the assembly than speaking with tongues. For “he that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church” (I Cor. xiv.4).

Here then is a plain and simple rule which has its application to the practical use of the gifts of the Spirit. Every operation of the Spirit of God in the assembly aims at the edification of the saints in their corporate capacity, and this must be the criterion of every word spoken in the assembly; as it is said, “Forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church” (I Cor. xiv.12).

The apostle did not deny that tongues were a gift of the Spirit, but he would not allow that the Spirit prompted their use in meetings of the saints for edification. Tongues were given as a testimony to unbelievers, and could not build up the assembly in the faith for the simple reason that they did not reach the understanding. Supposing a person prayed in an unknown tongue, it is clear there could be no fellowship. The speaker might be praying with the spirit (the new nature), but his understanding was unfruitful (I Cor. xiv.14), and therefore his prayer was not in accord with the mind of the Spirit. For himself, the apostle says, “I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also.” And a similar principle is applied by him to blessing, giving of thanks, and teaching (vers. 16-19).

Every operation in the assembly then should be capable of being understood and be such that the simplest saint might be able to say, Amen. In short, fellowship between the one who speaks and those who listen is the rule enforced.

W. J. HOCKING

(From "The Bible Monthly" August 1927)

## QUESTION AND ANSWER

*Question.* "Can the words 'tempt' and 'temptation' be understood as 'test' and 'testing' in every place that they occur in the scriptures?"

From a reader.

*Answer.* The matter is not quite so simple as this, for often the same conflict may be both a testing and a temptation.

Satan's wiles, designed to undermine our faith and lead us into disobedience to God's will, must be described as temptations; but equally they are allowed by God for the testing and hence the strengthening, of our faith and obedience, and to teach us more of His own sustaining grace and power. The afflictions of life have also this same double character, and many of these are the direct result of Satan's action. See Luke viii.13; xxii.31,32; I Peter i.6.

The Lord Jesus Himself was thus tempted, the testing in His case bringing out the perfection of His faith and obedience, to the glory of God the Father.

There is also temptation to sin, arising from our own fallen nature. Satan of course makes use of this, as it gives him an opening, but in no sense does such temptation come from God, as James makes clear (chapter i.13,14). The translation "testing" is here quite inappropriate, for our old nature has already been thoroughly tested and found hopelessly evil. In this case our resource is to judge ourselves by God's word (Heb. iv.12), and to walk in the Spirit (Gal. v.16).

Now when we read of scribes, Pharisees and others, "tempting" the Lord Jesus with questions designed to find some flaw in His teaching which they might use as an accusation against Him, "testing" seems an adequate rendering.

Finally, scripture speaks of our tempting God, and here the

meaning can only be *testing*. Israel in the wilderness repeatedly put God to the test in their unbelief, saying "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Ex. xvii.7; Num. xi.4; Ps. lxxviii.19,20,41), putting Him as it were on trial.

In this sense Peter asks Sapphira "How it is that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" In conspiring to deceive the apostles, they were in fact testing the ability of the Spirit to discern and reveal their deceit.

The Lord Jesus, when *tempted* by Satan, refused to tempt, or rather, put to the *test*, His Father's power to deliver Him, for He trusted Him absolutely. To Satan, He quoted Deuteronomy vi.16, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." (Matt. iv.5-7).  
E.H.C.

## VOICES FROM THE PAST

There was no narrowness in the apostle. His heart was ever large; and now he could shew them so. It was in their own affections the Corinthians were contracted (2 Corinthians vi. 12). There was free and full room in his heart for them, but not in theirs for him. They had been lax, and he is about to warn them solemnly on this head; they were still narrow. How great an error to count narrowness fidelity, whereas it may well go, as here, with laxity! In the apostle we see large-heartedness with real holiness; and they, too, go together. But the apostle counts yet more on grace, and as he had declared how his heart was expanded, instead of being shut up, he adds, "and for the same requital (or, for requital in the same), I speak as to children, be expanded also yourselves" (verse 18). Love never fails; and that their affections should answer his was the only recompense he sought at their hands.

W. KELLY

(From Notes on 2 Corinthians vi.—1882)

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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after death, and in any case Peter says nothing of any response to this preaching. But it is of interest to note that the only other place where Noah's preaching is spoken of is in *Peter's* second epistle.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

### THE "LORD" IN 1 CORINTHIANS XI

The title, "Lord", occurs seven times in the latter part of 1 Corinthians xi. in connection with His supper. In verse 29 of the New Translation (J.N.D.) it does not occur, as in the A.V.

- (1) We eat the LORD'S supper (verse 20);
- (2) Paul received it from the LORD (verse 23);
- (3) The LORD JESUS instituted it on "the same night in which He was betrayed" (verse 23);
- (4) We thereby announce the LORD'S death (verse 26);
- (5) We drink the cup of the LORD (verse 27);
- (6) We are held responsible in respect of the body and blood of the LORD (verse 27);
- (7) We are chastened (disciplined) of the LORD (verse 32).

Thus, it is the Lord who gave the supper, providing it and inviting to it. He presents Himself before the soul in connection with the emblems of bread and wine. The Lord Who is in the midst takes part with us. It is the Lord with Whom every soul has to do — He is the Lord of love and light, of grace and truth, of forgiveness and discipline. Every one who does not discern or distinguish the body, is disciplined of the Lord.

The Lord is everything to us and for us; and therefore He has the fullest claim upon us. Everything at the Lord's supper speaks of Him, and there the Lord speaks to us in everything.

J.N.V.

(Extracted)

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

Luke xi.5. We have seen that “bread for the day” is the gift of the Father, in grace. As Man, holy and true in every respect, the Lord Jesus knew from whence came the bread for each day. Isaiah wrote of Him, “He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed” (Chapter 1.4). He knew “how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.” World resource cannot give *this* bread. Let us see the energy and devotion with which the Lord Jesus emphasizes the truth of the Father’s readiness to hear and to answer prayer.

He presents a familiar situation to His disciples. “Who among *you* shall have a friend.” It was, of course, an accepted practice with them all to respond to such household needs in an emergency. One never knew when one’s own need might arise, and to refuse an appeal would be a shameful act and become widely known. The friend, so called, makes this request at a most inconvenient hour. It is midnight, yet his need is met — indeed, “he will rise and give him as many as he needeth” (verse 8). It was a reluctant response, and Jesus so represents it. Was it not characteristic of the nation! It is no reluctant Hearer who says, “I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” With grace, overflowing beyond Israel, Jesus continues, “For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” It is *His* undertaking.

Moreover He continues with this emphasis, bringing their thought back from the friend relationship, such as it was, to the *family* association. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” He knows the unnatural and unthinkable situation in which a father may

mock or deceive his own son. The Father's love, incomparable, characterized by the gift of the Holy Spirit, would be their wonderful experience — divine power given to them in response to their prayer after Pentecost. It is no figure of speech — no mere religious formality — that places the word "Father" upon the lips of the believer.

Verse 14. Again we are brought, quite suddenly, into another scene. Satanic power is in contrast as Luke records the effect of it in the life of one poor sufferer: "He was casting out a demon, and it was dumb." One thinks of the Lord surrounded by so many evidences of Satanic blemishes upon a people who once were in experience of the Power of God. Weakened by departure, they had become prey to that power which operates within the old nature of man. Body and mind were alike vulnerable to the destructive operations of "the power of darkness", and the continuous work of the Son of Man, in healing the many whose appeals came to Him, was a sign — indeed, a pledge — of that condition which would obtain in the beneficent age when complete rulership should be His own. "The works of power of the age to come" (Hebrews vi.) would, however, become fully operative only as the result of His death — that sure foundation upon which the great edifice of *all* God's vast purposes shall be built.

These evidences of the coming kingdom, with all its attendant perfections, to displace the distortion and death of the age of sin, were the Divine Worker's means to show the movement of "the finger of God" even in face of bitter enmity. "If by the finger of God I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God is come upon you" (verse 20). By His presence it had come upon them, alas, unexpectedly. They were not repentant prisoners longing for liberty. The kingdom they sought was a cessation of the condition foretold them as arising from their sin. Yet, with what patience the Divine Worker reasons with them! The power that had held the man speechless had been overthrown. The demon-possession of dumbness was no longer in evidence — "the dumb spake." Yet unbelief was stronger than evidence! Indeed the wonderment of unbelief was so predominant that no one

seemed to spare a thought for the poor man — there is no record of rejoicing with him.

The sensitive mind of the beloved Worker felt many crowd reactions. At least three must have reached Him from this crowd. There was the wonderment of incredulity which finds no place for faith; the violence of unbelief, in prejudiced opposition; the religious subtlety that presumes to test, even in face of obvious proof. What “sign from heaven” could be more convincing than the overthrow of Satanic power! It is wonderful to think upon the patience with which the Lord answers these people. “But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation” (verse 17). “If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because ye say that I cast out demons by Beelzebub.”

Jesus goes on to remind them of that grace by which power had been vouchsafed to some Jews to cast out demons. The thought of lingering love and mercy, so characteristic of the heart of God for His erring people, is very touching. “But if *I* by Beelzebub cast out demons, your sons, by whom do they cast them out? For this reason *they* shall be your judges.”

At verse 21, Jesus gives them a simple illustration so that there may be no doubt in the minds of any present who retained the remnant character of faith. For them, as for us, He gives evidence of the present sovereign power of the Kingdom of God. It is a power stronger than that of the kingdom of Satan. To those to whom He ministered, it was, in grace, a *present* deliverance from Satanic power — “When the strong man armed keepeth his own house (court), his goods are in peace; but when the stronger than he coming upon him, overcometh him, he taketh away the panoply in which he trusted, and he will divide the spoil he has taken from him.” The taking away of *sin itself* entailed the sacrifice of Himself — and the shadow of this was across His path. Today, there are those in this distorted world, who, relying upon the worth of that sacrifice, confide in God as Father and are witnesses to the Power that excels — the power of the Spirit of God. Writing to believers who had experienced

the power of antichrist already in the world, John reminds them, "Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (I John iv.4).

As He confronted the crowd in its varying expressions of unbelief, Jesus made His momentous statement, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth" (verse 23). The choice is — the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of Satan. There is no neutral state. The word used for "palace" or "court" is the same as that used for "fold" in John x. 16. The enclosure, or court, of the world is kept by the strong man armed with all that appeals to man's inclination for self-pleasing. It is there that he holds his human possessions. The dumb man was an expression of these goods under control — there was no word in his lips for God. But let the very weakest of believers take his place as "gathering with" the One who has overcome "the strong man", and he shall know that perfect "liberty of the children of God."

What a precious privilege to "gather with Him"! To feel that our tiny efforts are contributing to His purposes of grace! Is it not a symbol of garnering for eternity? The glory of a harvest in which the beloved Husbandman will have joy, graciously shared with all who have "gathered" *with Him*.

EDWARD T. WOOD

## **A REMARKABLE PRAYER LIFE: that of PAUL the APOSTLE**

Were we to judge by the extent of his labours, by the number of his converts or by the many churches that he founded, we might imagine that Paul had little time for prayer. But how wrong should we be! While in his case we cannot point to any particular circumstances which led to *one* remarkable prayer, we must be struck by the remarkable extent to which his whole life was filled with prayer.

The keynote is struck at the very beginning, when the Lord Jesus sent Ananias to "enquire in the house of Judas

for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth." So Ananias went and found the once proud persecutor on his knees.

On his knees again we find him, in company with other servants of the Lord at Antioch, "ministering to the Lord, and fasting" (Acts xiii.1). Evidently these men of God, in that Syrian city where the gospel had first been spoken to Gentiles, were concerned to know the Lord's will for its further extension. They got their answer so plainly that Luke writes: "The Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

The next record we have of Paul at prayer is in Acts xvi, where at Philippi, we find him with Silas and Timothy, regularly attending prayer meetings by the river bank, as there was no synagogue (verses 13,16).

It was as they went to prayer that the demon-possessed girl was freed from her bondage, and it was this that led directly to the trial, beating and imprisonment of Paul and Silas.

Once again, prayer was their resource, but now accompanied by songs of praise that were doubly remarkable in their painful condition. What a tribute to the power of grace to triumph over all that Satan could do! We may ask, what did they pray for? Surely, for the progress of the gospel, above all in Philippi, and for their persecutors, but especially for the gaoler. If this be so, how soon was this prayer answered!

It is the same wonderful story today. In Communist prisons and slave camps, Christians are being tortured, yet their prayers and praises and testimony to the grace of Christ are used to the conversion of their gaolers. Are we supporting them by *our* prayers?

## PRAYER IN THE STORM

One more instance is afforded us in the Acts of the Apostles, of Paul's prayer habits. During the disastrous voyage towards Rome, after many tempestuous days and

nights, Paul spoke up to encourage his companions in peril. "Now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, Whose I am, and Whom I serve, saying Fear not Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and lo, *God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.*" (Acts xxvii. 22-24).

These last words reveal the secret. Paul had prayed, of course, as we all should have done. But more, he had prayed for the lives of *all* his companions, that they might be saved from destruction — saved to hear the message of the gospel, knowing to Whom they owed their lives. And God had granted his request *in its totality*. Everyone would escape safe to land. Now there cannot have been many shipwrecks in which, with part of the ship stuck fast, and the remainder dashed to pieces by violent waves, not one out of 276 persons should have been drowned. Yet so it was.

Moreover, Paul had prayed for this, and God had promised it to him. Yet when the sailors planned to flee in the boat, leaving the ship to its fate (verses 30-32), Paul intervened to frustrate their intention. He did not just leave it to God, but when action was called for, he was ready.

Neither must we miss Paul's prayer of thanksgiving to God for his food "in presence of them all" (verse 35). Has this not a message for us today, when in so many places this has been given up?

## PRAYER AS PART OF HIS MINISTRY

Apart from these few recorded instances of Paul's praying, it is from the references in his own letters that we gain an insight into the place that prayer had in his ministry; and the three characteristic exhortations on the subject, to which he frequently gives expression, all find their place.

First, as to **thanksgiving**. Not only did his own heart rejoice at the working of God's grace in each place where the gospel had been preached, but he tells how he thanked God continually for this.



Such thanksgiving is found in Romans (for their world-renowned faith); in Colossians (for their faith and love and hope, chap. i. 3-6); in Philippi, among other things, for their fellowship in the gospel; and in both Thessalonian epistles.

To the Corinthians he writes: "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We may perhaps be surprised that he found in Corinth so much to thank God for. But he did not deny how richly God had endowed them, because of their unworthy use of His gifts; **nor did he turn away from them on account of it**, but deemed them to be all the more in need of his ministry.

Paul's second exhortation to "**pray without ceasing**" likewise accords with his own practice. For the Romans, whom he had not seen, and whom he knew to need the ministry which was specially given to him, he prayed continually, asking for a prosperous journey by the will of God to come to them. That the answer to this request was delayed by what seems Paul's own failure, surely tells us how God's goodness overrules such things, so that when he did at last arrive, a prisoner, in Rome, it was with a greatly increased knowledge of the Lord's gracious ways, and with a greatly enriched message.

Another thing that comes out in this connection is his desire for the prayers of his fellow believers. So he writes, "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed" (Rom. xv. 30-32). And so in other places.

For the Thessalonians, whom he had had to leave to face persecutions before they were well established, he prayed, as he tells us, "night and day exceedingly" that he might see their face and perfect that which was lacking in their faith (I Thess. iii. 10). What a picture these words conjure up before us! While toiling over his tent-making; in the intervals between his talks with one and another in the market place; late at night and early in the morning — always he would lift up his heart to God for those tempted ones in Thessalonica.

Thirdly, the **comprehensiveness** of his prayers. He exhorts the Ephesians "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance **for all saints**; and for me." (Eph. vi. 18,19).

From his letters we see how he remembered before God not only all those among whom he had laboured, but also saints at Rome and Colosse, to whom he was personally a stranger. Indeed, for these latter he prayed with special earnestness, that the full glory of Christ might be made known to them. (Col. i. 27-29). And how his earnest longing for the salvation of his own people Israel led him to pray! (Rom. x. 1)

Finally, what did he ask for himself? The main burden of this devoted servant of Christ was always that he might bear an effective testimony to his Master. "Pray for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. vi. 19,20). And so again in Colossians, "Praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ . . . that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."

For other things, we may be sure that he knew for himself the force of his words, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." How else could

he possibly have achieved and endured as he did?

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## **CHRIST JESUS HUMBLING HIMSELF**

(Read: Philippians ii.3-11)

The more we consider it, the more amazing it is that when the apostle desires to set forth an example of humility he brings before us the Lord Jesus Himself — the One to Whom all glory belongs, the One of Whom we read that in the beginning He was, and was with God, and was God (John i.1). This is far better than all the definitions that men could ever give of the doctrine of Christ. He was the Eternal, and He was not only the Eternal but He was eternally distinct. The Son was what the Father was not; and the Father was what the Son was not and what the Spirit was not. He was with God, and He was also God. And it is because of what He is that His humiliation is His glory.

We have in Philippians ii. the most absolute contrast with all that man has been in his history, with all that we are by nature. It is natural for us to desire to rise in the world. It is not our ambition to go down. More than this, as was pointed out long ago, to depart from that place where God has placed him, whether it be the case of an angel or a man, is apostasy. "The angels that kept not their first estate", He spared not. So it was with Adam. The temptation to Adam was to rise above that place, blessed as it was, where God had placed him. "Ye shall be as gods", the serpent said.

It is only because the Lord Jesus Christ was Who He was, because He was not the creature but the Creator, that He could humble Himself and leave His first estate. Then follow these wonderful words, "He counted it not a prize to be equal with God." It was not a question of attaining anything but rather of maintaining. He sought not (that was not the ambition of the Lord Jesus) to maintain the glory that was His. Might I say, if the language is not too strong, that the being on equality with God was not that which He valued, but He emptied Himself of divine glory, and came down, and

took the place of a creature; He took the place of a man, of a servant.

May I say in passing what a marvellous revelation this is of the thoughts of God towards men? When you think of the universe, and then of the world itself on which we live, which is as nothing compared with it, what is man on the face of the earth? Yet, in the eyes of God, what is there in all the universe to be compared with man? Man was the object of His love. It was a man that God had crowned with glory and set over the works of His hand; but what ruin had come in through sin!

But here was the manifestation of the wondrous thoughts that were in God's heart to man. The Deity Himself came down and became man, and took upon Him the form of a servant. God in His grace has given us in the Gospels the wonderful path of service in which the Lord Jesus Christ walked. It moves our hearts to worship as we read it. We know that when we were young Christians we naturally turned to the Epistles, especially to the Epistle to the Romans, when our consciences were not yet in perfect peace. But what joy it is, the older one grows, to turn back to the Gospels and to read of that Blessed One Who came down from heaven; to contemplate Him in that infinite grace that made Him to be here a Servant for us, poor guilty sinners, and for those that were most guilty among the guilty too, those that were outcast even among sinners!

We see Him stooping even to ask a drink, even to be beholden to a poor woman who was an outcast. Is it any wonder that her heart was touched, that all else was forgotten, even her errand? She went back to testify of Him in the ears of her fellow citizens. How full of surprise, how incredible the news must have seemed to them! "You tell us the Messiah has come and has been speaking to you — you!" Had he any idea of the creature He was speaking with? "Yes", she says, "He told me all things that ever I did." "And didn't He repel you?" "No", she says, "He told me that if I had known Who was speaking with me, I would have asked of Him and He would have given me living water." Is it any

wonder that the whole town came streaming out? When the men came home from their work they left their evening meal and went out to see the wonder of the Christ of God sitting at that well! How blessed it is for us to see how grace and glory meet in that blessed One!

But He went even beyond that. We have the second step in the Lord's humiliation. "He humbled Himself." It was not enough to Him to become a servant, to be here in fashion as a man, but "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." There was no staying until He had reached the very bottom, until He had gone as low as it was possible for Him to go, down, down until He is found beneath the judgment of God, alone and forsaken, upon the cross.

And now what will God do? How will God not answer to such grace! God has "highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name." That is a figure of speech which occurs in Scripture more than once. It means that God has given Him honour, as you read that "David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians" (2 Samuel viii.13).

"At the name of Jesus." That is the Lord's own personal name, and we come very far short of the truth if we see in the name of Jesus, simply "Saviour." Hosea means "saviour", but Jesus is Jehovah the Saviour. "Jehovah shall save" is the meaning of the word Jesus. And at that which is His own personal name, at the name of Jesus, "every knee shall bow." This is not simply grace, but this is power. "Of things in heaven," whether it be archangel, or angel; "of things on earth"; or of infernal beings; every knee shall bow at the name of Jesus because of the personal glory that belongs to Him. That name by which He was known here in the world, in the days of His flesh, when He walked in lowliness and meekness through this world, that is the name to be honoured; and all will own His personal glory and bow to Him because of Who He is.

And then there is something more; "and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the

Father." That is the righteousness of God. That is God's righteous answer. Not only will all bow to the name of Jesus, not only will all own His personal glory and worth, but for the glory of God the Father, the righteous answer of God to all the shame of the cross, every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. Beloved, we may well sing as we do sometimes in our hymn:

"Oh, then may His glory and love  
 Make us walk in the service of heaven,  
 'Mid obedience and suffering to prove  
 That we to the Lamb have been given."

G. F. Cox

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

## DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES

I Peter iii.18-20

*"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached to the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls were saved by water."*

This scripture has been so fully dealt with in "Preaching to the Spirits in Prison" by W. Kelly that further reference here may be judged superfluous. However, the old error has been recently revived, and W.K.'s book may not be readily accessible to some readers.

The difficult part of this scripture is in lines 3 and 4, and there are two chief misunderstandings. First, that the "Spirit" in verse 18 is Christ's own spirit (which He committed into the Father's hands as He died), rather than the Holy Spirit. This then leads to the notion that Christ's spirit, after His death, visited the spirits of the unrepentant in the unseen world (at least those of Noah's day), to preach to them.

The reader of the A.V. might wonder at the confusion over

the word "Spirit", but as the word "the" is not in the original, modern translations generally use a small "s" and say "in the spirit" or "spiritually". However, there are very many cases where "the" is absent in which the Holy Spirit is certainly referred to, as for example Romans viii.9. But the matter is decided at once by the word "quicken", or made alive. This cannot possibly refer to the intermediate or death condition, but plainly to the Lord's resurrection. As always in scripture, it is the body that dies, never the soul or spirit. Thus the spirit could not be said to be made alive. The only sense in which the expression *could* be used would be of the spiritual quickening we know as the new birth. But in this case it is always the man who is quickened, not his spirit merely, as for example in Eph. ii.5. Other uses of the word refer to the body, as in Rom. viii.11. Spiritual quickening, of course, could only be said of sinful man, who is dead in sins, never of God's holy One. A modern translation such as "in the spirit he was brought to life" (N.E.B.) must still therefore refer to resurrection, and the spirit to the Holy Spirit as characterizing that condition. But the A.V. is then vastly preferable.

If we understand, then, that there is no reference to the intermediate state, the second misunderstanding vanishes. The preaching Peter speaks of was not at all to the spirits of dead men, but to those living in the days of Noah. To these Christ preached, not personally, but by the Spirit of God in Noah. He preached to those whose spirits are *now* in prison, Peter says. We may with advantage compare the statement in chapter 1 about the Spirit of Christ in the prophets. This was the Holy Spirit leading the prophets to utter prophetically the experiences of Christ's spirit.

The reference to the eight souls saved in Noah's day was perhaps to comfort the believers in view of their own comparative fewness of numbers — a thought which often troubles people today.

Moreover, it does not appear why the unbelievers of Noah's day should be singled out for a special testimony

*(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)*

deliberately withheld truth of a more advanced order from them because they had not grasped it. In effect he said to them, "What is the use for me to speak to you about the heavenly calling? You do not yet understand your earthly responsibility. You do not know what faith in a crucified Christ involves. You have not yet learned the true character of a disciple of Christ, taking up the cross and following Him." When the world sees a man bearing a cross they say, "Here is a malefactor going to crucifixion. He is not fit to live." They jeer at him. He is to them worse than other criminals; he is because of his very cross the more despicable in their eyes. If we are truly following Christ, we become associated with His cross, and such is the light in which the world will regard us. We are then to the world outsiders, rank outsiders, and it will have nothing to do with us. But we should be content to accept this treatment, and as disciples to be as our Master.

I will not say more on this topic now than to invite you to consider it very earnestly. It is of the utmost importance that we should study how to please the Lord Jesus Christ, and to please Him we must learn the divine estimate of the cross of Christ. We know how the world regarded it; and the word shows us how intimately it affects our practical life.

W. J. HOCKING

(To be continued, D.V.)

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

We have referred to the joy and privilege of "gathering with Him" (verse 23 — Luke xi.). The sad alternative is to "scatter". The ideologies of man are offered in substitution for that humble subjection to Christ which brings the believer into ever increasing communion with the Father. There continue to be spurious centres of gathering which proclaim themselves. The only true Centre of gathering is Christ Himself. "He that gathereth not with Me scattereth," says the Lord. There is a divine value placed upon Christ — it can be shared by none.

There is, too, the outward representation of holiness — "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof". It does not submit to the sustaining Power — other than human — without which it is false. The Lord speaks of an unclean spirit which has left a man. This spirit is evil in origin and in operation. It could be termed a "control". The man associates himself, outwardly, with a religious movement — even with true followers of Christ. Fears of various kinds may have impelled a reformation, but the danger remains. The faithful "Worker" Himself issues His warning, for no cleansing of the man by his own efforts, however determined, can bring him to God. The acknowledged need for a Saviour, the personal appeal to God on the ground of the death of His Son — this alone assures the safe occupancy of the poor man's "house". "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," was the prayer of the apostle Paul for the believers at Ephesus. The sad alternative is re-possession by the evil control — stronger, more possessive than before since there is no defence, and the conviction of ability to resist is shown to be hollow and unavailing. It is a house swept clean by human resolve — garnished with outward correctitude but empty! The "peace of God" does not garrison there — "the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first".

It is a sad reflection that religious man insists upon offering to God the product of his own endeavours — the house of his tainted life, swept and even decorated with deeds of charity — a self-product which admits no centre of impulse in Christ. It has ever been thus — from the confident advance of Cain with the produce of the cursed ground to the present time when man has, largely, ceased to consider there is any obligation to approach God at all.

At verse 27 one becomes aware of the confusion of crowd voices — the questioning and disputing. Luke implies this by his accent upon the behaviour of a woman. “A certain woman, lifting up her voice, out of the crowd, said to Him, Blessed is the womb that has borne thee and the paps which thou has sucked.” It was one voice only that lifted itself in praise above and “out of the crowd.” The beneficent work was done — the dumb was given speech, but it would cease again at death — it was not for eternity. To hear and keep the word of God had eternal links for man with the Eternal God. “For all flesh is as grass . . . the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord liveth and abideth for ever” (I Peter i. 24-25). Thus the faithful Witness points the way, “Rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.” To hear the word of God is to turn from the world-voices of material things. There were those who clamoured for “a sign from heaven”. Their ears were not tuned to the heavenly message of the living Word.

The continued presentation of events, in an order which emphasized for Theophilus the moral movement of the teaching of Christ, is very evident. Despite the open evidences of the power of Jesus in liberating the dumb man from Satanic captivity, the cavilling crowd demanded “a sign from heaven”. “The crowds thronged together” (verse 29). Their vehement excitement voiced the opposition of “the generation” to a Messiah who did not accord with their rebellious ambitions for liberation. Even the voice of the woman was heard no more.

One thinks of the sad tones in which Jesus must have

made His pronouncement. "He began to say, This generation is a wicked generation; it seeketh a sign; and a sign shall not be given to it but the sign of Jonas." A sign suitable to themselves was their demand, but He would lay to their charge the sign of a prophet discredited by Israel — one, then, to be sent to the Gentile world! They were to be placed on the same ground as the Ninevites — the subjects of God's pity. Rejected as Messiah He would go, as Son of Man, into humiliation and death. On the ground of His death alone could He reach them, for the judgment they had incurred would fall upon Him. At the message of Jonah, a comparatively failing prophet, the men of Nineveh repented, "and, behold, more than Jonas is here". "For, as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, thus shall also the Son of Man be to this generation."

Verse 31. The energy and sincerity of "a queen of the south" is brought to their minds. It was part of their own national history. She had only *heard* of the wisdom of Solomon. She had seen no sign from heaven — nor had she sought one! The riches and wisdom of the son of David were the wonder of a large part of the civilized peoples of that day, but not all his words, nor all his acts, were perfect, as were those of the Son of Man. The divine gift of wisdom to Solomon was in answer to his prayer, and this was, in itself, an admission of his need. Yet, to hear from himself the answer to questions, that our modern civilization would do well to seek, she made an arduous journey, and she came in unbelief — burdened with problems unanswerable from sources over which she had control. But before "she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants", the queen of the South had become a worshipper! "Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made He thee king, to do judgment and justice" (I Kings x. 9). "And, behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

It was, indeed, "a wicked generation." The people of Nineveh, that great city faced with destruction, had "re-

pented at the preaching of Jonas." "A Queen of the South" had come in the humility of one seeking a wisdom she did not, herself, possess. Both these Gentile peoples of the past were in position to condemn the Jew of that day.

Shall we not pause to remind ourselves that the One who laboured, as His Father had laboured since sin entered into the world of men, was still working amid a generation more wicked than its predecessors! "Behold, a greater than Jonas is here" — "a sign" to a wicked generation — as *Son of Man*. What a precious title! What an expression of the universal **GRACE OF GOD!**

In the spirit of this grace the Lord Jesus brings them to the thought of light as opposed to darkness. Here again is that sharp distinction shown between "gathering" and "scattering." There is no half-way position of compromise. So in His further example — there is no twilight! There is only darkness — or light.

As a light set upon a lampstand God had placed His Christ among them. Their moral condition was that they could not see God's light. It was not the misplacing of the light — that testimony of holy life and divine power shone clear. The eyes that should have seen it were blind since the *hearts* were obsessed with national aspirations which had no room for repentance as to the sin that had brought its own darkness.

EDWARD T. WOOD

## REMARKABLE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE

### The Prayer in Gethsemane

Is it fitting, we may enquire, to include the prayer in Gethsemane, sacred to every believing heart, in a series of prayers of failing men? The writer believes it should be included, because His life as man, right up to the cross, is set before us as an example, e.g. in I Pet. ii.21; Heb. xii.1-3. Unique as His prayer was, those who follow Him can learn from it, and find something which we can seek to imitate.

There is no need to outline the circumstances, which are familiar to all. But we may usefully call to mind that

during the last few months of the Lord's earthly life He repeatedly warned His disciples of His coming death, whereby we may be sure that it was prominent in His own thoughts. Thus in Luke ix.51 we read that "When the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," and later "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark x.45).

He approached the cross with a full understanding of all that it entailed for Him, and with perfect communion with His Father about it. At the last supper He once more spoke to His disciples about His death, and even told the betrayer to hurry (John xiii.27).

With Judas gone the Lord Jesus gave his whole attention to the welfare of His disciples, preparing them for the future and strengthening their feeble faith and understanding. What astonishing, selfless love! But when He entered the garden with them, He became greatly distressed and troubled in mind (Mark xiv.33). It is surely this above all which brings Him near to us, and assures us of the reality of His manhood.

The fearful ordeal was now immediately present in His thoughts. Taking only Peter, James and John with Him, He went on a little. Saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch," He went a little further and fell on His face and prayed, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

### **CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S POWER**

First of all let us note His perfect confidence in the power of God. Satan and all his host, the Jewish leaders and all their hatred, the mighty power of Rome — all were as nothing in face of that. Yet surely the words mean more than this. They must mean, that if there were any other way to accomplish the salvation of men, then His Father could, even at that late hour, bring it to pass. "All things are possible unto Thee."

Far beyond our understanding as the sufferings of the Lord upon the cross must ever be, we believe that His suffering for sin — for our sins — suffering that culminated in His cry “Why has Thou forsaken Me?” — was what caused the Saviour such intense distress as He contemplated it. Was there possibly any other way?

### THE PRESENT WILL OF GOD

“Yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt.”

The cross then, was not some inevitable fate which the Lord could not escape: it was the present will of the Father, that will which He freely accepted, which He desired above all things should be accomplished. That will, the Lord Jesus knew, was the expression of that sublime love that filled the Father’s heart; love which the Son shared fully; love for a world at enmity with Him.

### THE SECOND PRAYER

After finding the three disciples asleep, He returned to pray again, and in Matthew’s account, the words are a little different. “O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done.”

Now we may easily miss the full force of the last words. We are so accustomed to finding our own desires in conflict with what we know to be the will of God, that the words “Thy will be done” become for us a matter of resignation — often reluctant resignation to what we dislike. But this was not the case with our blessed Lord. In His mouth they were the expression of His intense desire for the accomplishment of the Father’s will, and with that emphasis we should read them. Paul writes of that “good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God,” and that is exactly what it was in our Saviour’s eyes.

Moreover, its fulfilment in His drinking of the cup was the seal of His own triumph and the basis of all His present and future glory. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.” While it is unthinkable that He should have turned away



from the cross, yet He was perfectly at liberty to do so. Like the Hebrew slave, He could have gone out free (Ex. xxi). It is to His everlasting praise that He chose to submit Himself to it. So God's will for Him, while glorifying God, was that in which He Himself was glorified. It ensured that "the joy set before Him" (Heb. xii.2) should be fully realized, that He should be satisfied when He saw the travail of His soul (Isaiah liii.11).

What we are so slow to learn is that the will of God *for us* is the very best thing that divine love can do for us. It is not a second-best thing, to be accepted with as good a grace as possible! It may entail sacrifice, but is always the sacrifice of what is less for what is greater, of what is transitory for what is eternal. As we seek, then, to follow our Saviour, though at such an immense distance morally, let us endeavour in communion with our loving Father, to learn by prayer what His will is. He will always give the strength to carry it out.

### THE ANGEL APPEARS

"There appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." Here is another of those touches which show the perfect humanity of the Lord. How had He humbled Himself, to receive strength through one of His creatures! Was not this part, at least, of the Father's answer to His prayer? For not by acts of power, but in weakness and suffering, He was to conquer Satan and put away sin; and His body was thus strengthened for the spiritual conflict that lay before Him. The agony of His soul as He contemplated the cross, was shown by His sweat, falling to the ground like great drops of blood.

After returning to the disciples and finding, alas! no encouragement from them, He went away to pray a third time, saying the same words, as Matthew records.

### THE CONFLICT PAST

The calmness and dignity which marked Him in all the following scenes contrast noticeably with the unworthy be-

haviour of the disciples. His was the calmness and peace of One Who had faced the whole terrible ordeal in prayer to God, while the disciples had slept. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," had been His word to them, and it is valid for us. Let us take it to heart, when trials lie before us.

### **GOD'S ANSWER**

"Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (or, for His piety, J.N.D.), is how His prayer is referred to in Heb. v.7. He suffered death, yet was delivered from it, for it was not permitted to hold Him, as all others are held by it. He prayed, "If this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." And so it was. His death of shame was followed by a reverent burial and then a glorious resurrection. Now all power in heaven and earth are His — power to bring to pass in its fulness that blessed will of God for which He gave Himself.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## **CHRISTIAN GROWTH AND CHRISTIAN BUILDING**

(Notes of an Address on I Corinthians iii.)

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we have the instructions of the Apostle Paul with regard to the practical management of affairs in the assembly at Corinth. The subjects of the Epistle relate to suitable behaviour in a company of God's people where improper conduct of more than one kind had been permitted. These subjects are in contrast, for instance, with those of the Epistle to the Ephesians where we have expounded the brighter and more exalted characteristics of the church in its heavenly calling.

To Corinth the theme of the apostle was less lofty, and from the commencement of the chapter now read, we find why the apostle confined his ministry on this occasion to

what we may call earthly things. "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not able to bear it: nay, not even now are ye able." Paul was, as it appears, unable on account of their condition to feed them with meat, but could give them milk only, comparing two varieties of his ministry in this manner.

There was therefore something wrong at Corinth; their spiritual condition was at fault. And the apostle in the wisdom given him by the Spirit of God for the help of the saints brought suitable truth to bear upon the condition in which they were. They had not been growing as children of God should. They were, as he said, "carnal," and he was, therefore, unable to write to them as he might have done if they had been spiritual.

It is needful to notice that in mentioning the two classes, carnal and spiritual, he is not differentiating between those who are converted and those who are unconverted. The carnal ones were "in Christ" equally with the spiritual ones. He says that they were carnal, but also that they were babes "in Christ." They were babes, however, who had made no advancement. Something held them back. There was a check to their growth; what was it?

Now as a company of believers, the assembly at Corinth might be regarded as a very distinguished gathering indeed. We learn from the Acts that they had had the benefit of the personal labours of the Apostle Paul himself among them for some eighteen months at least. They should, therefore, have benefited very considerably by his ministry. And judging only from outward appearances, it might have been supposed that they had so benefited, because we read in the first chapter (ver.4-9) that they were enriched by God in all utterance and in all knowledge, and that they came behind in no gift.

In point of fact all the gifts of the Holy Spirit were theirs and were in active exercise in the assembly too. There were prophets, there were teachers, there were those who had

words of wisdom, there were those who wrought miracles, and so on. It was an active assembly, a living affair, not a dead stagnant company, but a real active corporation. The apostle himself wrote words of strong commendation to them: "I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus; that in everything ye were enriched in Him, in all utterance and all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye be unproveable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

### **SOMETHING LACKING**

From this testimony it appeared that the Lord was really blessing the saints in the assembly at Corinth. The preaching and teaching made the presence of God manifest. Men could hear the tongues, and listen to the prophets and to the teachers. What further evidence of spiritual health was required? Could there be anything lacking in this outwardly prosperous assembly at Corinth?

It was the apostle's special service in this Epistle to point out to them their lack. The great activity was the superficial appearance of things only. Accordingly Paul, by the Spirit of God, went down where we must all go in order to discover the seat of spiritual power, or of spiritual weakness, and that is down to the heart. There was something wrong with the heart of the Corinthian saints, and this fact is made clear in the first two chapters of this Epistle.

Now the truth concerning their spiritual condition was this: while they undoubtedly possessed in abundance these very striking gifts, they became very proud of their possession, and relied too much upon these external activities and energies of the Holy Spirit. They, with the most serious results to themselves, omitted to learn the truth of their own personal unworthiness and unfitness. It was the more strange that this should be the case, since the apostle makes it clear in these chapters that when he first went to evangelize

Corinth, he went to them with a full knowledge of their peculiar dangers and temptations, and presented his gospel in a manner suited to meet their special weakness.

Corinth was a very populous city, very opulent and very learned, and because the people were learned and opulent, they were proud of the position to which they had attained by their own efforts and abilities. I am speaking of their natural status as compared with citizens of other cities. As citizens of Corinth they had acquired many advantages of a worldly character which they esteemed very highly.

Paul was a wise preacher, and when he visited Corinth, he selected as the central theme of his preaching the cross of Christ, because, as he says (i.18) the word of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness; but unto us that are being saved it is the power of God.

Now if you weigh this verse you will see that its force is not quite the same as that of a verse in Romans where the apostle speaks of the gospel as God's power unto salvation to every one that believeth (Romans i.16). To the Romans Paul declares what is true of the gospel in a comprehensive way; but in this case he points to the cross as being the power of God whereby those that are being saved are enabled to live the life of Christ. For the word of the cross comes to a man, not only to save his guilty soul from the just condemnation which is his due, but to bring him under the influence of the power of God, and to make him a centre of blessing here in the world. In other words the preaching of the cross leads him to a power stronger than he himself possesses, a power which will lift him above the plane of mere human energies, and will show to all that he is a man of God, not of the world; a man with a heavenly character and a heavenly calling. There is but one thing that can accomplish this in a proud self-satisfied man, and this is the full acceptance of the cross of Christ, and what it involves practically.

In order that this result might be obtained at Corinth, Paul preached Christ crucified. He was competent to have set the truth of the gospel before his scholarly hearers in

such a rhetorical fashion as would have pleased their imaginations and captivated their mental powers. They would then have regarded his demonstrations of the truth as triumphs of logic, and would have accepted them, as people now will readily accept some novel and startling scientific theory.

### **PREACHING THE CROSS**

But the apostle knew better than to use such wisdom of words in his preaching, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. He knew that the gospel was not a theory for the intelligence, nor a fanciful dream for the imagination. Discipleship to Christ must rest upon a living foundation in the soul, and it was essential to preach that the cross of Christ is the power of God from the outset of the Christian career, and that everything that is of the world, its riches, its learning, its fame and all its powers, are in the sight of God absolutely valueless. Indeed, these are just the things that put Christ upon the cross. We know this historically because the cross was the award that the world made to our Lord Jesus Christ. The world's logic and philosophy, the world's religion, the world's military power, all united in crucifying the Lord of glory.

We, too, ought to consider the significance of this historical fact. We ought to think of the crowning sin of the powers of this world. Its magisterial powers in the exercise of their judicial functions were fully concerned in the so-called trial of our Lord Jesus Christ which ended in the sentence of death, the death of the cross. The cross showed the measure of their execration of the Man of God, the Lord from heaven. But let us not think only of those who were immediately guilty of the cross of Calvary. If they came so woefully short in their estimation of the Lord Jesus, what is He to us in our own valuation? Is He to us day by day what we should rightfully regard Him to be? Do we not, in practice, often depose Him from that place of supremacy He should have in our lives? What is the great corrective of this depreciation of Christ? The cross,

because therein I, as a believer, learn that I myself, as a natural man, was concerned in crucifying the Lord Jesus Christ.

We very often stop in our thoughts at the truth that our sins were borne by Jesus. This fact is true, blessedly, everlastingly true, but that truth is not the whole of the truth comprehended in the death of Christ. At the cross was the judgment not only of what I did, but of what I am, and of what I am capable. And who among us knows of what he is capable? If the invisible arms of Omnipotence did not shield us, what might we not be, what might we not become? We have no power for the divine life within us, of ourselves. The power within us naturally does not make for righteousness in the eyes of God, because it is the power that put Jesus Christ upon the cross.

The apostle proceeds to expatiate upon this theme of his preaching, and shows that although the preaching of the cross is, in the eyes of the world, regarded as weakness, it is not so in its effects upon the believer. On the contrary, Christ crucified is God's power, and His cross is the necessary power for living to God.

Herein the Corinthians, whatever other knowledge they possessed, fell short. They had not learned the essential lesson of saintship. In the Christian career, it is useless for me to proceed on the lines of my own ideas or to follow the bent of my own thoughts, to say nothing of adopting the maxims of the world for my personal guidance. In everything appertaining to matters of conduct, I have to learn that for me there are fresh ideals. I must let old things go, and remember that things have become new. I am, as I find in the Second Epistle, a new creation in Christ. This is so by divine appointment, because the old crucified things are useless in the things of God.

Again I would say that this view of the practical value of the cross is not pure imagination, but sober fact, and of such importance in Christian growth that the apostle

*(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

### JESUS COMING UPON THE WAVES

"And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them"  
(John vi. 17).

We have the record of two different occasions on which our Lord calmed the waves. Each doubtless has its special dispensational aspect. For in the one case Christ was with His disciples in the ship; in the other they were without Him.

In the case before us, He had departed again into a mountain himself alone. It was after the miraculous feeding of the multitude, who, because they had eaten of the loaves and fishes, were eager to make Him king, yet they ignored Who He really was, and had scanty appreciation of their spiritual needs.

And so He was alone, the One ever so accessible for human necessities; so solitary in His own divine Being, yet so truly and so perfectly human as to value the sympathy of His followers (e.g., Luke xxii. 28). These, on the sea, at any rate, could not do without Him, though they understood Him so feebly, and He had not forgotten them.

Their need was particularly great just now, for it was dark, and Jesus had not come unto them. More than that, the storm arose. Is it not so oftentimes in our experience? There seems an aggravation of difficulties, positively; and negatively, Jesus has not come. Of course, non-realization of the Lord's spiritual presence now must be due to lack of faith. Our eyes are holden. But yet Jesus never fails to appear, as He did when He seemed as a phantom on the Sea of Galilee.

So, later on, one who loved Him thought He was the gardener! In what unsuspected guises Jesus may come to us! But He always comes when the need is greatest, and before we are overwhelmed. At the appointed moment His words reach us and thrill us, coming sometimes from very ungrammatical lips, while the most polished periods have proved but tinkling cymbals.

But Jesus speaks to His own from the waves; their eyes are no longer holden; and, receiving Him, they are at their desired haven immediately.

R.B.

(Extracted)

# REMARKABLE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE

## AN ASSEMBLY PRAYER

Acts iv. 24-30

This is the only instance scripture gives us of an assembly prayer, so we ought to examine it with the greater care. We shall find that it has some noteworthy features.

### THE BACKGROUND

Peter and John had performed a great miracle of healing on a lame man, but their subsequent preaching of Jesus as the One in Whose name and power they had acted had drawn upon them the fury of the chief priests and Sadducees. After a night in prison, they had been brought before the Jewish rulers and questioned as to the miracle. Peter again proclaimed Jesus, crucified by them but raised and glorified by God, as the source of their healing power and also as man's only hope of salvation. Unable to deny the remarkable miracle they had wrought, but anxious to prevent any further preaching of Jesus, they commanded them not to speak or teach henceforth in the name of Jesus, and reinforced their commands with threats. To which Peter and John replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Released after further threats, they went "to their own company", and told them all that had happened.

Now we can be quite certain that the news of the imprisonment of the two apostles would have brought the infant church to earnest prayer to God for them, just as for Peter on a later occasion (Acts xii). And we may perhaps attribute their astonishing unanimity in the prayer that follows, in part at least to this time of waiting upon God.

### WITH ONE ACCORD

On hearing the report of Peter and John, they raise their voices to God with one accord — impelled by the one Holy Spirit Who indwelt them all. "Lord, Thou art God, Which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in

them is." In thus addressing God as Creator, perhaps their main thought was of His immense power, against which the raging of the nations was futile. We might, perhaps, have expected them to use the title "God of Israel". Until recently, thoughts of Israel's glory had no doubt been a main pre-occupation with them, as with the apostles when they asked the Lord "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" But now Israel had joined with her Gentile conquerors in crucifying the Lord Jesus, and their recognition of this in their prayer shows how thoroughly they were attuned to God's mind. Not Israel now, but the glorified Christ of God possessed their hearts.

Next let us note how impressed they were with the thought of the scriptures being fulfilled. "Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord, and against His Christ, For of a truth against Thy holy Servant Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done." Thus they were not dismayed, however great the forces combined against them; for had not God spoken of it all in His word long ago? Nothing took place, then, but what was in His plan.

Today we can surely enjoy the same confidence. Dark though the day is, God's word has prepared us for it. If we see "evil men and seducers waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," it is all written there (II Tim. iii.13). We have no need to be dismayed when we hear men talking as though the Faith were an outworn superstition. Christ has declared that the powers of darkness should never prevail against His church, which is enough to warn us that they would wage continual war against it. But it is well, when we come together to pray, that we should be conscious of this conflict, and of the needs of those who are "in the forefront of the hottest battle."

## THEIR PETITION

What then were they to ask God for?

Should they ask for protection from the threatened punishment if they or the apostles, dared to continue speaking in the name of Jesus? But no! They asked for boldness to continue so speaking. The danger that they saw, was not at all that they might *suffer*, but that they might be *afraid*.

“Now, Lord, behold their threatenings,” they prayed, “and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy servant Jesus.”

Thus the things which had provoked the Jewish leaders to arrest the apostles, were the very things which they desired to be continued, for the honour of the name of Jesus. And the mighty power of the Creator — what display of it did they seek? Not the deliverance of themselves or the apostles, but that they should be strengthened to testify and endure.

## GOD'S ANSWER

The answer was not delayed. As an assurance of the power they desired to see, the very place where they were assembled was shaken. They were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit, and proceeded, in His power, to speak the word of God with boldness.

Another consequence was, that they became more united than ever. “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul . . . With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.”

Thus completely was Satan defeated.

## LESSONS FOR OURSELVES

What lessons can we learn from this prayer? How does it apply today? For distant as are those days of pentecostal power, the same God is ours, and the Holy Spirit is still here, ready to honour the name of Jesus. The need is that

we ourselves, as we come together to pray, should be thoroughly imbued, as they were, with the desire to see His name honoured, His work done. We need to be conscious of the great issues that are at stake in our day, and of the many souls in danger. We need to be delivered from the narrowness which thinks only of our own immediate circle. We must remember those that are in bonds, as bound with them. And before we come together at all, we need, perhaps, cleansing from selfishness and worldliness.

Then should we not also pray, just as they did, for boldness in making Christ known? In our land, at least, our personal safety is not threatened, and Satan has to rely on the threat of ridicule or the love of ease to silence our testimony.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## CHRISTIAN GROWTH AND BUILDING

*(Continued from July issue)*

(Notes of an address on I Corinthians iii.)

### THE CAUSE OF THEIR CARNALITY

The fact that the Corinthians had not learned what the cross was to them from a practical point of view occasioned their carnality. The apostle wrote, "Ye are yet carnal; for, whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk after the manner of men?" Fleshly feelings in their minds resulted in envying and strife, while divisions, schisms, parties in the assembly arose in consequence. They were not joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. They were disunited because they were each looking at matters from the ordinary point of view.

What is the ordinary point of view? That every man who is worth his salt is entitled to his own opinion, and that every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind. Well, if each person is entitled to an independent judgment, there must of necessity be envy, strife and schism. Scripture enjoins that we are to be of the same mind; but the question at Corinth was, Whose mind shall we have? Some said, Paul is a safe man to follow; we will follow Paul. But another person prefers the mind of Apollos. He is impressed by the

way Apollos presented the truth. Thus one party is formed who follow Paul, and another who follow Apollos. They make their selfish choice, and set up their little coteries. Those who esteem Paul cling together, and those who esteem Apollos cling together. Others are for Cephas; and others, the highest in pretension, the ultra-pious people, are for Christ. This last party-cry sounds as if it admitted of no condemnation, because if a man says he is of Christ, what can you reply? Your mouth is closed; but only until you remember that Christ is not of a party. In His church, there are no such divisions. He is not for this company, and against another. Christ is for all those that are His. So that those who formed themselves into a party claiming Christ exclusively were deceiving themselves, being carried away by the shallow wisdom of this world.

As we read of this failure at Corinth, we must recognise our own similar failures. We know how ready we are to bring our personal likes and dislikes into the assembly of God. We know how good it appears in our own eyes to secure that things shall be done in our own particular way. For we say, "Our own way is a very good way." And it may be a very good way, just as following Paul was following a very good man. Neither Apollos nor Cephas could be said to be unworthy masters to have. Yet the Corinthians were carnal in making such a choice. They were not spiritual but schismatic.

Their root-error was selfishness. They had not learned that individually they were crucified with Christ. At the cross was the end of the old man. There the natural man was condemned, and cleared away, and moreover, cleared away under a token of the severest disapprobation.

We ought to remember that the want of unity among the children of God arises from selfishness in some form, and selfishness should be absent from those who bear the Lord's name. At the cross of Calvary the soldiers divided the garments of our Lord into four parts for their own possession. And at Corinth the assembly was divided into four parties, through men seeking their own leaders. The Lord looking

down saw this exhibition of carnal feeling. Still the prophets were going on with their work; still there was teaching; still there was great outward energy; but underneath the surface the spirit of self-seeking was at work. What does the Lord see at work among His own today?

### CO-OPERATION, NOT COMPETITION, AT CORINTH

The apostle proceeds to show them the evil of the partiality which was in their minds. He writes, "What then is Apollos? and what is Paul? Ministers through whom ye believed; and each as the Lord gave to him. I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." There had been therefore fellowship among the servants of the Lord. Those who laboured at Corinth were co-operating in the work. Each had his special ministry, but all sought to ensure the general advancement of Christian life.

Paul went there with his own service. It was not an acceptable service in the eyes of men, for he said, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," so that their natural pride might be humbled, and their faith stand in the power of God, and not in the wisdom of men.

Apollos followed Paul with his service. This was supplementary, but essential. Paul says in effect, "It was necessary that I should plant; it was also necessary that Apollos should water; but if there had been no other agent there would have been no increase." Life to the seed and the power of growth and fructification depended upon the divine Agent, God. But God wrought through Paul and Apollos as instruments, and gave the increase accordingly.

We lament sometimes the absence of human agencies and human service in our companies. We find ourselves where there are few or none to help. Yet the Spirit of God is there, and it is God who now, as then, gives the increase. It is always the resource of faith in times of difficulties to get back to things as they were at the beginning and pray that the mighty hand of God may work.

We know that the followers of Christ at the present time



are hopelessly divided, and they will be so when the Lord comes, but He will take them all to Himself in spite of their disunion. So in spite of the broken condition of the church God will surely work, if we will only acknowledge two truths. First, we must own that in our flesh dwells no good thing, that is, no good thing for helping on the family of God nor even for receiving the things of God, since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. Secondly, we must realise that God's power is unchanged. Then there must be great faith, for God honours faith in His name and power.

Thus the apostle, to correct their disorderly state, brought before the Corinthians that in the service of God there should be co-operation and not rivalry. Each minister and servant had his place. One supplemented the other. Paul was not called to do both planting and watering; neither was Apollos. Each had his own work, and God would give not only the increase, but an appropriate reward to each. "He that planteth and he that watereth are one: but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." Further the apostle said, "We are God's fellow-workers: ye are God's husbandry, God's building."

### BUILDING FOR THE DAY OF CHRIST

Now the apostle introduces a second figure to describe them. He first spoke of them as being God's husbandry, or God's field, in which the planter and the waterer were working together for one common object, namely, for the growth of the saints of God. Now he changes the agricultural figure to an architectural one. He turns from the figure of the field to that of the building.

I think we shall be justified in regarding the metaphor of building as having reference not only to labourers such as Paul, Apollos, and others, but to the saints generally at Corinth. And I should like to speak of the verses that follow in their application to us all as builders.

We know that the servants of the Lord possess an extra share of responsibility because of what is entrusted to them.

But it may be of more practical value to us at the moment to consider our individual responsibility. It is easy enough to miss the value of the exhortation by passing the responsibility off to the teacher and to look even with some sort of satisfaction at the lot of responsibility that he has to bear and to hope that he will get through with it, while we forget that we, too, have our responsibility to build wisely and well.

The apostle speaks of building upon the foundation: "If any man build upon the foundation." He refers to the foundation which, as a wise masterbuilder, he laid when he went to preach at Corinth. The city was given over to idolatry. Though there were some Jews there, the mass of the people were godless Gentiles. Paul came and preached the living God and Jesus Christ His Son, Christ crucified. Much people in the city listened to him, and in spite of their eminence as rich and learned men of the world, accepted the Crucified One as their Saviour. Such a discipleship was the deathblow of their hopes and ambitions as men of the world. The apostle laid this foundation for Jesus Christ at Corinth, and now he says, "Take heed how anyone builds thereupon."

So long as we are here in the world, we are of necessity builders. We share in that erection of God's upon earth which consists of living persons brought to Him. Our thoughts, our motives, our actions, our characters are embraced in that great formation. Each day is filled up with what we do, and with what we are. Therein we build for eternity; only we should build in view of a day of the severest testing, as the apostle enjoins. God will then make manifest of what sort the work of every man is, not merely that of the teachers and the labourers. Indeed we are all labourers in the sense that we are builders.

The question here is not whether we are children of God or not, nor what is our ultimate destination, but of what the day of Christ will reveal concerning us. In the first chapter the apostle referred to the fact that the Corinthians were waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. In that time when He comes forth in His glory, those that are

His will appear with Him. But how will they appear? They will be seen in fine linen, and this linen, we are told, is the righteousnesses of saints (Revelation xix. 8,14). Every man's accumulated works that have stood the test will there be manifested to his individual credit. His apparel will be fine linen, white, pure, spotless, shining in perfect holiness in the day of revelation of Jesus Christ.

The apostle writes, "If any man build on the foundation, gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is." If then it be true, as it is, that I am daily building either, gold, silver, precious stones, or wood, hay, stubble, and further, that a day of manifestation is coming I shall surely desire to build the very best and most enduring thing. I shall wish to build the thing which will stand the great test.

If I am sending an article to the Goldsmiths' Hall to be hall-marked, it will be folly to send a piece of brass and expect it to be certified to be gold of a certain standard. I must take great care that I am not sending some sham "Birmingham" stuff which will be returned to me to my discredit and disgrace.

We are sending the fabric of our lives to be hall-marked at the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us take care that we are sending only gold, silver, and precious stones, which will stand the test. If I have the sanction of God's word for what I do and for what I am, I need not fear that day. To have the word of the Lord is to be perfectly safe.

Again, if I am walking as Christ walked, I need not shrink from the test. Therein we have what has already stood the test. His was that perfect, holy, heavenly life, lived here to the wonder and despair of all human beings. The Lord Jesus traced a lowly unswerving path of rectitude and grace through this world, and what a track of holiness and heavenly testimony He has left! We have the record in the four Gospels. The fire of sacrifice proved that life; there was no fault, no blemish found, but a fragrance that has filled heaven

and earth. Christ passed through the fire of suffering and death. The Man Who lived here below amid tribulation and shame so that He was known as the Man of sorrows, Who bore the burden of sins at the cross, and was Himself made sin, though He knew no sin, I say, that same pure, heavenly, saintly life went on high and is in heaven now, the Man Christ Jesus in all His glory. And if I can only live like Him, if I can only in some measure reproduce His kindness, His meekness, His longsuffering, I know I am building what will stand the fire.

Having therefore the word of Christ, and the example of Christ, there is no need to build wood, hay and stubble. These are things without life, though once they had it and grew in the earth. They are now things of the past; old things. If there was once life, now the tree is dead, the grass is dried, and the stubble is withered. They are of a nature that cannot withstand the fire.

### DEFILING THE TEMPLE

The figure of the temple is also taken to emphasize the necessity of holiness. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The testing day is in the future, but now God is in the midst of His own people. This gives an additional reason why we should be concerned with the character of our building. We compose the temple of God here in this world. It is needful that the temple should be a beautiful and glorious one, not beautiful according to the architectural fancies of man's mind, for this would be a poor thing to offer God. He would have His temple formed of those whose lives are fashioned like that of His own Son Who tabernacled here and from Whose blessed Person the glory of God ever shone. "Destroy this temple", He said, speaking of His body (John ii.19). Now we corporately are the temple of God, Who dwells in us by His Spirit.

Now the apostle refers to a very serious matter. You will notice that in these verses he speaks of three classes of persons. There is a class who build gold, silver, precious stones,

and who will in the day of reckoning receive a due reward. There is a second class, consisting of those whose work of wood, hay, stubble, will be burned. This fact appears to justify the thought already expressed that the class of builders includes others besides teachers and preachers. The wood, hay, and stubble that they introduce in connection with the temple are destroyed, while they themselves are saved, but so as by fire. Lot is an example of this second class. He was a man who spent his energies in pursuit of the things of this life. He sought the best of things in this world, and builded in the place of judgment, in the very spot on which the fire of heaven was to fall. The fire did come down upon the doomed city, and Lot lost all his possessions. As a righteous man, it was distressing to him to be in Sodom; nevertheless he remained in the abominable place. His righteous soul was vexed daily, but he put up with the vexation of his own spirit rather than flee from it. The value of his possessions in Sodom seemed to him a compensation for the troublesome conscience within him, but in the end they were all burned up, and he lost the reward of faith as well.

There is a third class mentioned, however, and this class consists of those who deliberately defile the temple of God. These are guilty of serious sin. The apostle is referring to the assembly of God, the company of God's people, as constituting a temple, and he speaks of those who wilfully destroy the sacred character of that temple where God dwells by bringing into it what is poisonous and evil and corrupt. The truths of holy scripture soothe and edify and comfort the children of God, but whatever is contrary to that word of God robs them of their proper nutriment, and poisons the spiritual life.

The false teachers introduce what is foreign into the spiritual system. Disease and disorder are the result, and the person who is responsible for this evil among the saints will be judged accordingly by God. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

Now we ought to revere the assembly of God's people,

because it is a holy thing. The temple is not a material building, but consists of those who follow the Lord. These persons are holy because they are dedicated to God; they belong to Him, and not to themselves. As being God's they have a special calling to use their hearts and minds and tongues to the glory of God. And it is only in the midst of this assembly that God makes known by His Spirit to those who are spiritually and not carnally minded His spiritual presence, spiritual power, and spiritual manifestation.

We should beware of a power which is very active today in calling men after unseen things and supernatural powers. This power lures away from the perfect and complete communication from God which we have in the scriptures. It is contrary to God, to Christ Jesus, and works to defile the temple of God, and to the destruction and damnation of men's souls and bodies.

### ALL OURS, NOT A PART

At the conclusion of the chapter, the apostle exposes the folly of the Corinthians in allowing the rise of these parties. He shows how unworthy are partisanship and quarrelling in the assembly. He says, If you strive to exalt one party at the expense of others, you are really missing the best of your privileges. In claiming one teacher exclusively, you are virtually denying that you have them all, that they all belong to you. You want Paul to the exclusion of Apollos and Cephas. But Apollos belongs to you as well as Paul, and so does Cephas. Indeed the whole band of apostles and prophets belongs to you. Why should you glory in one man? Let none of you glory in men. If you boast, glory in God, for to Him belongs all the praise.

The expression, "all things are yours", is a very wide one, but I think that the apostle means especially the things in the assembly, rather than the things of the world. As in the assembly each member is of the body of Christ and forms a part of that wonderful unity, so the exercises and energies and functions of that body as a whole are for the benefit and growth of each individual member. Our eyes

work for the benefit of our arms and our feet equally, and so do our ears, and other parts. God has set the members in the body of Christ, as it has pleased Him. Hence they are all for us, and to single out one or more especially for ourselves is to do violence to the word of God, to act as if we doubted the wisdom of the Head, and to prevent our normal growth in the truth, as was the case in the assembly at Corinth.

I suppose there is a sense in which all things in the world are ours, even in their opposition to us. God uses the enmity and the sorrow of the world as a useful discipline which helps our development. Discipline for the moment always seems grievous, but looking at what it works out for us under God's controlling hand, it is always worth the endurance. Some of us have experienced this in our past histories. We have passed through circumstances which at the time we imagined we should never survive. Painful as they all were, we are now glad we have been brought through them. We have learned useful lessons. We have proved what Christ can be to us, and what He can do for us. We see the light on our past pathway in some instances, though there is still much we do not know now. But in the day of Christ we shall see the truth even of these things, for that day will make all things manifest. What a day that will be!

Yes, let us believe that all things of the world are ours too, for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. And here we discover the reason, for we are Christ's. We look therefore at once to Him who is the Exalted One, lest we might be lifted up with pride to think that all things are ours. The apostle adds, "ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." What Christ has, He has as God as well as man.

In conclusion, let us not forget to learn that the secret of power for a true Christian walk is to know the end of ourselves which was brought about at the cross of Christ.

W. J. HOCKING

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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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## EDITORIAL

With the "Concluding Review" in this issue, we come to the end of the series of articles under the title "Some Remarkable Prayers of the Bible", by our esteemed contributor E. H. Chamberlain. To him we extend our warm thanks for the labour devoted to this study.

We would strongly recommend careful re-reading of the whole of this series because of the many practical lessons they contain for the present time. For convenience, the following list of the previous instalments is given, with page references:

- I Nehemiah's Prayer ..... July 1969—page 79
- II Abraham's Prayer ..... August 1969—page 85
- III Hannah's Prayer ..... October 1969—page 109
- IV A servant's Prayer ... November 1969—page 124
- V Jacob's Prayer ..... December 1969—page 138
- VI Daniel's Prayer ..... March 1970—page 30
- VII Paul's Prayer Life ..... June 1970—page 64
- VIII The Prayer in Gethsemane ... July 1970—page 76
- IX An Assembly Prayer ... August 1970—page 85

Should any of our readers require copies of the foregoing issues of *Words of Help*, please contact the Publishing office, or write to the Editor, who will endeavour to supply the need from his own limited surplus.

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

Luke xi. 37. As one reads of these events in the order in which Luke is guided to present them, the differing characters of darkness which emerge are significant. The True Light had come into the world and had revealed every man. None could avoid this exposure of man's failure.

We have seen the expulsion of the dumb spirit, and heard with amazement the assertion from darkened minds that the source of power was evil itself. The Light revealed the dark recesses of an "evil generation", and showed the last state of human reformation to be worse than the former lamentable condition.

With foreknowledge of another kind of darkness, Jesus accepts the invitation of the Pharisee to dine with him. "And He went in and sat down to meat." See His immediate answer to the work before Him, and the absence of self consideration! "For the Christ also did not please Himself" (Romans xv. 3). But the Pharisee " marvelled that He had not first washed before dinner". Here is that darkness in which is outward pretence to honour Christ, while within is all that is contrary to His character. The façade of religious activity was in character with the house of the Pharisee. The Light — the presence of Christ — revealed it. It was a means of income — not a channel of giving — "rather give alms of what ye have: and, behold, all things are clean unto you". This was foreign to their covetous nature. The "first seats in the synagogues — the salutations in the market places": these they prized and sought. They were unclean, but their ritual washing would not cleanse them. The One in their midst needed no cleansing. The outside of the cup and of the dish appeared clean, but this did not deceive the divine Beholder, who told them "your inward parts are full of plunder and wickedness" (verse 39).

How valuable it is to realize that God works from the "within" of man. Is not His object to give us the unspeakable privilege of entertaining His Christ? How privately,

secretly, He works *within* — that there might be an outshining of the only character that is pleasing to Him! “In THEE have I found My delight,” was the proclamation — the declaration of divine judgment — the Mind of the Infinite in scrutiny upon the Man Christ Jesus! A delight in Him, and in Him alone, unshared by any other. And we are to be like Him — He is to be the Hidden Man of the heart.

The evils of that day were all about, and in pressure upon, the Divine Worker — the Holy One Who, with the Father, still worked amid a fallen nation, “an evil generation”. Consider the impact upon His pure nature as the self-appointed leaders of the people stood revealed in their inner wickedness: the Pharisee making profit of the vain glory of tithing infinitesimal things — setting aside for God the things of least value and significance as a means of representing a superior holiness that did not exist but was financially profitable.

The doctors of the law complained — they were insulted. But the light of which Jesus had been speaking when the Pharisee “besought Him to dine with him” revealed the dark outcome of unbelief in their case also. Deriving importance and profit from those who came to them for help, they laid upon them burdens of their own interpretation of the law too heavy to bear. Withholding all aid, they left them, helpless. Their fathers killed the prophets, while they, in their hypocrisy, built sepulchres to them. The gain from these wicked reversals of principles that were sacred was exposed in all its evil, and, though it add to their hatred of Him, Jesus pronounced His verdict, “yea, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation”.

This exposure, by the Lord Jesus, of the product of unbelief, was inevitable. Hypocrisy and holiness were confronted. There could only be judgment where evil masqueraded as righteousness. Then, too, He told them the way — “rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you” (verse 41). The giving of alms would be an act of *grace* as opposed to one of extortion.

It would be positive in beneficent aid — seeking no reward — no praise of men. Grace flows from a genuine *source of good within*, where no confidence in human achievement would be found. The giving of alms is in the bearing of burdens — the practical lifting of a weight of sorrow — the true sympathy of a heart that is *occupied with good*, and is thus fortified with peace and secure against sin!

The real purpose and character of these enemies emerged. “And as He said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things: laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him” (verses 53, 54). Their judgment of Christ is the same that we find in the world of today. There is still a respectable approach, and a pretence to acknowledge Christ by outward form and religious ceremonial, but when, in face of man’s true condition of sin, the judgment of God in regard to him is pronounced, opposition replaces the respectable approach. For to submit to God’s judgment as to Christ is to bow to that judgment as to *man*.

These self-styled leaders of the people were responsible in the position which they had taken. God’s judgment follows this principle. Through the mouth of His Christ He had revealed and judged that inner evil of deception which so darkened the light of testimony that He desired from His people.

For those who, with spiritual intent, seek a message for our souls today, there is the sad condition of man in contrast with the outshining perfection of the Lord Jesus. We may see Him, alone the faithful Witness in an “evil generation”—revealing, in light, the character of God in grace as opposed to hypocrisy wielding power by exaggeration of the law — the binding of burdens too heavy to carry — the extortion of money with which to buy a salvation which only the blood of Christ could purchase. All these are, in principle, still with us, together with other movements, in substitution for the control of world evil, which cannot but fail. “For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet”

(I Corinthians xv.25). Meanwhile we are to walk, individually, "worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called" — knowing, with spiritual awareness, the animosity of the world, yet showing that light of witness to His character which may, by His grace, be used to draw others to a **knowledge of Himself**.

EDWARD T. WOOD

## REMARKABLE PRAYERS OF THE BIBLE

### Concluding Review

As we come to the end of our study of some remarkable prayers of the Bible, it will perhaps be useful to summarize some of the recurring lessons, and to look at a few New Testament scriptures bearing on the subject.

#### THE INITIATIVE IS ALWAYS GOD'S

Not only does He know our needs before we ask Him, but it is He makes us conscious of the need, and prompts us to pray. Our praying is part of His plan for us, so drawing us closer to Himself, and also teaching us the most important things to pray for. We have noted, too, that His answers are all prepared, and sometimes set in motion, *before* we pray.

#### HIS RESPONSE WILL ALWAYS BE WORTHY OF HIMSELF

It is therefore essential to remember **to Whom we pray**. Should we not do well to begin with worship and thanksgiving?

**His great love** should always be before us; it is the source of all blessing, so that when we pray, it is no question of extracting blessing. Alas! so often we are like Jacob, unaware of His goodness staring us in the face.

**His mighty power**. "All things are possible unto Thee", our Saviour prayed.

**His majesty**. To remember this helps to get our prayers, ourselves, into a right perspective. He is so **great**, His purposes are so vast; yet there is a place for us in them, and *because* He is so great, He will heed the least of those who seek Him.

## HIS WILL IS PERFECT. (Romans xii.2)

His will *for us* is our highest and best blessing. This then is what we ought to desire to know, and what we should desire to be fulfilled in us. Prayer is not bending Him to our will, which would be disastrous if it were possible. Do we pray that He will make us willing to do His will? (Phil. ii.13; Ps. lxxxi.13, 16).

## HE GIVES LIKE A FATHER (Luke xi.)

With all the evil of man's heart, he still knows how to give good things to his children when they ask. *How much more* our heavenly Father! Moreover, His command to us is, "Give to him that asketh thee" (Matt. v. 42), and this establishes His own character as a giver. What He would have us do, is what He himself does, for we have to imitate Him. The Lord says, "Ask, and it shall be given you". Not exactly, what you ask shall be given you, for He often gives far more, and better. So Hannah found, and Zachariah also. (Luke i. 13-17).

If He gives like a father, let us ask like little children. We cannot possibly ask too much, if we ask in faith.

## WHAT SHOULD WE PRAY FOR?

When we or those we love are in trouble; when fears and difficulties and sorrows oppress us; when danger threatens; when we are at our wits' end — in all these situations we turn to God in prayer, yet exactly what to ask is often a matter of perplexity. The immediate deliverance, which at first sight seems desirable, may not fulfil God's gracious purpose of blessing. In Rom. viii. 26, 27 we read. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, and He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to God."

Here is a wonderful picture of God's Spirit, Who indwells

His own, so joining Himself to our spirit that our longings, which we cannot express as we wish, are taken up and fashioned by Him into intercession which is acceptable to God.

But it is a poor thing to pray only when we are in distress or difficulty. God's purpose is to lead His people on in the knowledge of Himself, to draw our hearts out in communion with Himself, to learn more completely His love for us and for His people. Those things which are dear to His heart — His saints everywhere, often sorely tried, yes, and persecuted; His work of blessing in the gospel, and the servants through whom it is carried on; people whom we meet with day by day, part of that world for love of which He gave His Son — such things as these it is our privilege to speak to Him about.

### WATCHFULNESS

Should we not be on the watch, as we speak to Him, to *listen* for His answer, as well as to *look* for it? Perhaps He has something to say to us, perhaps there is some action that He will call us to — some word to speak, some gift to make, to help forward the fulfilment of our prayer.

### PRAYING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS

This is something we have not met in our mainly Old Testament studies. The Lord said, "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John xvi. 23, 24).

It is the Christian's privilege to approach the throne of grace as one accepted in Christ, but the magnitude of this promise sometimes baffles us. Its "whatsoever" does not seem borne out in our experience. If this is so, it surely becomes us to say that the fault must be ours.

It will be helpful to examine the context of the promise. Both in John xiv. 13, 14, and in John xvi, the Lord was speaking, primarily to the apostles but surely not only to them, of going out in His name to carry on His work. To ask



the Father in the Lord's name is then to ask, as it were, *for Him*. We may present the cheque, but the signature is His. Perhaps if we knew more of what it is to obey the leading of His Spirit in His service, our difficulty would vanish, and we should find the Lord's word fulfilled to the letter.

One more remark is necessary here. It is certainly not the Lord's will to exempt His people from the sufferings of life, and indeed, suffering for His name is a special privilege (Phil. i. 21). Hence when we pray for His tried or persecuted people, we can be certain that it is according to His will to ask Him to sustain their faith and their joy in Him, while recognizing that their deliverance from the suffering may not be His will, or not yet. Many have found a more steadfast faith, and a deeper knowledge of His love, in the endurance of great suffering. He works all things together for good to His own, but it is our *ultimate* good always.

### SOME HELPS AND HINDRANCES

It helps to have a set time for prayer — an unhurried time. First thing in the morning is the best, as many will testify, but it may not be possible. Last thing at night, when we are tired, should not be our only prayer time.

It helps to come to prayer with a quiet, reverent spirit; but if we are not in a right frame of mind, it is better to pray until we are, rather than to abandon prayer! Here is one of Satan's most dangerous assaults.

A very definite hindrance is unjudged sin, or an unforgiving spirit. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive those that trespass against us."

Some have claimed to find a form of words — a written or printed prayer helpful. But the sooner such a crutch is thrown away the better. Prayer, like worship, must be in spirit, and the words we use are unimportant. Our own words, however simple or faulty, are better than another man's, and the Spirit of God has undertaken to help our infirmities.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## SELF-OFFERING

The first two books of scripture contain three instances of men offering themselves unreservedly: Isaac, Judah, Moses. Later books provide other examples, but there is something so striking about the self-offerings recorded in Genesis and Exodus that we do well to ponder them in the light of New Testament revelation.

### ISAAC

The story of Abraham's offering of his son on Mount Moriah in Genesis xxii. is so well known that it may be considered briefly. The figure of the "father of the faithful" is so prominent in it that, knowing him to have been a man of like passions with ourselves, we marvel at his breathtaking faith (Hebrews xi. 17-19), shown out by works (James ii.21), and can well understand how he came to be called the friend of God.

In the testing of this father's heart, we see a beautiful foreshadowing of the One who spared not His own Son (Romans viii.32) — if indeed we may speak of foreshadowing in connection with that which formed part of the eternal counsels of God. And the ram caught in the thicket by his horns is the clearest possible picture of the all-important gospel doctrine of substitution.

But what of Isaac's part in this strange scene? He is pre-eminently the son — the free-born son: Ishmael has no place here. For Isaac there is no question of acting under duress. His later history seems to confirm an element of passivity and submissiveness in his character which did not mark Abraham or Jacob in the same way, and we cannot trace to what extent this was the fruit of the divine life within him or how much was the outcome of natural temperament. Even so, in the crisis of Mount Moriah, it was surely a power above nature that sustained him, for he had not been told beforehand what was to take place. Self-preservation is a strong and universal instinct, and mere nature would have impelled Isaac to resist.

It is just here that the beauty of the type shines with greatest lustre. Isaac's heart was tested to its depths, but bowed to the will of God, and the obedience of both father and son being manifested at that supreme moment, Abraham's hand was stayed and a substitute found. The son was received again as from the dead; the Divine pledge was given of immutable blessing in the risen seed; and as father and son returned to the servants, they walked — in a figure — the pathway of resurrection.

## JUDAH

The believer likes to dwell upon the touching and delightful scene in Genesis xlv., where Joseph can at last reveal his identity to his brothers. But in the chapter which leads up to this it is Judah who is the central figure.

Joseph's stratagem was designed to test his brothers' hearts — to ascertain their feelings towards their aged father. If they sought to protect Benjamin, then grace had wrought within them and they were changed men.

So the cup was found in Benjamin's sack! Such a happening his brothers might earlier have welcomed as a providential opportunity to rid themselves of him. For Joseph being dead, as they thought, would not their envy of him tend to express itself in hatred of his younger brother? Instead, they rent their clothes and threw themselves despairingly on the ground in the presence of the dreaded despot in Egypt.

Before leaving home, Reuben had in vain offered his two sons as surety for Benjamin. Later, when the family had used up the food brought from Egypt, Judah pledged himself to guarantee Benjamin's safe return, and Jacob reluctantly consented to let him go with his brothers. Now that the worst has happened, Judah steps forward to plead with the ruler of the land in order to make good his suretyship for Benjamin.

Is this the callous, calculating man who had proposed that Joseph be sold to the Ishmaelites — the man whose relations with the Canaanites are recorded in chapter xxxviii.? It is the same Judah: but now, thank God, how different!

Do we realise what it must have meant to one who from his youth had known only the free, proud life of a nomad, to offer to become a slave in Egypt? No doubt he took it for granted that Joseph had long since died from inhuman treatment at the hands of some cruel master. Now he was prepared to undergo himself the fate to which some twenty years earlier he had consigned his own brother. A changed man indeed!

It was at this point that Joseph's semblance of severity broke down. How did the interpreter manage to translate, sentence by sentence, Judah's impassioned torrent of words? Probably his services — part of the façade — were redundant anyway, since Joseph heard and would understand his native tongue! As Judah spake of his father, and the lad, until he reached the climax of his magnificent plea to be accepted as Benjamin's substitute, Joseph could no longer contain his pent-up emotions. That day Judah found himself, not the slave of a ruthless tyrant, but the welcome guest of a long-lost brother.

## MOSES

Exodus xxxii. unfolds the tragic but inevitable consequences of the "law-principle": the law is the strength of sin; it makes the offence abound; it works wrath. The people of Israel had placed themselves under it. When it had been proposed to them they had, three times over, unanimously promised obedience (chapters xix. and xxiv.). Redeemed out of bondage, borne on eagles' wings, brought to God Himself, what other answer could they give? And yet, with the deceitfulness of the heart of man already evident by their murmurings along the way, how desperately imprudent a promise to make!

They pledged themselves to obey when at a distance from God and when heart-obedience was impossible. Their desire for a visible god evinced self-will and impatience, and by playing on his weakness they dragged the more responsible Aaron down to their own level. This was the drama of Eden all over again, while the blend of good intentions with fleshly

self-confidence reminds us of Simon Peter on the night of his Master's betrayal. In every case the fall was immediate and complete, but here at Sinai, the ordained high priest having fallen with the people, Moses himself takes on the office of high priest and intercedes for them — how mightily, and with what utter self-denial! For his heart is searchingly tested by the offer that he should become the progenitor of a greater nation than Israel. But he pleads God's own glory and His promises on Israel's behalf, so that the nation is spared.

His zeal for that same glory causes him to break the tables of the law at the sight of the people's sin, and he executes unsparing judgment. But his heart is still filled with love for his nation as God's people, and "fearing and quaking" he again climbs the mount of God, if so be he may "peradventure" make atonement for them. As mediator he will identify himself so completely with them that he pleads to be blotted out of God's book for their sakes. How like the great apostle to the Gentiles, whose love for Israel produced not only great grief and uninterrupted pain in his heart, but even the desperate though passing desire to be made a curse from Christ for their sakes (Romans ix.1-3).

But the Divine answer to Moses was: "Whosoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." True, Moses' mediation presently obtains a fresh covenant. This, however, while proclaiming God as slow to anger, abundant in mercy and truth, and showing grace to whom He will, leaves the people still under trial, a trial which culminated at the cross. And the apostle characterizes this covenant as the ministration of death and condemnation (2 Corinthians iii.). Great as was Moses' love for his people, it could not save them from the ultimate consequences of sin against a holy God.

### SOME CONTRASTS

All these things were written for our instruction, and the foregoing three men, in the reality of their self-sacrifice, stand out as witnesses of what the Spirit of God has wrought in

renewed human hearts. They are, at the same time, figures of Him Who was to come, and, like the two Adams of Romans v., they teach us by way of contrast as well as by likeness.

In their free, voluntary self-offering, they are beautiful types of the One Who offered Himself without spot to God. And let us bear in mind that when the Holy Spirit describes, in the opening chapters of Leviticus, the offerings that look on to the work of the Son, He begins, not with the sin-offering, but with the burnt-offering: that which is most precious to God's heart occupies the first place.

On the other hand we know that, with all their willingness, their self-offering was not consummated: that for which they offered themselves was not ultimately required of them. (This is also true of those of a like spirit in later Old Testament times, as David's three mighty men, Esther, Daniel's companions.)

Here the contrast is complete, as it was intended that the Lord of glory should have the pre-eminence in all things. In His one offering, we see obedience perfected to the point of death, even the death of the cross; unmitigated Divine wrath endured and exhausted; life voluntarily given up; and love strong as death — love to His Father and to ruined sinners — finding an eternal redemption.

The details of those self-offerings set up other contrasts:

(1) Isaac on the way enquires "Where is the lamb?"; but the divine record lets us into the secret of eternal counsels in which the Son undertook to come into the place of weakness and suffering in order to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

(2) Judah offers himself in complete ignorance of the true state of things: he does not know that Benjamin is innocent, nor that the one whom he regards as a terrible tyrant is his own brother whose loving heart harbours no resentment whatsoever against him. But the blessed Lord offers Himself in full knowledge of the guilt of man, and also, thank God, of the heart of the Eternal that devised such a wonderful plan of salvation.

(3) Moses offers to make atonement, but he is morally unfit to take that place: while spiritually and intellectually he towers above his weak and idolatrous people, yet he partakes of the same fallen nature as the most degraded of them. In seeking their good he had, earlier on, committed murder; at a later date he was to give way to unbelief and impatience (Numbers xi.11-15; xx.7-13); and beside such extreme outbreaks of his old nature, the tests and tensions of daily life produced minor failures and shortcomings, as even the most saintly of any age can testify.

But what a privilege it is to turn from "man whose breath is in his nostrils" to the second Man out of heaven, victorious at every point where the first had failed, and at the end of His course marked out as perfectly fitted to make atonement, not merely for a chosen people, but for the sins of the whole world.

The lawgiver went up with the vain hope of making atonement: the Son, lifted up from the earth, made full atonement, and then ascended to the highest place of glory in virtue of that one offering. We who believe see ourselves accepted and set apart for God in the full value of it.

Christ alone could make propitiation; yet as regards the self-emptying lowliness which was manifested in that act, we are exhorted to have the same mind (Philippians ii.5-8), and to follow in His steps (I Peter ii.21).

As types, those Old Testament worthies necessarily fall short of the great Antitype; yet, looked at in themselves, they may be of great service to us if the thought of their devotion leads us, not to morbid introspection, but to humble and healthy exercise in view of the apostle's appeal in Romans xii.1. They offered themselves at a given moment of crisis, whereas our intelligent service is to maintain a constant attitude of heart and mind. True, the new nature, however excellent its desires, is not sufficient by itself to carry this out in practice; but is not the indwelling Spirit present to produce -- continuously -- fruits equal in quality to those exhibited, in times of testing, long ages before Pentecost?

A. C. McCANN.

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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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### READY FOR THE MASTER'S KNOCK

*“Let your loins be girded about, and lamps burning; and ye like men who wait for their own Lord whenever he may leave the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately”* (Luke xii.36, J.N.D.).

Is the thought of the Lord's nearness welcome, or ungrateful to the soul? Is the expectation of being with Him, without notice or delay, pleasant to the heart?

The true practical walk of the believer gives a right answer to these enquiries. “Let your moderation be known unto all men, — the Lord is at hand.” “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the Judge standeth before the door.”

Moderation, or holy restraint in the use of present things, and gracious, liberal consideration of others, here approved as among the right ways of a saint, are such as would stand the light of the Lord, if He were at the moment to appear.

Are our ways, then, such as suit the thought of His nearness, and would abide the light of His presence? Have they, or have they not, this voice in them, “Come, Lord Jesus”?

Could vanity, could uncleanness, could the desire of gain, could the lust of distinction? Has the haughty look that voice in it? Has carnal levity, or spiritual sloth? We know that these cannot desire the day of the Lord, for it is to them “a day of darkness, and not of light”.

Our behaviour should be such as would introduce us to His presence without disturbance; for He comes, not to regulate, but to gladden us — not to put us in a right path, but to close a right path in glory.

J.G.B.

(Extracted)

## THE LAST CHAPTER OF THE PROPHECY OF MICAHA

The concluding verses of Micah vii. contain a threefold declaration as to the character of God:

**Verse 18 — His delight in mercy;**

**Verse 19 — His ultimate triumph over evil;**

**Verse 20 — His performance of His promises.**

With this grand climax in view, it will be helpful to consider the earlier verses. (Quotations are from the New Translation by J.N.D.)

The moral conditions of Micah's day are described in verses 1-6, and readers may well discern substantial similarity to those of the present time in countries where departure from the faith is evident.

**Verse 1 — "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage. There is no cluster to eat; there is no early fruit which my soul desired."**

Better days are over and gone; the plentifulness of a past summer harvest is no more than a happy memory: a season of dearth and decay has set in.

**Verse 2 — "The godly man hath perished out of the land, and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood, they hunt every man his brother with a net."**

Some have thought the opening words have special reference to the passing away of the pious king Jotham, who was succeeded on the throne of Judah by Ahaz, "who did not what was right in the sight of Jehovah . . . but walked in the ways of the kings of Israel" (2 Chronicles xxviii.). Such a man would tend to gather round him administrators and subordin-

ates sympathetic to his own ungodliness. He certainly "provoked to anger Jehovah the God of his fathers" (verse 25) Under such leadership, is it surprising that in the nation generally uprightness was giving place to greed, dishonesty and violence?

**Verse 3 — "Both hands are for evil, to do it well! The prince asketh, and the judge is there for a reward; and the great man uttereth his soul's greed: and together they combine (Lit. 'weave', 'twist') it."**

A lowering of standards amongst those responsible for law and order in the kingdom suggests the degeneration of faithful service to the community into personal ambition and selfishness. What scathing denunciation — "*both hands are for evil, to do it well!*" — with conspiracy to defraud thrown in for good measure!

**Verse 4 — "The best of them is as a briar; the most upright, worse than a thorn-fence. The day of thy watchmen, thy visitation is come: now shall be their perplexity."**

The general sense of this verse would seem to be that whereas those in positions of leadership should have been, by reason of their good example, a preservative element within the community, their failure presaged judgment and confusion for all.

**Verses 5, 6 — "Believe ye not in a companion, put not confidence in a familiar friend; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: a man's enemies are the men of his own household."**

Friendship and family loyalty are debased until a man's enemies become those of his own household: deceit and treachery imperil the most intimate of friendships! J.N.D. (in his Synopsis of the Books of the Bible) remarks — "We find here a striking circumstance. The Lord Jesus declares in the gospel, that that which the prophet describes as the

height of iniquity, should be produced by (i.e., man's reaction to) the preaching of the gospel; such is the activity of the heart, which the light brings into activity, stirring up a hatred which is only the more exasperated by the nearness of its object."

In circumstances such as the foregoing, what should be the outlook of those who wish to live the godly life? The next seven verses suggest the answer.

**Verse 7 — "But as for me, I will look unto Jehovah; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me."**

The godly man looks to the One Who has pledged Himself to care for His people. The prophet Micah's eyes are up to Jehovah: he will wait upon God for deliverance: and he is certain that God will hear his cry. Like Habakkuk at a later date, he will joy in the God of his salvation.

**Verse 8 — "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: though I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, Jehovah shall be a light unto me."**

When feeling bewildered and crushed, in a day which is continually darkening both morally and spiritually, divine light will guide the godly man's footsteps and illumine the future. He will prove in daily experience the truth of the Lord's words to the people in the temple at Jerusalem: "I am the light of the world; he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). Happy indeed is the man who keeps close to his Master, and does not allow the sight of his faith to become dimmed by worldly distractions!

**Verse 9 — "I will bear the indignation of Jehovah — for I have sinned against Him — until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light: I shall behold His righteousness."**

In His government of nations, God may allow wickedness to continue, and even increase, until men have learned by bitter experience the folly of their evil ways. Though "the mills of

God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small." Divine judgment is certain, and the godly man can only submit to God's discipline, and exercise patience until He lifts His hand: he will acknowledge that God is righteous in all His ways.

**Verse 10 — "And mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is Jehovah thy God? Mine eyes shall behold her; now shall she be trodden down, as the mire of the streets."**

God will see to it that His enemies, and those of His people, are put into their proper place. Such as have taunted the godly, and reproached the Almighty for His apparent reluctance to intervene in human affairs (though this be because He is longsuffering — see 2 Peter iii.9) will be brought to shame and humiliation.

**Verse 11 — "In the day when thy walls shall be built, on that day shall the established limit recede."**

Nevertheless the outlook is by no means hopeless: clouds of frustration and depression will give place to sunnier skies of revival and expansion. Broken walls will be rebuilt, and borders extended.

**Verse 12 — "In that day they shall come to thee from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain."**

Scattering, probably through fear, will be reversed in favour of rallying to the common cause.

**Verse 13 — "But the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings."**

Desolation will be restricted to those whose wickedness has brought it upon them.

What then does the future hold?

**Verse 14 — "Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine**

**inheritance, dwelling alone in the forest, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old."**

Here indeed will be the freedom from fear which men seek so earnestly! Does this verse express the prophet's prayer that God will revive His grace to His people, and feed again the flock of His inheritance, so that earlier days of prosperity and abundance return? If so, is —

**Verse 15 — "As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt, will I shew them marvellous things."**

God's answer? When Israel came out of Egypt, they rejoiced in the marvellous things God had done for them. Loudly they raised their voices in songs of praise. Read again Exodus xv. — "I will sing unto Jehovah, for He is highly exalted: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. My strength and song is Jah, and He is become my salvation . . . Who is like unto Thee, Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like unto Thee, glorifying Thyself in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Because Jehovah is the Fulfiller of His promises, the day must come when His people will have the joy of their salvation restored to them, and the streets of the land will resound with praise to their Saviour God.

**Verses 16, 17 — "The nations shall see, and be ashamed for all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick dust like the serpent; like crawling things of the earth, they shall come trembling forth from their close (or, fortified) places. They shall turn with fear to Jehovah our God, and shall be afraid because of Thee."**

For centuries God's chosen people on earth have suffered the judgment which followed the rejection of their Messiah. This indeed was at their own invocation when they answered Pilate: "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew xxvii.25). But when they have repented of their sin, God will again take them up, and then those who have ill-used them will be ashamed: "like crawling things of the earth,

they shall come trembling forth . . . they shall turn with fear to Jehovah our God, and shall be afraid because of Thee." What a glorious day for Israel this will be!

Finally we come to Micah's summary of what he has come to know of the character of God.

**Verse 18 — "Who is a God like unto Thee, that forgiveth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in loving-kindness."**

What a grand exposition of the loving-kindness of God! Truly He delights in mercy: He must do! Is it not thrilling to find "gleaming and flashing" from this Old Testament page, the glory of that gospel whose full shining forth awaited the coming of Jesus Christ (II Corinthians iv.6). Believers of the present day may well have greater perception than Micah's, by the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, but the truth of God's forgiveness was known to God-fearing men before Christ actually came to accomplish the atonement necessary to make it possible.

**Verse 19 — "He will yet again have compassion on us, He will tread under foot our iniquities: and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."**

God's triumph over evil is sure and final. The foul achievement of Satan when he tempted Eve and Adam to disobey God is to be temporary, and will be nullified. "Where sin abounded grace has overabounded", wrote the apostle Paul to the Romans. The full working out of this has yet to come, but it is just as certain today as when Micah declared "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea."

**Verse 20 — "Thou wilt perform truth to Jacob, loving-kindness to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers, from the days of old."**

The prophecy of Micah looked forward primarily to the restoration of Israel to blessing in a day which is now not far distant. The use of the name Jacob reminds us, as ever,



of the unworthiness of those who are to be the objects of God's mercy, and the mention of Abraham — the man who "believed God" — establishes the principle of faith, the essential requirement on the human side. But since the character of God remains unchanged from age to age, we may take the encouragement of these verses to ourselves amid the darkening shadows of our own day. E. A. PETTMAN

## "UPON AN INSTRUMENT OF TEN STRINGS"

(Psalms xcii.3; xxxiii.2; cxliv.9)

*"Sweet is the work, my God, my King,  
To praise Thy name, give thanks and sing,  
To show Thy love by morning light,  
And talk of all Thy truth at night."*

*Isaac Watts*

As the instrument of ten strings is mentioned only in conjunction with the psaltery, it is thought that these two instruments, both of ten strings, were used together, the former supplying the treble and the latter the bass.

It is probable that all three of the Psalms which mention the ten stringed instrument were written by David, although his name is mentioned only at the head of Psalm cxliv. He was the sweet psalmist of Israel and a cunning player upon the harp. The instrument of ten strings was a form of harp or lute. In the hands of David it was an instrument of joyful praise, "a musical instrument of God" (1 Chron. xvi.42). Out in the open fields, minding the sheep, it was his custom to meditate upon the wonder of God's creation, the starry heavens He had made, the greatness of God, and the goodness of God as he had experienced it. Then with his heart full of gratitude and praise, he felt that nothing less than an instrument of *ten* strings would suffice to speak the praises of the LORD: and from his skilful fingers and from his grateful heart, would rise together the pæan of praise to delight the heart of God.

For us, today, now that Christ has come, it is the full

revelation of God in the Lord Jesus that is the theme of our praise. To praise Him because He died for our sins and has redeemed us to God is a string that we often touch, and it is our joy to sing:

“One string there is of sweetest tone  
 Reserved for sinners saved by grace;  
 'Tis sacred to one class alone,  
 And touched by one peculiar race.”

The note of praise from this one string alone is exceedingly precious to the Lord's heart; but in addition, there are also other chords which may be sounded. It is a full stringed instrument of praise that God has put into our hands in order that chord after chord may be awakened to sound forth the praises of His beloved Son. This harp of praise is actually in our hearts, and the Spirit of God touches one string after another to produce there, in our hearts, the symphony of praise. Our own spirits respond to His touch, so that in communion with Him, there rises from our hearts and lips the sweet melody of praise to Him Who is supremely worthy. Each string has its own peculiar beauty and vibrates to the glory of God at the gentlest touch of the Holy Spirit.

It is not meant to suggest that we are limited in our praise to only ten strings, for the glories of the Person and work of our Lord Jesus are inexhaustible; but should it not be our desire to praise Him on a full stringed instrument in all His manifold characters and glories?

Here now are ten strings in this beautiful instrument of praise. May each vibrate afresh in our hearts, as we read, producing acceptable worthy praise to God our Father and to our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Let us praise Him as the *Creator* of the universe, by Whom and for Whom, all things were made. All creation bears the stamp of His handiwork and reveals Him as a God of wisdom, order and beauty. In Psalm cxlviii. all creation is called to utter His praise. Shall our lips be silent?
2. Let us praise Him as the *Upholder and Sustainer* of

all things. "All things subsist together by Him" (Col. i.17.N.T.). From the stars in their courses, the waves of the sea, the winds of heaven, the flowers of the field, to the humblest living creature, all are controlled and cared for by His unerring skill.

3. Let us praise Him who is the *Son of God*, the eternal Son who ever dwelt in the bosom of the Father, in whom "all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell" (Col. i.19.N.T.).
4. Let us praise Him as the *Son of Man*, the "one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii.5), who took a human body like our own; who experienced hunger, and thirst, and weariness; who wept His tears of loving sympathy with those two sorrowing sisters in the home at Bethany, whose brother Lazarus had died. Today, He is the risen glorified Man in the presence of God for us; but His heart still beats with love and sympathy for His own who are in this world. There is no sorrow, anxiety or care that touches our lives which He does not feel.
5. The next two strings are sounded "upon the harp with a solemn sound" (Psalm xcii.3). This softened solemn sound takes us now to that lonely hill where our Saviour died. With adoring, worshipping hearts we bring our praise, remembering Him as the perfect *Burnt Offering*, offering Himself wholly for God, yielding up His life, in the perfection of His obedience, for a sweet smelling savour to God, His Father.
6. Still with the softened solemn sound, with deeply grateful, but contrite hearts, let us praise Him as our *Sin Offering*. Even as "the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb. xiii.11, 12). He suffered in the outside place. He was treated as sin deserved to be treated. He experienced what it was to be forsaken by God, during those three hours of

darkness when He was made sin for us.

7. Now, let the seventh chord of praise be awakened. This string vibrates with an ecstatic tone of pure triumphant joy, as we remember that our Lord is now the *Risen, Triumphant One*, the Conqueror of sin and death, Who has met and defeated the powerful foe that we could never have met; Who has crushed the head of that foul Serpent who reared his hateful head to bruise the Saviour's heel upon the cross. With glad untiring praise we hail Him as the mighty Conqueror, the Accomplisher of all the will of God.
8. Let us praise Him also as our great *High Priest*, Who "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" intercedes continually for us, bearing our names upon His heart of love, and bringing them before the throne of God for a memorial continually. In the exercise of this priestly service He receives the humble tribute of our praise and presents it before God in all the acceptability of His holy Person.
9. Let us vibrate yet another chord which sounds with a note of glad expectant joy, as we anticipate the fulfilment of our Lord's promise to come again as the *Bright and Morning Star*, and as the Bridegroom of our hearts to present His blood-bought bride unto Himself.
10. The tenth string may lead us further still in this symphony of praise, as we rejoice with our Lord in the prospect of His glorious millennial reign of peace and righteousness as "Lord of lords and King of kings". Then shall come "the kingdom of the world of our Lord and of His Christ . . . and He shall reign to the ages of ages" (Rev. xi.15.N.T.).

A. E. JORDAN

## THE WIDOW OF NAIN

(Read: Luke vii.11-17)

This miracle is mentioned only in the Gospel of Luke, where the Lord Jesus is seen in His character of man, enter-

ing into the everyday life of those amongst whom He had humbled Himself, in order to minister to their needs in all the ups and downs of this life. In His service of love to His own, that is, God's chosen people, Israel, to whom He was sent, He exhibits compassion for them as sheep going astray: for they were looking to their own shepherds for food, and were not fed.

The Lord Jesus, in going about and doing good, knew what it was to travel on foot many a weary mile: for this walk to Nain was not less than twenty English miles; and at the end of His journey, as He climbed the steep and rocky ascent up the slope of the hill, known as "Little Hermon", upon which Nain was situated, not a complaint escaped His lips of the weariness of the way: although we know that He was weary: for He was truly man, made like unto His brethren; but He was sustained in doing the will of His Father Who sent Him. He could say to His disciples at another time, as He sat weary on the well at Sychar, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (John iv. 32, 34).

He Who had come as the Life, the Light of men, was met on all sides with the ravages which sin had made; and here in Nain was a case where it had resulted in death, as it must do. As He came nigh to the gate of the city, well on to the close of the day, a man was being carried out for burial. In looking at this funeral procession, wending its way through the arched opening in the wall surrounding the city, the eye would rest upon the body of the young man lying on the bier. He would probably be clothed in the garments he wore during his life, with bandages adjusted over them; and as interment would take place shortly after death, it is probable that he had died that same morning.

The lone figure of a woman immediately behind the bier was the only mourner, but men and women in sympathy with her had gathered in large numbers, for "much people of the city were with her." But it needed not to be pointed out to the Lord that the one who lay dead was the only son

of his mother, or that she was a widow: for all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. "Thou God seest me" is ever true; and nothing can be hid from the omniscient eye of God.

That the wages of sin is death is a solemn fact; and here was evidence that such was the case. God had said to Adam, In the day that thou eatest of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt surely die. Through Adam's disobedience "many were made sinners", and the penalty must be paid in death. But God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Thus, as the result of the cross, where Christ paid the penalty for sin in His own death, we see that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans v.20, 21).

But here before the Lord was a case where sorrow overwhelmed every other thought; an only son, the comfort and support of his widowed mother, had been ruthlessly taken from her by the hand of death. And from the grave none can return, and in it there is no remembrance. As soon as the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her; and how comforting to the heart of this lone widow, that the compassions of the Lord were not limited to words casting her on the mercies of God, but that they expressed themselves by restoring to her alive, her son who had been dead! And what an earnest this work was to her of the resources of grace treasured up in Him, Whom she would now know to be the promised Messiah for Whom every godly Jew was looking! The widow had always been a special object of God's loving care, and the Lord did the will of God in this as in all things.

Death must flee from His presence, for He is the Resurrection and the Life; so He says to the woman, "Weep not." And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. How eloquent is the

narrative in its simplicity! And how complete was the blessing bestowed!

The Lord Jesus, in anticipation of His work on the cross, said elsewhere "The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (John v.25; xi.25, 26).

His words look right on to the end, when death and the grave shall be cast into the lake of fire, and there will be no more death. But how solemn is the word that "The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works . . . and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." This is the second death, from which only those are exempt who take part in the first resurrection.

The fact of the Lord having raised this dead man at the gate of Nain caused fear to come upon them all: for it spoke to their consciences that God was in their midst, and they were little prepared to face the light. "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." They were constrained however to give glory to God: for God does make the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He restrains: for all things serve His might. They also acknowledged that the prophet God had told Moses He would raise up like unto him, was truly present. The same testimony however, when brought before them after the Lord's death and resurrection, resulted in the religious authorities persecuting the Lord's disciples, and even stoning Stephen to death. But the Lord's comforting word is "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you" (John xv.18). The truth will be either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death.

H.K.

(Reprinted from *The Bible Monthly* — July, 1932)

PSALM 22. (1 - 3)

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# Words of Help

*from the Scripture of Truth*

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Vol. LVIII

NOVEMBER 1970

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Concluded from inside back cover)*

Sometimes in our ordinary talk concerning spiritual matters, we speak of the new thing we come to possess when we are born anew (John iii.3) as the **new nature**, or as the **divine nature**. It is better, however, to follow the scriptural usage of the word. The Lord said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the Spirit is **spirit**," and we find "**spirit**," in the early verses of Romans viii, applied to that which is born of God within us. "**Nature**" is a wider term, embracing far more than the fresh element bestowed upon us at the first, and expressing the entire change of habit and general conduct which make up the "new man."

Once we were "**by nature**" the children of wrath as others (Ephesians ii.3), doing what our flesh and thoughts willed to do. Just as that "**nature**" included both the evil root and the evil fruit, so the "**divine nature**" of which we have become partakers involves both the **new spirit**, the **seed** which abides in us and cannot sin because we have been begotten of God (I John iii.9), and also our entire Christian practice. Being the children of God, we now exhibit a "**divine**" character at all times and under all circumstances.

A heavenly standard of conduct is therefore imposed upon us in the passage from Peter. Being born of God, our ways should bespeak that origin. Our Lord came forth from the Father: and He said to Philip, "He that hath seen Me has seen the Father" (John xiv.9). May our words, our walk, our lives, demonstrate that we have "**become partakers of the divine nature.**"

W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from *The Bible Monthly*—1941-2)

## LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XLI. *"Thy love to me was wonderful"*  
(2 Samuel i.26)

Such was David's appraisal of his friend Jonathan's devotion when tidings reached him of the death of Saul and his three sons in mount Gilboa at the hands of the Philistines.

From the standpoint that David is a type of Christ, it might have seemed more appropriate if these words had come from Jonathan's lips before they were silenced in an untimely death. For, like the rest of Israel, Jonathan owed his life to the one who had slain Goliath. As Jonathan reminded his father on one occasion, David "put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice" (1 Samuel xix.5). Nevertheless it is in David's lament that the words occur.

David was deeply moved by the tragedy which had overcome Saul and his sons, and instead of rejoicing over the removal of the man whose envy had made his own life almost unbearable, thinks rather of the dishonour brought upon the name of Jehovah by the slaying of one who had been "anointed with oil." He calls upon the daughters of Israel to weep over Saul "who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel." Magnanimously indeed he links Saul and Jonathan when he says they were "lovely and pleasant in their lives."

Considering, too, that Jonathan's career had ended with the ignominious fastening of his body to the wall of Beth-shan by the Philistines, would there not have been justification for some criticism on David's part? If Jonathan had wholeheartedly thrown in his lot with the one who had won his affection instead of following Saul so closely, how different things might have been! Had he not confessed to David in the wood of Ziph, "Thou shalt be king over Israel," adding "and I shall be next unto thee"? Alas, Jonathan returned to his house and to the support of his father, so that David has to remark so poignantly "in their death they were not divided." Instead of the honoured place in David's kingdom

which he had bespoken for himself, Jonathan finished up—on the wall of Beth-shan! How gracious, therefore, David's testimony to his friend—"thy love to me was wonderful"!

Jonathan's first outflow of love to David was the outcome of his appreciation of what David had done for him. Did he not feel personally indebted to the one who had rid Israel of their great enemy? That Jonathan himself was no mean soldier, 1 Samuel xiv. makes clear. Yet, even with such an achievement to support him, Jonathan had not been able to bring himself to tackle Goliath. On the other hand, David, probably a much younger man, had firmly stepped forward at the crucial moment and had shown what could be accomplished by unwavering faith in the living God. Such a display Jonathan, a man of faith himself, would be able to appreciate fully, and instead of giving way to envy as Saul did, he loved David as his own soul, stripping himself of garments even to his sword, bow and girdle, that David might be appropriately honoured.

A little later we find that Jonathan "delighted much in David" (1 Samuel xix.2). This seems to show that he grew to love David for what he was in himself. From the moment when Saul's anger had been roused by the ascription of greater praise to David in the acclamation of the women of Israel in their public rejoicing, David's life had been in danger. Yet in the course of chapter xviii. we read four times over that David behaved himself wisely—"more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was much set by" (verse 30). It would seem therefore that gratitude for what David had done expanded into sincere admiration for the man himself—his superb physical courage, his humility and absence of bragging in spite of his great victory.

It is lovely to find too (chapter xx.) that Jonathan's devotion to David survived Saul's taunt that he had "chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion . . . for as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom" (verses 30, 31). No doubt David knew the many temptations which Jonathan must have parried in

complete disregard of self-interest. So we are not altogether surprised at David's eulogy, "thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

Yet was there not a third explanation of Jonathan's devotion to David? Did he not love him because, by God's appointment, he was destined for the throne? Undoubtedly he would have heard from David of the anointing by Samuel following God's rejection of Saul for disobeying His instructions with regard to Amalek (1 Samuel xv. and xvi.). So in chapter xxiii.16-18, we find Jonathan strengthening David's hand in God, bidding him "Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel." In this Jonathan shows his complete acceptance of the will of God, and the certainty of its fulfilment in due course was a delight to him.

In Psalm ii., where opposition among the nations to God's appointment of His King in Zion is considered, the exhortation is to "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry" etc. What folly to disregard the divine decree! So we may love our blessed Saviour as we contemplate His present exaltation, waiting until His foes become His footstool, and He reigns in glory. How worthy He is of our love and our loyalty on that account!

We may well be very conscious of our own inadequacy and short-comings, so as to doubt that our Saviour could ever refer to the response of our hearts in the superlative terms used by David to describe Jonathan's love to him. Yet we should know Him well enough to be aware that He values the genuine love of even the poorest heart, not least the expression of it when those who truly love Him meet to remember Him in the breaking of bread and the drinking of the wine. Let us not fail to render to Him what is His due, and thus gladden His heart.

E. A. PETTMAN

## THE DIVINE WORKERS

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

Luke now gives his friend an appendix to the events in the Pharisee's house (Luke xii.). There Jesus had suffered the discourtesy of criticism arising from hypocrisy. He warns

His disciples and the multitude crowding around Him, "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

The character of the Son of Man has beauty beyond our comprehension, but how it stirs one to see each feature as it comes to us. Jesus never weighed actions in relation to Himself—it is *we* who do that—He always weighed actions in relation to God and the person acting. Hannah knew this: she sang, "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." His disciples were affronted by the behaviour of the Samaritans toward Him, but He told them He came to save—not to destroy. It was their position before God that concerned Him, not their refusal to accept Him in their village. He used the whip of small cords only when the money changers sat in open affront to God in His own house.

So, here, Luke shows the grace and care of Jesus in warning of the spreading leaven of hypocrisy, and, at the same time, the infinite care and love of God whose interest extended even to counting precious the very hairs of their heads. Thus, out of enmity to Himself in the house of the Pharisee comes the warning to the multitude who were being deceived by the outward religious observances and demands of the Pharisee cult. God's hatred of pretence in approach to Him is emphatic as one reads the indictment in chapter xi., and, as the record of the words of Jesus continues, the shelter of His response to all who approach in reality is clear. "Fear not"—the enmity of the religious world may kill, but "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man confess before the angels of God." The same discerning protection that is aware of the death of a sparrow would be their ever present shield. They were not to stand in fear of Pharisees, but to confess the Son of God and hear *their names* upon His lips as those who, before the heavenly multitude, would be proclaimed His own for eternity.

There would be many words spoken against the Son of Man by that "generation." They would be forgiven. But "the generation" would reject not only Christ Himself but the Holy Spirit, Whose testimony would be to the value of the

cross of Christ in redemption. The solemn word that follows is "it shall not be forgiven." He speaks thus of the "generation" of unbelief as distinct from the *nation* which will, in repentance, be forgiven. So does His work most solemnly and clearly distinguish between those in the Light of eternal realities and those, alas, who prefer the dark of a passing world of unbelief.

The flock of Israel remains, crowded around Him, and a voice from the company seeks to make use of Him for earthly purposes as though His Messiahship were accepted. "Teacher, speak to my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But He was not appointed as "a judge or divider" over them—nor for any earthly position. His purpose was an heavenly one. His reply to the man is in the form of a question none could answer—"Who established Me as a judge or a divider over you?"

It will be remembered that Luke emphasizes the moral aspect of events which form the treatise upon which he laboured for the spiritual benefit of Theophilus—and, indeed, for ourselves in our own day. What is the moral teaching evoked by the voice from the crowd? The better rendering of verse 15 is "Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness, for it is not because a man is in abundance that his *life* is in his possessions." There would be many poor in the crowd, and the voice raised at an unjust partition of possessions would express the desire of the majority for things earthly and material. Israel had forfeited her heritage. She was no longer a nation, but scattered and set aside. The Jews, taxed and controlled by Rome, with relatives and friends scattered far from Jerusalem, were obsessed by things material, and the maintenance of their "place and nation" (John xi.48). The true path of life was in faith in God—in confiding in Him for all they needed. The heart of them all was under that Light of searching which disclosed the selfish folly and danger of seeking and relying upon earthly possessions in a passing life.

So, in the manner of that day, and with intent that all should understand, the divine Worker speaks His parable: "The

land of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do? for I have not a place where I shall lay up my fruits." One thinks of the crowd, intent, expectant—a rich man was the object of envy! But there would be nothing evil in a good harvest. Plentifulness is a mercy. Received as such it would tend to thanksgiving. The danger lay in trusting in extending barns and "good things laid up for many years." "Repose thyself, eat, drink, be merry" (verse 19). The purpose and reliance was in the tangible things of time—the munificent Giver of the good was forgotten.

The parable is short—but most solemn. Of what permanent value was the inheritance of the man in the crowd—or of the brother who was retaining it? Both were covetous! Were they not a present symbol of Israel? For how many centuries she had grieved Him! Was not His parable, in a measure, an echo from the past? Had they not relied upon their possessions in covetous pride rather than upon the One who had given all to them?

There is a very sad note in the prophetic swan song of Moses. "He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness: He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him . . . that he might eat the increase of the fields: and He made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs . . . and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick . . . then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deuteronomy xxxii.).

So, Moses, on the eve of his departure from Israel—at the close of his long day of shepherd care! One turns to hear the lament of "that great Shepherd of the sheep" (Hebrews xiii.20), toward the close of *His* earthly day, "ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John v.40).



As to ourselves, who know the eternal treasure of His love, shall we not seek to be increasingly rich toward Him—using, as stewards in responsibility, the daily mercies from His hand? The evening of the Day of Grace is closing in toward the night when the soul of a covetous world will be required of it.

EDWARD T. WOOD

## MARTHA AND MARY

Scripture records three well-known incidents concerning these two sisters. In Luke's gospel, chapter x., we are told of how Martha welcomed Jesus into her home, and how Mary sat at His feet and listened to His teaching. In John's gospel, chapter xi., we are told of the death of their brother Lazarus, and how Jesus raised him from death. In three gospels—Matthew, Mark and John—we have with substantially the same details, the incident of the supper at which Mary anointed the Lord with ointment.

For the sake of some readers it may be as well to say that the Mary with whom we are now concerned is not the same as Mary Magdalene (that is, Mary of Magdala), since the first lived at Bethany. Also, both Marys are different from the unnamed outcast ("a woman in the city, which was a sinner" Luke vii.), who also anointed Jesus' feet.

Mary Magdalene was delivered from demon possession by the Lord, but there is no reason whatever to think that He healed Mary of Bethany. Again, the Magdalene's affliction was dreadful, but it *was* an affliction, and is not to be confused with the sinful life led by the woman of Luke vii.

Finally, the two anointing scenes are quite different. One took place in the house of Simon the leper, at a supper arranged in honour of Jesus; the other in the house of Simon the Pharisee, where Jesus was dishonoured by His host withholding all the customary courtesies.

In the first the woman, Mary (of Bethany) was criticized for wasting the ointment; in the other, Jesus Himself was criticized for allowing the woman to touch Him.

To return to Martha and Mary. The Lord Jesus loved them and their brother Lazarus (John xi.5), and they loved Him, and believed Him to be the Christ, the Son of God (verse 27).

As an expression of her love and faith, Martha made Him welcome in her home, and probably, though this we are not told, His disciples as well. It goes without saying that this involved much work and preparation, and we find Martha "cumbered about much serving." Her annoyance at seeing Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to His teaching, is so entirely natural, so "human", that one inevitably feels sympathy with her. But then, she comes to the Lord and rebukes Him for allowing Mary to sit there. "Lord," she says, "dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me."

At once it is clear that she has made a great mistake. An attitude that could lead her to speak thus to the Master for whose honour all was professedly done, condemned itself. To accuse Him of thoughtlessness! And then she goes further, and presumes to instruct Him to put things right.

Yes, we can see at once how wrong she is. But what was the source of her error?

Her faith was true, though for a moment she forgot His glory. In His great humility He had made Himself liable to just that!

Her love was true, and it was *practical*. To minister to His needs and the needs of His disciples with her hands and her substance was the truest expression of love. Where then had she gone wrong? What did the Lord answer?

How gently, how graciously, did He deal with her! There was no word of rebuke for her rudeness to Him, only a simple pointing to her error. "Martha, Martha, thou art worried and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." Thus did He at the same time defend the one who was unjustly faulted.

What one thing had she failed to give due attention to? Surely in that she had never really sat at His feet, as Mary had.

To sit at His feet, and listen to His words—such words as had never before been heard in this world—was not only enough to fill Mary's heart and mind completely, but to sit there and learn from Him was also to give Him the place that belonged to Him. For He had come into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He had come to make known the Father, to reveal the Father's love. That place Martha denied to Him, as far as she was concerned. *Her* mind was taken up with what she was doing and wanted to do, and just then everything had to be subordinated to it. How easy for self to fill the mental vision instead of Christ! Yet she was doing it all for Him.

Now many christians cannot accept this view of the matter, and ask what would happen if everyone were like Mary? However, He Who fed the five thousand *after* ministering all day long to their spiritual needs knows the answer to that quibble!

That then was Martha's mistake. The better way would have been to place herself and her household *at His disposal*, leaving Him to command. Would He not then have sat her also down at His feet until, nourished and strengthened as never before, she and Mary could have gone together, at His bidding, to prepare what was needful? Martha would not *then* have been cumbered, or worried, or troubled. Or perhaps He had some still better way. Who knows? Do we ourselves know what it is to sit at His feet? Is it our habit to do so?

The very essence of Christianity is the bringing of poor lost men back to God, to know Him as revealed in His Son, to have communion with Him. But there are many whose Christianity is so "practical" that they have organized Christ out of it altogether. Others are so occupied with meeting men's bodily needs, essential as these are, that the needs of the soul (for which Christ died) are ignored, or even denied.

But when the heart and mind are filled with Christ, there is no hindrance to Christian activity; but it is activity directed by Christ, energized by His Spirit, guided by His word.

The essential thing, then, is to yield ourselves to Him, to teach us, to strengthen us, to use us just as He sees good.

Activity is not the first thing: He wants us before all else to know Himself. In that way we shall grow like Him, so that we may become in very truth "the epistle of Christ, known and read of all men." Do men indeed see Christ in us?

Moreover, it is surely true that very many, at least, of the quarrels and divisions that have marred the history of Christendom would never have occurred if the servants of Christ had had their hearts and minds taken up with Him. Most of the things which disturb the peace of Christian assemblies to-day would not occur, or would be amicably settled if, instead of there being so much display of self-will, brethren were really yielded to Christ. There is nothing so calculated to produce at the same time, patience with one another and a firm stand for the truth of God (not just our own or brethren's prejudice), as a heart truly yielded to Christ.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

(to be continued, D.V.)

## SINGING IN A STRANGE LAND

*"How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?"* (Psalm cxxxvii.4).

There is a touching pathos to the opening verses of this Psalm, which every sensitive heart will feel. The people of God had been carried away as captives into Babylon, some five hundred miles from Jerusalem, on the remote side of the Syrian desert. It was a captivity they had brought upon themselves by their persistent disobedience and idolatry. Now they find themselves captives in idolatrous Babylon, surrounded by the abominable idolatries of that heathen land. Their grief at their sorrowful plight is very great, while their captors add the final touch of irony to their cup of bitterness by demanding from them "one of the songs of Zion". Their hot tears flow fast as their minds travel back to their homeland and to Jerusalem, whose walls had once echoed with the holy praises of Jehovah. The thing their captors required of them was impossible to them now. "How can we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" they reply. It was weeping, and not singing, that must be their occupation now, and their harps,

the instruments of joyful praise, are hung silent and unused upon the weeping willows by the rivers of Babylon, to weep with them, had that been possible.

May there not be times when there is something analogous to this sorrowful situation in our own lives? Do we not have to own that there are times when, through disobedience, or unconfessed sin, or coldness of heart, the Holy Spirit of God is grieved within us? As a consequence, the harp, that joyful instrument of exultant praise, about which we thought last month, lies silent and unused. The Spirit of God is no longer free to vibrate its chords, in communion with our own spirit, to produce in our hearts the sweet melody of joyful praise, that would glorify God and rejoice the heart of our Lord and Saviour.

The Holy Spirit always remains within the believer, even as the Lord promised, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever" (John xiv.16). But when there is disobedience and sin allowed in the life, He must perforce occupy us with our failure, making us feel how deeply we have grieved our gracious Lord. This is the beginning of the work of restoration. Then there follows "the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. v.26); when the Word of God is brought to bear upon the conscience in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that the sin and failure are seen in the light of God's truth and holiness, leading us to full confession to God, Who has promised that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i.9).

The interrupted communion and the joy of the Lord are then restored; the harp of praise which had been laid aside, neglected and unused, is taken up, its chords of praise are heard again as the Holy Spirit is free once more to engage us with the glories of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. The cleansed and restored heart pulsates with fresh glad praise, to Him Whose own heart is gladdened by every note of true praise that rises to Him from the hearts of His own. A. E. JORDAN

## THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

(See Ephesians iii.3, 4)

We must guard against the notion that "the mystery" or secret means the gospel. The gospel in itself does not and never can mean a mystery. It was that which in its foundations always was before the mind of God's people in the form of a promise, or of a revelation of grace not yet accomplished. But nowhere in Scripture is the gospel called a mystery. It may be connected with the mystery, but it is not itself a mystery. It was no mystery that a Saviour was to be given; it was the very first revelation of grace after man became a sinner. The Seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head. A mystery is something that was not revealed of old, and which could not be known otherwise. Again, you have in the prophets a full declaration that the righteousness of God was near to come; the plainest possible statement that God was going to show Himself a Saviour-God. So again you have His making an end of sins and bringing in reconciliation and everlasting righteousness. All these things were in no sense the mystery. The mystery means that which was kept secret, not that which could not be understood, which is a human notion of mystery; but an unrevealed secret—a secret not yet divulged in the Old Testament but brought out fully in the New.

What, then, is this mystery? It is, first, that Christ, instead of taking the kingdom, predicted by the prophets, should completely disappear from the scene of this world, and that God should set Him up in heaven at His own right hand as the Head of all glory, heavenly and earthly, and that He should give the whole universe into the hands of Christ to administer the kingdom and maintain the glory of God the Father in it. This is the first and most essential part of the mystery, the second, or Church's part, being but the consequence of it. Christ's universal headship is not the theme spoken of in the Old Testament. You have Him as Son of David, Son of man, Son of God, the King; but nowhere is the whole universe of God (but rather the kingdom under the whole heavens) put under Him. In this headship over all things, Christ will share

all with His bride. Christ will have His Church to be the partner of His own unlimited dominion, when that day of glory dawns upon the world.

Hence, then, as we know, the mystery consists of two great parts, which we have summed up in Ephesians v.32: "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Thus the mystery means neither Christ nor the Church alone, but Christ and the Church united in heavenly blessedness and dominion over everything that God has made.

(From Lectures on "The Ephesians"—by William Kelly)

## **PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE**

*"He has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."*

(2 Peter i.4)

The apostle Peter writes here of the new life of believers in its practical, moral display, rather than of the inward source from whence the display arises. The life that God gives implies more than the new state which is in contrast with the old state of death Godward in which we were. **The divine nature** implies the exhibition of that new life in new forms of love and hatred, of growth and development, of activity and achievement. It is, in short, Christ living in the new man, by faith (Galatians ii.20).

It is, of course, true that a fresh germ of life is imparted at the new birth, but the existence of that inner germ makes itself evident outwardly. Secretly the seed takes root downward and springs upward into view. The one born "of water and the Spirit" not only enters the kingdom but sees its spiritual character. For the kingdom of God is not a terrestrial domain; nor acts of "eating and drinking; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans xiv.17). When these qualities of the kingdom of God form part of our life, we have manifestly "become **partakers of the divine nature,**" as the apostle declares.

*(Continued inside front cover)*

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*from the Scripture of Truth*

Vol. LVIII

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No. 12

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# WORDS OF HELP

## A Monthly Magazine for Believers

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*(Concluded from inside back cover)*

describes these gifts of theirs as "an odour of sweet savour, an acceptable sacrifice, agreeable to God" (Phil. iv.18, New Tr.). They spoke to him of Christ working in the hearts of those distant brethren, for he uses similar terms in describing Christ's offering and sacrifice to God (Ephesians v.2). Clearly, the Philippians were walking in close communion with the Lord, and the love of Christ had constrained them to minister in that way for Paul's necessities. Their generosity sprang from the life of Christ within them, and the frankincense and myrrh of their offering were evident to the spiritual mind of the apostle.

What surprises to human reckoning there are when our conduct and ways are displayed in their real character in the sanctuary of the Lord's presence! Sweetness and fragrance were in the widow's mites, while the gold and silver talents of the rich were but filthy lucre, corrupted and cankered (James v.2, 3). There were grateful odours to the Lord in the alabaster box of Mary, but only the noxious vapours of treachery and death in Judas's bag for the poor.

"To me to live is Christ", said the apostle; and, again, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." By such living it is that "we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ", while we also exhale His fragrance and sweetness to those about us.

W. J. HOCKING

(Extracted)

**MARTHA AND MARY, continued****THE RAISING OF LAZARUS**

There are clear signs, in the record of the death and raising up of Lazarus, that Martha had taken to heart the gentle correction in the words of Jesus which we have already considered.

She is at one with her sister in sending to Him a perfectly phrased message: "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." It is free from any suggestion from them as to what the Lord should do. It does not demand haste. Had they said, "Lord, come down ere our brother die" (see John iv.49), Jesus, in order to fulfil the divine purpose, would have had to deny their request. But they left it all to Him.

Since He remained two days where He was, before going to Bethany, and found Lazarus four days dead when He arrived, it is evident that, even had He come at once, He would not have come in time. But the sisters knew that He could have healed Lazarus without being present, as He had done elsewhere. Some of the Jews remarked on this, saying, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" But no such complaint came from the two sisters.

Martha comes to meet Him, and her first words disclose at the same time her faith in His power and grace and the very human limitations of that faith. She says, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died".

But He *was* there, the Son of God, as she acknowledged. Had He then come there helpless, too late, defeated by death's rapid attack, merely to condole with their grief? What an utterly unworthy conclusion! Some glimpse of the truth she has, however, when she says "But I know that even now, whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee".

Now we may remark that this indefinite, though compre-

hensive word "whatsoever" was perhaps used to avoid any hint of her seeking to direct Him. Her "even now" betrays man's feeling of utter helplessness in the face of death, and when she says she *knows* God will answer any entreaty He might make (a way of speaking not really suitable to the majesty of His person) it is doubtful if she fully means it, as her next words show. Certainly she hardly expected it.

"Thy brother shall rise again," the Lord replies. And Martha says, "I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection in the last day". But if that was all, it was an answer that any godly Jew might have given, and showed that she had failed to understand what difference the presence of God's Christ made. Then follow the renowned words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Martha answered evasively, though confessing her faith in Him as the Christ, the Son of God, because she could not take in what He told her of the future resurrection at His coming, nor of its application there and then to her brother Lazarus. And who shall blame her! Nevertheless her confession of Himself was as clear and full as that of Simon Peter in Matthew xvi. "Yea Lord, I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." And then she goes away to call Mary, who perhaps, she thought, might understand better.

Now we are told that Mary remained sitting in the house when they received the news of the Lord's arrival, but went out when Martha told her of His calling for her. Full of sorrow and perplexity as Mary's heart was, it would quite certainly be wrong to attribute her remaining in the house to any reproachful feeling. Probably she felt it became her to wait for His call. But equally was it becoming for Martha, whose house it was, to go out to welcome Him. He knows and values the outgoing of our hearts towards Him! It is our frequent forgetfulness that grieves Him.

Then Mary fell at His feet and said, as her sister had said, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!" Her faith, then, was limited, as Martha's was. But how much more suitable to fall at His feet while confessing it! In such an attitude she acknowledged that, though she did not understand, she would wait for Him to show His own answer to their sorrow and need. But she said no more, probably being too overcome by her emotion.

It is at this point that we read of Jesus Himself groaning in the spirit, and weeping. He wept, surely, in sympathy with their grief; but was He not also disappointed because even in Bethany He found no *expectation* of the mighty deliverance He had come to bring? Perhaps we also disappoint Him in this way?

Finally, as He orders the stone to be removed from the tomb, Martha's lack of subjection to His word re-appears, as she protests at this. But again, how gentle is His reply: "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?"

We know how gloriously they saw it. But the scripture leaves us to picture their feelings.

## THE SUPPER AND THE ANOINTING

The supper took place six days before the Passover (John), and in the house of Simon the leper (Matthew, Mark). Simon was doubtless one whom the Lord had healed, and he was evidently distinguished from other Simons by this designation. We know nothing more about him. But apparently this supper, held in honour of Jesus, for some reason was not held in the house of Martha.

Lazarus sat with Jesus among the guests, a living monument to the glorious power that had raised him to life, and a reminder to everyone of the true majesty of the lowly Man Who was there, eating and drinking among them.

Martha did not sit with the guests. Probably she was on familiar terms with Simon and his kinsfolk (if any), so that

it was natural for her to help in the serving. But the simple statement, "and Martha served" inevitably takes our minds back to the earlier occasion. Now, however, her service is not a "cumbered" one. Mary is not helping her, but there is no resentment in her heart. Previously, self and its doings had occupied for her the centre of the stage, and how wrong of Mary not to be there too! But now she is consumed with love for the blessed Lord Who was not only her Lord and Saviour but Who had wrought so wondrously to restore to life her beloved brother. Her serving was part of that true devotion to Him, and doubtless was as truly valued as the worship of Mary. So does He ever appreciate the performance of tedious, humdrum tasks done faithfully in His name. "Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."

Then came Mary, bringing an alabaster box of very precious ointment (its value in today's money being about thirty pounds), and breaking it, poured it on the head of Jesus (Mark) and on His feet (John). "And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

Was it that she began by pouring it on His head (the accustomed place), but then felt that the place at His feet became her better? It has often been remarked that it is the Gospel which so constantly brings Him before us as the Son of God which records the anointing of His feet — as though marking how the Divine Glory had come down to tread the paths of earth.

We do not read that she kissed them, as did the woman in Luke vii, for that was the rapture of one who had come to do honour to her new-found Saviour, to Whom His host had denied the kiss of welcome — this was rather the worship that set Him infinitely above her. But like the other woman, Mary wiped His feet with her hair.

The ointment she had treasured for just this occasion, and as she alone, it seems, of all His disciples, had really believed His prophecies about His death, she poured it out on His living body, fearing (and how truly!), that there

would be no other opportunity to show Him honour. "She is come aforehand," said the Lord, "to anoint My body to the burying." Then she wiped His feet with her hair, so declaring that what was naturally her glory was appropriately devoted to His lowly service.

"Waste" the disciples called it angrily, led on by Judas Iscariot, who affected to think of what its monetary value would have meant to the poor. But all that Judas really showed was how little he valued his Master, as he confirmed by going away to make his bargain with the chief priests.

But the Lord Jesus, as He defended Mary, had to spell out the true position for His dull disciples. "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on Me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but Me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying."

Used as they were to going in and out with Him, they failed to value aright the inestimable privilege that was theirs. But how had Mary profited by sitting at His feet! She had learned, perhaps more than any other, of the true glory and grace of the Son of God. This must always be the source of true worship.

The three members of that Bethany family represent the three important facets of Christian activity: Lazarus the victorious risen life lived to the glory of the Master; Martha the diligent service for Him; Mary the worship poured out at His feet. May it be ours to abound in them all!

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

## OUR MOST HOLY FAITH

*"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life"*

(Jude 20,21)

The forcible tone of the exhortation conveyed in these

verses is in keeping with the energetic language of the entire Epistle.

We know that Jude was inspired of the Holy Spirit to denounce in no measured terms the apostacy from the faith that was even then setting in, and which, alas, is to be fully developed in a day that is coming.

But, if he draws in lurid colours a picture of the evil, if he speaks in words of singular vehemence and indignation, equally earnest is his encouragement to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Not only must the holy light of Christianity ever throw all that is contrary to it into deeper shadow, but the very enormity of the evil thus displayed should be the signal for the believer to strive with redoubled vigilance against it.

Hence Jude's trumpet-call to the conflict. Hence he characterises **the Faith as "most holy"**.

It is evident that the word, "**faith**", is used in this passage not so much as the emanating principle of all spiritual life, but rather in an objective sense (so I wrote it above with a capital letter), meaning the sum total of the truth revealed in Christ.

**Faith**, then, is a body of doctrine, but it has its centre and circumference in a Divine Person, Who, of old, was pre-figured in the unleavened cake of the meal-offering, which also was declared to be "**most holy**". In this offering we have the incarnation set forth, as other kinds typify the atonement.

The "**most holy faith**" embraces all that, and more than, the various Levitical sacrifices foreshadowed, and we shall do well to consider the "**faith**" from this (may I say?) pictorial standpoint.

And, while undoubtedly a subjective introspection of what we believe is good and even necessary, here at any rate Jude bids us to build up ourselves upon the truth revealed in the



word of God. If we do this, our subjective faith will assuredly gain both in strength and solidity.

In this passage, we have a fourfold exhortation, all four closely connected. And, no doubt, the heeding of one injunction will lead to heeding all of them—

- (1) Building up yourselves;
- (2) Praying;
- (3) Keeping in the love of God;
- (4) Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If we really (1) **build up ourselves** on our most holy Faith, it must be because we (2) **pray** much, and that in the power of (en) the Holy Ghost. But perhaps it is possible to attend too exclusively to the first two exhortations (that is, to the letter of them), and thereby to develop a certain austerity, a “Stand by, for I am holier than thou” attitude, which may exist half-unconsciously to ourselves.

So there is the third thing: (3) **“keep yourselves in the love of God”**. And it is striking that this part of the exhortation is put in the imperative form; for while it is said, “building up”, “praying”, “looking”, it is not “keeping”, but **“keep”** — almost as if to “keep” oneself in God’s love were the chief thing. Truly all is important for us to obey, but no one who is conscious of how little he deserves God’s love will be elated with spiritual pride, or indulge in a hard and austere spirit.

Lastly, the saints are exhorted (4) **to look for** the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, which fitly completes — the apostle’s words, I was going to say, but Jude was not an apostle in the strictest sense, any more than was James, author of the Epistle that bears his name, though both he and Jude were the Lord’s brethren — which fitly completes Jude’s hortatory words.

Thus, we have four things, building, praying, keeping, looking. They are present things for us; they are not viewed as completed and done with; they endure while the Christian life on earth endures, that is, as long as the believer is in the body.

But only those can **build themselves up** who are already on the foundation, and "rooted" in Christ (Ephesians iii.17; Colossians ii.7). And it is interesting to see that the apostle Paul in Colossians (ii.7) uses the same word for **building up** that Jude does in his brief epistle — the same word and with the same force, indicating a continuous process.

The only difference is that Paul says **being built up in Christ**, and Jude says **building up ourselves on our most holy faith**. Thus does scripture ever corroborate scripture. R.B.

(Reprinted from "*The Bible Monthly*")

## CAPTIVITY LED CAPTIVE

(Note on Ephesians iv.8)

The difficulty of the passage lies in the peculiarity of the expression, "He led captivity captive". It is a poetical phrase, quoted from Psalm lxxviii.18, containing this forcible Hebrew idiom. And we think its interpretation becomes clear after a little careful consideration. It is hoped the following remarks may help.

The word "captivity," may have one of two meanings. Here, vigour and emphasis are given to the phrase by using its less common meaning; that is, the word "captivity," here means the *captors*, and not as more generally, the *captured*. Viewed in this light, the sentence signifies, "He led those captive who had led others into captivity." And according to this interpretation, the Lord in His ascension led as captives those powers who had held the sons of men in captivity or bondage.

The passage, therefore, presents the beautiful figure of the Lord, Who had first descended into the lower parts of the earth, ascending up on high as the Victor. By His sufferings and death, Christ had overcome all the foes of God and man. He had "spoiled principalities and powers" in the cross, and "made a show of them in triumph" (Colossians ii.15, New Tr.). His ascension is the triumphal return of a conqueror, leading in His train a procession of cap-

tives, that is, of those who had been the oppressors of others. Compare the similar phrase in Revelation xiii.10, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity"; and also, "They shall take them captive, whose captives they were" (Isiah xiv.2).

The fact of this victorious conquest by our Lord is now known, not by sight, but by faith, for we *see* not yet all things put under Him (Hebrews ii.8). When our Lord appears in power, all His enemies will be publicly *seen* to be under His feet, the last enemy to be destroyed being death (I Corinthians xv.25-28). But in divine estimation, the actual victory was gained at the cross. Then, in effect, the powers that lead into captivity (cp. 2 Timothy ii.26; Luke xiii.16) were themselves led captive. The Lord entered the strong man's house, and having first bound the strong man, spoiled his goods (Matthew xii.29). Satan, sin, and death were subjugated by the One Who was "crucified in weakness," and they who had been captors were made His captives; "He led captivity captive."

Other examples of the use of this phrase in a similar sense are found in the Old Testament. In Judges, the victory by the children of Israel over their Canaanite oppressors is celebrated in song. Through their leaders they were delivered from captivity to Jabin. Deborah sings, "Lead thy captivity captive, (Barak), thou son of Abinoam" (Judges v.12), that is, Lead the Canaanite captors (who had brought Israel into a state of captivity) captive. It would show how the tables had been turned, which is the force in Psalm lxviii.18 and Ephesians iv.8. Compare also the LXX version of Numbers xxi.1; xxx.12; 2 Chronicles xxviii.11,13, where the abstract form, "captivity" is used instead of the concrete, "captives," to add vigour to the sentences.

W. J. HOCKING

## THE MEETING OF ISAAC AND REBEKAH

(Remarks on Genesis xxiv.24-36,58-67)

This scripture contains a very beautiful type of the coming

of the Lord Jesus to take His body and His bride to Himself.

Abraham had concerned himself to provide a bride for his son Isaac. Isaac had in a figure passed through death; he had been offered in sacrifice, and his father had received him back as from the dead. And now Eliezer, who is a type of the Holy Spirit, comes across the wilderness to the kindred of Abraham, and there he bears his testimony as to Isaac. "My master has one son whom he loves, to whom he has given everything he has."

Eliezer bore witness to Isaac, who was the heir of all things. And he won the heart of Rebekah by his testimony, so that when he came to the point, and put the question to her plainly, she was ready to leave home and kindred and everything to which she was accustomed, and go with Eliezer to be the bride of one whom her eyes had never seen.

Abraham's servant and Rebekah had come across the wilderness together. She had already tasted of Isaac's wealth by the valuable gifts bestowed upon her. Many conversations went on during the journey between Eliezer and Rebekah concerning Isaac the heir of God's promise to Abraham.

And then the evening comes when Isaac goes out as usual to meditate at eventide, and this time the camels are coming. And he meets with Rebekah, and loves her, and she becomes his wife. He welcomes her to share his blessing as the heir of the promise. He brings her into Sarah's tent. Sarah in the Old Testament is a type of Israel.

## THE MISSION OF THE SPIRIT

Just so the Holy Spirit has been sent down into this world, consequent upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. You know the testimony of the gospel to us is that the Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hands, and that the one who believes in Him has eternal life (John iii.35,36). Was it not this truth that the Spirit

of God set out before us to win our hearts for the Lord Jesus Christ?

And the Holy Spirit is the One Who cares for us in the wilderness. His supplies never fail. We are weakness itself; we live in a day of weakness, but this has been true of the saints always. The Spirit of God is here in all His power, while failure comes in on our part — the failure of unbelief, and the failure due to lack of love; yet there is no stint of resources in Him. And He is leading us on to the day when the Lord Jesus will come from heaven, and we shall meet with Him as Rebekah met with Isaac. Then the Lord will take us to be with Himself in His Father's house.

### ARE WE EXPECTING THE LORD TODAY?

There is not one of us who would question this hope, but beloved, have we ever searched our hearts as to it? Do our consciences ever raise the question whether we are content to know as a doctrine that the Lord Jesus is coming again without ever being in the actual expectation of it? Let us each one this morning put the question to himself. Would it fill me with joy if I knew with certainty that the Lord Jesus was coming today?

It is a very easy thing to pass the question by, to refuse to consider it in the presence of Him Who reads our hearts, but there could be nothing more health-giving for us, and nothing more needful for us. Alas, it is so easy for us to content ourselves with the knowledge of the truth, when the truth itself has lost all power in our hearts. Do you think if we knew for a certainty that the Lord Jesus was coming today, that there would be so many empty seats this morning?

### IS NOT THE LORD HIMSELF EXPECTING?

Beloved, it is the moment, I may surely say with reverence, the moment to which the Lord Jesus Himself is looking forward. He loved the church; He gave himself for it. He looks down upon us from heaven. He sees in us the

fruit of all His suffering and agony upon the cross. Such is the place that we have in His eyes. He loves us, and cares for us as a man cares for his own flesh, and when we think of the poverty of our answer to such love, it humbles us in His presence.

What should we say to Him? For it is not only that He will speak to us, but you and I will speak to Him. And we shall not then make any excuses to Him. He is the One who knows all the truth, and we, as those who know Him and have confidence in His love, will tell out all the truth to Him.

But beloved, it is not for us to content ourselves with the knowledge that the Lord Jesus is about to return. I say again, the question is whether our hearts are really looking out for Him to come, whether this hope has its proper effect upon us day by day.

#### WHO WILL BE FOUND WATCHING?

“Blessed,” said the Lord Jesus, “are those servants whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.” It is not enough to know the *truth* of His coming. That is what the wicked servant knew, for he said, “My lord delayeth his coming.” *That* evil thought is what you and I have to guard against. In our lack of desire, in the little love that we manifest toward His Name, we show what is in our hearts.

And, beloved, the more we think of the love of the Lord Jesus, the more it is the meditation of our hearts, the more it will be our desire to answer to such love, and to the desire of His heart. Then, because of His great love for us, we shall no longer slumber and sleep, but we shall strive to be found at His return watching for Him and longing for Him.

May He find us not only ready because we have been cleansed from our sins in His precious blood, but may our hearts be engaged with Him and be set free to serve and please Him. May we be so walking that nothing will come up in our hearts to create the desire that He should delay

His coming a little longer. Beloved, may His love so work in our hearts that He may find us expecting Him, ready to answer to His voice, and to go in to be with Him in His Father's house for ever. G. F. Cox

(Reprinted from *The Bible Monthly* — February 1934)

## FRAGRANCE AND SWEETNESS

*"I rose up to open to my Beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock"*

(Song of Solomon v.5)

On the table was a pot with a dozen pink blooms. They looked gay and bright in the sunshine that was flooding the room. A visitor attracted by the showy sight quickly drew near to enjoy the fragrance of the flowers, but, alas, there was none. They were artificial; cleverly made; "things without life", having colour and form, but lacking the excellences of real plant-life — fragrance and sweetness. No honey bee ever visited those pink petals on my table.

I thought how often the Christian life lacks the sweetness and fragrance of the absent Master. There are pleasant words, cheery smiles, and charitable deeds, all very commendable and delightful features in themselves; yet there is something missing. The spirit of Christ is not in the heart to impart fragrance and sweetness to the outward actions. They are flowers made by man's fingers, and not grown in God's earth.

It was not thus with the gifts brought by Epaphroditus to Paul the prisoner from the Philippian assembly. Those kind offerings, conveyed to him with such devoted pains, were all redolent with the love of Christ, and their sweetness and fragrance were a joy to the lonely and saddened servant of the Lord imprisoned in Rome.

In his letter of acknowledgment to the saints, the apostle

*(Continued inside front cover)*

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