

Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

(Continued from inside back cover)

careful comparison of passages where it occurs makes it clear that the predominant meaning is the abode of the soul or spirit after death, with no distinction as yet between godly and ungodly.

When it comes to speak of Christ, the Scripture in Ps. xvi. says "Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol", and continues "Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Both Paul (Acts xiii.34-37) and Peter (Acts ii.31) understand this as referring to the resurrection of Christ, with the thought that His soul would not be allowed to remain among the dead, or His body to remain in the tomb. As Paul says elsewhere, Christ brought life and immortality *to light* by the gospel, and apart from this O.T. reference, the N.T. does not speak of the godly as going to hades, but as being "with Christ", or "asleep in Jesus", or, as in the passage already referred to, "in paradise".

Here is a change, with greater light, in the use of the word "hades", but from various dubious sources the idea arose that Christ's spirit visited hades to release the souls of the righteous. This is quite foreign to Scripture, though possibly the Apostles' Creed refers to it. Certainly 1 Pet. iii.19 does not mean this, for the preaching there referred to was not by Christ's human spirit but by the Spirit of God, as Peter says. Christ testified to those ungodly men by His Holy Spirit acting in Noah, while they were alive before the flood. But not even this scripture can be tortured into teaching that Christ suffered in "gehenna" after His death. On the cross He was forsaken of God, and this surely is what hell is in essence, but when He cried "It is finished" and gave up His spirit, He passed into the presence of God, which is what paradise is. There, as Ps. xvi. declares, is fulness of joy.

EDITOR

STRENGTH FOR ALL SEASONS

How familiar at the change of the years is the picture of an aged, bearded, stooping man, with a spent hourglass in his hand and a worn out scythe over his shoulder, to depict the passage of time; and the figure of a baby to represent the hope and vigour of the future. Many people, at the beginning of a new year, are foolish enough to formulate resolutions reforming their ways which have no more hope of surviving than those which died three hundred and sixty days before. One cannot deny that a feeling of kinship with the old man creeps over one at times but is it really true that the believer is left to languish in the rush of daily circumstances as his unbelieving compatriots do? "Moses the man of God", who wrote Psalm xc., spoke of man's days being set at three score and ten years, but which may continue to the length of four score in unusual circumstances. Actually for him at that advanced age, life was to just begin to open out, and he subsequently had forty more years of the most arduous and eventful life a man ever had, leading Israel through the wilderness. At the end of this he viewed the whole of Canaan from the top of mount Pisgah and died there with eyes undimmed and natural force not abated.

It has been said, with a deal of truth, that we are immortal till our work is done. The promise was, "as thy days (note the plural) so shall thy strength be" (Deut. xxxiii.25); that is, today, tomorrow, the next day and every day to follow until the end. "I am with you always until the end of the age," was the promise of the Lord Jesus to His own (Matt. xxviii.20).

The words of Isaiah at the close of chapter 40 are topical and enlightening, though he has not much cheer for the one who trusts in youthful strength, which the Apostle Paul also admitted was only profitable for a little while. Isaiah tells us, "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall." So the witness of these two agrees that continuance cannot be hoped for unaided, but both bear testimony to the availability of suitable help. The former, speaking of his own experiences can say "I can do all things

through Christ that strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv.13), and the latter comes out with that wonderful testimony, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. xl.31).

Verses 28 to 31 of Isaiah xl will well repay close study. "Fainting" and "weariness" are mentioned three times. First in verse 28, as unthinkable in connection with Jehovah, "the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth," He made it all in perfection and set the universe to work perfectly. As Sustainer He causes it day by day to function faultlessly, so that today, after how many thousands of years we do not know, man, having found out the rules on which it works, can calculate forward and backward and bear testimony to its amazing accuracy. "He fainteth not, neither is weary", but do the men of science give Him the glory due to His name? Do they not rather draw attention to their own cleverness?

Secondly verse 29 tells us, "He (with emphasis on the Person) giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." Here then is the Source to which we can go. The apostle James tells us that He giveth to all men liberally" (James i.5). Could anything be more wonderful for the flagging servant of God — the strength that can not only remove but create mountains, available without limit! For Moses it did wonders, for Paul it enabled him to do all things and for us the word is that He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. iii.20).

Youthful strength will fail verse 30 tells us; it is only fed from within, "young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." The marginal reading is even better; "they shall change their strength." That which is youthful has been exhausted and only the flagging remains are left, but there is another store to be drawn upon, exceeding in power and quantity even that of youth. "He (the everlasting God) giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." That which is natural is no longer to be relied upon, but how much better for the fulfil-

ment of the purposes of God will His own energising be! Here is something that can be drawn upon at all seasons and in all circumstances by every servant of the Lord who feels the need of it.

A. A. TUNLEY

DANIEL THE PROPHET

The life and prophecies of Daniel illustrate remarkably what we may call God's resourcefulness. For when His people Israel, whom He had established in Canaan as His witness among the idolatrous nations, failed so completely that He had to remove them bodily into a heathen land, God raised up Daniel from among the captives to be a powerful witness to God's glory and majesty. What an encouragement it must have been also to his fellow captives to know that one of themselves was standing for God in the royal court! And so outstanding was his testimony to righteousness that the prophet Ezekiel was led to join his name with those of the ancient patriarchs Noah and Job who were similarly renowned (Ezek. xiv.14).

Nebuchadnezzar's plan to make use of the talent among his royal captives by bringing the best of them into his own service was perhaps calculated to lessen their resistance, and their desire for freedom. But his attempt to incorporate them completely into the life of his court at once raised difficulties for Daniel.

Babylon was noted for its idolatry, which permeated the whole of its life. Part of the national religion was that the king was supposed to be the special favourite of the gods, and his food and drink would be "sanctified" by first offering some of it to the gods. When Daniel therefore learned that he and his fellows were to have their portion directly from the king's table, he saw that they were being made partakers of the Babylonian idolatry.

It was because Israel had joined in the idolatry of the heathen around them that God had given up His people to captivity,

and now its defilement pursued them even there!

Now if ever a man had an excuse to say "This is something I cannot help, and therefore I am not responsible", that man was Daniel. But he did not tamely submit to this situation. Instead, we read that he purposed in his heart that he would not be defiled. In the eyes of faith, what was the great king Nebuchadnezzar to the God of heaven? Like Moses, he endured as seeing Him Who is invisible. How important always to have God before us!

We must also admire the gentle and courteous way he set about achieving his purpose. We read that God "had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs". God's providence had put him in the charge of a man capable of realizing his worth, yet we may be sure that Daniel's own behaviour had already made a favourable impression. So he first made a polite request of Ashpenaz himself to be excused from taking the king's food, not hiding, incidentally, his reasons. When because Ashpenaz feared for his own safety Daniel could not get his way, he turned with a quiet persistence to his own immediate superior with his plan for a ten days' trial. This, as we know, was strikingly successful, and Daniel and his three friends who had followed his lead without hesitation, were found to be in far better shape as a result of their simple diet than those who had received the king's food.

Thus Daniel had *won* his right to be undefiled, and this right he doubtless retained throughout his life. Is it not a lesson for us all? For we live in a defiling world, but if our heart be right with God and we are sufficiently determined to be true to Him, He will enable us to do so. Not in monkish seclusion, but there in the midst of that heathen court, Daniel remained undefiled.

DANIEL PROVES GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

The next trial of Daniel's faith came through the prophetic dream of Nebuchadnezzar, in which he saw the great image.

Having forgotten the dream when he awoke, yet having been left with a disturbing consciousness of its importance, Nebuchadnezzar turned, as kings usually did, to the astrologers and other "wise men" to help him. In this we see God working to bring forward His servant Daniel.

When the astrologers protested at the unreasonableness of the king's demand that they should tell him the dream he had forgotten, he became furious, accused them of playing for time, and commanded their execution. It is not clear why Daniel and his friends were not summoned before the king along with the "wise men", but they were included in the scope of the decree of execution.

Daniel, having learned of the decree, went to Nebuchadnezzar to ask for time, and promised that he would then tell the king his dream. What basis had he for this confident promise?

It was the action of a man who knew his God! Having been faithful to God, having honoured Him by his witness against the defiling idolatry of Babylon, Daniel now counts upon God's faithfulness to honour *him*, according to His word: "Them that honour Me I will honour" (1 Sam. ii.30).

So, once more taking the lead among his companions, he gathers them together to pray to God for the help needed, and then goes to bed to sleep as one whose mind was at rest. In his sleep God revealed to Daniel the king's dream, and its meaning.

DANIEL'S EXULTATION AND WORSHIP

When Daniel awoke, with the dream still vivid before his mind, his immediate reaction was a striking one. Before even giving thanks for the revelation that meant his deliverance from death, he exults in contemplation of the wisdom and power of God which the dream revealed. God's people were in captivity, God's temple was in ruins, and Daniel himself was in captivity because of his people's sins, but nevertheless God was over all, and had everything under His own control. It was He, and no other, Who had set Nebuchadnezzar upon the throne;

but soon He would bring his kingdom to an end, and replace it by another. So with the succeeding kingdoms — God was in control of their destiny, and soon He would set up His own kingdom, which would sweep them all away, and would itself last for ever. Can we not enter into the prophet's ecstasy, as the whole panorama passed before his mental vision? No doubt it had been a matter of faith with him before that his God was supreme, but the dream gave substance and depth to his faith. So Daniel answered "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 unto 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." Then he gave thanks to God for answering his prayer, and giving him the wisdom he needed. Next day he went to Arioch, the captain of the guard, and asked to be brought before the king.

DANIEL GIVES THE GLORY TO GOD

Here was an opportunity, had he desired it, to magnify himself. For Daniel now possessed the secret which none of the learned and wise men of Babylon could obtain, and he was certain of the king's favour. But he began by disclaiming any special wisdom of his own, and made it clear to the king that the God of heaven alone was able to reveal the secret he sought. And how astonished must Nebuchadnezzar have been when Daniel unfolded to him the dream he had forgotten!

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S PROPHETIC DREAM AND ITS MEANING

Nebuchadnezzar first saw a huge image of a man, dazzling and frightening, which seems to represent autocratic power in a man, which power, as Daniel explained, God had given to

Nebuchadnezzar and to his successors. Until then, the house of David ruling in Judah had been the depository of divine authority: now this authority was transferred into Gentile hands.

First was the head of gold, representing the Babylonian Empire in the person of Nebuchadnezzar himself. "Thou art this head of gold", Daniel said. Wherever Nebuchadnezzar turned, he was able to subdue other nations, and his power was absolute, unquestioned.

But the head of gold, however magnificent would pass away, and would be replaced by another, inferior kingdom, represented by the chest and arms of silver. This change indeed Daniel was to live to see, though Nebuchadnezzar did not, when the Medo-Persian Empire overthrew the Babylonian. In what way was the second empire inferior to the first? Probably in that the kingly power was limited by the law, "the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not" (Dan. vi.8,15), whereas in Babylon there was no such limitation.

Then would come the third kingdom, the Macedonian, represented by the belly and thighs of brass (or bronze). And lastly would be the Roman Empire, portrayed by the legs and feet of iron, which signified the strength to break down and subdue all opposition. All this, apart from the names of the kingdoms, Daniel described and then interpreted to Nebuchadnezzar.

Next followed a new feature — not metal representing autocratic power, but in the feet and toes a mixture of iron and potter's clay, indicating a source of weakness through the introduction of an incompatible element. "They shall mingle themselves with the seed of men" — who are "they", and what kind of mixture is implied?

This is not an easy question to answer. Historically, the barbarian armies which infiltrated the empire and gradually established separate kingdoms instead of the united empire seem to correspond to the terms of the prophecy: "partly strong and partly broken", but ten kings, corresponding to the ten toes, never made their simultaneous appearance. But plainly the empire was not overthrown by a single conquest, as

were the three preceding powers, but rather disintegrated, and attempts by various people to re-unite its constituent kingdoms (Charlemagne, Napoleon) have had no success. Likewise the pretence in the Middle Ages that the empire still existed as "The Holy Roman Empire" was but a fiction. Thus our thoughts are inevitably directed to the future, which the conclusion of the dream points out.

Finally, Nebuchadnezzar saw a stone, cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet, and at once shattered it to fragments. These were all blown away like chaff before the wind, while the stone grew into a great mountain which filled the earth. Daniel explained that "in the days of these kings" the God of heaven would set up His kingdom, which would destroy and replace the others, and would itself last for ever.

This has manifestly not yet been fulfilled. But there was nothing in the vision to indicate how long the divided state of the empire would last. The end is to be in the days of the ten kings, and it leads us to look for the revival of the Roman Empire in a new form — ten kings or powers united together — the very thing which Daniel's vision in his 7th chapter, and also Rev. xiii. foretell so clearly.

Present efforts to bring about economic unity in Europe, and eventually political unity, indicate the trend of things. But it would seem that some further pressure — shown clearly in Revelation — will be needed to bring it about.

And then the God of heaven will set up His kingdom, the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He spoke of Himself as the "stone which the builders rejected, which is become the head of the corner", and added His own warning that "whosoever shall fall on that stone (that is, be stumbled by Him) shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." In Daniel's vision it is not exactly Christ Himself, but His kingdom, that the stone represents, but the correspondence is evident. His own words show clearly that it is not of His grace to sinners that He is speaking, but of the time when judgment must fall.

THE EFFECT UPON NEBUCHADNEZZAR

How different was the king's response from Daniel's own when the dream was made known to him! He prostrated himself before the prophet, and commanded that an oblation and sweet odours should be offered to him, whereas Daniel's was an outburst of worship to God. The king did indeed acknowledge to Daniel that his God was a revealer of secret things, but he does not seem to think of himself worshipping Him. But instead he promoted Daniel to high honour, and also, at Daniel's request who did not forget those whose prayers he had asked for, Nebuchadnezzar promoted his three friends. But Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

(to be continued, D.V.)

CHRISTIANS AWAKE!

THE PURPOSE OF HIS COMING

In examining prophetic scriptures to discover their meaning and the order of the events which they foretell, we must be careful not to miss the wood in looking at the trees. God's purpose is to establish the glory of Christ before the eyes of men, and this must be dear to the heart of every Christian.

While at the present time the glory of Christ is displayed in showing how the love of God meets every need of the repentant sinner, the day fast approaches when God must deal with those who refuse to bend the knee to His Son, and treat His world as their own. God's righteousness was displayed at the Cross, but for those who refuse to accept His mercy and repent, His righteousness must be displayed in judgment. God's declared purpose to "head up all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth" (Eph. i.10) will not be brought about by the proclamation of the gospel. That proclamation has as its aim to gather out of all nations "a people

for His name" (Acts xv.14) — a heavenly people to be the bride of the Lamb in the day of His glory. This bride — the Church — is typified as far as it is composed of Gentile believers by Asenath, the Egyptian bride of Joseph (Gen. xli.45), when he was made ruler of all Egypt, his brethren according to the flesh being in ignorance of his glory.

The hope of the Church, as we have seen, is to be taken to heaven to be united to her heavenly Bridegroom before He begins His task of subduing the earth. To those who have kept the word of His patience (Rev. iii.10), that is, those who are content to be rejected by the world now, and to suffer now if need be, as He was rejected and suffered, He promises that He will keep them "from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." This promise the Rapture will fulfil.

After this the book of Revelation shows the judgments by which the world will be freed from the incubus of sinful man doing his own will and Satan's. These judgments, providential at first but more direct and more devastating as the earlier ones fail to awaken man, will not be effective in bringing men to repentance. Then comes the revelation of the Lord Jesus Himself from heaven — judging and making war in righteousness — Who will destroy every form of evil.

During this time, He will also begin to deal in grace with His brethren according to the flesh — that is, with Israel — and we have a picture of their exercises of conscience in Joseph's brothers, especially in Genesis xlii. Like them, a remnant of Israel will recall their nation's handing over of Christ to the Gentiles, and this will lead to their repentance and conversion. Paul explains that "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Rom. xi.25,26). This is not to say that many ungodly Jews will not be cut off before the Lord appears, indeed Zechariah tells us that "in all the land two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is re-

fined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My name, and I will hear them" (Zech. xiii.8,9).

This allusion to refining fire doubtless refers to what Scripture calls the great tribulation, a time of trouble which is worldwide, but is specially severe for Israel, as Jeremiah foretells (chap. xxx.4-7). The Lord spoke of it as worse than any previous time of suffering, but for the elect's sake He will cut it short, and not allow the enemy to finish his objective, otherwise no flesh would be saved. As Jeremiah adds, "Jacob shall be saved out of it". God will apparently use the sufferings of that time to break down that pride and self-righteousness that have so long prevented Israel from accepting a crucified Messiah as their Saviour, and He will "leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord" (Zeph. iii.12).

ISRAEL A BLESSING TO THE WORLD

God's purpose for the world is to display the extent of His love and goodness and mercy first of all in His people Israel, that the nations also may learn to trust in Him: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be My people" (Zech. ii.10,11). Jerusalem shall be established as "the throne of the Lord" (Jer. iii.17), the city of the great King — the Lord Jesus Christ. Many lyrical passages of Isaiah celebrate the blessings which the Lord Jesus will pour upon Jerusalem, e.g. chapter lxii.1-3.

Then the temple in Jerusalem will indeed become "a house of prayer for all nations", and "many people shall say, Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Is. ii.3).

Thus the peoples of the earth will learn righteousness, and will experience God's righteous government. As Isaiah says again, "He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, nor re-

prove after the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth" (xi.3,4).

The peace that people have longed for will then be established and maintained by the mighty power of the Prince of Peace, for "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more".

A TIME OF TESTING

The earthly reign of Christ will thus provide an answer to the problems raised continually as to why God allows this or that evil to flourish. Now grace reigns supreme, and so judgment is held back; but then judgment will be immediate, and no wickedness will be tolerated. Again, it is sometimes a puzzle why so much is not made plain, but then men will have the glory of the Lord before their eyes — it will no longer be a matter only of faith. All the blessing that God intended for man from the beginning will then become a reality, and Satan's falsehoods will be seen for what they are.

But this time of blessing will also bring out the real nature of fallen man. Except where grace has brought about repentance, outward blessing will fail to change his heart's enmity to God. Thus when Satan is released at the end of the thousand years, he will succeed in raising rebellion among the nations against God's King (Rev. xx.7-9). That men should actually *prefer* Satan to Christ may seem incomprehensible, but then it will be demonstrated.

CHRIST'S GLORY SEEN IN THE HEAVENLY SAINTS

It has been necessary to treat at some length the way in which the glory of the Lord Jesus will be made known on earth, but it would be a great mistake to think of it only in terms of outward prosperity and peace. For as Scripture makes

plain that the heavenly saints will be associated with Christ in the government of the world at that time, so it seems also that the fulness of His love and grace, the marvel of redemption through the blood of His cross, will be seen most clearly in them — in sinners saved by grace, and now sharing His glory. The nations will walk in the light of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. xxi.24, R.V.).

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Question

In a Christian publication it was stated recently that after His death Christ had to suffer in hell to complete the work of our redemption. Is this a scriptural statement?

Answer

No, it is a travesty of Scripture.

1 Cor. xv.3 states that *Christ died for our sins* according to the scriptures, and that He was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures. Not a word about suffering after death. And surely His own word on the cross, "It is finished" is enough to destroy any such error. His promise to the repentant thief "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise" tells us where the Saviour went after His death. One who upheld this teaching claimed that His soul went to hell and His spirit to paradise; but people must be in desperate straits when they have to say such things to prove their doctrines!

Some confusion arises from the two different words translated "hell" in the A.V. "Gehenna" is the place of punishment for the wicked, and "hades" is the abode of the dead, translating the Hebrew word "sheol". Now while the first is very definite and unvarying in its meaning, the second, "hades" or "sheol" refers to something as to which there was no clear revelation in the Old Testament, though it was spoken of as a place of darkness.

Those who died were spoken of as "going down to Sheol", where the association with the burial of the body is plain. Indeed, "sheol" is often translated "the grave". However,

(Continued on inside front cover)

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people what had been God's dealings with him, and ends with this remarkable ascription of praise: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

This is a tremendous advance on the responses to God's dealings which he had made previously. In chapter ii. he had acknowledged the supremacy of Daniel's God; in chapter iii, he threatened dire penalties on blasphemers of God; now he speaks as one who knows God for himself. In all ages man must come to this in order to be saved.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

FIVE ASPECTS OF THE CROSS

It has often been said that the Cross was the most important event of all time. It is in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ that we see, on the one hand the greatest demonstration of the love of God for a guilty world, and on the other the greatest exhibition of the evil of the heart of man and of his hatred of God. For if God was showing His grace and compassion in delivering up His only Son to the sufferings of the cross for man's redemption, the rebellion of men's hearts was laid bare in rejecting and crucifying the Sent One of God.

We may consider the Cross in five different aspects.

(1) "The Death of the Cross".

This brings before us the cross as endured by the Lord Jesus. In Phil. ii.8 we read, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." There is no mention in this passage of His bearing our sins: it is the burnt offering rather than the sin offering. It is the voluntary surrender of the One Who, subsisting in the form of God, did not seek to retain what was essentially His, but emptying Himself, took the form of a bondslave, and was made in the likeness of men. A tremendous stoop this from Godhead glory into manhood, but He descended still further; for "being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient even unto death." There is a great contrast here with Adam. Adam brought in death by his disobedience, Christ in obeying the will of God even unto death, annulled death. His death in a world of sin was His glory: sin and death, the results of the fall, had no claim upon Him. It was in His self-humiliation that He stooped to death, treading a path of obedience in which God was perfectly glorified, so that the deepest moral glory shone out in His death.

And there was something more. Not only did He become obedient unto death, but that death was the shameful death of the cross. This tells out the horror, the degradation, the anguish of the death to which He submitted. The cross ex-

presses the lowest extreme of human shame and suffering, yet it was to such a death that the Lord of glory voluntarily went in His perfect devotion to His Father's will and purpose. "He endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii.2).

(2) "The Blood of His Cross".

This phrase occurs in Col. i.20, and refers to the sacrificial aspect of His death. It emphasizes what is due to God, what God sees in the cross of His Son. It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul (Lev. xvii.11), and that cleanses from all sin (1 John i.7). Sin has come in, and all creation was ruined in the fall. God's great plan is to bring about the reconciliation of all things: the whole universe must be cleansed and renewed. While this awaits the future day of glory, the basis has been laid in the blood of His cross.

Let us notice something rather striking here. To accomplish His great purpose God was pleased to work through Christ: in Him all fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell so that by Him all things might be reconciled to God. But this could only be accomplished through the blood of His cross. All the fulness dwelling in Him as a man was not in itself sufficient to overcome the enmity that is in man and bring him to God. It is the blood of the Cross that makes propitiation for sin and brings about reconciliation.

But if the heavens and the earth are thus to be reconciled in a future day, the believer can enter into the blessedness of reconciliation *now*, as the apostle goes on to say, "and you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet *now hath He reconciled* in the body of His flesh through death." It is by His precious blood that we are already redeemed, and thus are enabled to "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. v.11).

(3) "The Word of the Cross".

In 1 Cor. i.18 the apostle writes, "For the preaching of the

Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God”.

The word for “preaching” is not the usual word for “announcing” or “proclaiming” the Gospel. It is the ordinary term for a spoken message, and the apostle puts the word of the Cross in contrast to the word of human wisdom in verse 17. There were many that called the doctrine of the Cross foolishness, but they were those that were perishing. “For”, says the apostle, “the word of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God.” That God’s own Son should stoop so low, not only to become man but going right down into death, and that the most ignominious of all deaths, death on a cross — seems to human reasoning but the depth of folly, especially when it is claimed that this is the way of salvation. For the natural man is ignorant both of his own sinfulness and of the perfect holiness of God. But we who are saved know that such is the total ruin of the human race that there was no other way by which eternal blessing could come to us than through the sufferings of the Cross. It is no wonder that the great impelling aim of the apostle was to tell out with all his power the grand message of a crucified and risen Saviour.

(4) “The Offence of the Cross”.

In the apostle’s day there were Judaising teachers who were seeking to bring in a legal system among the children of God, and how well they succeeded with the saints in Galatia! They were advocating adding legal requirements such as circumcision to the Gospel, thus undermining the sovereign grace of God on which the Gospel is founded. For the doctrine of the Cross undermined the privileged position of the Jew. For it was the Jews’ claim to a righteousness based on lawkeeping which led them to refuse and crucify the Saviour of *sinners*. Thus the doctrine of the Cross destroyed their claim and insisted that they must be saved on the same ground as the uncircumcised Gentiles. Here lay the offence of the Cross — a doctrine which exposes man’s sin, humbles his pride, brings to

nothing his wisdom and declares his guilt before God. Had Paul preached the necessity of circumcision he would have found favour among the Jews wherever he went, for the offence of the Cross would have ceased, or "been done away" (R.V.). It would have been a false, emasculated gospel, in which neither the guilt of man nor the grace of God had any real place.

Paul faithfully set forth the message of the Cross, and willingly suffered the reproach attached to it, and endured bitter persecution from the opposers of the truth.

(5) **The Glory of the Cross.**

In Gal. vi.14 the apostle says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The world is a system in which man in the flesh can find a place, a place and position to boast of. Yet the world crucified God's Son, and to Paul that was the end of its glory. He boasted rather in the Cross, but this meant separation from the world. He saw himself entirely outside the world, ignorant as it is of the love of the Father and guilty as it is of the rejection of the Son. Let us remember that the Lord Jesus in commending His own to the Father spoke of them as those not of the world, though sent into it to witness for Him (John xvii.14-18).

How Paul loved to be identified with the blessed Man Who had suffered on the cross! "By Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Not only would he have no part with the world, viewing it as crucified — rejected and cast out — but he also saw himself as crucified to the world. All for him that was of value was centred in Christ, now risen and glorified, Head of the new creation. In Him circumcision availed nothing now, nor uncircumcision. These belonged to the world, and had nothing to do with the new creation, which so filled the vision of the great apostle.

May we too see more clearly that we are but "strangers and pilgrims" passing through an evil world but in no way attached to it, for our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20), and our allegiance is to the One Whom the world rejected but Who is

now sitting at the right hand of God (Col. iii.1-3). May we perceive more clearly the true significance of the cross, for as the hymn writer expressed it:

*“When we survey the wondrous cross
On which the Lord of glory died,
Our richest gain we count but loss,
And pour contempt on all our pride.”*

R. A. CREETH

THE DIVINE WORKERS XLVII

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

Luke xx. These events in the life of the Lord Jesus are so placed and recorded by Luke, under divine direction, in order to continue the thought of His endurance and testimony in face of growing animosity.

BY WHOSE AUTHORITY

“On one of the days as He was teaching the people in the temple and evangelizing, the chief priests and the scribes, with the elders, came up, and spoke to Him, saying, Tell us by what authority thou doest these things; or who it is that has given thee this authority”. It is beautiful to think of Him where the ordinary people could gather, in one of the temple precincts. He would never be found in the inner house. Teaching — as never the chief priests and elders would be — and announcing the grace of God in His purposes of response to repentance, Jesus was confronted by those who deeply resented His encroachment upon their religious preserves. As in Christendom today, their assumption that they had the authority of God for their forms and ceremonies, linked with human display, was paramount. They were fiercely determined upon continuance. Hearing their haughty challenge, we may listen to the quiet

reply. It is in the form of a question. "And he answering said to them, *I* also will ask you a word, and tell me: The baptism of John, was it of heaven, or of men? And they reasoned among themselves".

The question was heard by all the people. It placed the chief priests and elders on public trial. It concerned Israel as a people — those scattered as well as those present — and was of outstanding importance. The persons addressed had to choose between the divine testimony by John and the personal advantage and consequence of their own position as connected with the priesthood and the temple. It was either their rulership or the acknowledgement of Jesus as Messiah. Their consciences were under divine scrutiny. The gathering awaited their reply. To deny the heavenly authority of John in face of the conviction of the people that he was a prophet would be fatal to their position and standing. They sought shelter in a lie — "They answered that they did not know whence it was". So does unbelief forfeit the benefit of divine truth — "Neither do I tell you by whose authority I do these things".

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD

v.9. "And he began to speak to the people this parable: A man planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And in the season he sent to the husbandmen a bondman that they might give to him of the fruit of the vineyard; but the husbandmen having beaten him sent him away empty. And again he sent another bondman; but they having beaten him also, and cast insult upon him sent him away empty. And again he sent a third, and they having wounded him also, cast him out". The story covers Israel's history from Joshua. It was in those days that God planted a goodly vineyard and left it in the hands of Israel telling them to till it. The thought of the far country is again in emphasis. In the previous reference to it (Luke. xix.12-27) messengers of antagonism were sent after the nobleman during his absence. "Servants" are mentioned as distinct from "citizens". It is graphic of our own time of responsibility to Christ.

We are to heed His request "Occupy while I am coming". He has gone to "receive for Himself a kingdom and to return".

In the parable now before us we are shown the dealings of God with Israel. Judge after judge was raised up and prophet after prophet gave the appointed message. They suffered, were persecuted, even slain. Stephen tells out Israel's sinful history in Acts vii.51-53. There was no fruit for the One Who had planted the vineyard. "Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Perhaps when they see him they will respect him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir, let us kill him, that the inheritance may become ours. And having cast him forth out of the garden, they killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those husbandmen and will give the vineyard to others." Both of these parables bring the solemn thought of judgment. Together they sketch the dealings of God from Joshua till the return of the Lord Jesus in glory. He does not now send back His servants to seek for fruit. He has gone to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return — to execute judgment. In Psalm cx. the Spirit of God links the thought with the truth of these two parables; for the Heir of the vineyard has been rejected — the Jewish period has closed and as the Psalm says "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool".

It is not possible for us adequately to sympathize with the Son of Man — so beloved in His patient submission. He is to be cast out of the vineyard. The husbandmen have determined on His death. There is sadness in His voice as He tells them the vineyard shall be given to others. "And when they heard it they said, May it never be! But he, looking at them said, What then is this that is written? The stone which they that builded rejected, this has become the corner stone". (Ps. cxviii.22) Thus the Word of God is His reply to them. There is grace as well as judgment in His following words, "Everyone falling on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall crush him to powder".

Sincere repentance, on realization of the sin of refusal of the

corner stone, is to be broken and contrite in spirit indeed, but it is the means, in grace, to escape the judgment that must utterly destroy.

INSINCERE QUESTIONS

v.19 "And the scribes and the chief priests that very hour sought to lay hands on him, and they feared the people; for they knew that he had spoken this parable against them". There were three principal groups of influence among the people. The Herodians — political religionists, the Pharisees — legal religionists, and the Sadducees — freethinking religionists. They formed three groups of enmity against God. Luke shows their method of approach to Jesus with the dominant intention of bringing about His death as a means of protecting their own survival of control. The words "they feared the people" show their anxiety lest the effect of the teaching of Jesus should reveal their own self-interest and the religious hypocrisy by which they lived.

The scribes and the chief priests with expressions of flattery attempt to obtain evidence of sedition. Tribute to Caesar was a continual reminder of the liberty and unity Israel had forfeited. "They sent suborned persons pretending to be righteous that they might lay hold of his language so as to deliver him to the power and authority of the governor". The purpose of their question was discerned. "Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not? But perceiving their deceit he said to them, Shew me a penny. Whose image and title has it? And answering they said, Caesar's. And he said to them, Therefore render the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God". It was a short, terse sentence, replete with divine wisdom. "And they were not able to lay hold of his word before the people, and wondering at his answer were silent". They were compelled to pay tribute to Caesar. They had, long since, refused to acknowledge what was due to God. Their course should have been one of submission to the consequence of their sin and of rendering repentance to God. Thus it was no platitude that Jesus spoke. His two injunctions were essential to those who

were suborned, those who had sent them, and to the nation itself. His word was, as ever, directed to the consciences of men, and the Herodians were silenced.

v.27. "And some of the Sadducees who deny that there is any resurrection came up, and demanded of him". The growth of animosity directed toward Him must have caused suffering to His sensitive soul. Luke rehearses the imaginary situation detailed by these freethinking religionists (vs.28-33). "And Jesus said to them, the sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those deemed worthy to obtain that age and the resurrection from among the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they can die no more, for they are equal to angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." Jesus contrasts "this age" with "that age". The sons of *this age* are the natural product of sin and unbelief in God. But there are those considered worthy to obtain *that age* and the resurrection **from among the dead**. This is distinct from resurrection as such. It has its own appointed age — a time of blessedness in which the unjust can have no part.

So, again, Jesus speaks to their consciences through the Word of God — even to the consciences of unbelief. He shows that Moses testified against their unbelief. Shoeless and humbled, upon holy ground, he had heard the voice of God, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". The Lord gives them proof of the immortality of the soul. "He is not God of dead but of living, for all live to Him" (v.38).

Writing to the Philippians, Paul states his own experience in having suffered the loss of all things counting them as refuse by comparison with attainment "unto the resurrection from among the dead" (Phil. iii.11). Luke, above all the Evangelists shows the precious truth of this separate state, besides the certainty of the glorious aftermath of life.

v.40. "For they did not dare any more to ask Him anything". The leaders of religious thought were silenced. They were already discomfited by His answers which disclosed to the crowd their religious pretences as a screen for their mundane purposes. They affected to respect the Word of God but Jesus knew that they had no wish for a Messiah who would not at

once lead them to ascendancy over Rome and advance their own interests. Thus He asks a vital question as He quotes from Psalm cx. "Jehovah said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet. David therefore calleth him Lord; and how is he his son?" There could be but one true answer. The Messiah must be a Divine Person to be David's Lord.

Beyond the mental grasp of unbelief, and to the Jew, a stone of stumbling — a rock of offence—yet He is the holy subject of the testimony of God. "Behold a voice out of the heavens saying, This is my beloved Son in Whom I have found my delight (Matt. 17). If Jesus were not very God, as well as man in true perfection, Christianity would be a pretence and Christ an imposter. Thus dreadful is the position of those who deny His deity and the resurrection of the dead — with none save themselves to bear the judgment of sin — just and sure. Happy and grateful those who in faith can say what John said from spiritual experience — "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth".

EDWARD T. WOOD.

DANIEL THE PROPHET II

The work of a prophet was never limited to prophesying future events, and the next four chapters of Daniel's book (chapters iii, iv, v and vi) present Daniel in other aspects. It will be convenient to consider these together.

THE GREAT IMAGE AND THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel does not appear personally in this, but he records it, and the whole incident brings before us a vital part of his theme — authority given into Gentile hands, and the use men made of it.

King Nebuchadnezzar, instead of paying heed to the entire message conveyed to him in Daniel's interpretation of his dream, and acknowledging that his great authority was a trust

from the God of heaven, proceeded to set up his own god in the shape of a huge golden image, and to compel all the leaders and prominent men in his dominions to worship it.

No doubt Nebuchadnezzar calculated that this was a good way of cementing together the varied peoples he ruled over. It illustrates the tendency, so often displayed by political leaders, of using religion as a political tool, and it foreshadows the attempt of the last Gentile world ruler — the Beast — to subject the whole world to a universal religion in which all worship will be directed to himself.

The story of how Daniel's three friends refused, when the band gave the appointed signal, to prostrate themselves before the image, is well known. Accused and brought before the king, and threatened with the dire penalty of being cast into the furnace alive, they stood firm.

Nebuchadnezzar challenged them, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" They answered, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us . . . and He will . . . but if not, be it known unto thee O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Nebuchadnezzar's reply to this was to call in his strongest men to bind the three and cast them into the furnace, and to order its heating to be intensified sevenfold. Such are foolish man's thoughts of defeating the power of God! So did Caiaphas send "a great multitude, with swords and staves" to arrest the Son of God, not knowing that the Saviour's giving Himself up to do the will of the Father alone restrained the twelve legions of angels from hastening to His deliverance! But for the three in the furnace God did intervene, and while the fierce blast of air that was intended to superheat the furnace blew out fierce flames which killed the soldiers, the servants of God had only their bonds consumed and were themselves unharmed, their hair and their clothes unsinged.

Thus by simple faith in God, along with the obedience to His will which faith taught them, the three were able to nullify completely the power of the great king. And while the failuer

of their nation to glorify God in face of the surrounding idolatry had brought them into this position of danger, their courage and faith made them witnesses to the supremacy of the God of heaven there in the very midst of idolatry. What God can do through those who are completely yielded to Him! One wonders too, how many of "the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors," who saw the three come out of the furnace, learned that day to believe in the true God. The king indeed, goes a little further than he had done with Daniel, saying "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego", but there was not yet any *personal* submission to God, as the next incident shows.

Who was the fourth whom the king saw in the furnace? However little *he* understood, does it not seem that he was caused to utter the truth — that the Son of God Himself came to be with His faithful servants?

The message to the Christian sufferers in today's Communist persecutions is similar, yet different. The Son of God is indeed with them, even if unseen, and He enables them to triumph in imitating Him even to the forgiving of their torturers, while their deliverance, if they suffer death, will be like His — the triumph of resurrection.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S MADNESS

The fourth chapter of Daniel contains a most unusual document. It is the king's own account of how, through seven years of madness he was humbled and, we may surely say, converted. In this, Daniel, as God's prophet, shows the king the application of his warning dream, and points out the way of deliverance.

Once again Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream which filled him with foreboding, but this time he remembered it when he awoke. But he was no more successful than before in getting help from his "magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers" — they could not interpret his dream. Daniel alone was able to do so.

In his dream the king saw a great tree, as high as the sky and visible to all the earth, which provided food and shelter for all animals and birds. This, Daniel explained, was a symbol of the king himself as supreme ruler. Then came a sentence from heaven commanding that the tree be cut down, its branches cut off and its leaves and fruit scattered, so that the animals and birds fled from it. Nevertheless the stump was to be left.

Here the decree became more personal: *he* should be bound (tethered?) with a band of iron and brass among the tender grass, wet by the dews of heaven, living among the animals. "Let his mind be changed from man's to a beast's and let seven times (i.e. years) pass over him, that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will".

All this, Daniel explained, foreboded for him seven years' banishment from the throne, years when he would live as described, in the fields like a beast — "till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men etc". Yet the tree stump being left in the ground meant that the kingdom would at last be restored to him, when he had learned his lesson.

Evidently Daniel had difficulty in bringing himself to tell the king his fate, and he entreated him to heed the warning. Courageously he rebuked the mighty monarch, saying "Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity."

His warning was unheeded, and after a year's spite the king's overweening pride brought the divine sentence upon him. His reason left him, and he was driven out to live in the fields.

What mercy could an absolute monarch expect, from the ill-wishers with whom he was inevitably surrounded, when madness had rendered him helpless? Yet Daniel had assured him he would be restored to his throne, and now, when his reason returned, his ministers brought him back. How certain is God's word! But now Nebuchadnezzar's first thought was to give honour and glory to God. So he makes known to all his

(Continued inside front cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

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EDITORIAL

We return this month to the subject of the varied aspects of the Cross, with the article by our esteemed contributor Mr. A. E. Jordan. While we may feel that nothing entirely new can be said on this topic, it is remarkable how last month's article and this month's do cover different ground.

Certainly the subject of the Cross must always occupy a foremost place in our theology, and it is a sad thing to hear Christians complain that we cannot get beyond the Cross. Indeed we cannot, even though we do not carry a crucifix around. Our Saviour is no longer there, but His pierced hands and feet will be our joy throughout eternity.

(Continued from Inside Back Cover)

is the only means of removing it. Of course for any individual man it requires faith, but the value of the blood extends to the whole world — it is not limited at all from God's side.

Hence the thought of judgments does not seem to come in. No doubt unrepentant men will be destroyed by judgments, and we do read of "the wrath of the Lamb", for the Lord Jesus is both Saviour and Judge, but John the Baptist spoke of the removal of sin, not the destruction of sinners. Thus Scripture does not speak of the Flood as "taking away the sin of the world."

Editor

THE RISEN SHEPHERD

"Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night, for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee" (Matt. xxvi.31,32).

This prophecy of Zechariah which the Lord quoted (Zech. xiii.7) was, as we know, literally fulfilled. It was not a natural expectation that the arrest of the Saviour in Gethsemane's garden would lead to His being immediately forsaken by the eleven. They were undoubtedly attached to Him, apart from their faith in Him as Messiah. They were also brave men, as their subsequent endurance of sufferings showed. But the power of Satan was at work — it was, as the Lord said to His captors, "Your hour, and the power of darkness" — and to watch with their Master, and to pray, was their only defence. Yet when He returned from His prayer He found them "sleeping for sorrow", and so, unprepared to suffer with Him, they fled.

They were "offended" at Him; that is, they were stumbled because His enemies were apparently too strong for Him, and their belief in Him was at least in part replaced by doubt and disappointment. So His words were fulfilled, and the centuries old prophecy of Zechariah came to pass: the Shepherd was smitten, and the sheep of the flock were scattered. But our concern now is with the Lord's next words: "But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."

The women who came to the tomb on the resurrection morn were reminded of this promise by the angel (Matt. xxviii.7; Mk. xvi.7), with the additional instruction that they were to meet Him there, in Galilee. Then the Lord Himself met the women as they went to tell the disciples, and repeated the message: "Be not afraid: go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee and there shall they see Me".

The Lord's instructions were thus quite definite, and His promise certain. But the disciples, overwhelmed by His death, and unbelieving as to His rising, instead of making their

way into Galilee, were found cowering and fearful, in the upper room in Jerusalem. Thus the risen Shepherd had to begin to rally His scattered sheep first of all in Jerusalem.

First, Mary Magdalene. The word "scattered" is perhaps not applicable in her case. Mary was found at the cross, and early at the tomb, where her love for her Deliverer impelled her to stay when Peter and John returned home. Her love was rewarded by seeing Him risen, though at first because of her grief she mistook Him for the gardener. But He had only to utter her name, "Mary", and her recognition was immediate. A touching assurance this, that He was the same Jesus — the very tones of His voice were unaltered.

To Mary Magdalene He gave a *new* message, not of a meeting in Galilee, but of His ascension to the Father. It is appropriately recorded in the Gospel of John, where the Lord's promises of coming back to the disciples in the power of the Spirit, and of their knowing Him then as one with the Father, and one with them also (John xiv.20) are set down. "Go to My brethren," He said, "and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God, and your God." For if the meeting in Galilee was intended to rally the many disciples there, it was in Jerusalem that the Spirit would come to baptize the disciples into one body, linking them thus with their ascended Lord. He had told them of His going to the Father: now He spoke plainly of His ascension.

The other women who came, perhaps for the second time, to the tomb, saw the angels in the sepulchre, and received the message reminding them and their fellow-disciples of the Lord's promise to meet them in Galilee. And as they ran to tell the news, filled with both joy and fear, the Shepherd Himself met them, and saluted them. Did He foresee the unbelief that would meet them when they told their tale? Angels? Well, it was all their wrought up condition! Yet, whatever the men might say, *they* knew that Jesus Himself had met them, and that they had held Him, and worshipped Him.

There was another disciple who needed special attention from the watchful Shepherd. "He restoreth my soul" the

Psalmist had written. Peter had been in mortal danger of a despair that might destroy his faith. The Lord had prayed for him beforehand (Luke xxii.32), and He had turned to look at him as the words of denial were uttered, causing him to go out and weep bitter tears. And now Peter was doubtless left in anguish of mind and uncertainty, and so the Lord appeared specially to him — the least worthy, as he must have felt, of all the disciples. What passed between the Lord and His disciple we do not know, but knowing something ourselves of that tender love, we can guess.

There were two others of the scattered flock who perhaps had come near to giving up their faith completely. On their way to Emmaus, when the Stranger overtook them and questioned them, they spoke of Him in the past tense. "We trusted" they said, "that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel." So they had left the mourning company in Jerusalem, and were evidently going home. Yet the Shepherd did not at once make Himself known. Instead He proceeded to show them from the Scriptures that all the happenings which had so perplexed them were just what was needed to fulfil the purpose of God — things that they would have expected if they had believed the Scriptures. Having thus brought peace to their tortured hearts, and having shown them how solid was the basis on which their faith could rest, He revealed Himself as the risen One, ready now to enter into His glory. As they recognized Him He disappeared, but this glorious climax to His unfolding of the Scriptures made them return quickly to Jerusalem to share their joy with the rest of the flock.

That evening it seems they were all gathered together — the ten apostles and "they that were with them", with perhaps only Thomas missing. They were still apprehensive of interference from the authorities, but most were now ready to believe that Jesus had indeed risen. He had appeared to Simon, and that seemed decisive. Yet when the Lord suddenly stood in their midst, the doors being locked, they thought they saw a ghost, and were terrified. Now it was His task to convince them that it was their own Shepherd

that had come again to them, and He invited them to examine His hands and feet, and to handle Him. Was it a cold corpse that was thus presented to them? Not so, or how would they have rejoiced as we read that they did? No, it must have been the same warm touch that they had so often felt. Then still more to prove that it was Himself in bodily form He asked for food — the same food that was there on the table — and ate it in their presence. Finally He gave strength to their renewed faith by opening their understanding of the Scriptures, as He had done to those on the Emmaus road. And we indeed have not seen Him as yet, but we too can examine the testimony of the Scriptures, and thus strengthen our own faith.

One sheep was still missing, and perhaps for his sake, perhaps having been instructed by the Shepherd, they did not yet obey His command to meet Him in Galilee. But poor Thomas, so stout in his rejection of the testimony of his brethren, was gathered in at last to the company of rejoicing disciples by the Lord's appearance once again in Jerusalem, in the upper room. There he heard his own unbelieving words repeated to him, and then confessed, "My Lord, and my God."

THE MEETING IN GALILEE

There must have been many more disciples in Galilee than in Jerusalem, and it seems likely that the "above five hundred brethren at once" who, Paul tells us, saw the risen Lord (1 Cor. xv.6), were in Galilee. How they were led to assemble we do not know, but assemble they did, and we may surely look upon this appearing as one more action of the Shepherd to give confidence to His trembling sheep. For those in Galilee would soon hear of how Jerusalem had rejected Him. It has been suggested that this gathering is the same as that recorded in Matt. xxviii.16. It is true that Matthew only speaks of the eleven apostles, but he is telling of those who went away from Jerusalem into Galilee, "to a mountain where Jesus had appointed them." and his statement leaves room for others to have joined them in Galilee. "Some doubted" we are told, and this is easier to understand if they

were *not* of the eleven apostles. But we cannot be sure that it was the same occasion.

There is no mention of the ascension, for of course the Lord did not ascend from that mountain. Instead, the Lord leaves them with the promise of His abiding presence, "even unto the end of the age."
E. H. Chamberlain

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the cross of Christ. It is the central fact of human history. It is the focal point upon which all the teaching of Scripture converges and it is the foundation truth of the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. Apart from the cross of Christ the whole human race is shut up to its sin and to an eternity of separation from God.

The types and prophecies of the Old Testament were signposts to the Cross pointing down the centuries to the death of Christ. The Gospels give us four very detailed historic records of His cross. The Epistles unfold its meaning and value and we find there that it was the main theme of apostolic preaching (1 Cor. i.18; 1 Cor. ii.2; Gal. vi.14). In the Revelation we find a redeemed company looking back to the Cross with eternal gratitude and worship.

There are four important aspects of the cross of Christ which deeply concern every one of us.

The Climax of Man's Sin

Man's first act of sin was one of disobedience and that one act of disobedience in the garden of Eden has involved the whole human race, and was the beginning of a long course of rebellion against God, and of every form of wickedness. The state of things in the nation of Israel, the most highly privileged of all the nations of the world, some 3,000 years later is described in 2 Chron. xxxvi.11-14 when we find the king, the priests and the people unitedly hardening their hearts and turning from God to the abominable idolatries of the heathen nations around them. God's answer to their rebellious affront to His holiness was one of compassionate

grace in sending to them His messengers continually "rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place". Israel's reaction to God's grace was the ill-treatment of His servants and the refusal of God's message that they brought, thus augmenting their guilt.

In Luke xx.13 we find that God's compassion and mercy are not exhausted. He has a further step that He is prepared to take, a step of incomparable grace: "I will send my beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him." When He came, not only was He refused, but He was mocked, reviled, spit upon, crowned with thorns and then "they crucified Him". That was the crowning act of man's sin and rebellion, the Son of God cast out of His own world by the creatures that His own hands had made. God's precious, unspeakable gift of grace was thrown back into His face. No member of Adam's fallen race can escape from the implications of this solemn truth. The human race, of which we form a part, is guilty of the crucifixion of God's beloved Son. It is the climax of human wickedness and guilt.

The Revelation of God's Love (1 John iv. 9-10)

This precious aspect of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is all the more glorious because it is set against the dark background of man's crowning sin. The rainbow of God's love encircles the Cross and shines in all its glorious splendour against the dark background of man's guilt. The contemplation of the cross of Christ must dismiss for ever any lingering doubt of the love of God, for He who died there was God's gift, God's love gift, His precious, eternal, beloved Son. The greatness of God's gift reveals the greatness of His love (John iii.16; Rom. v.8). His cross is both "the measure and the pledge of love".

*"Inscribed upon the cross we see,
In shining letters, God is love;
The Lamb Who died upon the tree
Has brought us mercy from above".*

The question that confronts every one of us as we contemplate this mystery of divine love is: What response does such amazing love evoke from my heart? Isaac Watts well understood the response that such love calls forth from our hearts when he wrote:

*“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all”.*

The Requirement of God’s Holiness

While we rejoice in the revelation of God as a God of love, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, it is important to remember that Scripture also stresses His absolute holiness. “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts” was the cry of the seraphim in Isaiah vi.3. It may well be that the holiness of God is insufficiently stressed today and as a result sin and unholiness are thought by many to be of little consequence.

What is the answer to that solemn cry out of the thick darkness which closed around the Sinless Sufferer and Sin-Bearer upon the cross, when He cried “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” The holiness of God is the answer, as we read in Psalm xxii.3. “But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel”. The holiness of God cannot be compromised. Sin cannot be passed over without its penalty of death being exacted, but the awful penalty having been borne by our blessed Saviour upon the cross the judgement of God in respect of sin is exhausted, the holiness of God is maintained and the way opened for God’s love and mercy to flow out in righteousness.

The Basis of the Believer’s Blessing

The sufferings and death of Christ have laid a sure foundation for the eternal salvation of all who believe on His name. All our blessings as believers flow to us as a result of the cross of our Lord Jesus. Romans v.1-5 sets forth the seven-fold blessing of believers in Christ. We are justified, we enjoy

peace with God, we have access into the grace and favour of God, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, we glory in tribulations, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, the Holy Spirit is given to us. These supreme blessings were secured for us at immense cost, at the immeasurable cost of our Saviour's sufferings and death, as the previous verse reminds us, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. iv.25).

Again, the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians reminds us that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and also that it is the purpose of God to have a people "holy and without blame before Him in love". This wonderful purpose of God to have a people conformed to the likeness of His own Son in the eternal enjoyment of His love and His holy Heaven is to be accomplished on the basis of the finished work of our Lord Jesus so perfectly accomplished upon the cross: "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i.7).

As we contemplate the wonders of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ may our hearts overflow with worship, praise and eternal gratitude both to the Father Who gave His Beloved Son and to the Son Who came and gave Himself for us.

A. E. Jordan

DANIEL THE PROPHET

BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

"The head of gold" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream image, representing the kingdom of Babylon, had come to its last days under king Belshazzar, who is thought to be Nebuchadnezzar's grandson. Daniel refers to him as his son, according to the prevailing custom. Belshazzar was probably acting as regent for his absent father Nabonidus.

The great feast which Belshazzar made, described in Daniel v., may have been something of a religious festival. At any rate, a prominent part of the feast consisted in drinking wine in honour of the gods, "praising the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone" (verse

4). But when Belshazzar conceived the idea of celebrating the superiority of his gods over the gods of the peoples Babylon had subdued, and commanded to bring in the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and to drink wine out of these in praise of his gods, it became a deliberate affront to the God of heaven. For God had already clearly shown, in His dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, the reality of His power and glory, so that Belshazzar was without excuse.

Then appeared the fingers of a man's hand, writing on the wall opposite the lamp — a sight at which the king turned pale with terror and trembled violently. He called for the astrologers, Chaldeans and soothsayers to read and interpret the writing on the wall, and promised a scarlet robe, a chain of gold and a place next to himself in ruling the kingdom, to whoever could do so.

If the wise men could read the words, they could make nothing of their meaning, and they may have thought it better to keep silent altogether. And so it was that at last the matter came to the queen's ears (possibly Nebuchadnezzar's queen, who would know Daniel better) and she came into the banqueting hall and informed the king about Daniel.

We are told at the end of chapter 1 of how Daniel "continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus", and in Belshazzar's third year we find him still engaged "in the king's business" (viii.27). What a tribute this is in itself, both to Daniel's uprightness and wisdom, and to God's faithfulness to him, that amid all the changing tides of favour in an oriental court, and in all the unpopularity of a servant of the God of heaven in the midst of idolatry, he should have been able to remain in the same position for so long! Yet inevitably his early fame had been forgotten by the new generation. The queen stated that Nebuchadnezzar had made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, etc., but there was no kinship between his outlook and theirs, and so he had not been called in with them before Belshazzar.

Now he is brought forward, nearly 70 years after his first appearance before Nebuchadnezzar, and Belshazzar repeats

his offer of greatness and honour. How will the aged prophet respond?

DANIEL REBUKES THE KING

First Daniel refuses the proffered favours, and we sense that he has not the same respect for this king as he had for Nebuchadnezzar. Then he promises to read and interpret the mysterious writing. But before proceeding to this, he reminds the king of God's dealing with Nebuchadnezzar — the greatness and glory that He gave him, and how He had to humble his pride, "till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will". But all this Belshazzar had ignored, refusing to learn from his grandfather's experience. Not only had he not humbled his heart, but he had lifted up himself against the God of heaven in a calculated insult. He had praised the senseless idols, and had failed to glorify the God "in Whose hand thy breath is".

The writing was God's sentence upon him; it consisted of just four words: MENE (twice), TEKEL, PERES — i.e., NUMBERED, WEIGHED, DIVIDED. The days of his kingdom were numbered — and finished (where the doubling no doubt means an immediate execution of the sentence, see Gen. xli.32); the king himself was weighed in the balances, and found wanting; his kingdom was divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. All this Daniel interpreted, in the fewest possible words, and in that night the king was slain and his kingdom taken. Darius the Mede then became king.

THE DEN OF LIONS

In this incident we once again find a conflict between the rights of the God of heaven and the claims asserted by the authority given to man.

Darius, the Median king, divided the kingdom into 120 provinces, each with its governor, and three "presidents" over these governors, who were directly responsible to the king. At once Daniel's ability brought him to the fore, and the king planned to give him supreme authority. This of

course provoked the fierce jealousy of the others, yet when they tried to bring about his downfall they could find nothing on which to base an accusation against him. They were compelled to acknowledge his complete integrity, and they discerned that in one respect only was he vulnerable — in his unyielding faithfulness to his God. The wholly artificial situation which they contrived to trap him reveals to what straits they were reduced.

They proposed to the king a temporary edict, apparently designed to strengthen the king's authority. Under this edict every prayer or petition to any god or man, except only to the king himself, was to be forbidden for thirty days, under the penalty of an offender being thrown into a den of lions.

Such an edict was a claim of superiority over all powers of earth and heaven, and it foreshadows again the presumptuous assertions of the Man of Sin. Knowing the flattering ways of courtiers, the king should have been on his guard, and had he bothered to think, he must have known that Daniel, his greatest minister, would not submit to the edict. However, unaware of its real purpose, Darius signed the decree.

Daniel of course must have known what was afoot, but apparently made no effort to stop it, believing perhaps that it was God's will to manifest again His pre-eminence. So he continued his constant practice of kneeling in prayer to God three times a day. God's house of prayer in Jerusalem was in ruins, but he opened his window and faced toward the city as he prayed.

When the king received the inevitable accusation against Daniel he realized he had been trapped, but found himself unable to alter the decree. As Daniel long before had showed to Nebuchadnezzar, the Medo-Persian kingdom was inferior to the Babylon — silver instead of gold — and it comes out in this, that the king was, according to the law, bound by his own edicts. But before Daniel was thrown into the den the king said to him, "Thy God, Whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee." What a testimony this to the power of Daniel's faith, that the king himself was thus able to share it!

So, after a sleepless night, the anxious king came to the lions' den to ask the prophet if his God had indeed been able to save him. Daniel answered that because of his innocence before God and before the king, God had sent an angel to shut the lions' mouths. Thus God once again displayed His faithfulness to His servant, and showed in that heathen land what it meant to trust in the living God. Where now was the boasted unchangeableness of the royal decree?

E. H. Chamberlain

QUESTION AND ANSWER SECTION

QUESTION

How can desires for God's glory become great enough to bear the self denial that must accompany walking in the Spirit?
E.G.J.

ANSWER

The questioner is quite right in linking together self denial and walking in the Spirit, only these should not be regarded as *separate* things. Self denial — not denying oneself certain luxuries, but turning away from self altogether and setting the Lord Jesus Christ before us as the object of our lives — this indeed is what walking in the Spirit *is*. It can only be made a reality if we rely upon the power of the indwelling Spirit, and not upon our own strength, while He will always lead our hearts to Christ. When we dwell upon Christ, on His love for us, on His own excellencies, and on the glory of the place where He now is, we are insensibly led away from self. Moreover as the Lord Himself has taught us, self denial is not an extra which we can take up or leave as we choose, but it is the basic condition of Christian discipleship. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Our desires for God's glory can only be fed by such occupation with Christ, for we love Him because He has first loved us. And the more we obey the promptings of the Spirit, the more rapidly will our love grow.

QUESTION

“The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mark xiv.38).

Does “the flesh” refer to the natural body? G.M.P.

ANSWER

Yes, it refers to the body in its weakness and liability to give way under stress. Muscular strength is not in question, for the strongest man, faced with spiritual forces he does not understand, may be unable to stand firm. This was the case with Peter, James and John.

The Lord Jesus, “made in all things like unto His brethren,” sought and received strength in prayer for the ordeal before Him in Gethsemane, and exhorted His disciples to do the same.

“Flesh” in the New Testament often means our old, corrupt nature, but not in this verse.

QUESTION

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

Does this mean that the sin will be taken away by means of judgments in the earth? G.M.P.

ANSWER

The title “Lamb of God” recalls Abraham’s answer to Isaac’s question “Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” He said, “My son, God will Himself provide a lamb for a burnt offering.” Thus the title must surely refer to the sacrifice of Calvary, by which sin is taken away.

“Which taketh away” means that *He* is the One that does it — it is an abstract statement, independent of time.

Sin is what defiles the world, and the blood of the Cross

(Continued on Inside Front Cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION

“He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Matt. iii.11).

What does “fire” mean here?

ANSWER

Fire suggests intense energy, and also destruction. It is used in Scripture as a symbol of God Himself (Ex. iii.2), the Source of all energy; of the power of His word (Jer. xxiii.29); of His consuming judgment against the wicked (Ps. xi.6; Heb. xii.29); of the purifying effect of His presence (Mal. iii.2); and of the testing of divine judgment (1 Cor. iii.13). Most of these things can be seen in Matt. iii.11.

In Luke xii.49 the Lord Jesus says “I am come to send fire on the earth.” This was the effect of His presence — to bring everything and everyone to the test — to cleanse and renew everything that was of God, and to destroy (eventually) all that was opposed to Him. As Malachi had said, “Who may abide the day of His coming?”

When the Holy Ghost was poured out at Pentecost, “cloven tongues as of fire” sat on the head of each one. Here was symbolised the power of the word of the Christ, which they were to preach in the energy of the Holy Ghost, a word that announced grace and warned of consuming judgment.

Editor

ALONE WITH GOD

POWER FOR SERVICE

Every disciple of Jesus Christ is called to serve but the commissioning comes from Him alone Who said, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit . . . as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John xv.16; xx.21). Being ordained by Him we are to be fruitful in our service, to labour, but not in vain. We are to bring blessing to others in the world by our labours and by our very presence in it.

How is this to be done? There are many ways, but one thing is certain, we cannot do it unless our strength for service is constantly renewed; and it is only from much secret fellowship with Christ that the renewing of our strength can come. It is also clear that before there can be any fellowship in service, there must be fellowship in living. If our effectiveness in service is limited it is because we have not recognised the truth of the statement, "without Me ye can do nothing." We give out so little simply because we take so little in.

Interdependence

In John chapter 15 our Lord uses the picture of the vine to press home this vital truth. "I am the vine," He says, "ye are the branches"; and the fruitfulness of the branch depends upon its essential connection with the vine. There is an interdependence between the branches and the vine. Without the branches the vine can do nothing. If our Lord's disciples do not bear fruit, then so far as the world is concerned His work was all in vain. His hands in this world are the hands of His servants and if they do not the work, then it is left undone. If they do not bear fruit, or the fruit is poor, it is because the divine life has been obstructed or even ceased to flow. All that the Vine has is for the branches; the riches of His grace are not for Himself, but to be imparted to His own to empower them for service. Everything of beauty and glory, of strength and fruitfulness, is to be produced through Him, "From Me is thy fruit found" (Hosea xiv.8).

There is an apposite expression used by the Apostle Paul when he writes of our growing up into Christ (Eph. iv.15). This is more than growing into His likeness, it is an increasing closeness of personal union with Him. True Christian life is a growing out of Christ, as the branch grows out of the trunk; but outward growth is conditioned and proportioned by inward growth, and what is true of natural growth is also true of spiritual growth. Speaking of false prophets Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. vii.16), and it is only the outward growth and fruit bearing that can be seen by men; but where it is in evidence, it is the result of an inner process that cannot be seen. It is the soul taking, in secret, an even firmer hold on Christ, becoming more and more closely bound to Him by faith and love, and so receiving the power for serving Him.

This process is one which best takes place when we are alone with God in the quiet place. It can hardly happen anywhere else. It is a fact that in the Christian life all our best and most strengthening experiences come to us when we are alone with God.

The Experiences of Others

Jacob was alone at Peniel when he wrestled with the angel "until the breaking of the day," and the result of that encounter with God was that his name was changed and he was strengthened to go out and meet his angry brother Esau the following day. It was while minding the flock in a solitary place in Midian, that Moses met with God and received his great commission to lead the Children of Israel out of Egypt into the land of promise. In the life of this man, perhaps more than any other, we can see the fruits of abiding in Christ. How often we see him shut up with God, pleading the cause of the people, and renewing his strength for unpleasant and unpopular tasks. It was from lonely fellowship with God on Sinai that he brought away the glory of God on his shining face; a reflected glory that awed the people into obedience to Him from Whose presence he had come.

The silent tracts of the Syrian desert were the places where

John the Baptist was clothed with such power by the Holy Spirit that he was able to return to Judaea and so effectively preach the baptism of repentance. It was also a desert place where in seclusion, away from the teaching of men, Paul was trained by God for his special ministry. For the Apostle John, the solitudes of the Isle of Patmos were the setting for the wonderful revelation of Jesus Christ that was given to him. Here, shut away from the world and shut in with Christ, he saw and heard things which have been denied to other men.

As with these of old, so today, all our best experiences come to us when we are alone with the Lord. We shall need wisdom and strength to serve the Lord acceptably, but this is only to be found in His presence. There are temptations which can only be overcome while we are consciously before Him; here it is that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. We can only intensify our love, revive our hope, quicken our faith, and renew our strength in the secret place. With all our weaknesses and ineffectiveness in service it is strange and sad that we do not more often find our way into His presence.

The Need for Endeavour

But strength for service will not come without some deliberate endeavour on our part. A few hasty or lazy prayers will never bring it to us. We need deep communion with Christ if we are to get it at all. It is the unseen part of the vine, the roots, which provide the nourishment and the essentials for growth and fruitfulness; and similarly it is the results of secret communion which are seen in the outward living of the Christian. Our visible lives will soon tell whether or not our invisible roots are going deep: dryness below ground soon leads to deadness above ground.

There is a suggestive metaphor which is used by Jeremiah to explain the fruitfulness of God's servants, "as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river" (Jer. xvii.8). God provides the water, and there is more than enough for our needs; but we have to spread out our

roots in search of it. Trees often survive in drought where shrubs wither, because their roots go deeper and find sources that are never dry; and a strong, well-nourished Christian is strengthened against trials that will weaken another feebler soul. But this strength comes from deep, personal intercourse with God, from secret study of the Scriptures, and with prayer. These are the things which he has to seek; he must go in search of the water of life, it will not come to him.

If we are to bear "much fruit" then we must find the hidden resources of God's grace, and that is a secret process, a secret between our Lord and ourselves. Without this secret communion there will be no spiritual growth, but because of it we are enabled to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work . . ." (Col. i.10).

T. D. SPICER

FOUR PREGNANT WORDS

Romans iv.24 to v.2

Four pregnant words in these verses summarize the portion of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at them in order.

Justification

"If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

We begin as sinners, and in coming to Jesus as our Saviour we are self-confessed sinners. Else why come to Him, Who declared that He came not for the righteous, but to save sinners? The answer to our sins is the fact that Jesus died for us, He was "delivered up for our offences."

The apostle does not stop there, for the death only of the Lord Jesus would have left in doubt whether His sacrifice was sufficient, and therefore availing to put away our offences. But He was raised again from the dead, leaving no possibility of doubt. And our attention is directed particularly to the One by Whose power He was raised again. For God is the One to Whom it belongs to judge, either to

condemn or justify, and in raising from the dead the Man Who died for our offences God has declared plainly that the question of our offences is closed. It is a matter that can never be raised again. God's righteousness is satisfied, and He declares righteous those who believe in Him.

Now faith comes in here because in believing what God has done in raising Jesus again we accept for ourselves this divine activity. We acknowledge our own need as sinners, and gratefully accept the salvation that is brought to us. We rejoice to know that God Himself has been working on our behalf. We could never have presumed to put ourselves into the picture, had not God sent His own Son into the world declaring that it was for sinners He came.

It is not said here that we believe in Jesus Who died for our offences, though of course this is true and must be implied. For if God delivered Him up for us all, it was His beloved Son Who thus yielded Himself to fulfil His Father's will, so that it is also said that Christ gave Himself up (same word) for us (Eph. v.1). But it is our faith in the God Who raised Him from the dead that is spoken of, because God is the judge, and He declares us righteous. Thus Paul says, "our Lord Jesus was raised again for our justification."

There is one mistake we may need to guard against, and that is the notion that the phrase "raised again for our justification" implies that our justification, in some mystical way, dates from the resurrection of the Saviour, or even that He was raised *because of* our justification.

Now the idea that a sinner still in his sins and rebellion against God can be called "justified" is obviously false, and this also overlooks the importance of faith. Faith in God implies submission to Him, that is, repentance. Neither does the word "for" mean "because of". Jesus did not die *because of* our offences, as though there were some necessity; He came freely to endure the penalty, out of love. And God raised Him *because* He had glorified God perfectly there upon the cross, but also, with a view to believers being justified, as the fulfilment of His purpose. That is, the work of Christ,

including His resurrection, laid the foundation for the future blessing of those that should believe.

Peace

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Let us notice first of all that Paul does not just say, “Being justified we have peace with God”, but, “Being justified by faith we have peace with God”. Why is the mention of faith so important here? It is important because “by faith” excludes the possibility of our works having anything to do with it. If there were any question of works affecting the matter of our justification, how could we ever have any peace at all? We should always be wondering whether our works were of the right kind, or sufficient. But if our justification is wholly by faith, we are resting solely upon what Christ has done for us in dying for us, and what the Father has done in raising Him up for us — an activity entirely outside ourselves, and indeed, completed long ago.

“We have peace with God” — how the words remind us that we were once at enmity with Him — “enemies in our mind by wicked works.” The Saviour came preaching peace, offering forgiveness and reconciliation to all who would receive Him, and now that our sins are gone, peace with God is our happy portion. This is the more remarkable in view of what we are in ourselves — possessors of a new life, but yet having the old, corrupt nature still there. How then can we be at peace with God, seeing that all evil is repellent to Him? It is because He sees us in Christ, and so Paul says, “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Not just through what He has done for us, but also because He lives in the presence of God for us. King David looked upon Mephibosheth and was reminded of the *dead* Jonathan; but God sees believers as those for whom His beloved Son suffered at Calvary, while Jesus is there at His right hand, risen and victorious.

This peace God wants us to enjoy. He wants us to rest in the certainty of it, in its unchangeableness. We change; our

moods and feelings vary from day to day; but we are entitled to rely upon this peace, for it is founded upon Christ Himself.

Favour

“By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.”

Now the word *grace* here is better rendered *favour*. When we speak of peace with God, it is not at all that some sort of toleration is extended toward us. No indeed; for God has brought us to Himself as those upon whom His favour rests — a place of favour and illimitable blessing. This has nothing to do with our deserts, but as Ephesians expresses it, it is “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath brought us into favour in the Beloved.”

Our place before God is altogether according to the merit of the beloved Son of God, and thus this favour so freely bestowed upon us will never be diminished.

Nor is this favour something which is merely reserved for us in the future, but through Christ we have access into it at all times. We can come to God in faith, with confident expectation of obtaining blessing according to the measure of His favour towards us. We do not need to come, as Esther had to come to King Ahasuerus, with fear and trembling, hoping that he might hold out the golden sceptre to her. We come to a King infinitely greater, but His favour toward us is assured, and access is always open to those who come through Christ. We must come, of course, with humility and reverence; but of His favour toward us as we come there is no doubt.

Glory

“and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

This is one of those places where the word *rejoice* should be replaced by *boast* or better, *exult*. For not only do we now stand in the favour of God, but the certain hope of standing soon in the presence of His glory is also ours. “Certain hope” we say, because in our world “hope” is almost a synonym for uncertainty, but this is not how Paul uses

the word. He wrote "in hope of the glory" because it is something not yet seen, yet it is so sure that we can exult in the prospect. So perfect is the justification which is ours through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, that God will have us there in the glory before Him, displaying in us, to the whole universe, what His grace has achieved. It is to the praise of the glory of His grace.

If we feel like shouting "Hallelujah", this is just what *exult* implies; but even if we do not give utterance to it in that way, God looks to us so to keep that glorious prospect before us that our hearts will be uplifted in the midst of trials and afflictions. So shall we be able to encourage one another, and to help the downcast. Praise and thanksgiving and rejoicing are what God looks for in His redeemed people.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

DANIEL THE PROPHET—III

We must now consider the prophetic visions of Daniel himself, recorded in the last six chapters of the book. We begin with the vision of the four beasts, in chapter vii.

THE FOUR BEASTS

The parallel between the substance of this vision and that of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image is very striking, but it is by no means a mere repetition of the king's dream. The same four kingdoms are seen, but in quite a different aspect. To Nebuchadnezzar the human form appears, and human glory is portrayed at least in the gold and silver portions, where the magnificence of the king wielding supreme power is shown. But Daniel, the prophet of God, sees four wild beasts. Does not this show how these great powers appear from the divine point of view?

As in the king's dream, Daniel's vision also shows how these earthly powers are to be replaced by God's kingdom. But to Daniel the great adversary of God and oppressor of God's people is also shown.

The four beasts come up out of the sea — representing the unsettled state of the world — one at a time. The first

like a lion, with eagle's wings, pictures the pride and strength, and perhaps the majesty of Babylon and its ruler Nebuchadnezzar. It is, by the way, the parallel between this vision and the king's which enables one to see clearly the application of these beasts to the same four kingdoms. Babylon, as Daniel explained, was the first. The eagle's wings are plucked and the beast made to stand up as a man, and with a man's heart. Is this the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar, as a result of which the wild beast is transformed into a man, able to know God and willing to acknowledge Him?

The second beast, like a bear, no doubt represents the Medo-Persian kingdom which subdued the Babylonian. The Persian element gained the supremacy over the Median, when Cyrus was king, and the bear raised up on one side may signify this. The vast extension of the empire under later Persian kings is perhaps foretold in the words addressed to the bear, "Arise, devour much flesh."

Then appears a leopard, with four bird's wings — a double indication of the swiftness of the conquests of Alexander king of Macedonia, who overthrew Persia. The eventual division of his dominions into four main parts after his death is indicated by the *added* feature, "the beast had also four heads." These details are sufficient to confirm the identification of the beasts, without being in themselves important.

The fourth beast, however, has a special importance in the vision, and is introduced by the words "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly." It seems that a main object of the whole vision is to reveal this power and its activities, the other three merely giving the fourth its historical place.

The description continues "It had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns."

Now evidently the fourth beast is the Roman empire, as is the iron in Nebuchadnezzar's image. The strength and ferocity and ruthlessness of Rome are plainly foretold, but

is there not something more? And could Rome in history be said to be diverse from all preceding empires? Then also the ten horns — ten kingdoms or their rulers — are a feature which the historical Roman empire lacked. So we are prepared for a future revival of the Roman empire in a form in which these further features are present.

Daniel then sees another horn, a little one, arise among the ten and pluck up three of the ten by the roots. "In this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." The ten horns "out of this kingdom" are explained to Daniel as being ten kings that shall arise, and the little horn as another king arising after them, different from them, who will subdue three kings.

It is this man whose rise is central to this vision — his character and behaviour are "diverse" — he is the great enemy of Christ in the last days, the one who appears again so prominently in Revelation xiii. as the (first) Beast. He is shown here as devouring the whole earth, treading it down and breaking it in pieces (verse 23).

In Revelation he is shown as a beast with seven heads as well as ten horns, rising, as in Daniel's vision, out of the sea (or unsettled state of the nations), but he is plainly a man, who like Daniel's little horn, speaks great words against the most High. In Revelation we are told that the dragon (Satan) gave him his power, and his throne and great authority, and perhaps his diversity consists at least partly in this. Other rulers derive their authority from God: his comes directly from Satan, though no doubt with God's permission.

The ten horns appear again in Rev. xvii.12 as "ten kings that have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast". Here again is confirmation that this feature in Daniel's vision belongs to a future revival of the now defunct Roman empire. But the little horn subdues three others, while in Revelation there are always ten. Perhaps Daniel gives more of the actual development of the situation — a little horn — a minor authority who grasps supreme power while destroying three others, and then per-

haps fills their places with his own nominees. But these details are surely given so that God's people at that time shall be able to recognize what is going on. It is vitally important that they shall be able to identify the Beast, so as not to be deceived by him. That is no doubt why Rev. xiii.18 gives his "number".

Besides being a blasphemer, the Beast is a persecutor of God's saints. "He shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hand for three and a half years." This period appears again, as forty two months, in Rev. xiii. It is the period of the great tribulation, when the Beast will be allowed power to distress the saints, but only for this limited time. The changing of times and laws is part of the destruction by the Beast of every religious and political system in order to obtain undisputed supremacy, and then finally worship, for himself. We find it again, as far as its effects on the Jews are concerned, in Daniel ix.27.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

Finally Daniel has a vision of God's judgment on all this. "I beheld till the thrones were set up (not cast down) and the Ancient of days did sit." Here is One Whose white hair speaks of wisdom, while His throne is the fire by which everything is tested. Countless myriads of angels attend Him. The judgment of the (fourth) beast with its blasphemous horn follows.

Then, evidently in a fresh vision, Daniel sees one like the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He comes to the enthroned Ancient of days, and receives universal dominion and glory, and a kingdom which shall never pass away or be destroyed. It was to this vision that the Lord Jesus referred when He was before the high priest: "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Later, while the vision is being explained to Daniel, a significant variation appears, in that judgment is given to the saints of the most High, and "the kingdom and dominion,

and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." This accords with what Scripture elsewhere reveals, that when Christ reigns, His heavenly saints will reign with Him. An alternative translation speaks of "saints of the high places". This would include all who partake of the first resurrection, as is clearly shown in Rev. xx.4-6. There are mentioned, as reigning with Christ, in addition to those given earlier in the book, those beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who refused to worship the Beast. This brings us back to Daniel's vision.

The question now arises, do we see any sign of these things today? To this we can only answer, that the theme of a new unity of Europe, whether political or economic, is in everyone's mind. The "treaty of Rome" is the document in which men's plans are at present expressed. The fear of Russia, which students of prophecy have always seen as the probable reason for seeking this unity, is likewise prominent today as never before. Enough here surely, to transform every Christian into a diligent reader of the prophetic word!

An alternative interpretation of Daniel's seventh chapter, or at any rate of the little horn who is so prominent in it, is to see papal Rome in the fourth beast and the pope in the little horn. "The great words against the most High" which the horn speaks are then the papal claims to be Christ's vicar, and to infallibility. However, the prophecy refers to defiant blasphemy against God, and the papal claims hardly amount to that. Certainly the papacy has sought to wear out the saints of God, but their persecutions were not confined to three and a half years. So the prophecy of Daniel hardly fits. The prophetic delineation of the papacy is more properly seen, surely, in the harlot of Rev. xvii, which is both seducing and persecuting. Even here the papacy can only be regarded as an undeveloped form of that evil system of Mystery Babylon.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

EXODUS xxxiii.

“I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory. And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee . . . thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by: and I will take away Mine hand, and thou shalt see My back parts: but My face shall not be seen.”

And wouldst thou see My face? That cannot be.
No mortal eye can view the infinite and live.
But here and now “There is a place by Me,”
Stand in this clift of rock, to see what I will give.

And wouldst thou be assured that all is well,
Despite the dreaded dangers of the future way,
And seek to view the days to come, and tell
Thy soul of peace, and work well done, throughout thy
day?

My hand shall screen thine eyes, but faith shall see,
With vision new, the way that I have brought thee here
Thus far, through alien land, and through the sea,
Shall My continuous care and patient grace appear.

And, dwelling thus on My unchanging love,
Thy fears shall vanish and thine anxious care will cease.
For faith links on with mighty powers above
And thou shalt be assured, and know indwelling peace.

“There is a place by Me” — come closer still,
While I awake the memories of those yester-years,
Recall My guiding hand upon thee till
This hour, when I remain the answer to your fears.

Edward T. Wood

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from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

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(Continued from inside back cover)

work on our behalf.

Here is a portion for our hearts, showing that we are very far from being despised on account of our own frailties. It is a very sweet portion when we feel our poverty and unattractiveness through weakness. The world despises weakness, but in Christ we find sympathy. But note how it is used in Heb.iv.14-16, as the basis in part of a twofold exhortation. "Let us hold fast our profession" and "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace", as though the Spirit had said "Do not let your infirmities cause you to give up and go back. Come boldly unto the throne — it is the source of your strength because it is a throne of grace. The power and strength of it are on your side."

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION

Would you please explain on which three days and nights the Son of man was in the sepulchre?

ANSWER

It is apparent that in His statement concerning this (Matt. xii. 40), the Lord was using "a day and a night" as a unit of time. Any part of that unit would be counted as a unit, according to a well understood convention. Thus Friday, on which day the Lord was crucified, was one unit; Friday night and Saturday was one unit; Saturday night and perhaps part of Sunday morning—we do not know at what hour He actually rose—was one unit.

EDITOR

A THREEFOLD INCENTIVE TO ZEALOUS SERVICE

What a devoted servant of the Lord was the apostle Paul! How faithfully he fulfilled the mission that was entrusted to him by the risen Lord when He appeared to him on the Damascus road and said, "For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (Acts xxvi. 16-18).

From a study of the fifth chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians we can gather three great motives that actuated him in his untiring ministry.

The Judgment Seat of Christ.

First he ever had before his mind that all his work would one day be tested at **the judgment seat of Christ**. Looking on to the coming of the Lord he says, "Wherefore we labour (or strive earnestly) that whether present (with the Lord) or absent, we may be acceptable to Him" (2 Cor.v.8-9). The apostle's great ambition was to serve the Lord acceptably and to be well-pleasing to Him in all things, for, as he goes on to say, "we must all appear (or, be manifested) before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

It is salutary for the believer to remember that everything he does will one day be examined by the Lord Jesus, and he will be rewarded accordingly. Every action is to be estimated at its true value, in order that "every one may receive his praise from God" (1 Cor.iv.5). The Lord is going to give His own assessment of our service, and will reward all that has been done for His glory, while what has been done for mere self-aggrandise-

ment will be destroyed. It is an encouraging thought that what we do with a single eye for the Lord's glory has a permanent reward, while what is done for self-glory will be blotted out for ever. Will it not be a joy to receive our Lord's approval in that day, and a relief to witness the disappearance of all that has been displeasing to Him?

One has said, "What a lack there would be if there were not this great clearing up of things before we have passed fully into eternity, if the wisdom and grace and holiness of God were not perfectly displayed in all His ways with us, if we had not the lessons of time impressed upon us for the wisdom of eternity!" (F.W.G.) We shall see then our failures and mistakes in the light of His unfailing grace along life's way, and the Lord's own words as to His people will be perfectly fulfilled, "I am glorified in them."

Let us then serve the Lord with all diligence and godly fear, in the knowledge that nothing, either good or bad, will be overlooked by the glorified Lord when we are manifested before Him. Let us see to it that we are building with materials that will stand the test in that day, for every man's work will be tried by fire to show of what sort it is. "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss" (1 Cor. iii.12-15).

"The Terror of the Lord"

Let us now look at the second great motive that moved the apostle to zealous service. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." As he thought of believers having to give account at the judgment seat of Christ of their conduct and service, it brought home to him what a solemn thing it was for the unsaved to be judged for their sins at the great white throne. As the apostle Peter puts it, "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet.iv.17-18). If our blessed Lord is not going to overlook a single word or deed in

the lives of His blood-bought people, what will it be for those who reject the Saviour to have all their sins made manifest at His judgment throne? As Paul in his preaching the gospel pondered the doom of those who did not believe, the thought gave urgency to his preaching: he knew the terror of the Lord, he knew that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity (Hab.i.13), and he therefore sought to persuade men to believe the gospel and to turn to God in repentance and faith. But let us notice that "the terror of the Lord" had no terrors for Paul — his heart was resting in the love of Christ, he would say, like John, "that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John iv.17).

How zealously he applied himself to proclaiming the word of reconciliation that had been given to him! (see verses 18-20). "Now then," he says, "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us: we pray, in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." He saw that men were at enmity with God, but through Christ God had opened up the way for the enmity to be removed, and for those who were once far off to be forgiven and brought near to God. Can we wonder that the apostle so zealously proclaimed such a message?

The Constraining Love of Christ

The third great incentive to devoted service the apostle found in the love of Christ. "For the love of Christ constraineth us," he says. What a motive this is, the all-constraining love of Christ! He not only felt the solemnity of the judgment seat of Christ, he not only realised that "the terror of the Lord" meant judgment for the unsaved, but he was fully taken possession of by that all-conquering love of Christ which had triumphed over all his hatred to the name of Jesus and his overbearing arrogance and had brought him as a humble, devoted servant to the feet of the risen Lord. In the dust of the Damascus road he had cried, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And it was still his great ambition to win the approval of the One Whose love meant so much to him.

"The love of Christ constraineth us!" Throughout their ar-

duous service with all that it involved of danger and suffering, the apostle and his fellow-workers were stirred into vigorous action by the love of Christ constraining them. For souls that were perishing the preaching of the Cross was God's means of salvation, and the devoted apostles were constrained to proclaim the glad news of salvation wherever they went.

Some might criticize them as being beside themselves, such was the joy they manifested as being directly occupied with God Himself: others might belittle the earnestness with which they sought the blessing of men (see verse 13). But the apostle goes on to explain, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them, and rose again" (verses 14, 15).

Here we have the supreme reason for the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He went voluntarily into death, He gave Himself a vicarious sacrifice on behalf of all, because all were by nature in the place of death, dead in trespasses and sins. He not only died, but He rose again, and we who are associated with Him in resurrection life belong to a new creation of which He is the exalted Head. Why did Christ die? Not only that we should be delivered from death and judgment, but that we should be found walking in newness of life (Rom.vi.4), no longer living to ourselves, but to Him Who died for us, and rose again. "Thus He Who is the source of life is also the object of life to the Christian; and this in His full character of death and resurrection, so as to act the more on the affections. For if He died for us in grace, He rose for us in power, that we might devote ourselves, thus set free, to His service and glory" (W.K.).

Let us now ask ourselves, how do these three motives affect us? They were the mainspring of the apostle's energetic and fruitful service to his Lord, but do they act upon us in a similar way? In the first place, are we making every endeavour to serve the Lord so acceptably that we shall receive His approval in the day when we appear before His judgment seat? Secondly, does the solemn fact that the terror of the Lord means judgment for all who are unsaved give urgency to the message of

the gospel which we are privileged to make known? Thirdly, does the love of Christ constrain us to devote our lives in grateful and wholehearted service to the One Who loved us and gave Himself for us?

R. A. CREETH

FAITH: ITS PRACTICAL WORKING

Rom.v.3-11

Last month we surveyed briefly the confident assurance which the believer has through faith in the God Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. Now we would see how that faith reacts to the stresses of daily life.

Justification: Peace: Favour: Glory are the words in which the fruit of faith is summarised, and "exulting in hope of the glory of God" is Paul's triumphant conclusion. Now he adds, "And not only so, but we glory (or exult) in tribulations also."

This is to come down to earth with a vengeance! For we know that exulting is the last thing that we are inclined to in times of tribulation. Now there are two possible meanings to the words "exulting in tribulations" — do they mean exulting in the tribulations themselves, or exulting in the midst of tribulations, i.e. in spite of them?

Now we would suggest that both meanings are possible, but that we have to begin — most of us — with the second. The word "tribulations" includes both the ordinary trials of life to which all are subject, and also those special troubles which are apt to come upon the believer because of his following a rejected Master. We stand indeed in God's favour, but it is not His way to favour His children by shielding them from the sufferings of a groaning creation. But whatever the afflictions, faith will enable us to hold our heads high if we remember that none of these things can alter in the slightest degree the glorious destiny that Christ has made ours.

The next words of the apostle suggest however that what *he* had in mind was the glorying in the tribulations themselves, as things which could turn out to be a positive good. A high standard indeed! For he says "We glory in tribulations also,

knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."

Patience — patient endurance — is not a natural trait for most of us. Like Israel in the wilderness, we tend to complain when trials come, and may even, like them, lose our trust in the wisdom and love of our Leader. But if we learn to endure without these displays of impatience, faith and trust are strengthened, and we are prepared for yet sterner tests. So God may be able to trust us with more demanding tasks than we should otherwise have been able to face.

If instead of enduring patiently we give up and return to the ways of men, we shall find that nothing is easier in consequence. For God will not allow His children to escape His training hand, and will bring us back at last (if we truly are His) to walk in His ways. And always the way back is harder than if we had continued in patient endurance. So let us "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith; Who for joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame".

"And patience worketh experience."

"Experience" here — translated "proof" elsewhere, as in Phil.ii.22, "ye know the proof of him (Timothy) that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel", is the knowledge gained as the result of *testing*. Thus materials to be used in engineering structures have to be tested to ensure that they will withstand the stresses they will have to endure in practice.

Now with us the patient endurance of trials reveals to us, not our strength, but our weakness. It shows us how liable we are to fail if we rely on ourselves, but also shows us how we may confidently count on the strength which the Lord supplies: "My strength is made perfect in weakness." Even our failures and breakdowns reveal the constancy of God's grace towards us, grace that is always ready to restore and heal, and set our feet once more on the heavenly pathway. The *proof* of this, as we go on from one trial to another, constitutes the "experience" of which Paul here writes.

Modern translations lead us to understand the "proof" here

as being the steadfastness of character which results from trials patiently endured. Now no-one would deny that such steadfastness is produced, but when the apostle's next words "and experience worketh hope" are made to suggest our hope is stronger because of our steadfast character, this seems to show that we are on the wrong tack! How can our hope depend in any way on ourselves? Surely the "proof" we have made is of divine support always available to us to bring us through.

"And experience worketh hope".

We had "hope" earlier — "exulting in hope of the glory of God". Now here is hope strengthened and deepened as a result of the trials the believer has passed through. The hope which has been before him, like the light at the end of a long tunnel, certain to be reached in due time, and meanwhile encouraging him to go on towards it, is now the more firmly grasped because it has been his support when everything was so dark around him.

"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Hope does not fail us or let us down, because we have learned to trace the source of all our blessings up to the love of God, and this cannot fail. God has given us His Spirit in order that we may know the things which He has freely given us, the fruit of His outpoured love.

If we are asked, when we are passing through some deep trial, what has become of the exultant hope with which we began our Christian life, we ought to be able to answer "Nothing that has happened or is happening now can alter the certainty of that hope. For we know that God's love is working all things together for our good."

It is very striking that we get here the first mention in this epistle both of God's love to us and of the Spirit He has given us. Earlier chapters speak of our need as sinners, and of God's righteous way of meeting this need by the sacrifice of Christ, but not until the ground of our justification is firmly established does the apostle speak of the source of it and of the divine means of our enjoying it — the Holy Spirit within us.

So we can see that our salvation does not depend on our enjoyment of it, but rather the reverse — our enjoyment depends on a firm assurance of its basis in Christ's work as that which establishes the righteousness of God.

Then the writer goes on to show the sure proof of God's love to us in that His Son died for us: **"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."**

Earlier in the epistle he had proved man's sinfulness, and his utter inability to free himself from that condition. Now he brings out that for those who were thus powerless to make any move toward God Christ has died — died for ungodly men. The unexpectedness of this we have become familiar with; but Paul emphasizes that neither goodness nor even righteousness was to be found in man, but only sin. Yet for such unattractive people Christ has died, and this is God's demonstration of His love toward us. Thus Paul by the Spirit echoes John iii.16. The same Spirit will, if we allow Him to lead us, warm our hearts continually by shedding abroad God's love in them, whether our pathway be bright or overcast.

"Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

Thus our confidence does not only rest in what Christ has *done*, for we know that He Himself is alive in the presence of God for us. Justified now by His blood, we shall be saved by our living Saviour when the day of wrath dawns.

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

The logic of this is inescapable, and forms, we would think, a triumphant conclusion to all that Paul has been saying. Yet he does not stop there, though many believers do, but he adds,

"And not only so, but we also make our boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the reconciliation."

For our salvation is not something which Christ has, as it were, extracted from God; but our boasting, our exultation is in God Himself, in that the whole work from beginning to end is the accomplishment of His own purpose to make Himself

known to His creatures through and in and for the glory of His Son Jesus Christ.

Note as to the translation.

For those who use the A.V. it is worth noting that the words "rejoice" (verse 2), "glory" (verse 3) and "joy" (verse 11) are all the same word, which is better rendered *exult*, or *glory*.

Also "atonement" (verse 11) has long lost its old meaning. King James' translators read it as "at-one-ment", so that the word "reconciliation" represents its meaning better.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

DANIEL THE PROPHET IV

The second of Daniel's own visions, in chapter viii, was seen in the second year of King Belshazzar. It concerns an oppressor of Israel in the last days, a mysterious figure who is difficult to place with certainty in the prophetic scene, but whose importance can be judged by the fact that his activities are foretold in a special vision. He has, moreover, a historical predecessor, the well known Antiochus Epiphanes, in whom the prophecy has received a historical fulfilment.

Daniel sees first a representation of the rapid expansion (then future) of the Persian empire under the symbol of a two-horned ram "pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him." The two horns, of which the higher came up last, are later explained to Daniel as the Median and Persian constituents of the kingdom.

Then follows a striking representation of the rise of the Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great. Daniel sees a he goat, with "a notable horn between his eyes", coming with incredible swiftness up to the ram, attacking him fiercely, breaking his horns, throwing him down and stamping on him. Thus the amazingly rapid and complete overthrow of the Persian power was depicted. The he goat became very strong, but at the height of his strength the great horn was broken: Alexander died at the age of thirty two, having in a few years extended his kingdom as far as the Indus.

The great horn having been broken, four "notable" but smaller horns came up in its place. This signified the four divisions of the empire which eventually resulted: Greece and Macedonia, Syria with part of Asia Minor, Egypt, and Babylonia. There is perhaps the suggestion that there were other, less notable horns, and this corresponds to the rather chaotic state of affairs after the death of Alexander. Then Daniel sees another horn, a little one, come out from one of the four, and then itself become "exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." This more or less fixes the territory of the "little horn" as in the Syrian kingdom.

ACTIVITIES OF THE LITTLE HORN

The actions of the little horn are described as follows: "It grew great, even to the host (or army) of heaven; and some of the host of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them. It magnified itself, even up to the Prince of the host; and the continual burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through transgression; and truth was cast down to the ground, and the horn acted and prospered" (RSV).

Remembering Joseph's dream of the sun and moon and twelve stars making obeisance to him, we shall be prepared to see God's people Israel in the term "the host of heaven". It is how God sees them; however failing they were, they represented God in a heathen world. They become the chief target of the attacks of the man whom Satan was using to destroy the truth of God. We have, pictured here, the activities of the notorious Antiochus Epiphanes, who plundered Jerusalem, profaned the temple, and slew or enslaved large numbers of the people, seeking to destroy their worship. He prohibited the daily sacrifice, and offered a sow on the altar to defile it. The people were required to join in heathen worship, and all copies of the scriptures that he could obtain were destroyed. Many gave up and joined in idol worship, many remained true and suffered.

Daniel hears "holy ones" speaking of the duration of this tribulation: it was to be 2,300 days, then the sanctuary would be cleansed. This cleansing was brought about historically through the Maccabaeen uprising, as a result of which Jerusalem was freed and the temple was reconsecrated. This was in B.C. 164.

As Daniel pondered upon the vision, the angel was sent to explain its meaning. He assigned the fulfilment of the vision to "the latter end of the indignation; for it pertains to the appointed time of the end" (RSV).

Now the "indignation" here refers to God's indignation against His rebellious people, and "the appointed time of the end" means the last and greatest tribulation just before the Lord comes. Hence we must look upon the persecutions of Antiochus as a preliminary and partial fulfilment of the vision, drawing our attention to another and worse tyrant at the end of this dispensation, who will arise in the same quarter that Antiochus did.

Gabriel says, "At the latter end of their rule, when transgressors have reached their full measure, a king of bold countenance, one who understands riddles, shall arise. His power shall be great, and he shall cause fearful destruction, and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people of the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall magnify himself. Without warning he shall destroy many; and he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes; but, by no human hand, he shall be broken" (RSV).

This king will thus pursue a career in which relentless destruction of all that oppose him, and great power backed up by cunning and deceit, lead him to persecute the faithful among God's people (for what purpose is not certain), as did Antiochus Epiphanes. His rising up against the Lord Himself seems to refer, according to verse 11, to the abolition of the Jewish worship. Now this in chapter ix is attributed to the Roman prince that is coming (verse 27), so it could be that the king of chapter viii acts in this as the agent of the Roman prince.

We may note that this oppressor is not said to *invade* the land, thus distinguishing him from the "king of the north" in chapter xi, and from the Assyrian foe with whom he is sometimes identified. As Israel was part of the dominion of Antiochus, this later oppressor may be already established as ruler of the land, or at any rate as overlord, when the dramatic events of the last days take place. There is some resemblance between him and the second beast of Revelation xiii, for instance the suggested collaboration with the Roman prince, and the emphasis on his deceitfulness, correspond; but there is no suggestion of miracle working, so that any identification is uncertain.

Finally, the end of this oppressor is hinted at, rather than described, so that we cannot be sure whether he will be cut off by the Lord Himself when He appears, or whether he is destroyed earlier. We only know that it is not man that will end his career.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

BODILY WEAKNESS

The following piece is an extract from a letter to a young Christian. Its recipient, greatly helped by it at the time, kept it, and now, having proved its truth through many years, desires to pass on its message. It is therefore printed by his special request.

"I hope you are better as to your body, and your soul stronger spiritually through its weakness, it having thrown you upon the Lord. Not always does health lead us to the Lord, or if near Him, keep us there, more often it works the other way. Says the apostle, "We who are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened." He found his body a hindrance, and it must be so seeing that it is in humiliation, not yet redeemed, the seat of carnal passions, of sin, of pain.

Still there is another side as well. It belongs to the Lord and it is the temple of the Holy Spirit, therefore it has to be cared for on that ground. One expression of that care is keeping it in subjection, so that the flesh and carnal appetites which have

their abode there, do not break out in mastery over the soul. By and bye we shall have our house from above, then the hindrances and curtailments which we now experience will be gone for ever. It is this which Paul has somewhat before him when he writes "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."

There is another view, and Paul presents it when speaking of the thorn in the flesh. "Most gladly therefore" said he "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong." In this view the weaknesses associated with our body become the means of positive blessing, that is the power of Christ resting upon us. Infirmities make nothing of us. We cannot think of ourselves as being anything when faced with infirmities: they destroy pride and glorying in the flesh: self being thus removed there is room for Christ to fill the soul. Christ then becomes known, what He is as suiting us in our need becomes experimentally known, as sustaining us in face of what we are in ourselves. We move along our earthly path in weakness, and finding no consolation or power in ourselves, or in any human arm, we turn to Christ and find it all in Him. His strength is made perfect in weakness. We live by Him in the midst of weakness.

Another thought associated with this is that of the sympathies of Christ as our great High Priest. Though He uses our infirmities to make good His power in us His sympathies are toward us as one "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." These things do not exalt us, but place us at a disadvantage, and produce a sense of poverty and good-for-nothingness which is exceedingly painful to our poor human hearts. Through this Jesus has passed. He felt the weakness, the frailty, of human nature (not its sin) above all upon the cross, and expressed Himself accordingly (Psalm xxii.6,7,14,15,17.). Though now out of them He has not forgotten the experiences of His own path and heart. This sympathy is part of His priestly

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remaining 71 years after his father's coming, and Moses' 80 years before the Exodus, there are only 64 years for all the events of Exodus i. and ii. That is, time to forget Joseph, time to build two treasure cities, and then more measures of oppression. This seems much too short.

But Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not "children of Israel". Jacob returned to Canaan with his "children" when Joseph was 6 or 7 (Gen. xxx.25 and xxxi.38), and he entered Egypt when Joseph was 39 (30 plus 7 years plenty plus 2 years famine), so the sojourn in Canaan was 33 or 32 years, leaving almost exactly 400 years in Egypt, as Gen. xv. says.

If however the Hebrew text is correct, without the additional words, so that the whole 430 years were spent in Egypt, there is no difficulty in treating the 400 years of Gen. xv as a round figure, agreeing with the more exactly stated 430 years of Ex. xii. It is possible that a copyist may have added the words to bring about more exact agreement.

Seeing that the subject in Ex. xii is deliverance from Egypt, it seems incongruous, after speaking of the sojourn in Egypt, to add on, *afterwards*, "and in the land of Canaan." We believe then, that 430 years, to the day, were spent in Egypt; we think that 1706 B.C. may be about right for the entry, so that the Exodus date is wrong, but there is no certainty on such points.

Some expositors regard Gal. iii.17 as decisive, and date the 430 years from Abraham's entry into Canaan. But which promise does Paul refer to? His words seem to imply the promise of Gen. xxii, and this cannot be taken as the beginning of the sojourn in Canaan. However, his argument is, that God established His covenant by promise; then *after* 430 years there came the law; thus the law cannot invalidate the promise. The exact interval is therefore not in question.

EDITOR

ALONE WITH GOD SURRENDER TO THE UNSEEN

What is a Christian? One who accepts by faith an unseen Saviour, who surrenders himself to the dominion of an unseen Lord, and who cherishes an unseen hope. "Whom having not seen ye love; in Whom, though *now ye see Him not*, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter i.8). One of the best blessings of the secret place, where we are alone with God, is that we can enter into fellowship with the Unseen; a fellowship that lies at the root idea of the Christian life.

The Need

Although there are countless blessings to be found when alone with God, we find it difficult to live in the realm of the unseen. The pull of the world around is stronger than the attraction of that which we cannot see. A navigational compass is mounted and adjusted so that its needle may swing freely, unaffected by the attraction of its immediate surroundings. It is necessary that we find some adjustment to our environment so that we may respond to the attractive force of the unseen God. There is a tendency for Christian graces to be displayed only "weather permitting". When the sea of life is calm — in the quiet of the hour of worship in fellowship with the Lord's people, in times of good health and outward prosperity — the needle points steadily enough to God; but when sorrows and disappointments come, when the pain of sickness is sharp, when the blast of temptation is keen, immediately all is wrong — the needle then points to neither faith nor peace.

The Value

The value of complete surrender to the Unseen is found most convincingly when trouble of any kind has to be met and overcome. The Apostle Paul must surely have been conscious of the Presence of the Lord when he wrote, "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us

a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. iv.17,18). Christian folk are often criticised for having their heads in the clouds and not giving sufficient attention to worldly affairs. But would it not be probably more true to say that most Christians have too much of "present worldliness" about them, and that they do not consider sufficiently that which is eternal and so far excels the temporal?

God's all-sufficient peace can only come to us as we draw aside, and contemplate the unseen and eternal. It is certain that if this steady look at things above is lacking, we shall be without balance and our looking at the things of this life will either prove to be a pitfall or else be depressing. A clear upward look enabled Paul to entirely reverse the judgments he would have naturally passed on things below. What he would have called heavy, he calls "light"; what he would otherwise have thought had no end, he terms "but for a moment". This is one of those occasions when it seems he can hardly find words to express himself. For him the greatness of his hope is not only "glory" but a "weight of glory" — "an exceeding weight . . ." — "a far more exceeding weight . . ." — "a far more exceeding and eternal weight . . ." See how he piles one word on top of another, endeavouring to communicate his concept of what is to come. The scales in which he weighs his troubles do not balance. One side is immensely heavier than the other as he considers that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed" (Romans viii.18).

The Wisdom

If we could but rise in spirit as the Apostle does and surrender to the Unseen, we should see, as he did, that the feverish struggle for promotion, gain and security which is common to men and generally applauded, is foolish; and that the pursuit of spiritual riches is not so foolish as the world reckons, but supremely wise. The practice nowadays is to set

store against a day when difficulty or adversity may come; but the recollection that "the things which are seen are temporal" will sober ambition and correct our thinking. We have but to write over our possessions "temporal" to realise that he who lays up treasure for himself, is not rich towards God (Luke xii.21).

We often need to do in secret fellowship with God what every wise businessman does — to draw up a balance-sheet. Vague ideas of spiritual solvency are insufficient and we should not remain content with them. We ought to be perfectly clear about our standing. This is obviously what Paul did, for he writes, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory . . ." He says, in effect, I have worked it out, I have tried to make it balance; but it is obvious that in setting the temporal over against the eternal the present cannot be compared with the future. Nowhere can such a calculation be made, except in the secret place, in the presence of the Eternal.

To be alone with God, to enter into fellowship with the Unseen, will give us a better understanding of the purpose of life; and as we learn to see things in the light of heaven so the earthly will relax its grip upon us. T. D. SPICER

HIS GENERATION

"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken" (Isaiah liii.8).

v. 10. *"when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand".*

Spoken long before the events they portray, these words cover the past — and the future. The day will come when a repentant Israel will know the meaning of them. Zechariah hears their question, prophetically. "One shall say unto him, what are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the

house of my friends" (Zech. xiii.6).

The care of the Jews in recording their genealogies is proverbial. The records of their generations were inscribed with meticulous accuracy, and not without a certain pride. Thus the word of the prophet is significant — "who shall declare *his* generation?" Who shall inscribe the names of *his* family or boast of *his* present progeny? "For he was cut off out of the land of the living". It is the *human* thought of finality — the ending of a life without any continuity of productive living. But there is, also, *divine* foreknowledge of their evil purpose, since they "saw no beauty that they should desire him" as well as *divine* evaluation of his death — "For the transgression of my people was he stricken". He who had sole right of judgment over His own people, knew their transgression, and knew also the need to give One Whose unblemished life could be placed upon the altar of sacrifice, righteously to be accepted in atonement for them. "Because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" — his life was *given*, it was not forfeited, and man had no power to terminate it.

"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" — humbly, as convicted sinners, hitherto self-deceived, we may look in faith to that pure soul and see the unblemished offering divinely provided. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x.14). The perfection of that offering will be the glory of eternity — the sustaining reality of Divine Love in responding so completely to the destitute condition of man. It will ever be the source and mainspring of our worship. The overflowing purpose of divine grace takes us beyond forgiveness — amazing as that must be. By that "one offering" there is expiation — redemption and justification unite in holy assurance of the Father's love.

"He *shall* see His seed" — the promise of this undertaking was also proclaimed long ago. It is the triumphant answer to the question posed. The precious seed is still being gathered. The Sower observes it. He nourishes it and protects it. It is "His generation" — the Spirit of God de-

clares it! The fulness of it is yet to appear. The believer turns eyes of faith to "a throne stood in the heaven" (Rev. iv.2) and remembers Psalm cx.1 which describes the present period of waiting. "Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet". As being there, in spirit, among "the elders", we may see, from the standpoint of heaven, the future rapture of those who have waited in faith — "joint heirs with Christ". The complete company is there around that throne before the first seal of the book is opened — before the first act of God is revealed in judgment. The ecclesia has, indeed, been "gathered out". "This corruption shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality" . . . "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv.54,57).

In Revelation v.9 we hear the song of the coming day — a "new song" of celebration. It has never been sung before. The elders sing and the song is not of their *own* salvation but of the worthiness of the Lamb to take the book of the vast purposes of God and to open its seals "because thou hast been slain and hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation and made them unto our God kings and priests and they shall reign over the earth". How wonderful to see, that, after the whole company of the redeemed has been translated, there will be further "seed" as the result of the worthiness of the Lamb! The purposes of God are so full — so beyond mere human intelligence — that, as a symbol, "the book" (manuscript roll) is shown, the writing upon which overflows to the back. God's value of the death of Christ is shown to be such that He alone, as the Lamb of sacrifice, is worthy to take this roll while, as He does so, the countless thousands universally acclaim Him worthy of the seven-fold gift, without which neither judgments nor blessings could proceed for the glory of God.

"He shall see His seed". It is quite impossible that the promises of God in regard to the Jewish people shall be broken. Daniel records the words of the angel (Dan.xii)

“there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book”. The Lord Jesus refers to this — “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. xxiv). The repentant remnant of Israel shall be delivered out of their distresses.

There will also be salvation for a vast throng of Gentiles. The message of the Glad Tidings reaches increasingly throughout the world. It is sad to think of the coming time when “the mystery of lawlessness” will work unrestrained in “deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish because they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved” (2 Thess. ii.10). But God will, quite certainly, visit those who have *not* heard the true message of salvation, as well as those disillusioned by the worldly characteristics of Christendom. Circulation of the Scriptures grows widespread at the present time in almost all languages. This is clear indication of the approaching fulfilment of the divine promise of Matthew xxiv.14 that the “glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all the nations”. The blessed result is “a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues” (Rev. vii.9). They do not sing the new song but they are shown as “before the throne and before the Lamb” which indicates their divine acceptance as earthly saints — further “seed”, the precious produce of the death of Christ. Clothed with white robes and with palm branches in their hands they ascribe “Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb”. They have found salvation and “are they which came out of the great tribulation” — a time of Satanic activity in oppression, the foreshadowing of which can be seen at the present time.

Within a very short time before He gave His life, and sitting with His disciples upon the mount of Olives, Jesus gave them His answer to their question, “When shall these things be?” (Matt. xxiv). As disciples in the land of Judea

He answers them in the character of the Jewish remnant — “the end is not yet”. There would be false deceivers coming in the name of their Messiah; they would “hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled”. Here is His word of comfort and reassurance — they are precious “seed” to Him — members of “His generation”. They look for their Messiah despite world upheavals, personal afflictions, betrayal and death “but he that shall endure unto the end shall be saved”. No power, human or Satanic, shall frustrate the purpose of God in having His own earthly people dwelling in submission to His will in their own land.

The shadows are lengthening over the day of grace. Judgment awaits the world that “lieth in the wicked one”, but the mercy and the patience of God are infinitely beyond man’s assessment. His Word shows Him to be waiting till “the end” foretold by His Son, as though, humanly speaking, He is resolved to be quite satisfied that no single “seed” — not one member of the “generation” from the cross of His Christ — should be left outside the blessings of the Father’s House.

The sudden absence from the world scene resulting from the calling of all believers “to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. iv.13-18) will be a universal shock to the world of unbelief. Advanced modern communication, both verbal and pictorial, will immediately flash its messages of bewilderment, and memories and consciences will be awakened. Despite intense persecution and martyrdom there will be earthly witnesses to take up “the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. xx.4).

Today, it is ours “to await His Son from the heavens, whom He raised from among the dead, Jesus, our deliverer from the coming wrath” (1 Thess. i.10) and how good, meanwhile, to submit our thoughts to Him, in the words of Isaiah’s prophetic promise, with its notes of victory over time and the fading joys of earth, “He shall see His seed” — and this is no passing vision for “He shall prolong His days”. Eternity will display the triumphant outcome of His cross. It shall be for ever the living impulse of worship.

“And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand”. While human pleasures have palled in monotony and lost the temporary sustenance on which man depended, the pleasure of the Lord increases — “it shall prosper in His hand”. John had a vision of this prosperity when he saw a new heaven and a new earth and “heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them and they shall be his people and God himself shall be with them, their God. And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall not exist any more, nor grief, nor cry, nor distress shall exist any more, for the former things have passed away. And he that sat on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. xxi).

“His generation” has been divinely declared — “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied” (Isaiah liii.11).

EDWARD T. WOOD

DANIEL THE PROPHET — V

The prophetic visions hitherto recorded plainly covered a long period, but when Babylon, the first of the four great kingdoms, fell, Daniel became aware that fulfilment had begun. The head of gold had now given way to the chest and arms of silver; the bear, rather than the lion, had now come into prominence. But other, earlier prophecies also claimed his attention.

Jeremiah’s prophecy of 70 years of captivity for Judah were now about to finish, while through Isaiah the name of Judah’s deliverer — Cyrus — had long been revealed (Is. xlv.28).

Daniel’s reaction to these things shows us once more the spiritual quality of this man of God. To him it was not merely a matter of deep interest that the time had come for his people to be restored to their land, but he looked at the matter from God’s standpoint. He knew that God had long borne with the people’s disobedience before sending them into captivity (2 Chron. xxxvi.14-20), so that if God’s pur-

pose in this chastisement was to be fulfilled, then their repentance was essential. So he, whose own faithfulness to God had been so remarkable, now began to acknowledge and bewail his own sins as well as the sins of the people, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. In any failure of God's people, can anyone claim to be entirely guiltless? Certainly Daniel felt this, as his confession shows.

He acknowledged their disobedience to God's law, and their refusal to heed the rebukes of the prophets. He owned the righteousness of God's judgment against His people, including in this not only Judah but also the ten tribes of Israel "that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee." But he also owned that mercy and forgiveness belong to God, and so entreated that God would now turn away His anger from Jerusalem. "O my God, incline Thine ear, and hear; open Thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name: for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies."

God's answer to Daniel's prayer and confession was conveyed to him by the angel Gabriel, while he was still praying. Now no doubt Daniel's main concern had been with the end of the captivity in Babylon, but did he not look beyond this? Certainly God's answer went further, and dealt with the final blessing of Israel and Jerusalem.

Seventy years of captivity were coming to an end, and Gabriel now revealed that seventy "weeks", or seventy sevens of years, were determined "upon thy people and thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy".

This says nothing about the Church or the Gentiles, but is concerned only with "thy people and thy holy city" — i.e., with Israel and Jerusalem. Some phrases appear to point to the Lord's work on Calvary; but as Israel's transgression

is far from finished, and their sanctuary is again in ruins, we conclude that the prophecy as a whole is still unfulfilled.

The key to this is contained in verse 26, for after saying in verse 25 that seven, and then sixty two "weeks" would see the coming of Messiah the Prince, Gabriel next revealed that Messiah would be cut off and "have nothing" (correct translation). In consequence, no doubt, of this, "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary" — the sequence of "weeks" is broken, and the final, seventieth week is left in abeyance. God, as it were, refuses to finish the blessing of the people and the city, because they refused His Messiah, or Christ.

THE COMING PRINCE

"The people of the prince that shall come" — what people and what prince are meant? We know it was the Roman army, under Titus, that destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70; we know also that a Roman leader — the "little horn" of chapter vii. is to arise at the end. Accordingly verse 27 brings in both the coming prince and the seventieth week: "He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week; and for half the week (or, in the middle of the week) he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator" (R.S.V.).

Some interpreters apply the "he" of this verse to Messiah, instead of to the coming prince; but it is surely most incongruous to ascribe such earthly activities to One Who has been "cut off", or put to death. We know of course, that He was raised from the dead, but of this there is no hint here. It is not said, as in Isaiah liii, "He shall prolong his days". Moreover the enforced cessation of the sacrifices is in accord with what we have been led to expect at the last days, and is what is again referred to in chapter xii. No, the words do not at all suggest the making of that new covenant with Israel and Judah of which Jeremiah speaks, an everlasting

covenant, and this person is certainly the Roman prince that is to come.

We have therefore, this remarkable picture: the very man who, in chapter vii blasphemes the name of God (verse 25) and wears out the saints, is shown here as making a covenant with many, i.e., the majority of the Jews. Probably it is a covenant of protection; and the sacrifices must have been renewed (and so the temple rebuilt) before they could be made to stop. We recall that times and laws are to be given into his hand. But such a covenant with an ungodly prince reveals how ungodly the majority of the people are — it is the godly remnant that are persecuted. But their covenant — their “agreement with hell” (Isaiah xxviii.15) — will avail them little, and after three and a half years he brings everything to an end. For the remaining three and a half years — the same period as in Dan. vii.25 — he persecutes the saints, and, as other scriptures show, seeks to draw all worship to himself. It is the time of the great tribulation, the time that Rev. xiii. 1-10 speaks of.

Gabriel does not repeat here what Daniel had learned in his vision of chapter vii, but speaks of a desolator, who comes upon the wing of abominations, language which implies protection given to idolatry. On account of this, this invader brings widespread destruction upon the land, “even until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator” — or, “on the desolate” — on Jerusalem, her warfare now accomplished (Isaiah xl.1). The desolator is probably the one described elsewhere as the king of the north (chap. xi.40), who is used by God to finish the chastisement of His people.

Then will come the blessing promised at the end of the seventy weeks — the cleansing and healing of the stricken people, with everlasting righteousness now established under God’s new covenant. Israel’s sins will be taken away when they accept at last the sacrifice made long ago at Calvary, and their reconciliation will be brought about by that precious blood. Vision and prophecy will be needed no longer, when God’s purposes for Israel will have been brought to fruition, and the glory returns to His temple (Ezek. xliii.1-5).

THE SIXTY NINE WEEKS

We have passed rather lightly over verse 25 of Daniel ix, in examining the completion of the seventy weeks, and we must now return to it.

It shows us a most definite starting point for these years — “the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem” (not the temple merely) — which leads us straight to Nehemiah ii.5-8, to the decree of Artaxerxes in the 20th year of his reign.

From this point to the coming of Messiah the Prince was to be seven weeks, and sixty two weeks, making 69 times 7 or 483 years, and this, according to one careful computation*, leads to the very day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, presenting Himself as their King.

Why the period is divided into two parts is not stated; but it may be that the first 49 years were occupied in the actual rebuilding of the city. Certainly this rebuilding took place in troublous times. From this prophecy those in Israel whose hearts were looking for Christ had a clear indication of when He was about to come. The suspension of the reckoning after Christ's death left an unspecified interval before the beginning of the seventieth week, but this interval could have been cut short at any time by Israel's repentance for that awful deed.

It may be asked, why does the resumption of the “weeks” take place when the Roman prince makes his seven year covenant? We cannot of course answer with certainty, but if the covenant includes among its provisions the permission to recommence the sacrifices (no doubt at a price), to the godly remnant this means true worship according to God's law, which God is able to own. The first verse of Rev. xi. has a similar thought.

The revelation to Daniel that, after his people had been restored to their land and their city had been rebuilt, further sin and further chastening were to take place, must have been very depressing. Yet he could rejoice in the certainty

*See “The Coming Prince”, by Sir Robert Anderson.

of final blessing. However, more questions evidently arose in his mind as a result of Gabriel's communications, and so in the next chapter we find him once more fasting and praying. This we propose (D.V.) to study next month.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION

In the "New and Concise Bible Dictionary" (Morrish's) on page 168, the date of the Israelites' entry into Egypt is given as 1706 B.C. and the Exodus as 1491 B.C. In Genesis xv.13, 400 years is given. Could you explain this, please? G.M.P.

ANSWER

This is a difficult and much discussed question. The length of time the Israelites spent in Egypt is judged from three statements of Scripture.

- (a) Genesis xv.13-16. 400 years. Quoted in Acts vii.6.
 - (b) Exodus xii.40,41. 430 years to the day.
 - (c) Galatians iii.17: the law 430 years after the promise.
- There are several uncertainties to be considered:

1. Does the 400 years in (a) cover the oppression only, or does it include the whole sojourn in Egypt? Careful examination of the passage seems to lead to the conclusion that the whole sojourn is intended.

2. While the Hebrew text of Ex.xii reads as in the A.V., the Septuagint (Greek text) reads "The sojourning of the children of Israel, which they sojourned in Egypt and *in the land of Canaan*, was 430 years". Supposing this to be the correct text, we must ask, when did the children of Israel begin their sojourn in Canaan?

Sometimes this is reckoned from Abram's first entering the land, and then we have, Abram 25 years to Isaac's birth; Isaac 60 years to Jacob's; Jacob 130 when he went to Egypt. This leaves 215 years in Egypt, and this is apparently the figure the Dictionary is using. But if we subtract Joseph's

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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figurative. Its features, taken literally, are incompatible with one another, e.g. streets of pure gold, like transparent glass! But the spiritual meaning is not far to seek.

Now as to Ezek. xlv.9, what it actually says is, that no foreigner uncircumcised in heart or in flesh, shall enter into the *sanctuary*. This does not mean there is no place for them in the *temple*. The sanctuary is the inner place, while the temple includes the surrounding courts. And there is no requirement that foreigners must be circumcised.

Finally, Micah iv.1,2 speaks quite definitely of the nations going up to worship in the house of the God of Jacob.

(c) The question of animal sacrifices is a more difficult one, but it may help to remember that Israel will not be a heavenly people as the Church is, at least not during the millennium. Our worship is in the heavenly sanctuary, where Christ is — within the veil.

We suggest that, just as the sacrifices in O.T. times were reminders of the *need* of a *true* sacrifice, and could not themselves take away sins, so these millennial sacrifices may be intended as reminders of what Christ has suffered. *We* cannot easily forget Calvary, because it is only by faith that we know our acceptance with God — faith in a crucified Saviour. But during Israel's centuries of blessing, when they will see so many evidences of God's favour, and the glory of Christ will be manifested, not hidden, it may be salutary for them to be reminded that all depends on that precious bloodshedding — that the Glorious One once hung upon a cross.

EDITOR

THOUGHTS ON THE BOOK OF EZRA

The book of Ezra deals with the relatively small number of Jews (42,360) who returned from the 70 years of captivity in Babylon to recommence a work for God in a hostile environment. The book therefore gives many important practical lessons for us today.

The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, the King of Persia, to make a proclamation for the rebuilding of the Temple. The leaders of Judah and Benjamin, the priests and the Levites with all those whose spirit God had awakened, rose up to go to Jerusalem (chapter i.5). In a similarly unfriendly world, with parts of the professing church displaying some of the features of the Babylon of the future (Revelation xvii), God would raise up teachers, pastors and shepherds to instruct, tend and care for the flock of God and to lead and encourage them in His work and service now.

Several groups of people are mentioned as comprising this returning remnant.

In chapter ii.36-39 we read of the priests. Now in the New Testament there is no separate priestly caste — all believers are priests (1 Pet. ii.5.). So all believers have the glorious privilege as holy priests to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The gathering together in truth and reality to celebrate the Lord's Supper, though in weakness, but with some measure of devotedness, should be highly valued and carefully cherished in all its wonderful simplicity. The Father is seeking worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth (John iv.). This Jewish remnant started well—they put the worship of God foremost. In chapter iii.3 they set the altar on its bases and offered burnt offerings. These offerings are also mentioned in verses 4,5 and 6.

Then there were the Levites — chapter ii.40 — whose task was to engage in the work connected with the Tabernacle. God is looking for servants today who are devoted to His work in all its various aspects either in relation to His people or to the unsaved world around us. The people of God need building up — need to be taught and encouraged in the things of the Lord,

and from the gathering those whose hearts are full of Himself go out to the needy world around.

Next the singers — chapter ii.41 — those who are engaged in the praises of God. How our hearts and lips need to be engaged in ascribing praises to God, and in thanksgiving! It was said of the heathen world with all its abominations that they were unthankful (Rom. i.21). The apostle Paul in Col. iii.15 exhorts “be ye thankful”. Also in that epistle (chapter iii.16) we are told to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. A similar word is given us in Ephesians v.19, 20. We ought indeed to be a praising and a thankful people.

The porters — chapter ii.42 — were the keepers of the House of God. Their task was to ensure that nothing unholy entered the courts of the Lord. The enemy comes in as an angel of light and poses to be interested in the work of God. Those who had re-peopled the land left vacant by the dispersion of the ten tribes after the Assyrian captivity had a mixed form of worship — they were not God’s people, but made that pretence. “Let us build with you for we seek your God as ye do” (chap. iv.2). When the enemy failed to gain entrance in this way, the people’s response was “Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto the Lord God.” Then there was a further attack. The people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah and troubled them in building (chap. iv.4). We should seek to maintain holiness in the Assembly and in the Lord’s work and avoid compromise by refusing help from people who may pose as Christians but who deny the fundamental truths of the faith. We need to avoid sectarianism on the one hand and worldliness and unholiness on the other.

Then there were the Nethinims (chapter ii.43-54) whose name means *dedicated*. These assisted the Levites in the work of the temple. The apostle Paul was a dedicated bondsman of Jesus Christ and so should we be in our measure — ready to spend and be spent in the Master’s service. It is the path of self-sacrifice but it is the path of blessing.

Apart from the Priests, Levites, Porters, Singers and the

Nethinims there were enumerated in Ezra ii. the various families who comprised this company that went up to build the temple. We may regard ourselves as not very important but the Lord's eye is ever upon us and each one is precious to Him, and each one has a function to perform in His body the Church. Where the figure of our human body is used in 1 Cor. xii. it is stated that those members which we think to be less honourable upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need, but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care for one another (1 Cor. xii. 23-25).

After the altar had been built, and the offerings had ascended to the Lord as a sweet savour, the foundation of the temple was laid by the builders and they sang and praised the Lord (chapter iii.10). The old people who had seen the first temple in all its glory, loudly wept while many shouted aloud for joy. The older men were chastened as they were aware of the former glory and they had much experience, but were they a source of discouragement to the young? We often hear older people speaking of the past when the assemblies were more numerous and larger, and they always seem to be harping back to the past. This can have a very discouraging effect, often dampening ardour and zeal. We live in 1975 with all its problems but with all its challenge and opportunity. It is right to be concerned about the present moral departure both in the world and among Christians, but this should challenge us to renewed zeal for the Lord Jesus, activated by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord is still on the throne and His work goes on. In Ezra's day the work was started but the people became discouraged and it needed the prophet Haggai to be raised up to be used of the Lord for the restoration of the people. We shall consider this with its practical implications in a later article (D.V.).

A SKETCH OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Let us consider the subject of Christian service as set out for us in the sixth chapter of Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians. He commences by entreating the Corinthians to take care that they did not receive the grace of God in vain: in other words, he appeals to them to make sure that their lives were lived consistently with the great blessing that God had so richly bestowed upon them. And this applies also to us today. We have indeed been richly blessed, God has lavished His grace upon us: what response are we making to the love of His heart? If we are living worldly, carnal lives, is not this receiving the grace of God in vain?

The apostle emphasizes that in warning or beseeching others the servant of the Lord must be very careful that his own personal conduct does not give occasion of stumbling to another. There were those at Corinth and elsewhere who were always ready to point the finger at the apostle in an attempt to undermine his teaching, but Paul does not hesitate to measure himself and his doctrine by the truth he would press upon others, as he says, "in all things approving ourselves as the ministers (or servants) of God".

He proceeds to give a most interesting and comprehensive sketch of Christian service, drawing attention to the moral characteristics and qualities necessary and to the vicissitudes that often beset the servant's path.

The Need for Patient Endurance.

What is the outstanding quality to be looked for in the Lord's service? It is "much patience" or "endurance". In chapter xii, verse 12 the apostle puts this quality above signs and wonders and mighty deeds. How impatient we are at times, and how prone we are to give up and lose interest in any little service we are privileged to undertake! The servant must be prepared to meet with disappointment, he may be misunderstood and his actions may be misjudged, he may also lose heart and become weary in well-doing (see Gal. vi.9), but his resource will be to turn to the Source of all endurance and encouragement (Rom.

xv.5,6), and to fix his gaze on the perfect Servant Who was so meek and patient in all His ways.

How Endurance is Tested.

The apostle now points out ways in which endurance is put to the proof. There are nine things mentioned, and they can be divided into groups of three. First are **“afflictions, necessities, straits”**.

“Afflictions”, or tribulations are the trials which are common to all the Lord’s people. The Lord Jesus Himself said to His disciples on the eve of His departure to be with the Father, **“In the world ye shall have tribulation”**, and the early believers were taught that **“we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”** (Acts xiv.22).

“Necessities”, indicates privation or severe need of various kinds, while **“straits”** would be times of trouble when man is shut up to the help of God. In the course of his arduous service the apostle experienced these things far more than most of us today.

The next group — **“in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults”** — are specific inflictions that came upon Paul and his fellow workers as they carried out their faithful service to the Lord. We are familiar with the sufferings of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail as recorded in Acts xvi., but with a reference to his critics the apostle could speak of having endured stripes above measure; he had been in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft, and he adds, **“Of the Jews five times I received forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned”** (2 Cor. xi.23-25). It is sad to think that these things are being suffered by many servants of God today in Communist lands, and we should remember these dear persecuted believers constantly in our prayers.

Then besides the beatings and the imprisonments, the apostle knew what it was to meet with tumults. One translation (N.E.B.) has **“mobbed”** for this, and we can think of several occasions when he was faced by angry and threatening mobs (see Acts xiii.50; xiv.5,19; xix.23-29).

The apostle now turns to the third group of testings, and

these are clearly voluntary — willingly accepted by one who is devoted to the Lord's interests. **“In labours, in watchings, in fastings.”**

The word used for **“labours”** here has the sense of wearisome toil. The zealous servant must be prepared to spend himself with little apparent return for his labour. He will not spare himself in the pastoral care of the saints and in the telling forth of the gospel. God's servant has to learn his lessons in the school of affliction that he may be able to sympathize with the people of God and enter into their trials and afflictions in the pilgrim pathway.

Characteristics of True Service.

First comes **“pureness”** — purity of thought, word and deed — practical holiness in walk and ways. Then comes **“knowledge”**, for the servant needs to be well informed as to the things of God generally, especially in the understanding of God's word so that he may be ready to apply it to meet any difficulty that may arise. **“Longsuffering”** comes next, for in the course of his service he will have differing personalities to deal with, but if he is motivated by divine love he will not be easily provoked (1 Cor. xiii.4-5). **“Kindness”** suitably follows, for **“love suffereth long and is kind”** (1 Cor. xiii; see also Eph. iv.32).

Next comes **“by the Holy Ghost”**, for the servant should be so living in the power of the Spirit that his ministry displays it. The power of the Holy Ghost is manifested in the worker's service. Then we have **“by love unfeigned”** — a love that is genuine and sincere, the outflowing of the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost (Rom. v.5).

Next comes **“by the word of truth”**, which seems to indicate that the servant must be characterised by truthful dealing in all that he has to say. Then follows **“by the power of God”**, a reminder that no service is to be undertaken in our own strength, but we are to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Lastly, it is **“by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left”**, reminding us of the exhortation to put on the breastplate of righteousness (Eph. vi.14). The servant of the

Lord needs to see that he is walking consistently in practical righteousness, avoiding everything that might bring the ministry into reproach.

Paradoxes in Service.

After this ninefold description of the spiritual characteristics of the servant of the Lord, the apostle turns in verses 6-10 to give nine paradoxes which are to be seen in the man of God, and which are so vividly reflected in the chequered pathway of Paul himself.

“By honour and dishonour.” Some may approve and some may disapprove, but the servant of the Lord should not be unduly influenced by either the praise or the criticism of men. **“By evil report and good report.”** At Lystra Paul and Barnabas were acclaimed as gods, but shortly afterwards Paul was stoned and left for dead. Again, on another occasion he was first supposed to be a murderer and then regarded as a god (Acts xxviii.4-6). **“As deceivers and yet true.”** Some might say he knows not whereof he speaks, or is seeking to deceive the the people (as perhaps in Acts xvi.20-21), but the servant’s aim is to be true to his Lord in the realisation that the message he proclaims is the very truth of God. **“As unknown, and yet well known.”** The believer has a source of life and power unknown to the world, though he himself may be well known. It is also true that the Lord’s servant may be practically unknown to the world, yet esteemed and loved by the saints.

“As dying, and behold, we live.” The apostle had previously said, “I die daily” (1 Cor. xv.31), and again, “We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake (2 Cor. iv.10). Paul knew what it was to be continually exposed to death in the Master’s service, yet was he living in the joy of communion in that new life that was his by faith of the Son of God (Gal. ii.20). **“As chastened, and not killed”.** The servant is subject, as are all sons, to the chastening hand of God, and this for his profit if exercised thereby (Heb. xii.6-11), but though thus disciplined it was not unto death.

“As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing.” The servant finds much to cause him sorrow in a Christ-rejecting world, yet he posses-

ses a joy given him of the Lord and which cannot be taken from him (John xv.11; xvi.22).

“As poor, yet making many rich.” Though possessing little of this world’s goods, and in some cases gladly giving up what he had in order to serve the Lord more freely, the servant is compensated by the joy of bringing souls to Christ and building up believers in the truth, thus imparting spiritual riches to many. **“As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”** We serve One Who took the place of a pilgrim and a stranger in this world, and as we follow Him we should expect nothing from a world which rejects Him still: yet knowing Him as the risen and exalted One Who has all power at His disposal, we possess all things in Him. Are we not blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ? Indeed, all things are ours, and we are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s (1 Cor. iii.21-23).

This completes this remarkable sketch of Christian service. Let us ponder it, and inasmuch as we are not our own, but we are brought with a price and should therefore glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. vi.19-20), let us challenge ourselves as to how we measure up to these things which the Spirit of God brings before us through His servant in this passage. Let us test our service and our ways by these verses, and look to the Lord that by His grace we may serve Him more acceptably.

R. A. CREETH

DANIEL THE PROPHET VI

The final vision of Daniel, recorded in chapters x, xi and xii, fills in some gaps in the previous visions, and also fills out and completes the picture of the prophesied restoration of Israel.

The last vision had shown him that the freedom given to return from captivity in Babylon was far from marking the end of Israel’s troubles, while the prophecy of the death of Messiah and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem, with all the ac-

companying suffering, must have caused Daniel great distress. He had, however, the consolation of knowing, according to Gabriel's revelations, that the end of Israel's transgressions and her final reconciliation to God was sure, even if delayed.

No doubt he was too old to go back to Jerusalem with the returning remnant in the first year of Cyrus, and in the light of the previous vision he was constrained to return to his mourning and fasting rather than to indulge in rejoicing. So in the third year of Cyrus we find him seeking, by prayer and fasting, for further enlightenment about his people's future.

THE VISION OF CHRIST

The answer to his prayer comes in an unexpected form. While he was by the river Hiddekel (Tigris) he saw a vision of "a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz, his body was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude."

Now it is evident that this was no mere angel: it was rather the Son of God Himself, not yet incarnate, but appearing in the vision as a man. All the revelations then made to Daniel were either from Him or given by His direction. This then was the Messiah the Prince that Israel were going to reject, and Daniel's anxious enquiry about his people is met first of all by this revelation of the glory of Christ Himself.

It was made plain that He is in control of everything, whatever men or the powers of evil might do, and He declares (chapter xii.7) the time when all these things will be brought to a conclusion.

To Isaiah the vision of Christ's glory comes at the beginning of his ministry, while to Daniel it comes at the end; but the effect on the prophet is very similar in each case. Daniel says "there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength (x.8). Honoured servant of God as Daniel was, "a man greatly beloved", yet he is prostrated before a mere vision of the divine

glory, and how much more before the glory itself — the light unapproachable? So we see how great was the grace of the Lord Jesus in laying aside His glory when He became man, else how could men ever have been at ease in His presence? And we can marvel at the grace which is going to enable us one day to be at rest in the presence of His glory.

It is somewhat difficult to distinguish the persons mentioned here, but just as it appears that, of the three "men" who appeared to Abraham (Gen. xviii), one was Jehovah and the others were only angels, so here it seems that a second person is present, who raises Daniel first to his knees and then to his feet, and strengthens him to receive the message sent to him. A similar happening in chapter viii. may help us, for there Daniel hears "a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision" (verses 16,17). Who is this that gives such a command to the angel Gabriel? Is it not the same glorious One Who first appears to Daniel in chapter x.?

ANGELIC POWERS

Another thing which is brought out here is the power exerted, unknown by men, in the affairs of nations by angelic powers, both evil and good. We understand but little of this subject, but it seems that the answer to Daniel's prayer was delayed for twenty one days by the opposition of one who is called "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" (verse 13). Perhaps this may give us a hint of *one* reason why we ourselves have to wait for the answer to our prayers. And as regards the nations, how often have man's efforts to bring about peace in the world been frustrated unexpectedly and inexplicably? For while Satan is the prince of this world, what can man's puny efforts accomplish? And yet he will not turn to the Prince of peace, Who alone is able to give him what he needs.

KINGS OF THE NORTH AND OF THE SOUTH

The angel told Daniel (x.14) that he would enlighten him as to what would befall his people in the latter days, but he begins with Daniel's own time. He gives an outline of what had already

been made known to Daniel in symbol form, but now he gives it in plain terms — the three future kings of Persia, and the overthrow of Persia by Alexander. Then the breaking up of the Grecian empire after the death of Alexander, two of the fragments of which assumed special importance — namely those to the north and to the south of the land of Israel. The antagonisms of these two powers were inevitably fought out over the land of Israel, and Israel herself usually fell into the power of the stronger.

The course of the disputes and conflicts of the kings of the north (i.e. mainly Syria) and of the south (Egypt) the angel foretells to Daniel with an accuracy which the opponents of inspiration can only put down to their having been written after the events! Only, this explanation fails to account for the equally accurate foretelling of events still future when the O.T. Canon was closed — the cutting off of Messiah and yet another destruction of Jerusalem, for example.

The prophesied events lead up to the time of the great persecution of the Jews under the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes, already referred to in chapter viii.11, when the temple was defiled and the daily sacrifices stopped and the abomination of desolation was set up.

Now some possibility of confusion arises here, because though this crisis certainly took place as described, in the second century B.C., it is in some ways a pattern of a similar crisis in the very last days, which is mentioned in chapter xii.11. But there is a significant difference, which helps to make the distinction plain. In the past crisis the Jews were able to make a successful resistance to the oppressor, as verse 32 of chapter xi. says, "the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits", even though there was great suffering (verses 33-35). But in the last days there will be persecution of unprecedented severity, in which the godly remnant will be the chief sufferers. These are expressly commanded *not* to resist (Rev. xiii.10). This will last three and a half years, till "he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people (xii.7).

The angel, after foretelling this prominent event in what is

now Israel's past history, goes on to speak of an extended time of perplexity and trouble (xi.33-35), continuing up to the "time of the end". Then comes an abrupt change, and he introduces a new personage with no preliminary notice. The transition is impossible to ignore, and quite certainly shows that he is speaking now of the end-time itself.

THE WILFUL KING

No longer speaking of the king of the north or of the south, he introduces simply "the king", as though he could be certainly identified by this title. However, from the context the presumption is that he will be a ruler of part of Alexander's dominions, one who *also* rules, as Antiochus did, over Israel. Is there anything to indicate who could thus be simply marked out?

In chapter viii. "the little horn" is explained as "a king of bold countenance" (verse 23) who comes into power "in the latter time of the kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full" — could this be the one signified? Certainly he is said to destroy the mighty and the holy people — compare chapter vii.25 with xii.7. The king in the portion we are considering is marked by wilfulness — a characteristic which goes well with the "bold countenance" of the little horn. He exalts himself, especially against the God of gods. He has no regard for the God of his fathers — a phrase which is usually taken to indicate a Jewish origin. This of course is in no way incompatible with his ruling in part of the old Greek empire, any more than it was strange to have a Jew as England's prime minister (Disraeli). It is helpful to remember that the vision of chapters x - xii fills out and completes what Daniel could not understand in the visions of chapters viii and ix. We may thus expect the little horn of chapter viii. to reappear here.

He exalts himself above all gods (verse 37) and, while ignoring any god his fathers ever worshipped, honours a god of his own — he is said to honour "the god of fortresses" (R.S.V.), with gold and silver, precious stones and gifts. The meaning of this

is not very clear, but perhaps it means he shows contempt for every kind of religion.

(to be continued, D.V.)

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION

In a recent article ("Christians Awake", January 1975, page 11) the future temple of Ezekiel is taken to be a literal temple. Are there not great difficulties in regarding it as a literal temple to be built in the land of Israel? For instance, "all nations" are to be "circumcised in the flesh" before being allowed to worship God in the temple (Ezek. xlv.9). They are to witness continual "sacrifices for sin" without ceasing, in spite of the statement in Hebrews that there is no more sacrifice for sins.

These things make many think that either the literal temple was conditional, and the conditions were never fulfilled, or, that it is a figurative temple.

I should be grateful for your comments on this. H.F.C.

ANSWER

(a) The word "if" in Ezek. xliii.11 does not seem sufficient ground for saying that the building of the temple was conditional.

(b) In reading prophetic writings, the question whether a literal or a figurative interpretation is called for must always be considered. In the case of Ezekiel's temple the large amount of detail given, especially the measurements, seems to necessitate a literal interpretation. For if these measurements are figurative, what do they mean? Who is to decide?

It is quite different in, say, the new Jerusalem in Revelation, where we have a city coming down from heaven. Of course it is

(Continued inside front cover)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION

In 2 Cor. v.1 we are told that believers who die before the Lord comes have "a building of God, an house not made with hands", already in heaven waiting for them. But in Phil. iii.21 we read that the Lord will change believers' bodies when He comes. Can you explain please? This "building of God" is presumably not to be confused with "My Father's house".

ANSWER

Undoubtedly this "building of God" means the resurrection body.

Any difficulty seems to arise from a rather too literal understanding of the words. Indeed, "already in heaven waiting for them" goes beyond what the scripture says.

Scripture commonly speaks of the promises of God in this way. Of the patriarchs it says "God hath prepared for them a city", and Peter speaks of "an inheritance incorruptible . . . reserved in heaven for you", and Paul "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Also of the Lord Jesus it was written "A body hast Thou prepared Me." In none of these cases do we imagine the thing in existence until the appointed time.

Thus there is no real difficulty in that Scripture speaks of our new bodies as being prepared for us in heaven. And let us note that Paul speaks of this as being just as true of the believer who lives to see the Lord's coming — he speaks of being "clothed upon" with our house which is from heaven, of mortality being swallowed up of life.

What God has prepared Christ will bring to pass when He comes.

EDITOR

LOVE'S LOWLY SERVICE

Jesus, knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end. John xiii. 1.

“Unto the end” — what does this mean, but that He was leaving them, yet not loving them any the less because of it? “Unto the end” does not surely mean the end of the time He was with them here, but implies a continuing of His love into the days of His absence, right on to the accomplishing of His purpose for them. We must therefore read the incident that follows (washing the disciples’ feet) in the light of this continuing love.

In seeking for the meaning of the feet washing we ought to reject any thought that it was merely a sort of symbolic ritual. Was it not rather a thing which needed to be done, but which was left undone because none was lowly enough to do it? It was a servant’s job, and they, alas, were still (as Luke xxii. 24 shows) obsessed with the question as to who was the greatest. So, after giving *them* the opportunity, the Lord Himself, in the middle of the supper, rises and girds Himself for the task.

There may well have been others besides Peter who felt as he did, but hesitated to speak, while wondering in their minds what the Lord meant to teach them. In answering Peter’s protest “Lord, dost *Thou* wash *my* feet?” Jesus referred to the coming days: “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” This was no reference to the full knowledge which we shall have in eternity, but simply to the understanding which the Holy Spirit gives to the believer now. Yet still there was something which they all could take in even then, and after resuming His place, the Lord speaks of this.

“Know ye”, He says, “what I have done to you? Ye call Me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and ye say well, for so I am. If I then your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”

Well aware as we all must be of the depths of meaning in the Lord’s utterances, there is also a danger of concentrating

so much on the spiritual meaning, or shall we say the symbolic meaning, of an action like this, that we lose sight of the plain surface meaning of His words. But this would be to narrow the meaning just as truly as if we denied the symbolic interpretation. Every part of the Scriptures must be allowed its fullest meaning.

“Ye ought to wash one another’s feet.” In speaking of the surface meaning, we do not of course mean the *literal* meaning, which has no relevance to us today. Also, at the risk of repetition, one would say that to carry out a literal feet washing as a *ritual* would be valueless, as savouring more of Judaism than of Christianity. But to wash the feet meant to supply comfort and refreshment to a weary traveller; it meant a real welcome to an honoured guest (see Luke vii.44); and therefore it typifies all those acts of love and care for one another, both as regards earthly matters and spiritual ones, which help those who are weary on life’s journey, and which bind the saints together and increase love and harmony. It has nothing to do with lording it over one another or seeking to manage the affairs of others, for the emphasis is on the lowliness of the service supplied.

Moreover, if we would get this in its right context, we must see it in the light of that continuing love of our Lord for His people of which the passage speaks. In saying “Love one another as I have loved you”, one vital aspect of that love is His purpose that His own love should be displayed in us towards one another. When we truly love as He has loved, His love for us achieves its highest potential. Doubtless it cannot be fully till we are like Him, but will not the opportunity then be past?

We might have argued that the Lord’s example was so powerful that no further comment was needed, but evidently He did not think so! So He said “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him”, with which words we may well connect those of Luke xxii, “Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.” Let us then seek grace not to shun the lowliest service.

He added, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them", a reminder of how easy it is to miss the blessing which the Lord designs for all of us.

THE SPIRITUAL APPLICATION

When the Lord told Peter "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter", Peter's answer was "Thou shalt never wash my feet." This gave the Lord occasion to speak of a deeper meaning in what He was doing, saying, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." This struck a chord at once in Peter's heart, for had he not once had such a vision of his own sinfulness that he had cried "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"? So he at once answers, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

Now it seems inappropriate at this point to bring in any distinction between the Lord's saying "no part *with* Me" as against "no part *in* Me", but at that moment Peter well understood the *necessity* of the Lord's cleansing him, if he was to be His disciple. Then the Lord's next words told him that he was already cleansed, and now needed only to be maintained in that condition: "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all."

The spiritual meaning of washing by water is complementary to that of cleansing by His blood — the first referring to the moral cleansing which the Lord produces in us by the power of His word and the example of His own holy life, the second the judicial purging of our guilt before a holy God. The second could not be fully known till Christ had died and risen again, but the disciples had experienced the transforming power of the Master's word (at least, all but Judas), though, as He told them, they would understand it fully in the days to come.

Is there any connection with "born of water (and of the Spirit)" in John iii.5? The connection indeed is very close, for "*born of water*" shows that a mere outward reformation of our sinful ways is not enough. The impartation of a new life from God is required. Of this new birth the Holy Spirit is the power, so we have "born of the Spirit"; the word of Christ is the means

the Spirit uses — this is the water. Faith takes hold of the word, receives it, and the soul is renewed. The outward moral change follows, as the new-born soul, with new desires and tastes, is directed and fed by the pure “water of the word”. This is the “washing of the regeneration” of which Paul speaks in Titus iii.5. It corresponds to the “bathed” in the Lord’s word to Peter.

“NEEDETH NOT SAVE TO WASH HIS FEET”

What exactly did the Lord mean by these words? Simply this, that as we go on our way, walking through this world where it is God’s will that we shall live, we shall not automatically remain morally clean unless we have constant contact with the word of God — the Scriptures in short.

Necessarily occupied with earthly things, we need constant reminding that we belong to heaven. Continually in contact with men and women who know not God, how can we maintain purity unless we keep His word before us? We still carry the old, corrupt nature with us, and Satan lays traps all along the way to awaken it into action. We need to examine our ways, our words, our thoughts even by that divine standard, so that any stain can be washed away. Unholy, fleshly thoughts; jealousy and hatred; self seeking and pride — these things cannot abide with us if our minds are refreshed and cleansed by the word that tells of Christ. This is spiritual feet washing, and it is a service which our Lord is constantly rendering to all His own, through His Spirit. As we read in Eph. v.26, He is sanctifying and cleansing His church by the washing of water by the word. But of one thing we must be clear, that there is no repeated application of the blood. Once sanctified by faith in His blood, the believer is perfected for ever (Heb. x.14).

CLEANSING OF ONE ANOTHER

Can we apply the Lord’s word “ye ought to wash one another’s feet” to this aspect of service also? If we are walking

together in love with the Lord's people, and our own hearts are filled with the grace of Christ, we ought to be able to help one another to keep our feet clean. A word of exhortation, or even of reproof, may serve to preserve harmony among the saints when fleshly action threatens to cause strife, or to deliver a fellow believer from a wrong course.

An extreme case of this is dealt with in Gal. vi., of restoring one "overtaken in a fault" in a spirit of meekness, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The apostle stresses the delicacy of such a service when he suggests that only "ye which are spiritual" should think of undertaking it. We can see that a spirit of censoriousness is quite incapable of dealing with such a situation — it must be the lowly service of love if it is to fulfil the Lord's intention when He said "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THOUGHTS ON THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND HAGGAI

Last month we saw that the returned exiles from Babylon first set the altar on its bases, and then laid the foundation of the temple itself. There must first be worship to God, and this is the message to us. With hearts full of His immense love and of the Lord's grace and compassion — grace that brought Him to the depths of Calvary's cross — we bring to Him our worship, and then we should be stirred to engage in His work.

The rejection of the help offered by the Samaritans with their debased form of worship resulted in their open and bitter hostility. They did their utmost to hinder and stop the work of rebuilding, and finally obtained an edict from the Persian king to prohibit the carrying on of the work.

For fifteen years the temple lay desolate. While there was the decree to stop the work, it is also evident that the spiritual condition of the people was such that they had no heart to continue it. They lacked faith and listened to the enemy in-

stead of relying upon God. They had become discouraged and turned from the work of rebuilding to follow their own selfish ends. They had become “weary in well-doing”. It was in such a situation that God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to prophesy (Ezra v.1).

To follow the spiritual progress of the people at that time we must now turn to the book of the prophet Haggai.

Haggai prophesied for a few dynamic months, giving five short messages (i.1-11; i.12-15; ii.1-9; ii.10-19; ii.20-23) with dramatic results.

1st Message

“Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying: This people say the time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.”

They were occupied with their own business — working in the field — their earthly pursuits had first priority. Do we not see the same attitude today? If the business or professional man, for example, with all the stress and responsibility of his working life, is unable to afford the time for the work of the Lord, or the student, pre-occupied with his studies, cannot give it any attention, are their priorities right? The Lord said, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. vi.33). And again, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John vi.27).

God then remonstrated with the people. “Is it time for you to dwell in your ceiled (panelled) houses and the Lord’s house lie waste?”

The people had pleaded that this was not the time to rebuild the temple, but they could find time to build their luxurious and expensive homes. Their time and money were directed to their own interests and God was robbed as a result. The apostle Paul could say, “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (Phil. ii.21).

The prophet continued, “Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. Ye have sown much and har-

vested little." Four times the people were told to consider — twice in this first chapter. Because they had not put God first He had blown upon their human efforts. They had sown much but harvested little, they had drunk but were not satisfied, they had clothed themselves but were not warm. Their money had wasted away.

Those who are pre-occupied with their own affairs and ambitions lose the true blessings and joy that come from the Lord. Of Israel it was said that God gave them their request but sent leanness into their soul.

"Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."

The people were now being roused into action on behalf of the work of God. We need to go to "our mountain" — to go into God's presence in prayer that we may receive the needed grace and strength to go and work for Him — to go out into the weary world around us and bring in souls quarried from the barren rocks of sin to be made living stones in God's spiritual house.

In the following verses (i.9-11) God makes it clear that it was because His house was left desolate that these calamities of poor harvests had befallen them. Says the apostle Paul: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gall. vi.7).

This message had the effect of rousing the whole of the people including the Governor and the High Priest, and "they obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and feared before Him."

2nd Message

"I am with you, saith the Lord." (i.13).

The prophet is described as the Lord's messenger (and is the only prophet who is) and he brings the Lord's message — "I am with you." What a word of comfort and strength for them! The same word was given to Moses at the burning bush and to Joshua when he was about to enter the promised land. Joshua was told to be strong and of a good courage, and our Lord has

told us that He is with us even to the end of the age. As a result of this message the spirits of the people were stirred and they “came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God.” May we too be stirred and invigorated and delivered from apathy and lethargy.

3rd Message

“Be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts.” (ii.4).

The second chapter opens with the prophet told to invite the people to compare the temple in its first glory with what they were now building. “Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” he says. This temple was much inferior to the first, and perhaps the critics had discouraged the workers. So now to the governor, the high priest and the people the Lord addresses this word “Be strong and work, for I am with you.” It was the second time He had assured them of His being with them. Let them then be occupied with the work they put their hands to for God. So must we — instead of keep harping back to “the good old days”. As the prophet Zechariah said, “Who hath despised the day of small things?” An old brother used to encourage me and exhort me to “go on, and go on.”

Then the Spirit of God transports the workers to the days of the Lord’s coming in power and glory. He speaks of the Lord shaking the heaven and the earth and of the “desire of the nations” i.e. the Messiah, coming. While they were not wealthy like Solomon when he built the first temple, the Lord reminds them that silver and gold belong to Him, and promises that the final temple will exceed the splendour and magnificence of Solomon’s temple. And in the day of review at the judgment seat of Christ, what has been done for Christ here below will by the Lord’s hand adorn the spiritual temple in the heavenly Jerusalem.

4th Message

In this section of the prophecy the Lord illustrates the need

for holiness and separation from evil. Because of their neglect of the Lord and of His temple, the people, their offerings and their work had become unclean in the Lord's sight. If we neglect God's work, this is sin and we are defiled.

The prophet then calls them to think upon their past experience (ii.15-17). They had expected to harvest much more than in fact was the case. They came to the vine vat to draw 50 vessels out of the vat, but there were only 20 there. It was God's governmental hand in judgment upon them. Yet the people did not return to Him.

The people were then called again to consider the past from the day the foundation of the temple was laid. The crops had not yet yielded their fruit, but then there is a word of hope. God says, "From this day I will bless you" (ii.18, 19). The work of rebuilding had been re-commenced. When the apathetic believer turns again to the Lord then He can wonderfully bless him.

5th Message

This was a special message of encouragement for Zerubbabel. The prophet refers again to the shaking of the heavens and the earth, the coming again of the Lord in power and great glory. In that day of great convulsion, God promised Zerubbabel that he would be made as a signet for he had been chosen (ii.23). Though doubtless he is a type of the Lord Jesus, being a representative of the house of David, it is also a promise of personal blessing. He would have a place of royal authority.

We remember that the overcomer in the Church at Philadelphia (brotherly love) was promised that he would be a pillar in the temple of His God and he would have the Lord's new name written upon him (Rev. iii.12).

So as we have seen, after 15 years of inactivity in the Lord's work, the Spirit of God in a series of 5 short messages through the prophet Haggai lasting some 4 months stirred the people into action. They started building (Ezra v.2) and although this brought opposition from the Samaritans (Ezra v.3, 4; 6-17) God wonderfully overruled for them. A decree from Darius the king confirmed Cyrus' original decree (Ezra vi.1-12) and

within a comparatively short time the temple had been rebuilt and dedicated with joy (Ezra vi.16).

As W. Kelly wrote, "Where there is simplicity of confidence in the Lord, it is astonishing how the tables are turned, and the adversaries stand in dread of the feeblest folk who have faith in the living God." May we therefore be encouraged and strengthened to labour diligently for the Lord. "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. vi.4).

"Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor.xv.58).

R. MAHERS

THE DIVINE WORKERS XLVIII

"My Father worketh hitherto and I work"

(John v.17)

Luke xxi. The record by Luke, in its moral order, presents many vivid and factual pictures of events in which the Lord Jesus showed the mind of God in regard to the people among whom He moved on His way toward Calvary. In the closing scene of the previous chapter "all the people" are His audience as He warns His disciples in that fearless outright way that left no doubt as to His meaning. They are warned of those who had appointed themselves their leaders. While Matthew devotes the greater part of chapter 23 to the utter failure and falsity of the Scribes and Pharisees who "Sit in Moses' seat", Luke shows the moral danger of being influenced by their behaviour. To "desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues and the chief rooms at the feasts" whilst impoverishing widows and "for a show making long prayers" is in sharp contrast with the lovely presentation of devotion of one poor widow who gave "all the living that she had". Presented in this way, the truths concerning the Lord Jesus in His reactions to the conditions he had

to encounter are very precious. If He “dwells in our hearts by faith” (Eph. iii.17) it is the function of the Holy Spirit to take all that concerns Him to use as the impulse for our worship — and our witness.

So, in Luke’s moving record, we see the Lord Jesus sitting, as He often did, in the outer court of the temple, known as the Court of the women, at the place of the Treasury. As we read, we may see the parade of those who wish by their gifts to gain personal renown, as lavish benefactors. The metal receptacles, wide of mouth, re-echo to the sound of coins cast in as offerings. The scene is one of display to attract the adulation of onlookers but what are the sensitive impressions of the One who “looked up and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury” and who “saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites”? There may have been many whose giving was dominated by a desire to maintain that which distinguished Israel from the gentile world, but the one whom He *saw* was in poverty, bereft of a provider, with a *sacrifice* of “all the living that she had”. Reverently speaking there was an affinity which, in His divine magnanimity, He made known to those near Him. She had heard Him tell of *His* life to be given — her response, in her known poverty, was to respond to His giving, in faith, by giving *all her living*. Her two mites fell silently into the offertory but her response to His grace, in giving her the faith which brought out her love and devotion, brought true worship to Him who had produced it.

v.5. “And as some spoke of the temple that it was adorned with goodly stones and consecrated offerings, he said, As for these things which ye are beholding, days are coming in which stone shall not be left upon stone which shall not be thrown down”. The admiration of the beholders is in contrast with the Lord’s own evaluation of the supreme sacrifice of the poor widow. Little do we know how much He values the true worship of the heart that is filled with appreciation of His sacrifice! It was a solemn and impressive answer that He made. That which stood for so many as the immovable emblem of their nation — a nation concerned only with *self*-establishment — would be reduced to rubble, at the coming siege and capture of

Jerusalem by the Romans. This would be followed by a long period of ignominious subjection "until the times of the nations be fulfilled" (v.24). Luke is not directed to enlarge upon the coming of the Son of Man and the completion of the age, found in the Gospel of Matthew. In His protective love, the Lord Jesus shows them the character of the times until the truth of His warning would be evident in the destruction of Jerusalem. They, too, would be persecuted, but He assured them, as Luke alone is led to record, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries will not be able to reply to or resist". He makes known to them coming earthly instability in the form of earthquakes, famines and pestilences as also disturbances among nations. There would even be family betrayals as leaders of uprisings draw repressive measures from Rome. There would also be the Satanic impulse in those proclaiming themselves Messiahs saying "I am he; and the time is drawn nigh". The Lord Jesus warns them "go ye not after them. And when ye shall hear of wars and tumults be not terrified; for these things must first take place, but the end is not immediately". Some of them would face death "and ye will be hated by all on account of my name" but, He assures them "a hair of your head shall in no wise perish. By your patient endurance gain your souls". They would remain the subjects of His redeeming love, their souls would never perish, patient endurance would demonstrate this.

v.25. From the sad foretelling of the destruction of Jerusalem, which came to pass in the lifetime of many of those who heard the words of the Lord Jesus, Luke is led to pass on the divine prophecy to the conclusion of the Gentile times. Jerusalem has been, and is, in our own day, "trodden down by the nations". It will remain so until the signs in heaven "and upon earth distress of nations in perplexity" with "fear and expectation of things coming upon the habitable earth" are a prelude to "the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory". It is a message for those then on earth who, in that day, will experience the distress and uncertainty following the translation of believers on the Lord Jesus and who will, even under persecution, receive, in repentance, the Gospel of

the Kingdom. The commencement of these troubles and the clear indications of world changes will, for them, be signs of deliverance.

The Lord Jesus thinks of them — over the centuries and unborn — “look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draweth nigh” (v.28). The parable of the fig-tree and all the trees, in His message to them, is wonderful as embracing the movement into active life, not only of Israel but of “all the trees” — the rising of nations hitherto subordinate — to take their place in responsibility. “When ye see these things take place, know the kingdom of God is near”. How very gracious is His anxiety and care that they should “stand before the Son of Man”. At that time it is evident the world will be subject to “surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of life. But watch, at every season praying that ye may be deemed worthy to escape all these things that are about to come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man”. He tells them “this generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled”. It is the generation of a Christ-rejecting race to which the Lord refers — the generation which *exists now*. It bears no relation to the human life-span. The generation of unbelief will face the accomplishment of the threats of judgment. It “shall not pass away till all be fulfilled” (v.32). His appearing “with power and great glory” will end Israel’s trials and grace will form the new generation to come. The Lord’s prophecy as recorded in Luke’s gospel flows in a sequence which brings definition of the events very forcefully. In Matthew and Mark the emphasis is upon the crisis character of the future events.

The chapter closes (v.37-38) with a brief record of the faithful continuity of the work of the Lord Jesus into which we may read His energy to teach in the daytime from early morning. One thinks of His word — “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh”. The night of His betrayal was near indeed.

EDWARD T. WOOD

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

(Continued from inside back cover)

of the end. That was true then, but we may contrast with them the command in Rev. xxii.10, 11 not to seal up its sayings, for the time was at hand. Thus the Jew could not understand, but the Christian is expected to. Nothing now remains to hinder the fulfilment of the promises, and Christ may return at any moment. It is noticeable that similar things are said about men's behaviour in both scriptures — Daniel xii and Rev. xxii. — “the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand”, compared with “he that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still.”

In Daniel we also read, “none of the wicked shall understand” a very significant statement when we remember that the end time will be a time of great delusion, when men will be given over to Satanic deceptions because they refused the truth when it was pressed upon them.

The 3½ years of tribulation mentioned earlier is reckoned as 1,260 days, starting with the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation (verse 11), but now another longer period is given of 1,290 days, without saying what event marks its close. But then a still longer period of 1,335 days — and a special blessing for the one who waits and comes to the end of it. One may surmise that a special blessing promised for *waiting* implies that there is every Satanic pressure or inducement *not* to wait. It may well be that after the ending of the tribulation period a time of *comparative* calm succeeds, when men will be inclined to cry “Peace and safety”. Then the blessing would be for those who, taught by God's word, are not deceived by this, and give no credence to Satanic delusions, but wait patiently for the coming of the Son of man.

Daniel himself, however, was not to see these days, but would, said the angel, rest and arise to his destiny at the end of the age (NEB).

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

ALONE WITH GOD — VIII

THE CALL TO HIGHER FELLOWSHIP

Time spent alone consciously in the presence of God is immensely rewarding and time infinitely well spent. One great discovery we may make when we rise for a while above the blinding and depressing fogs of life's anxieties and cares to the clear air of the secret place is usually that we are living on a much lower plane than we ought to live. We are not appropriating the fulness of God's grace as we might do, and we could be far holier and happier than is generally the case.

Experience

We ought to reach greater heights of Christian experience. How much is there that belongs to us in Christ that we have never claimed as personally our own! To say that it is the privilege of every Christian to enjoy to the full the blessings that flow from his union with Christ is insufficient. It is more than his privilege, it is his duty as well. We not only may be, but ought to be, "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. iii.16), "abounding in hope" (Rom. xv.13), and "kept in perfect peace" (Isa. xxvi.3). But do we really seek these things? Do we actually attain to them? Is it uncharitable to say that most Christians are only barely alive; that their spiritual pulse is feeble and progress slow; that their spiritual joys and victories are all too few? For many there is little or no vigour in their faith.

This meagre experience is certainly better than no experience of grace at all; just as a sick man is better than a dead one. But when Christ comes with His saving work He does not restore us from death to sickness, He restores from death to the fulness of life. Why do we then not enjoy the assured position He gives us? Why do we walk so often with a gloomy face and downcast eye when Christ has risen a Conqueror to make us sharers in His triumph over sin and death and hell? Looking at us and listening to our cheerless, half-faithless tones, who would believe that we were heirs of a glorious liberty?

When Jesus came out of the grave He did not bring the grave-clothes with Him. Lazarus did, and many Christians do. They walk about really "risen", but with the smell of the sepulchre still clinging to them. They have "life", but not "liberty". The reality of life they have, but they do not show the joyousness of their new life in Christ. It ought to be one of our chief concerns to show the reality of the Christian life to those around us, but we cannot do this effectively if we are only gasping that life ourselves. We cannot draw others out of the "slough of despond" if we ourselves, though a little higher up than they are, still tremble in precarious safety on the edge of the bog.

Expectancy

We ought to rise higher in expectancy too. "Grace upon grace" (John i.16 JND) is what He promises, but only "according to our faith" will the grace be given; and those who bring the largest pitchers to the fountain take the largest blessing away. The less we expect from the world the better; but the more we expect from God the richer, the holier, the happier we are sure to be. Peter tells us that, "through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord . . . are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter i.2, 4). We ought to expect to have every one of His promises fulfilled to us, however great, and for that we need not a stronger faith, but one which is more simple and childlike. Surely He must be grieved when having said, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it" (Psalm lxxxi.10) we expect so little.

Fellowship

Above all, we need to rise higher in fellowship with God. It is instructive to notice that those who have experienced close fellowship with God are often found high up, on one peak or another. Moses was on Sinai, and when he descended after forty days in the presence of God his face shone. Elijah met with God in Horeb, and there he was strengthened, encouraged and recommissioned. Peter, James and John were taken "up into an high mountain apart" by the Lord, where He was trans-

figured before them (Matt. xvii.1).

Those who climb high upon the holy hill of fellowship with God are sure to find that peace which the world cannot give. If the cares of the world disturb our peace, we have but to climb this hill and we are at once in the serene calm of heaven — a calm that neither care nor sorrow can invade. If the temptations of the world overpower us, it is because we are living too far down. Higher up we are beyond the tempter's voice.

Higher fellowship with God will also make us radiant as it did Moses, as well as calm and safe. The light of heaven will rest longer on our souls. In the mountains, when darkness has crept into the valleys, bright light can still be seen on the highest peaks that catch the glory of the setting sun. Then, when the glow has gone from them, it can still be seen lighting up the clouds that are yet higher. These too lose their radiance eventually; but if we could travel beyond the clouds, beyond the limitations of the earth itself, we could always have the full sunshine without a break.

If we want our lives to be transfigured by the perpetual sunshine of God's presence, we have to seek higher fellowship with Him in His secret place, and live among the "things that are above". It is in the quiet of the still hour that we hear most distinctly the call to a life of higher experience, aims and, therefore, of higher joys.

T. D. SPICER

GOVERNMENT AND GRACE

Paul speaks of God as "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. vi.15). He is everlasting king, and this postulates government. When the Lord Jesus has subdued all things, and put all things under His feet, all rule, authority and power, and has destroyed death, then the Son having delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, will Himself be subject, that God may be all in all. This passage must speak of the Lord as man. As joint heirs with Him we shall share with Him in that subjection, but we shall be

a sinless creation. But Godhead is a thing apart. So government is eternal, but it is not of this that I presume to speak, for I know nothing about it. There is very little revealed of the eternal state. I only wish to draw attention to a few of the scriptures which refer to God's government in *time*. Even of this we know very little, for God's pathway is in the sea, and His footsteps are not known.

If we considered only His government we should be filled with fear, so we must first consider what His grace has done for us. God is love as well as light and His mercy endures for ever. We as believers know Christ as our Mediator, and it is our blessed portion to rest on His finished work. He drank the cup of God's wrath upon the cross and thereby purged our guilt.

This is the gospel as we Christians know it, a gospel of infinite love purposed before the ages of time. In this gospel there is both grace and government. We know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ Who, though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might become rich. He took our lost and ruined state upon Him and died in our stead, thus bearing the penalty of our guilt and satisfying the awful justice of God. His resurrection and ascension up into glory manifested that the work of our redemption was completed to the satisfaction of God, and our sins are forgiven for His name's sake. God views us in Christ, the Holy Spotless One, Who ever lives before Him.

The flesh is a term much used in the New Testament in a moral sense meaning the sinful nature of unregenerate man. In contrast is the new man, which designates the nature of one who is born of God. He is said to be a new creature, transferred from the headship of Adam to the headship of Christ. He is brought into the favour of God in His beloved Son, and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

But we do not always act in this character. Alas! we often fail for although we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us if we are Christians, yet we still have our old nature, the flesh, and shall have as long as we are in the body. If we live after the flesh we are about to die (Rom. viii. 13), but living after the Spirit is life and peace.

Now we read in John i.12 that as many as received Christ were given power to become the sons of God. In this new relationship we are responsible to behave according to it. Now if children are sometimes badly behaved, it displeases their parents and might call forth their discipline. But it does not affect their relationship to their parents. Peter in his first epistle calls on us "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation . . . and if ye call on the Father, Who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." This fear does not imply terror, but that reverence for our heavenly Father which makes us fear to grieve Him.

He loves us too much to let us go in a wrong course, and has to chastise us sometimes. In Hebrews we read that the Father chastises every son whom He receives, and the chastisement might be severe, yet His mercy endures for ever. He would have more pleasure in rewarding us than in judging. He would have us judge ourselves so that we be not judged by Him.

There are many instances in Scripture of God's government both in blessing and in judgment. Of course every creature is under God's government, and always will be, but with Christians it is the Father governing His children, the Father's chastisement exercised in love.

The relationship in which Old Testament saints stood to God was different from that of Christians. They were not brought into the close relationship which is our blessed portion in Christ. They could not be said to be in Christ in heavenly places nor were they indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Yet in the Old Testament as in the New we have instances of God's government, both in blessing and in judgment.

Here are some examples which the reader may be interested to consider:

Abraham was accepted before God on the ground of faith, but also he was greatly blessed in his earthly possessions for his faithfulness. God said of him "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him and they

shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon him that which He hath spoken of him" (Gen. xviii.19).

Obed-edom's *household* was blessed because of *his* receiving into his house the ark of God.

The reward of a believer for faithful service is an example of God's government, as Paul explains, if any man's work stands the fire (the testing fire of God's discernment) he shall receive a reward (1 Cor. iii.).

Now in contrast to these are many instances of God's righteous government bringing suffering upon those that profess to be His people:

Samson by his folly and self indulgence lost his freedom and his sight.

Saul by his disobedience lost his throne.

David, though God said of him that he was a man after His own heart, by his great sin brought sadness to himself and evil consequences to his household. Yet, in God's grace, his sin was pardoned.

Moses, though a most devoted and faithful servant, for one act of disobedience was refused entrance to the promised land. This may seem severe, till we remember that his very eminence in God's service made his sin the more serious.

Ananias and Sapphira because they lied to the Holy Ghost, were struck dead. This does not mean necessarily that they were not true believers (who can claim never to have lied?), and if they were, no doubt they went to be with the Lord. This instance brings out clearly the distinction between grace and government.

Some Corinthian believers because of disgraceful behaviour at the Lord's supper had their lives cut short (1 Cor. xi).

When at the judgment seat of Christ the believer's work is tested, if any man's work will not stand the fire, as wood, hay or stubble it will be burned up; and though he himself is saved as though through fire yet he will suffer loss (perhaps in Christ's millennial kingdom).

Perhaps the most remarkable and informative example of God's loving chastening of His people, and showing how He

uses often the circumstances of daily life, is the life of Jacob.

He showed deceit in his treatment of his father, and he was made to reap deceit all his life. He was deceived by his father-in-law and deceived by his children again and again. He was compelled to live twenty years in contact with Laban, whose tricky ways so much resembled his own — a mirror in which he might see himself.

We rejoice in the love of God, and through infinite grace we can address Him as Abba, Father, but our God is a consuming fire (Heb. xii.29). Therefore let us hold fast (margin) that we may serve God with reverence and godly fear.

R. TURNBULL

METAPHORS OF SALVATION

The eternal truths of the Gospel, like most spiritual realities, are made comprehensible to man — as far as they can be comprehended — by means of metaphors taken from everyday life. This is always God's gracious way of revealing His truth, but we perhaps need to remind ourselves that they *are* metaphors, and as such have their limitations. Especially is it true that each sets forth one aspect of the subject, and we need their combined teaching to get a rounded view of God's great salvation.

Justification

This is the most fundamental aspect of salvation, as is made plain in that great gospel treatise, the Epistle to the Romans.

In this, God is revealed as the Judge, and the whole world is brought in as guilty before Him. But it is not as in a human court, where the judge only administers the law, for God is Lawgiver as well as Judge; His law is the declaration of what is due from man as being made in the moral likeness of God. Of this standard, every man has come woefully short in every way, and the verdict could not be otherwise than 'guilty'.

But now comes in a further revelation, and a most wonderful one. Christ having borne the penalty of sin upon the Cross,

God now reveals Himself as the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. The righteous penalty having been already borne, the guilt is expunged, and the Judge declares the believer in Jesus to be righteous.

What sort of righteousness is this? It is called in Romans 'divine righteousness', a righteousness apart from the law (that is, not in any way dependent upon man's doing, or fulfilling its requirement) wherein God's own action in justifying the believer is declared to be righteous. Who shall dispute God's claim? No man, nor even Satan can do so, for God's condemnation of sin, His estimate of its vileness has been fully shown in that His own Son has suffered the agonies of Calvary to put sin away. As Paul says in 2 Cor. v. "God has made Him (Jesus) to be made sin (i.e. a sin offering) for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him."

Now here it is necessary to remember the limitation of the metaphor we are considering. It may be said, and has been said, that if Christ has borne the penalty of sin, then faith is irrelevant and we must *necessarily* be saved — that is, all men. But faith is not irrelevant, for if a man continues in his sins, he proclaims that his past sins are his own, and deprives himself of the benefit of the Sin Offering. The point will perhaps be clearer after we have examined the next metaphor.

Death

Death a metaphor of salvation? Yes, and a very important one. Of course we do not mean physical death, but death as a figure of the cessation of all activity. Paul asks, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And he continues "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Here the figure of death is used to bring out the change which faith in the Saviour's death produces for the believer. He has turned to God, and turned away from sin, a change which is as irreversible as death, though in practice it is not complete, and

will not be in this life. The important thing is, that having been declared righteous by God in virtue of his faith in Christ, he at once begins to *live* righteously. He is delivered from the sinful condition in which he once lived. As one who has turned to God he is righteous in desire and intention, and seeks to obey His will. As James says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought along with his works, and by works was faith completed? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." The man whom God has declared righteous solely in virtue of faith, immediately begins to live righteously. But where there is no faith, there is no obedience.

Redemption

This is a metaphor which is not very familiar to us nowadays, except in a financial context. But in Bible times it was in frequent use. Slaves were set free if they could get hold of enough money to purchase their "redemption", and captives taken in war were similarly liberated by the payment of a ransom. Thus Peter writes, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

In Peter's use of the metaphor, the believing Jews, immersed as they were in empty formalism which did nothing to bring them to God, are thought of as being enslaved, till by faith in the precious blood of Christ they were set free.

Elsewhere in the New Testament it is the Redeemer Himself Who is prominent, because we owe everything to the love which made Him willing to undertake our deliverance, at the cost of His own life. We were in bondage to sin and the fear of judgment, and He became man so that as Son of man He might give His life as our ransom (Mk. x.45).

Again, as those who properly belonged to God but had been captured by sin and held in bondage by it, Christ has redeemed us to God (Rev. v.9). But though He has paid the ransom price, He has not yet taken possession of us altogether, and from that

point of view our redemption is incomplete. We are sealed as His by the Holy Spirit till the day of redemption, when the Lord comes again (Eph. iv.30).

The limitation we must observe is to refrain from asking to whom the ransom is paid.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

We may consider these things together because of their close connection.

We have done injury to God by our sinful ways, robbing Him of His due place in our hearts, robbing Him of the glory due to Him, and by our unbelief falsifying His love and truth. For all this we need His forgiveness. For the same causes we are completely estranged from Him, and our need is for reconciliation.

In the Gospel, God promises forgiveness to all who acknowledge their sin, and He Himself actively seeks that men should be reconciled to Him, not waiting for them to make an approach to Him — such is His grace. “We beseech you on Christ’s behalf” writes Paul, “be ye reconciled to God”.

In the Cross we see God in His love for man seeking a way of reconciliation on a righteous basis, which is, God in the person of His Son taking our sins upon Himself. This great mystery is beyond our understanding. The Cross is not a matter of God exacting what is due to Him, as is sometimes said. God forgives the wrong done to Him if the sinner repents, but the basis for putting away his sin was wrought out long ago at the Cross. So forgiveness and justification are different aspects of the truth.

Sanctification and Cleansing

In the old dispensation, everything used in the service of God was specially set apart for Him. This is called sanctification. In the New Testament the word is applied to the effect of God’s word through the Spirit in bringing a man to faith in Christ, so setting him apart for God from the defilements of the world. Such are said to be “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. i.2), “sanctified in God the Father” (Jude 1), “chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth”

(2 Thess. ii.13), "sanctified by faith" (Acts xxvi.18).

Thus the Old Testament ritual of outward sanctification is used as a figure of the inward change which the Gospel brings about.

In Hebrews Christ is spoken of as the Sanctifier (ii.11), and the means of sanctification the offering of the body of Christ (x.10) and the blood of the (New) Covenant. Here the contrast between the Old Testament rituals which needed constant repetition and the perfect sanctification in Christ through His one offering is emphasized.

Then also the New Testament uses the term for the progress in practical holiness which is God's will for the Christian, and in these cases it is often translated "holiness", as in Rom. vi. 19, 22; 1 Thess. iv.3; 1 Tim. ii.15 and Heb. xii.14.

Because the practical effect is the same, sanctification is often joined with washing or cleansing. Thus after describing the moral corruption of the heathen world, Paul writes "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." And the growth in practical holiness of His people is the constant care of the Lord Jesus, as in Eph. v.26, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it (the Church) with the washing of water by the word."

New Birth

This metaphor is found only in John's Gospel (i.13 and iii) and Epistle, apart from one reference in James (i.18) and two in Peter (i.3, 23).

When the Lord said to Nicodemus "Ye must be born again" (or, anew), He showed that to become a Christian a new life must be imparted to the soul, and this emphasizes the fundamental character of this change, and the impossibility of one bringing it about by his own effort. God alone can do it, for God alone can give life.

Here too the limitations of the metaphor are clear — for though a man is inwardly renewed by it, the new birth does not produce an altogether new person. His life has changed direction, from being a rebel against God he has submitted to

Him in repentance and faith, having been born again by the word of God (1 Peter i.23), that is, by believing that word. Now this is a moral change, in which man as a moral being has made a response to God, under the influence of God's word. Thus human responsibility remains: but the meeting point of that responsibility and of the divine sovereign gift of life is hidden from us. But the Lord says, "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son and believeth in Him may have everlasting life."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

DANIEL THE PROPHET

concluded

Daniel had been told that the lawless king would prosper till the indignation was accomplished, and so we hear no more of him here. The final deliverance of Israel, of such intense interest to Daniel, coincides with Satan's last attempt to destroy them. We read, then, of the attack of the king of the south, the whirlwind invasion of the king of the north (xi.40,45), and of the time of trouble of unparalleled intensity to which the people of Israel are subjected (xii.1). But Michael the archangel, evidently appointed by God as Israel's special protector, now undertakes their cause. It appears from Rev. xii.17 that at this time Michael with his angelic host casts Satan and his host out of heaven, where Satan had functioned as the accuser of God's people. Then Satan makes a special effort on earth for Israel's destruction. Is this the mainspring of the great tribulation?

There are no details given, except that the great Personage seen "upon the waters of the river" (chap. viii.16 and xii.7) declares that in $3\frac{1}{2}$ years the power of the "holy people" will be completely broken, and then the end — their final deliverance — will come. Satan's effort is thus limited to this period, otherwise, as the Lord said (Mk. xiii.20) there would be no flesh saved. The same period appears in Rev. xii. and xiii.

This deliverance, first spoken of in verses 1 and 2, does not apply to the whole nation, the majority of whom, as we learn from other scriptures, will accept the Antichrist and apostatise from their fathers' faith. But all those "written in the book" shall be delivered. Rev. vii tells us of 144,000 (probably a symbolic number) of the servants of God sealed before the judgments begin.

The angel declares that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." At first this sounds like a literal resurrection from the dead, but we know from Rev. xx that at the first resurrection only the righteous will be raised. Hence the angel's words must be taken figuratively, and seem to refer to an awakening of Israel to national consciousness, a process which may already be taking place. But "in the dust of the earth" seems to speak of those scattered among the nations who have lost the feeling of their identity with Israel.

Ezekiel in his vision of the valley of dry bones (Chap. xxxvii. 11-14) sees also what at first looks like a vision of resurrection, until we read what the Lord says to him about it. Israel is made to say, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts," and the Lord answers "Behold O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." This is evidently not resurrection.

Ezekiel tells of their being brought back to their own land, though the rebels among them will be purged out (chap. xx. 34-38). All this accords with the angel's words to Daniel. There will evidently be a great sifting, in which those who have stood for the truth in those dark days (the wise) will "shine as the brightness of the firmament" and those who have turned many to righteousness will "shine like the stars for ever and ever". Doubtless many will lose their lives in the great persecutions, and there will come a time when it will be more blessed to die, because such will partake of the heavenly hope (Rev. xiv.13).

Daniel did not understand these communications, and he was told to seal up the words, because they belonged to the time
(Concluded inside front cover)

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Accordingly, Lot looked round carefully at the surrounding country, and his eye rested upon the plain of Jordan, which was well watered everywhere (this was before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah), "like the garden of the Lord". So Lot decided to go eastward, choosing what he regarded as the best for himself.

Did he overlook the reputation of the "cities of the plain" — Sodom and Gomorrah chiefly — for wickedness? Some may ask, whether, even if he knew it, he should have avoided the place on that account, but the word of God shows quite definitely the folly of his choice. It was not as now, when the servants of Christ, carrying the redeeming message of the gospel, may be called to go anywhere to preach it. No, Lot went there for his own benefit, and must soon have regretted it. First he pitched his tent "toward Sodom", later we find him in Sodom, "vexing his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds."

When Lot had gone, the Lord invited Abraham to survey the land for himself in all directions, including that which Lot had chosen. "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Thus Abraham lost nothing by allowing Lot to choose — he was learning, now, to rest in the unfailing promise of God. This was not exactly a new promise, but God was gradually showing to Abraham all that His promise involved. God said too, that Abraham's descendants would be innumerable — like the dust of the earth. And so He called upon him to walk through the land from one end to the other — though for the present he owned "not so much as to set his foot on."

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE GREATNESS OF GOD

Psalm cxlv is a beautiful recital of the greatness and majesty of God as David's heart overflows in worship and praise. It has been well said that prayer occupies us with our needs, thanksgiving with our blessings, worship with God Himself. To praise a person is to speak well of him, to tell out his excellent qualities. The person himself is more precious than his gifts, the Blesser more than the blessings. While we rejoice in the intimacy into which the grace of God has brought us (we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have access by faith into the very favour of God, we boast in hope of the glory of God — what a cluster of blessings!), it is good to be reminded of the greatness of the One Who has brought us into such blessing. So in this psalm David strikes the chord in the first verse: "I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever." The emphasis throughout the psalm is on *what God is*, as well as upon what He has done.

"Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised: and His greatness is unsearchable" (v.3)

Let us gather up some of the ways in which the greatness of God is displayed to us. David speaks of God's *great goodness* (v.7) and His *great mercy* (v.8). He says also in Psalm xxxi.19: "Oh, how *great is Thy goodness*, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee: which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men." And in Psalm lxxxvi he exclaims, "I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify Thy name for evermore. For *great is Thy mercy toward me*" (vv.12-13).

We may think too of the greatness of God's love, as Paul speaks of it in Eph. ii.4-5: "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His *great love* wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." And in Heb. ii.3 we are warned not to be negligent of so *great salvation*. Another aspect of God's greatness is seen in Lam. iii when the

prophet says, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: *great is Thy faithfulness*" (vv. 22-23).

There is an interesting reference to the greatness of God in Zech. ix.17: "For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" The prophet is looking on to the full blessing of Israel in God's millennial kingdom, and he freely acknowledges that all the blessing into which they have been brought is the outcome of the goodness of their God. Their eyes have been opened to see the King in His beauty, and He has become to them the altogether lovely One. In the joy of Messiah's kingdom the young men are made cheerful as they feast upon Him as the firstfruits of the land in which they now dwell, and the maids too are glad as they drink of the new wine of the kingdom.

God is glorious

In verse 5 David says, "I will speak of the glorious honour (or splendour) of Thy majesty, and of Thy wondrous works." When the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses celebrated their redemption from Egypt and the destruction of their enemies, they sang, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power: Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy" (Exod. xv.6). And they go on to sing, "Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (v.11) We too can celebrate with worshipping hearts the great deliverance God has wrought for us, for He has "marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has taken us into favour in the Beloved" (Eph. i.5-6 JND).

God is gracious

"The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy" (v.8). We are reminded of Nehemiah's prayer: "Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness." Then after confessing the sins of the people he went on to say, "Nevertheless for Thy

great mercies' sake Thou didst not utterly consume them; for Thou art a gracious and merciful God" (v.31). And in Psalm lxxxvi.15 David says, "But Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

God is good

In our psalm David appreciates the goodness of God as a beneficent and bountiful Creator. He says, "The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works" (v.9). In Psalm cxix.68 the psalmist says, "Thou art good, and doest good." It has been said that goodness is really "love in exercise" and how thankful we should be that God is not only intrinsically good, for, as our Lord said, "there is none good but One, that is, God", but He actively dispenses His goodness to all His creatures, making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust. Moreover, as His redeemed children how we should appreciate the fact that it was the goodness of God that led us to repentance (Rom. ii.4), and that has also saved us, as we read in Tit. iii.4-5 "But after that the kindness (same word) and love to man of our Saviour God appeared, not on the principle of works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His own mercy He saved us" (JND). And not only has His goodness brought us to repentance and secured our salvation, but more wonderful still, in the ages to come He is going to show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. ii.7). We who have experienced such grace might well join with the psalmist in his exhortation: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him" (Psalm xxxiv.8).

God is righteous and holy

"The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (v.17). When Ezra made his prayer of confession on behalf of the people, his closing words were these: "O Lord God of Israel, Thou art righteous: for we remain yet escaped,

as it is this day: behold, we are before Thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before Thee because of this" (Ezra ix.15). Ezra freely acknowledged that it was the iniquities of the people that had brought upon them that chastisement of a righteous God. He fully justified God as he identified himself with the sinful failure of the people. We too as sinners come short of the glory of God, but through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus God has shown forth His righteousness: He remains just and yet becomes the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus (Rom. iii.21-26).

God is nigh

"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth" (v.18).

In Deut. iv.7 Moses reminded the people of the immense privilege of having God so near to them. "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?" And during his chequered career David proved that God was always near to him when he took the place of confession and contrition before Him, as he says in Psalm xxxiv 18: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart: and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." What comfort and assurance it gives us to know that we have a living Saviour Who is ever close to us, for He has said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me (Heb. xiii.56).

As we contemplate the greatness of God as brought before us in this psalm of praise, and as we are led to bow in wonder and worship in view of His majesty and might, let us remember that "His love is as great as His power, and knows neither measure nor end." Let us bear in mind that it was our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ Who gave Himself for us (Titus ii.13-14).

As the hymnwriter expresses it:

And when I think: that God His Son not sparing,

*Sent Him to die — I scarce can take it in:
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died, to take away my sin:
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!*

R. A. CREETH

ALONE WITH GOD—IX

THE MASTER'S EXAMPLE

Why should I pray? It is a question that comes easily to us all and comes from an unregenerate nature. Often the question is prompted by the enemy of souls, who would seek to turn us away from spiritual activity which would menace his own evil purposes. Need I be continually in prayer? Is it not sufficient that I have my daily devotions? The answers to all such questions are to be found in the personal experience of being alone with God; but it may be helpful to take a look in the last of these studies at the life of our Lord, for in His daily walk there is much to instruct and we find many pictures illustrating the effectiveness of the life of prayer.

His Habit

There had been a great festive gathering in Jerusalem, multitudes had flocked to it from all parts, and Jesus had come with His disciples from Galilee. Now it was nearly over and the crowds were dispersing homewards, the booths on the house-tops were being dismantled, and in the temple the usual daily routine was being resumed. "Every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the mount of Olives" (John vii.53; viii. 1). The Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head. For Him there was no home, no private room where He might shut the door and be alone with His Father. No one offered Him a place of rest. So He went out into the hills for a rendezvous with His God.

This was not an exceptional thing with Jesus. It was His habit all through His early life, even though at times some friendly home, like that at Bethany, was willing to give Him shelter. Time and again in the Gospel stories we read words like these — “Rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1.35) — “He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone” (Matt. xiv.23). What is impressive, is to find that such times of solitary prayer frequently came between days of hectic activity; days that were so filled with loving service that He had scarcely a moment to call His own.

As we further meditate upon these events, two very significant facts throw instructive light upon these secret hours spent in the presence of God.

Always in Touch

The first of these facts is that He was never for a moment out of touch with God. We are constantly getting out of touch with God. The business of this life and its many cares constantly come between us and God, and we need time when we deliberately go aside to get our bearings right and into touch with Him again. Jesus always lived in the closest fellowship with the Father. Let us listen to His words: “I am not alone, because the Father is with me”; “I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always”; “And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him” (John xvi.32; xi.42; viii.29). He was listening to and speaking with His Father all day long, being consciously in His presence, and yet He felt the need of more prolonged and quiet communion with Him.

The other fact is that most of the reasons which drive us to prayer could never have affected Him. He had no mistakes to regret, no defeats to sorrow over, no pardons to seek; indeed, He had no sin to confess. His meat and drink was to do the will of His Father, and there was no forgetfulness of that will for Him to lament and repent. More than this, we owe our

salvation to the fact that, made like unto us, in the midst of sore temptations, He alone of all men could pray without the need for forgiveness or confession of a single sin.

Why He Prayed

A writer has remarked that "in a natural fear of lowering the divine dignity of Christ we often forge His true humanity." In other words, we think of His early life as being on such a different level to our own that no parallel can be drawn between them. We find it difficult to think of Him as a man with feelings like our own, and when we come across some striking instance in Him of superiority in contrast to our own customary weakness, we excuse ourselves by referring to His divine nature and give up all attempts to imitate Him. We tend to forget that He, too, was strengthened by the sympathy of loving friends, experienced the power of the Holy Spirit for His ministry (Luke iv.14), walked by faith, and, above all, needed the empowering that only comes from private prayer with God. We overlook the frequent secret communion He had with His Father.

As we further study the occasions when we find our Lord in prayer we discover another intensely interesting fact — these seasons of prayer were not formal acts. He was not setting us a pious example of something which is needed by us but not required by Himself. They were real prayers. If they were not, they could not be an example to us. He prayed for others, but He also prayed for Himself: for we must not think of Him as half human and half divine; but wholly human though wholly divine, and subject to all our weaknesses. Therefore, He needed prayer to strengthen Him. Even for the Lord of Glory prayer was the vital breath.

When He Prayed

He lived in the atmosphere of prayer and any crisis, or particularly difficult experience, had to be met with special prayer. We find Him at prayer at His baptism. At the choosing of the twelve Apostles He prayed. At the tomb of Lazarus He prayed. Before doing any of His mighty acts He prayed, and

frequently after them we find Him withdrawn from public ministry for private prayer. He was transfigured before the three disciples while in the very act of prayer. With prayer He agonised in Gethsemane and interceded for those who nailed Him to the cross; and with prayer He looked up to His Father, in the darkness of desertion, as He hung upon that cross. If Jesus needed prayer to take Him through life's journey, how much more do we!

There are problems concerning prayer that we cannot solve. But many of our difficulties are answered when we see the Saviour on His knees. He would not have cried to God for help if it were impossible for God to answer such a cry. Perhaps, after all, the best answer to the question, *Why should I pray?* is this — "Because Jesus did." As He was, so must we be in this world. He was dependent upon prayer, and we are more so, for the servant is not greater than His Lord. The praying Christian is the overcoming Christian, and he is also the holy Christian, the one whose life is full of joyful, effective service for His Master.

T. D. SPICER

ABRAHAM

In the call of Abraham we see the first step in the unfolding of God's plan of redemption for mankind. True, there had been the Flood — a kind of negative step, necessary to preserve the purity of the human race, but the call of Abraham was the first positive step.

It is important to view this as the sovereign action of God's grace. No man called for it, or indeed had anything to do with it, save that Abraham, as the man of God's choice, was called to obey. Gen. xi.31 speaks of the movement of Terah, Abraham's father, with his family, out of Ur of the Chaldees, but Stephen in his defence before the Sanhedrin (Acts vii) gives the real starting point in Abraham's vision of God. He said, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in

Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran.”

“The God of glory” — a simple phrase, but packed with meaning. It was just at this time that the nations were turning to idolatry, and Terah’s family were not exempt from this tendency, as Joshua makes clear (Josh. xxiv.2). In contrast to the emptiness and deadness of idolatry, Abraham receives a vision of the living God. God made Himself known to Abraham and called him to renounce all his connections with home, family and city, and to enter upon a pilgrimage to an unknown destination.

We cannot be sure whether Abraham himself had been an idolater. Perhaps he had grown up under its influence, and failed to find satisfaction in it. But now, for the remainder of his long life, that glorious vision remained with him to sustain his very remarkable faith.

Some Christian might be inclined to say, “How much easier for us to tread the path of faith, if *we* had received a vision!” But then Abraham was a pioneer, and could not look back, as we can, to know of generations that have trodden the way before us. Nor could he look around him, to get encouragement from fellow believers the world over. Not that he was the only believer in the true God, but there was no united testimony. But Abraham went forth in reliance upon God’s promise for the *future*, whereas we can look back to the greatest blessing of all *an accomplished fact* — the death and resurrection of Christ. Lastly, let us remember the Lord’s special blessing for “those who have not seen, and yet have believed.”

The First Promise

The terms of this promise are given in Gen. xii.2,3. God undertook to make of Abraham, whose marriage to Sarai had hitherto been childless, a great nation. He promised also to make his name great, and to make him a blessing to all the families of the earth, and meanwhile to sustain him in all his contacts with others. “I will bless him that blesseth thee, and curse him that curseth thee.”

Did Abraham understand the implications of this promise?

Did he realize that blessing to all the earth meant the coming of the Deliverer promised in Gen. iii.15? Perhaps not at first, but he must have understood even then that God had a great purpose to accomplish through him. Another thing must have been clear to him, and that was, that he could not possibly see much of its fulfilment in his lifetime. But was the promise any the less real for that reason? He had the vision of the living God before his soul, and he needed no "theory of survival" to assure him that death would have to give way before the promise of God.

The First Hindrance

Let us try to understand what the call of God involved for Abraham. He had been brought up in a city — a highly civilized community, as the excavations reveal. He was now to become a tent-dweller — a nomad, ever on the move, and his eventual destination unknown. He was to leave his country, and henceforth would be a foreigner wherever he went. He was to leave his kindred and his father's household and all whom he loved, except for his wife Sarai. Yet all these things were as nothing compared with what God had promised to do for him. And if he left much behind him, he also was now freed from the presence of those idols which provided such a dismal contrast to the glories of the living God.

Before we proceed, let us ask ourselves, how does our position compare with Abraham's? For though we are not called to leave anything in a physical sense, yet the Lord has told us that we do not belong to this world though He sends us into it to testify of Him. And he calls us to abandon all that we have (Luke xiv.33), yielding it all with ourselves to Him to use as He sees fit. And He sets before us a glorious hope — to be with Himself in the day of His glory. Let us not lose the sense of the wonder of our heavenly calling.

To return to Abraham. At first the picture did not look at all like what we have pictured. Instead of Abraham leaving his father's house, Terah left Ur "to go into the land of Canaan", and according to the Scripture record, he took Abraham with him, and his grandson Lot. Exactly how this came about we do

not know, whether Terah expressed his intention of going, and Abraham saw in it a means of partly fulfilling the divine command, intending later to go on alone — we just do not know. But we can see that Terah's presence was hardly a help to Abraham, as was proved when they arrived at Haran.

There Terah decided to settle, though it was far short of his own expressed intention. Now was Abraham's opportunity to obey fully the divine call — but he did not. Instead, he settled down with his father in Haran. Was he waiting till his father had died, thinking this would make the next step easier? If so, he had lost the sense of complete obedience to God, and so hindered the fulfilment of God's promise to him. This surely reminds us of the Lord's word to His would-be disciples, "Except a man hate his father and mother . . . he cannot be My disciple." God's claims must always have priority.

How long Abraham stayed in Haran we do not know, but when his father Terah was dead, Abraham set out again to obey the call of God. The first verse of Genesis xii was apparently spoken in Ur, but is given at this point when Abraham left Haran, when he began to obey it fully; or perhaps God repeated his call. But the gracious patience of God shines out in this — he had not given Abraham up. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

A detail of interest is given here, in that we are told that Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran. Since Terah died at the age of 205, it seems that Terah was 130 when Abraham was born. Compare this statement with that in Gen. xi.26, where the 70 years seems to mark when the first of his sons was born, and it seems that, though mentioned first of the sons, Abraham was certainly not the eldest son of Terah, and may well have been the youngest. In that case, Haran's son Lot may have been about as old as his uncle Abraham.

Abraham and Lot go together

Once again when Abraham left Haran he found it difficult to leave his kindred, because his nephew Lot decided to come with him. But did he have the spirit of a pilgrim, as Abraham

had? The sequel shows that he did not. How true it is that we may imitate another's faith, but we cannot share it. Faith must always be an individual possession.

They came to the land of Canaan, and passed on through it as far as Shechem (A.V. Sichem) where there was probably a religious sanctuary of some kind — this seems to be the meaning of "the place". There Abraham paused, and there God appeared to him again, saying "Unto thy seed will I give this land." God had called Abraham out "to a land that I will show thee" and He had fulfilled His word. But that this land should become the possession of Abraham's descendants constitutes

The Second Promise

In that city Abraham built an altar to Jehovah because He had appeared to him there. There is no need to suppose any connection with the Canaanite sanctuary — rather his altar would be a witness against its idolatry.

Then he moved on to Bethel (named later by Jacob) and again built an altar to Jehovah. There he worshipped Him, and called on His name — a sort of public acknowledgment perhaps. Then he moved on, journeying south towards what is called the Negeb, and is today known as such. Abraham sought to explore the extent of the Land of Promise.

Abraham's Great Failure

Although Abraham was following the course God had called him to, he had much to learn of the meaning of faith, and when a severe famine descended on the land, without hesitation he abandoned Canaan to take refuge in Egypt. He sought no guidance from God in the matter.

But now further evidence appeared that he could not trust God to preserve him, in spite of God's specific promise. With what seems incomprehensible callousness he asks Sarai, who was indeed his half-sister, and was very beautiful, to consent to be known in Egypt as Abraham's sister, so that no-one desiring her should kill Abraham in order to get her. He seems only to have cared for his own safety.

The almost inevitable consequence followed: Sarai's beauty was reported to Pharaoh, and Sarai was taken into his harem. Then God at once showed how well He was able to protect Sarai, when her husband had put her in danger, showing how needless was Abraham's stratagem. God sent dreadful plagues upon all Pharaoh's household. The cause was soon discovered, and Pharaoh angrily sent Abraham away. How dreadful was his testimony to the living God!

The story illustrates the need for a practical reliance upon God if a believer is to glorify Him in all circumstances.

So Abraham returned to the land of promise, greatly enriched with cattle, silver and gold which Pharaoh had given him, but enriched far more in experience of God's faithfulness, and having learnt a little, we hope, of his own lack of it. He journeyed again to Bethel, where he had made an altar to God, and there "called on the name of the Lord". Thus was he restored.

Abraham's Triumph of Faith

Not only Abraham, but also Lot, had abundance of cattle, and this caused trouble. There was not enough grass for their combined herds, and their herdsmen quarrelled repeatedly. When reports of this reached Abraham, he was very upset. The eye of the surrounding people was upon them, and as worshippers of Jehovah, their conduct must be above reproach. "Let there be no strife between us, or between our herdsmen, for we are brothers." Would that the people of the Lord had always been as careful!

Abraham could see but one solution to the problem: if the combined herds made too large a demand upon the available pasture, then they must be split up, and Abraham and Lot must separate. Now Abraham, as the one in whom the promises of God resided, might well have claimed the best of the land for himself; he was also the senior member of the family, even if not older in years. But instead of insisting on his rights, Abraham invited Lot to choose first, himself agreeing then to go the opposite way.

(continued inside front cover)

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from the Scripture of Truth

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(continued from inside back cover)

in Israel concerning this thing" (x.2). As a result all the people were summoned to Jerusalem within three days, and because of the urgency of the matter (so did they feel it now that their consciences were aroused), the people sat in the pouring rain where they acknowledged that they had failed to obey the word of God. They undertook to put away their strange wives, as the only way to put the matter right, and offered trespass offerings.

It must be emphasized that today, though it is God's will that Christians should only marry believers, to divorce or even separate from those already married is completely contrary to Scripture. It is the difference between law and grace: law could only condemn, but grace seeks a remedy (see 1 Cor. vii.16).

We need in our day to put away from our lives all those things which defile and mar the testimony. The Apostle John said, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John ii.15).

We like these people of old, need to be delivered from any apathy or indifference to the claims of Christ. We should in God's presence seek to know the task He would have us to perform and to do it heartily as unto Him — not allowing disappointments and discouragements to dampen our ardour and zeal for Him. We need to be ever watchful that we do not allow the enemy to sow discord among His people, causing the love of many to wax cold. How we need to be watchful, diligent and zealous in His service while we await His return so that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

R. MAHERS

THE GREATNESS OF GOD IN ACTIVITY

In a previous article on Psalm CXLV we spoke about the greatness of God as expressed in His attributes — what God is in Himself. Let us now look at the same psalm from the point of view of *what God does* — His actions rather than His character. David says in verse 4, “One generation shall praise Thy works unto another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts,” and again in verses 10-12, “All Thy works shall praise Thee, O Lord, and Thy saints shall bless Thee. They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom.” While all this looks on for its fulfilment to the time when our blessed Lord shall take His great power and reign over the earth, it is good for us to occupy ourselves with the greatness of God in all that He is doing even now.

He is the Upholder

“*The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all that be bowed down*” (v.14). How prone we are to stumble and fall, and what a comfort it is to have One Who is ready to hold us up! There are times when we may say with the psalmist, “My foot slippeth; Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up” (Ps. xciv.18). Many times David experienced the upholding power of God’s mercy, as he says in Ps. xxxvii.23,24: “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand.” As we meet with the trials of life let us appropriate the beautiful promise in Isaiah xli.10: “Fear thou not: for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” Let us always remember that the One Whose glory it is to uphold all things by the word of His power (Heb. i.3), the mighty Sustainer and Upholder of the universe, is He Who stands by to sustain and uphold the weakest of His saints. Indeed, He is able to keep us from stumbling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory (Jude 24).

He is the Giver

“The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and *Thou givest them their meat in due season*” (v.15). The figure in this verse seems to be that of a great householder who bountifully meets the needs of those who look expectantly to him, as we have it in Ps. civ.27: “These wait upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season.” He is indeed a faithful Creator (1 Pet. iv.19), making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust, and dispensing food in season to all His creatures. How true it is that God delights to give, and James tells us that He gives to all men liberally (i.5).

In John iv. God is presented as *a giving God* in the gracious words of the Lord Jesus to the woman at the well: “If thou knewest the gift (or the free giving) of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water.” God was the great Giver — He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all (Rom. viii.32): the Lord Jesus, Himself the Gift of God, was ready to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believe. And with the Son all things are freely given, as the last scripture also reminds us. Well might we say with the apostle, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. ix.15).

He Satisfies

“Thou openest Thine hand, and *satisfiest the desire of every living thing*” (v.16). As a beneficent Creator God meets the needs of every one of His creatures, how much more does He provide for His children? “For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness” (Ps. cvii.9), and again, “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things” (Ps. ciii.5). But let us remember that the One Who so bountifully opens His hand to satisfy the temporal needs of His creatures, is ready and able to satisfy the spiritual needs of His children. Let us ask ourselves, Are we finding our satisfaction in our living Lord and Saviour, are we feeding on the living Bread that came down from heaven (John vi.33,35), or are we seeking

that which satisfieth not, and labouring for the meat which perisheth? (see Is. lv.2; John vi.27). There is a beautiful promise in Is. lviii.11: "The Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought . . . and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." We can only be fruitful in our lives and be true witnesses to others as we ourselves are drawing refreshment from the One Who alone fully satisfies the longing soul.

He Fulfils

"*He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him*" (v.19). The Lord longs to satisfy the longing hearts of those who draw near to Him in sincerity and truth. His ear is open to the cry of those who seek Him (v.18), and He fulfils the desire of those who fear Him. Is it our desire to be like Him, our Lord and Master Who left us an example that we should follow His steps? Is it our desire that Christ should be magnified in our lives? He will fulfil this desire to us if we follow closely to Him and occupy ourselves with His glories and excellencies. Then at His coming what a fulfilment that will be of all His eternal purposes and of our desire to be with Him, for we shall be perfectly conformed to His image, and He will be manifestly the Firstborn among many brethren (Rom. viii.29). On His part He will be satisfied when He sees of the travail of His soul (Is. liii.11), and on our part we shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness (Ps. xvii.15).

He Hears and Saves

Verse 19 goes on to say, "He also will *hear their cry and will save them.*" Psalm xxxiv.17 says, "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth (saveth) them out of all their troubles." Though so great in might and majesty our God is ever ready to hear the prayers of His weak and failing saints ("the Lord heareth the poor", Ps. lxxix.33) and our Lord is able to save right on the uttermost those who come to God by Him (Heb. vii.25). He is our great God and Saviour (Tit. ii.13), and would have us prove His saving power and grace day by day in our Christian lives, as Paul could testify, "Who delivered us

from so great a death, and doth deliver: and in Whom we trust that He will yet deliver" (2 Cor. i.9). Often we need to be reminded of what Isaiah told the people in his day, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear" (Is. lix.1). May the dear saints in Communist countries even now suffering bitter persecution and torture for their faith be comforted and sustained by the precious truth of this verse: "He also will hear their cry, and will save them."

The Lord Preserves

"The Lord preserves them that love Him" (v.20).

In the days of Nehemiah when the children of Israel assembled in humiliation before their God because of their failure and sin, the Levites began their confession with an ascription of praise to God. "Blessed be Thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even Thou, art Lord alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and Thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth Thee" (Neh. ix.5-6). But our God not only preserves the heavenly bodies which He created, but He "preserveth the way of His saints" (Pro. ii.8), as the apostle Paul proved when he was forsaken by all at his appearing before the Imperial Tribunal at Rome, as he records in 2 Tim. iv.16-18. "Notwithstanding," he says, "the Lord stood with me, and gave me power, that through me the proclamation might be fully made, and all those of the nations should hear" (JND). It is beautiful to notice that if Paul had power given him to proclaim the Gospel, the Lord Himself exercised His own power to deliver His servant from the impending danger, as he says, "I was delivered out of the lion's mouth" — a reference probably to the despotic Emperor Nero. The apostle could confidently add, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom."

It was the psalmist who said, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; He shall preserve thy soul" (Ps. cxxi.7). And the

faithful apostle proved that even though the heavenly kingdom should be reached through a martyr's death, the soul would be preserved through every evil. With this heavenly kingdom in view God's suffering servant can close his epistle with a burst of praise to the One Whose grace he proved sufficient in every trial. "To Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." David too closes his psalm with praise: "My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever."

R. A. CREETH

SOME THOUGHTS ON MATTHEW VIII

Matthew does not present a journal of events controlled by time. He records occasions in the perfect life of Christ in order to express the character of the Son of Man in His patient life of testimony in the midst of Israel. His miracles, set in the order of record shown to us, were not only acts of wonder to those concerned, and of power to onlookers. They were acts of the power of God Who, in Christ, could thus visit the world to deliver men from the evil consequences of sin. The *grace* and *goodness* of God are shown in chapters viii and ix. Matthew is able to record "When the multitudes saw it they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men" (ch.ix.8). It was an inadequate response, since the power was exercised through the only holy channel on earth, but it was in vivid contrast with the abortive efforts of those who would attain the character required for entry into the Kingdom on the basis of the Law as shown in chapters v. to vii.

In Matthew viii. we are shown the mountain, the multitudes and — a leper. "When He was come down from the mountain great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean". From the heights Jesus descends. There were those who had sought Him and were affected by His serious word to them — the word of "authority", so different from

the self-advertisement of the political scribes. Crowds are gathered below and, for the moment, we might be feeling a sense of growing interest — even popularity. But Matthew shows us the real condition of the nation by introducing the episode of the leper. He approaches — the poor man upon whom are the evidences of defilement — the hand of death. We pause to consider the significance of this. There were those who were lame — and many blind, yet it is not recorded that one of these is brought forward for healing. Why are we shown the leper — coming of his own volition?

Others were “impressed by His doctrine” but here is a worshipper publicly expressing his faith in the Lord as a *divine Person* — who, alone, could cure leprosy! “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean”. The admission of uncleanness linked with faith pictures Israel itself in a coming day as the outcome of the sacrifice soon to be made by the One Who “put forth His hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean”. The cleansing was perfect and immediate. It could not be otherwise. It was the divine response to faith. There was the touch, too — that gracious identification with the sadness of Israel so fully to be met at the appointed time. “See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself unto the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them”. There was to be no publicity, but a clear testimony to the grace of God in the presence of His Son, their Messiah, working among those who, though “His own”, had “received Him not”. “The gift”, in its entirety, spoke of the only real Gift acceptable to God. The two live birds of humble origin, the cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop each gathered to present precious facets of Christ. There is the life given — and the life received — with the insignia of death, the blood of its fellow, upon its wings as it soars heavenward into freedom. There is the cedar wood of noble excellence — the scarlet of royalty associated with the hyssop of humility. To go to the priest with assurance — divinely given — and to take with him the appointed symbols of the Lord whom he had worshipped was to “walk in newness of life” indeed.

Matthew’s record is brief — but how it welcomes meditation!

The man had seen the forewarnings of death upon his person — his form of clothing followed official requirements — many were sad for him — but only One could make him “clean”. Where had he heard of Jesus? The concourse of men would hinder him — one imagines him listening from a distance. He was convinced of Jesus’ power but it was faith in Himself as a divine Person that brought him to *worship* and to appeal to Him as *Lord*. For worship is not a formality, nor is it just a polite address. It is the overflow of a heart aware of the beauty of the character of Christ. Worship is *not* with a view to *getting*. It is the simple response in GIVING, drawn from the soul of one who really knows and loves the greatest of all givers — the One who gave HIMSELF.

Matthew viii 5. Capernaum was renowned for its medical skills. The references to its failures are more significant. They are to the glory of God. “When Jesus was entered into Capernaum there came unto Him a Centurion beseeching Him and saying, Lord my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him!” Taking the humble position of subjection to the Roman power which was required of the Jewish people, “Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him”. There are so many precious expressions of the character of the Lord Jesus available for meditation by those who would know more of Him. His unconditional promise, immediately given, brought confidence and comfort to the anxious man. For him, the *intention* expressed was the pledge of *accomplishment*. “Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed”. His own human orders were obeyed — the word of Jesus would be a *divine command*. One thinks of the effect of the Centurion’s faith upon the “Man of sorrows”. The atmosphere of unbelief on the part of the Jews — except where disease drove them to supplication — must have caused Him far greater grief than we can know. Here was refreshment for His spirit. He had “not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (v.10). He sees the enlargement of the scene of blessing — “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven”. He also warns the com-

pany of that darkness which envelops those who have no light of faith — those thronging to see miracles performed but who had no faith in the One who was the Source of power to produce them. The word which Jesus uses in response to Gentile faith is pregnant with power — “Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee” (v.13). Luke, by his moral presentation of the same occasion, shows the error of the Jewish claim to favour on the ground of being “worthy”. The Centurion sends friends to announce his unworthiness — even to receive Jesus into his house! Thus the emphasis in both records is upon FAITH — “Say in a word and my servant *shall* be healed” (Luke vii.7). So, for ourselves, aware of the bankruptcy of world resources, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”. (I John v.4).

Having shown the opening of the door to the Gentiles, Matthew records the healing in Peter’s house. Jesus is shown as not having, as yet, forsaken Israel. Indeed, He is closely in touch with her miseries and infirmities. Luke writes “And Simon’s wife’s mother was taken with a great fever: and they besought Him for her” (Luke iv.38). Matthew tells of His healing touch — “He touched her hand and the fever left her and she arose and ministered unto them” (v.15). Again, as with the leper, there is contact without contamination — identification, with the grace of divine sympathy in healing. “And when the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils; and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (v.17).

We see burdens — beyond compare, taken by Himself alone. He manifests God in goodness and power. As Son of Man, who had not where to lay His head, He is rejected — and conscious of it. Though crowds surround Him, He is not deceived. He looks for whole-hearted acceptance of Himself, aware that only a remnant will respond. Meanwhile, the prophetic word is being confirmed. “He was despised, and we esteemed Him not”.

ABRAHAM, continued

(i) ABRAHAM and MELCHIZEDEK (Genesis, chapter xiv.)

(ii) FURTHER VISIONS and PROMISES

We next see Abraham's faith expressing itself in other ways, and his dependence upon God growing. His nephew Lot soon found how fleeting were the riches he could obtain for himself, for he was caught up in a rebellion of the Cities of the Plain against their overlord Chedorlaomer, king of Elam. When Chedorlaomer came to subdue the cities, he took prisoner among others Lot and his household, and was returning home with much spoil from Sodom and Gomorrah, when Abraham received the news.

Abraham did not hesitate, but armed his trained servants, numbering 318, and, accompanied by some of his Amorite allies, pursued after the victorious army. Prudence might have told him that he was hopelessly outnumbered, but faith in God gave him confidence. Attacking by night he demoralised the enemy, and by pursuing them almost to Damascus he was able to rescue Lot and his household, and recover all his goods.

On his return Abraham was met by the king of Sodom, and by Melchizedek king of Salem (probably ancient Jerusalem) who was also "priest of the Most High God", who blessed him, and brought out bread and wine to refresh him.

Melchizedek is sometimes regarded as a mysterious figure, but there seems no good reason for treating him as other than an ordinary human being. It is interesting to learn that the "Most High God", creator of heaven and earth, as Melchizedek calls Him, was still worshipped in Canaan, amid all the surrounding idolatry.

Melchizedek blessed Abraham in the name of the Most High God, and gave thanks to God for His deliverance of Abraham, while Abraham for his part acknowledged the truth of Melchizedek's position as priest by giving him tithes of all the spoil he had won. We cannot now enter into the typical mean-

ing of his action, as Heb. vii. so fully explains.

When the king of Sodom met Abraham, he offered to let him keep all the spoils, presumably as a reward for his part in delivering all the captives. But Abraham refused to receive anything whatever "from a thread to a shoe-latchet" from so polluted a source. He said, "I have lifted up my hand to the Lord, the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take anything from a thread even to a shoe-latchet from thee, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abraham rich." From all the contaminations of Sodom Abraham turned resolutely away. But not so Lot. He alas, heeded not the warning God had given him, and soon was back in Sodom — right in, this time!

A Reassuring Vision and a New Promise (Genesis xv.1-6)

It seems that Abraham had now begun to wonder when God would begin to fulfil the promise of a numerous "seed". He was being tested in various ways, but God now, in a vision, assures him that his faith shall indeed receive its reward. "Fear not Abraham," He said, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." These were comforting words, but Abraham was not satisfied. What was the value of any reward the Lord might give him, he asked the Lord, so long as he remained childless, and a slave born in his house would be his heir? And how often do we also behave as though God were less able to reason than we are! But the Lord, as always, answers with grace.

His answer was a further step forward: "This (man) shall not be thine heir, but thine own son shall be thine heir." Then, perhaps still in the vision, God made him look up at the night sky, and promised him that his "seed" should be innumerable as the stars. What was Abraham's response? The word says, "he believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness."

Simple words indeed! But the simplicity of faith is shown there, and faith's reward. God had spoken, and Abraham believed it. However far distant the full accomplishment of the promise, however at variance with the physical state of

Abraham and Sarah, he confidently left it in the hands of the everlasting God.

“And He counted it to him for righteousness.” Now if Abraham had been perfectly righteous in himself, he had no need for righteousness to be reckoned to him; but for one who was a sinner before God, God reckoned his faith as righteousness — faith in a God Who in due time would Himself deal with sin and put it away. This is justification by faith — law or good works had nothing whatever to do with it.

God Covenants to Give Abraham the Land (Genesis xv.7-21)

Bound up with the promise of an innumerable “seed” was the promise of inheriting the land of Canaan. God had spoken of this before, and now He repeats it: “I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.” But Abraham was not satisfied, and sought further assurance, saying to God, “Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?” It was not the level of faith that he had just before shown — how inconstant is man! But God graciously responds, and gives directions for making a solemn covenant in a form with which Abraham was no doubt familiar — we read of the same thing in Jeremiah xxxiv. 18,19 — killing an animal, dividing its carcass into two parts, and the signatories to the covenant passing between the pieces.

The exact meaning of the symbolism in its ordinary use is uncertain, for the animals divided do not seem to form a sacrifice, but the solemnity of the covenant is doubtless signified by their death. But when God ordained it, who can doubt but that Christ is pointed to — whose death but His could give a firm basis for the bringing in of God’s covenant to establish Israel as His people in the land of promise?

At sunset Abraham fell into a deep sleep, and “an horror of great darkness fell upon him”, as God revealed to him the long years of suffering for the people he was to beget. God said, “Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterwards they shall come out

with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

Here the four hundred years seems to include the whole sojourn of Israel in Egypt (430 years altogether, according to Ex. xii.40), and not only the years of oppression.

Then as darkness fell Abraham saw a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp which passed between the pieces. It was God's covenant, so no doubt the lamp is a symbol of God Himself, who would be the light of His people throughout their long oppression. As to the furnace, we may remember that Moses (and also Solomon and Jeremiah) speaks of Egypt as an iron furnace (Deut. iv.20), so perhaps the furnace here is a symbol of the sufferings of the people there.

So God covenanted to give to Abraham's seed the country between the river of Egypt and the Euphrates. Have Israel ever possessed the whole of this? Probably not, though in Solomon's day he had a measure of control over territory reaching to the Euphrates at one point. But this was hardly possession. Assuredly when the Lord comes who shall question Israel's title to possess and enjoy the whole of it? How relevant is this covenant today!

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE COMING OF EZRA

We have seen how, as a result of the ministry of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the temple had been rebuilt. It was now dedicated with great joy. The priests were set in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses for the service of God, according to the law of Moses (Ezra vi.18). They kept the Passover at the appointed time, the priests and Levites having purified themselves; all the Israelites who had returned from captivity, and others who had separated themselves from

the uncleanness of the nations around. They also kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with joy.

This was a happy revival. In the New Testament in the epistle dealing with order in the local church (1 Corinthians), the section dealing with the coming together of the church (xi.17-xiv.40) commences with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This was foremost and central. We need to be constantly reminded of the Lord's great love and His sufferings on our account. This should produce a response in our hearts of devotion, dedication and holiness. Earlier in that epistle the Corinthians were told that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." As we remember Christ's sacrifice for us, there should be a holy life commensurate with it — the feast of Unleavened Bread illustrates this.

Ezra sought to consolidate the work at Jerusalem, having "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do it and teach Israel its statutes." Such men are needed today who seek to know and practise God's word and endeavour to impart it to others. There is a continual evil atmosphere in the world around and Satan is ever active to drag the Lord's people back into the world's evil ways. We should ever remember that Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world (Gal. i.4).

Ezra met an evil which needed immediate attention. The people, priests and Levites had intermarried with the original inhabitants of the land, the priests and rulers being the chief culprits, in defiance of the express command of God to the Israelites (Ezra ix.2; Deut. vii.2-6). This caused Ezra to be prostrate before God all day until the evening sacrifice when he poured out his heart in that great confession, identifying himself with the sins of the people. When Ezra had prayed and confessed before the house of God (x.1), a great company assembled in like confession. From among them Shechaniah spoke up acknowledging the people's trespass "yet now there is hope

(continued inside front cover)

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(continued from inside back cover)

gave the name "Ishmael", as God had told Hagar. Thus Abraham acknowledged his son, and as we see later, came to regard him as the heir that was promised, though this was not God's mind at all.

Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born, and it is full of significance that we read nothing more of God's dealings with him till he was 99. Thirteen blank years testified to the folly of what he had done, though perhaps we ought not to call them blank, as no doubt in them Abraham was learning the lesson of patience. If we look back at our own lives, we may discover similar periods when our spiritual life seems to have halted, yet in which some essential lessons were learned by us. We may think too of Moses' 40 years in the desert of Midian, wherein God was preparing him for the exacting task of leading rebellious Israel — a task that he could never have accomplished till he had learned complete distrust of his own wisdom and strength. "The flesh profiteth nothing" the Lord Jesus said later on; and not until fleshly power in Abraham and Sarah was dead did God resume *His* working, as we read in the next chapter.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

HE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN

(Philippians ii. 5-11)

“I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of the Father that sent Me” (John vi. 38).

The thought of Christ coming down from heaven is a familiar one, but how difficult it is for us mortals to gain more than a mere glimmering of what it entailed for our beloved Saviour! In the second chapter of Philippians Paul refers to it as something which demonstrates the amazing lowliness of mind of the Lord Jesus, and he calls upon us to have the same mind ourselves: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” This is the more forcible an exhortation as it is in the nature of things quite impossible for us to humble ourselves to the extent that He did! Paul begins with His eternal place:

“Christ Jesus, Who, subsisting in the form of God”

Now those who understand Greek tell us that the word for “form” used here implies not an outward appearance only, but what is an expression of the inward reality. He was God, and the majesty and glory of Godhead were manifest to those who were allowed to be in His presence. “Thousand thousand ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him” (Dan. vii.10). In Isaiah’s vision of His glory the seraphim covered their faces and their feet and cried one to another “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” And Paul continues

“He thought it not robbery to be equal with God”

Not robbery — not something to be seized or grasped — but the very contrary. Equality with God was His prerogative, but to accomplish redemption He was willing to abandon it.

“But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant.”

The first phrase is literally “emptied Himself” — giving up all

those prerogatives of equality and glory which were His, relinquishing the place of power, and taking "the form of a servant".

Here is the same word for "form", so that to obey the will of another became now the reality of the place He took. But whose will? Not the will of man — of rebellious sinful man. No, He Himself supplies the key, saying, "I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." And that Gospel which more than any other sets forth the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ emphasizes continually the obedience which He constantly rendered to His Father.

He says, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father doing: for whatsoever things He does, these also the Son likewise does." This same scripture shows that His self-emptying does not in any way or degree touch the intimacy and fulness of communion between the Father and the Son, only the Son now initiates nothing — He acts always in the place of the servant.

Then the power by which He works is the Father's power: "the Father which dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John xiv.10). So we also read, how "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and *with power.*" His own power He had laid aside.

Another striking thing is that in the work of saving souls for which He came He received all that the Father gave Him, saying, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

There is another matter which has been the subject of much contention. Briefly it is, did the "emptying" include the loss (or let us say the suspension) of His omniscience? Was it possible, it is argued, that divine knowledge of all things should be combined with the human consciousness of one who learned of events as they took place? Now merely to state the problem is to display our utter incapacity to answer it, or even to conceive of the answer. But if we listen to the voice of Scripture, it tells of One Who never had to confess ignorance, Who was never surprised by events, Who always knew what was going

on in the minds of men. He spoke of the near future and of the eternal finality with the same quiet certainty. Only once did He speak differently — of the Son not knowing the day of His return. But by this He may well have meant that, as the Father's Servant, it was not given to Him to reveal that day, for the times and seasons the Father has kept within His own authority (Acts i.), while the Lord had said that all things that He had heard of the Father He had made known to His disciples.

HIS OWN ACT

Striking words — He emptied *Himself* — it was His own act, His own choice. He *took upon Him* the form of a servant — it was His own act. This one sentence is sufficient by itself to establish His deity. For every creature, however exalted he might be, is created to serve the will of God — he is *created* in the form of a servant. Only God could take that form upon Him. And this leads us to observe, that however low the place and however humble the path of the Saviour in this world, He could never cease to be God. It is noticeable that never did the Lord Jesus refuse worship or homage offered to Him, and He said that all men must honour the Son, even as they honoured the Father.

Paul's final phrase in describing how He "came down from heaven" is

"And was made in the likeness of men."

More literally this is "and became in the likeness of men." He might, in taking the form of a servant, have chosen to become an angel, and that would have been an immense descent, but He came lower still to adopt the likeness of men, for only thus could He redeem men. The accuracy of the apostle's language is noticeable, for "likeness" implies *some* difference, and that, of course, is that He is not merely man, but God incarnate. Yet Paul does not say "in the likeness of man", for that would imply that He was not really man at all. And other scriptures make it plain that in manhood the Saviour was in all respects "like unto His brethren", save only that He was free from sin,

and from that corruption of natural powers which sin has brought about.

Some have thought that the statement in 1 Cor. xv.47 that “the second man is the Lord from heaven”, or “the second man is from heaven” (JND) implies a different (i.e. heavenly) sort of humanity for the Lord Jesus. The truth is, as an examination of the passage shows, that the phrase does not refer to Jesus in the days of His flesh, but it speaks of His coming again — it refers to the glorious Man to Whose image we are to be conformed. “As we have borne the image of the earthly (Adam), we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (Christ glorified).

His brethren were partakers of flesh and blood, and so He likewise took part of the same, so that He might have blood to shed, a life that He could lay down. The second occurrence of “partaking” in this verse (i.e. “took part”) is a different verb, for while the “brethren” had flesh and blood as their natural and sole portion, He became a sharer of that which properly belonged to His creatures. Yet J. B. Phillips’ translation (in spite of so many excellencies) is badly at fault here, in using the words “mortal man” in translating “made in the likeness of men”. But “mortal man” is not man as God made him, but fallen man, and such the Lord was not. “Mortal” means subject to death, not just capable of dying.

So He became man, accepting all the limitations of manhood. Limited as to place, He walked step by step along the paths of earth. Limited by time, He worked day by day, waking and sleeping as the sun rose and set. He, like other men, needed air to breathe and food to eat. And more than all these, He rubbed shoulders with men whose ways must have been a constant pain to His loving heart, and who did not understand Him or sympathise with Him.

We often think of the lowliness surrounding His incarnation — no room in the inn, cradled in a manger, growing up a carpenter’s son in despised Nazareth — all these details form a familiar and wonderful story. Yet these things are but a small part of the wonder of His great down-stooping. Because we are totally unable to imagine the Creator glory which was His, we are quite unfitted to appreciate the immeasurable step by

which He came down to take a place in His own creation. O the wonder of the love which prompted it! Yet this was not all.

OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH

“And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, and that the death of the cross.”

Always in His pathway here the Lord walked as a servant, and having become man He displayed perfect dependence upon the will of God. When Satan tempted Him to forsake this attitude, and as the Son of God to use His power to relieve His hunger, His reply simply stressed the dependent place of *man*, as the word of God revealed it: “Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” But now we see something beyond that.

His perfect dependence and obedience, so unlike the conduct of Adam, earned for Him the right to live and enjoy the favour of God. But there was a further task awaiting Him, which only He could carry out. However willing the holy angels might be to do the will of their Creator, it would have been utterly unrighteous that He should *require* of one of them that he should suffer for the sins of their fellow creatures. But He Who was God could do so, because for Him the act of obedience was fully voluntary — it was not *required* of Him. In Gethsemane He said to Peter, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently (i.e. at once) give Me more than twelve legions of angels?” But that deliverance He would not claim. And so He humbled Himself yet further, carrying obedience as far as death, and what a death!

“He humbled Himself”, not only allowing Himself to be mocked, reviled, scourged and crucified, but also, having accepted the burden of our sins, to be abandoned on the cross as one bearing the curse. Could humiliation go further?

GOD’S ANSWER TO THE CROSS

It was in order to give us an example to follow that Paul had described how the Lord Jesus humbled Himself. But he could not stop there, at the lowest point, at the death of the cross.

It is as though he is carried out of himself to give us the divine answer to it all. So he adds

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a name, which is above every name:”

He had come down to be man and die, and so it is as man that He is raised from the dead and highly exalted. As He had gone down to the lowest depths, so He is raised to the highest height, and given a name that is above every name. As we learn elsewhere, He is seated, as man, upon the very throne of God. But this of course is only possible because He Himself is in His own nature divine.

He is exalted in heaven, while earth is still rebellious; but this only continues while grace goes out to win men from the ends of the earth to bow willingly to Him as their Saviour and Lord. But the day is soon to come when all will be compelled to bow to Him.

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of beings in heaven, and beings in earth, and beings under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

It is as plain as can be that there are no exceptions here — every rational being must make this confession. It includes Satan and the fallen angels, and men that are unrepentant, as well as all believers to whom the confession is a delight.

“To the glory of God the Father.”

These words we may surely apply to the whole of what we have been considering, though it is specially connected with the Lord's exaltation.

Every step that He took — from the form of God down to the form of a servant, in His life in this world as a man, and in His acceptance in Gethsemane of the cup of death — all was to the glory of the Father. It opened the way back to God for sinful man, so displaying all the love that was in the Father's heart. And His exaltation proved that the whole divine purpose of redemption had been brought to a triumphant conclusion through Him. Thus it was worthy of God the Father

that His Son should reap the full fruit of His humiliation in being exalted, and the glory of the Father is displayed in Him.

Is there a place any more for human pride or self exaltation as we survey the Saviour's pathway? Shall we not indeed walk in lowliness before God and with one another?

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD

Scripture Reading: John xvii.

(Notes of an address given at a London Conference)

I wish to speak this afternoon on what the Lord Jesus has to say concerning the believer's relations with this world.

The time had now come for Him to leave His disciples in a world which had proved hostile to Himself, and would therefore be hostile to them. So He prepares them for the problems He knew they would have to face, and we have the record of this in chapters xiii.-xvii. of John.

Chapter xiii. contains His example of feet washing; chapter xiv. His instruction about the gift of the Spirit, and the invaluable privilege of prayer in His name. In chapter xv. He talks of bearing fruit for the joy of the Husbandman, God Himself; chapter xvi. mentions possible opposition, and the Spirit's power which would enable them to overcome. In chapter xvii. He speaks, not *to* them, but to His Father *for* them.

In natural things, the realization that our conduct is causing serious anxiety to someone who loves us dearly is a very potent factor in bringing us to a right state of mind. So, to remember that our behaviour in this world matters a very great deal to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that He is very concerned about it, that He knows our problems and has in His own way provided for us, and above all has prayed for us, these considerations should have much weight with us. How much it must have meant to Peter, when in despair at having denied his Lord, to recall that Jesus had said, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not"! In John xvii. the Lord prays not for "these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through

their word": thus embracing each individual soul born again through the preaching of the Gospel.

In this chapter the Lord refers at least four times to the relations of His own with the world through which they are passing. "World" has various meanings. It may denote the physical earth on which we live. It may signify the aggregate of human beings inhabiting the earth, as in John iii.16, "God so loved the world", which cannot mean that He loves the rocks, trees, etc., but that He loves the persons in the world. Then there is another and sinister meaning which we have in parts of this chapter, that is, the world as an organised system, built up under the aegis of Satan to make man happy so far as may be without God.

In this latter sense the world had its origin with Cain. We read (Gen. iv.): "Cain went out from the presence of the Lord": a terrible thing to do. Truly he was uneasy in that Presence; but in going out he left the only Source of light and good to build a city which he furnished with every type of comfort — comforts not inherently sinful, though his motive in supplying them was — for he sought to make himself independent of God. How unutterably foolish for a Christian to allow himself to be entangled in it, and to seek satisfaction there apart from God Who cares for him!

The world has its pleasures, its organised sport, its dancing, its social activities — not all wicked in themselves — its business, its politics, trying to make the world a happy place to live in without God. And if none of these appeal, it even offers a worldly religion! But in all these things Christ is an intrusion and often is misrepresented in its religion.

The whole thing is summed up in an expression often used: "A man of the world" — one who is not out of place anywhere. Some things he likes more than others; but you must not bring him too close to God. Well, Christians are not "men of the world", but belong to Christ, which brings us to the first reference (verse 6), where our Lord says, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me *out of the world,*" referring, I have no doubt at all, to the world in the bad ethical sense. Christians are no longer in Satan's world; not removed

physically from the earth, but given to Christ *out of the world*.

This is the complement of the truth in Colossians i.12,13, "giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." We glory in that verse, and think it wonderful. So it is. John gives the other side of the picture.

The next point is that we are *not of the world* (verse 16). Scripture contains many instructions concerning our behaviour in this world. For instance, the Epistle to Titus supposes we have worldly masters who have no concern or time for our profession of Christ. We are *not* expected to have worldly husbands or wives. It may indeed be that one partner is converted after the marriage: that is another matter. But it is not contemplated anywhere in scripture that a Christian should take an unconverted partner.

The Christian, then, is *not of the world*; he is given to Christ out of it: mark, not *may* be, not ought to be, but he *is* given to Christ. Some may look as though they were still of the world, becoming heavily involved in it, thus proving a great disappointment. But whether this is so or not, **EVERY CHRISTIAN BELONGS TO CHRIST.**

For illustration, consider Lot — a man who went the whole way into the world (Gen xiii.-xix.). Yet Lot never became one of the Sodomites. But there came a time when he uttered one word on behalf of justice and truth, and he was immediately shouted down by the people among whom he lived. So will it be with us if we are linked with the world.

"Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. xii.2). In other words, do not look like the world, seeing you are not of it. A worldly Christian is a tragedy.

Our next reference is in verse 18: "As thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." We often compare our journey through the world with that of the Israelites through the wilderness. To a great extent this is right; but the parallel is not entirely true. For one thing, the Israelites were suffering punishment because they turned aside

in unbelief when they were told to go forward ten days' journey and take the land. Our journey through this world is not a punishment. The remark has been heard, "We have no business in this world". According to this verse, Christians have the very finest of business in it: they are sent into the world by the Lord for a definite purpose.

In the address to the church at Pergamos (Rev. ii.13) you will remember the words "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." The Lord was not, as some have suggested, blaming them for being there, but letting them know that He knew how difficult the place was in which they lived. Though later the Lord had to reprove them, His opening words were of condolence, not condemnation. He would say the same to us. The world is our appointed sphere of service for our Lord.

The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world"; also, "Ye are the salt of the earth". It will be an extremely bad thing for the world when all Christians are removed. They think they can do without us, but will soon find out they cannot. In a very short time the world will plunge into utter ruin, and the judgment of God. "Ye are the light of the world"! Where is the world to get any knowledge of God from if not from those who are Christ's witnesses? Shame upon us if our conduct is such that it hides from those around us the light of heaven!

"As thou has sent Me". How did Jesus come into the world? His pathway brought Him reproach and persecution, and that from the religious leaders! He bore reproach for God as well as for Himself: what we bear is to be for His name. We are sent here as ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor.v.). What is the mark of an ambassador? He must be a citizen of the country he represents, and must have at heart the interests of that country. As ambassadors for Christ, whose interests do we serve? Our own, or His Who has sent us here?

Our Lord came with grace and truth. He spake gracious words; so much so that even the hardened temple police, little accustomed to returning without accomplishing their purpose, came back empty handed, saying, "Never man spake like this

man." But He was also a testimony against evil, and said of the world, "Me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil." Furthermore, He spoke words of solemn judgment — words not given to His disciples to speak, nor even, in the first place, to the apostle Paul to write. His own lips spoke of Hell, that awful lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels, but to be shared by those who refuse the Saviour. That same "grace and truth" should mark us.

I believe the neglect of this verse has led to much trouble in the assemblies of the Lord's people. There are, indeed, honourable exceptions both in companies and more amongst individuals. We should challenge ourselves whether we have given due heed to the truth that we are sent into the world to witness for Christ.

In our Bible Readings we are inclined to talk a great deal about reproach. Some, indeed, meet it more than others. But do we not talk about it more than we experience it, because we avoid going where it is likely to arise? Acts viii.4 tells us those scattered by persecution "went everywhere preaching the word". The word "preaching" could be rendered "gossiping", a word which has been degraded by usage to the rather poor significance it has today. But the idea is that wherever they went, they entered into conversation and talked about the word, about Jesus. That is what we should do. We rightly regard worldliness as a very bad thing: so also is aloofness.

To finish on a brighter note: we have here what I believe is the first presentation to us of the real hope of the Christian — to be caught up to be "for ever with the Lord" — this is implicit in verse 24: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou has given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world". This is indeed calculated to "lift our poor hearts this weary world above". But it is an added motive for holiness and singleness of life down here. If we think on the one hand of the Lord Jesus kneeling down and pouring out His heart to the Father about us, and on the other hand, look up and see the glory that is awaiting us there, do you not think we should be better Christians?

H. W. MARTIN

ABRAHAM AND HAGAR

(Genesis xvi)

The fulness of God's purpose in calling out Abraham is gradually unfolded to us in these chapters, and now we come to this, that it was needful for Sarah's faith to be equally engaged in obtaining the divine promise. For God's gracious desire is always that His people should have their hearts engaged with what He is doing, especially when they themselves are the instruments He has chosen to use. Now plainly this was not the case when this chapter opens, when they had dwelt ten years in Canaan (verse 3).

We can understand how Sarah's long years of childlessness had led her to conclude that this was God's will for her; yet had she taken hold in faith of the promise of God to Abraham she might have concluded that it was worthy of Him Who had ordained marriage for His creature's blessing to fulfil His promise to Abraham through his wife Sarah! We cannot doubt that in earlier years at least she had prayed for a child; when her husband told her of God's promise of a son of his own to be his heir there was every encouragement for her to have continued praying, and yet she adopts instead the miserable expedient which this chapter describes. But perhaps we are going too fast. Perhaps she had indeed continued praying throughout those ten years, and only turned aside to make this unworthy suggestion to her husband in a temporary fit of despondency. But this much seems certain — she was not yet ready for the mighty deed that God was going to do for her, and in her. She thought of natural blessing: God was going to work a miracle.

The plan Sarah proposed to Abraham was both stupid and dishonouring — dishonouring to herself and to her husband, as well as to God. It was stupid because the evil consequences could easily have been foreseen; it was dishonouring to God not only because it set aside the sanctity of His ordinance, but also because it showed no trust in His goodness.

So Sarah proposed to Abraham that her slave girl Hagar should take her place as Abraham's wife, so that Sarah might

“obtain children by her”. And Abraham agreed to this monstrous suggestion. How much persuasion he needed we have no idea.

The plan apparently succeeded; but who could expect a poor slave girl, suddenly thrown into a false position, not to despise her mistress? Evidently Hagar made little attempt to disguise her feelings, and showed her contempt for Sarah, who in her bitterness laid all the blame on Abraham. And surely the blame was largely his, whatever the pressure put upon him.

Then when Sarah complained of her maid's behaviour, Abraham made no attempt to shield her, allowing Sarah to vent her wrath upon the girl. And so severely did she deal with her, that Hagar ran away, pregnant as she was. But now the goodness and mercy of God shine out in contrast to the failure of both master and mistress.

Hagar had taken her own way, and it was likely to lead to real disaster for herself and for the child she expected. So God sent an angel to find and rescue her. “Where have you come from, and where will you go?” he said. She had no destination — she was just fleeing from her mistress, she said. Rarely can life's troubles be met by running away, and so the angel directs her to go back and submit to her mistress. And doubtless she was well treated when she returned.

But the Lord does not leave her without a wonderful promise to sustain her. From the son she was to bear an innumerable “seed” was to come, “because the Lord hath heard thy affliction”. God had heard the cries of the ill-treated slave girl, and now her son's name “Ishmael” or “God hears”, would always remind her of the blessed fact. But what made the deepest impression on Hagar's mind was the thought that God had *seen* her there in the wilderness. Poor slave that she was, He did not overlook her, and “Thou God seest me” was how she ever afterwards thought of Him. The story speaks volumes to every heart that has dwelt upon the love of God which saw us in our ruin and misery.

So she returned, and gave birth to a son, to whom Abraham

(continued inside front cover)

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