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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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CONTENTS

John Weston	- - - - -	1
Personal Holiness	- - - - -	5
Worship	- - - - -	9
The Christian and his Bible	- - - - -	13
The Work of an Evangelist	- - - - -	17
Brands Plucked from the Burning	- - - - -	20

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

As most of our readers will have learned by now, Mr. John Weston, who has been a contributor to our pages from time to time, was called home to be with the Lord on Friday, 21st September, 1962.

It is generally known that Mr. Weston carried on his ministry of the gospel at Wildfell Hall, Catford, London, and to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of that Hall, a week of special meetings took place there from May 27th to June 2nd last year. It was widely felt that there should be a special gathering to render praise and thanksgiving to God, and this service was held on Monday, 28th May, being largely attended.

On the following four evenings, addresses were given on subjects calling for particular emphasis at the present time, and by courtesy of the speakers, and the assistance of a young lady who transcribed the tape recordings, we are pleased to be in a position to give our readers a reasonably comprehensive summary of what was said on those occasions. We trust that through the medium of these pages the blessing and challenge of the week's ministry may reach a still wider circle.

Mr. Weston's address on the Friday evening, as might be expected, had its own special interest and appeal, since he was able to give many reminiscences of his work for the Lord through the years. We regret that considerations of space will not permit us to print all these, but readers will be glad to know that they contained much encouragement, and the reassurance so often needed in these days of difficulty that "the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save" (Isaiah lix.1). It was a great joy to Mr. Weston that there were two grand cases of conversion during the special week of meetings.

For blessing received over the years through Mr. Weston's ministry, many will continue to be thankful until the day of reunion in the Lord's presence.

EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS

JOHN WESTON

*Our BROTHER and FELLOW-WORKMAN UNDER GOD
in the GLAD TIDINGS OF CHRIST (I Thess. iii.2. J.N.D.)*



THE phraseology of the world provides titles for those who “exercise lordship” (Luke xxii.25), and its grandiloquence extends even to its ecclesiastics, who, whilst robing themselves with distinctive garments, profess to follow One who “made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant (bondman)” (Phil. ii.7). To be a “brother — fellow-workman under God” is a title to be coveted indeed. Is it not the insignia of devoted labour, which, however men would describe it, was a constant offering, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God? Thus Paul referred to Timothy these many years ago—so we, in our day, may certainly refer to our beloved brother, JOHN WESTON.

He was a man of courage as well as gentleness; of boldness in proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ, yet with that sensitive care for the feelings of all which proclaimed him a lover of his Master, an imitator of all that was of Christ.

For fifty years and more he has been my closest friend. As young men we learned together from any who had knowledge of the word of God and experience in public speaking. The way to gather a crowd to hear the gospel was our serious exercise. He excelled in this. There were several methods. He would quote I Corinthians ix.22, “To all I have become all things, in order that at all events I might save some” (J.N.D.). So we might have been seen standing at a likely spot, looking upward and pointing, till quite a number gathered to look also, and, though they saw nothing, they stayed when he began

to speak of One who set the stars upon their courses—and his own feet upon the way to Calvary.

In pursuit of knowledge from those of experience in public speaking, we went to hear several gifted servants of God. I recall some of the criticisms we made; how we both disliked artificiality, or any appearance of insincerity; but he would draw attention to the helpful points, and emphasise what he had written in my copy of the New Testament, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. ii.15).

His undoubted ability, as well as his tact and sense of humour, were constant sources of admiration through the long years of our mutual love. Nor did he ever refrain from criticism of any act or word of mine which he felt might better have been otherwise. This was in strict accord with our pact to be true and frank each with the other. So were our early doubts and fears and questions laid bare in the light of understanding friendship.

It was his obvious possession of some inner strength and peace that first arrested me. He did not preach to me in words, yet he was the vessel in the hand of God that warned me I was without what he possessed. He commended himself to conscience in the sight of God (see 2 Cor. iv.2).

He was some years my senior, but his early anxieties as to the outcome of the state of failure in our lives were much the same as my own. We had both been made aware of the certainty of the second coming of Christ, and there remained the fear of having no part with those we loved and honoured, should He come. A tract by F. B. Meyer on John iii.16 had been the means of awakening and of assurance to John. That glorious "whosoever" brought him into the grateful family of those sinners who, without resource in themselves, find, by faith in the Son of God, a Saviour who has met the demands of justice on their behalf. The plan of salvation became a personal reality to him.

I knew that he wanted to thank Mr. Meyer, and that he was seeking a way to do so. The purposes of God for us all reach to even the smaller details of our lives, and it must have been a joy to that ageing servant of God when our beloved brother joined him in the train on his way back from a meeting. There is no

more considerate Master of His dependent servants than the One who said "One is your Master—even Christ." There are times when He refreshes them with knowledge that He has indeed produced a divine result and has laid His hand upon them as instruments for His purpose. So did the well known preacher, of Regents Park Chapel, talk for a while with the young man to whom he had been used for eternal blessing, and both were refreshed and grateful to the "Father of mercies."

In the early days his energy in the open air was astonishing. His regular meetings in the neighbourhood of Wildfell Hall, the steps of the old fountain which used to stand in front of the Town Hall, Catford, and outside Forest Hill railway station, were well attended, and he met many kinds of people in need of spiritual help. Only in the glad harvest day to come will it be known how many are gathered in the Father's house as the result of his clear presentation of the Glad Tidings of salvation. He was very weary, sometimes, at the close of these evenings, yet, even on our holidays together, it only needed a place where we should cause no obstruction, and a passing crowd, to kindle his thoughts of their need of direction to the way of life.

I remember we were in Dublin, before the outbreak of the first world war, and had been visiting Sandymount where he lived as a boy. It was a Sunday afternoon, and we were returning from visiting some brethren. We came to a small patch of green surrounded by a low fence. Here, with so many passing people, was a good place. Now by 'a good place' we always meant a useful spot for open-air speaking. John said it would be best if we just stepped over the low fence—it was a Catholic community! As soon as they heard his voice they gathered, and he began to talk to the increasing numbers about "The blessed Virgin." The record of the wedding in Cana, and the little asides with which he kept the interest of the crowd, led up to the essence of his message, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it" (John ii.5). They were 'the words of the blessed Virgin Mary herself,' he insisted; so the crowd listened while he told them of some of the "whatsoevers" that Jesus said.

The outcome of his meetings in the open air in the neighbourhood of the Hall brought many to the meetings. So did his ministry wherever he was invited to speak. I was so often with

him in those early days that I had wide experience of his wisdom and capacity in many differing circumstances. Fearlessly he proclaimed the truth; yet with what courtesy and care lest any should be "offended" (made to stumble) instead of "built-up" in the faith. There was never any doubt as to what he believed, and certainly never any obscurity as to the need for conviction of sin and faith in Christ as a personal Saviour.

The happy days at the Lecture Hall, Perry Hill, came to an end, for there was not room for the numbers who wished to come. The little prayer meeting room at the end of the hall had curtains and a low screen, and it was a customary thing to open this extra space to make more room. But still the place was too restricted. About this time that tall beaming personality, radiating kindness and genial fellowship, bought Wildfell Hall. Everyone thereabout knew Mr. Batley, and it was evidently his great joy to buy a place in which the glorious gospel could be preached by one who had the gift of an evangelist. Furthermore there were hundreds of children in the nearby streets who were to be gathered in. Thus a greater work began. Many hands and such willing hearts came with one accord to give of their energy, labour and substance to make Wildfell Hall a place to which people could be invited with confidence. So the numbers grew, and blessing spread, and our gifted and beloved brother took up his labours for his Master with that inner awareness that "the hand of the Lord was with them." The glad day to come will reveal that "many believed and turned to the Lord"—many who have moved to other districts and gatherings, and many also who are in the company of the One they first knew to love as the result of the proclamation of the "Gospel of Christ—the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth."

The clarity and forcefulness of his writings made John Weston known also in a sphere wider than that of preaching, though he was known in this capacity in most of the chief towns of England as well as in Switzerland, Germany and Holland. His tract "Has God forgotten the world?" had a very extended distribution, and several editions of "The Christian and the Future" have been issued. He wrote, as he

spoke, with clear conviction of the truth of his message, and with genuine concern, and even anxiety, that his work should be a means of help to as many as possible.

The servants of God are called by their Master for His purposes, and none but He has right to direct them. By His power they undertake His work, and His is the glory of it. To be aware of His gift is to become responsible to Christ for the use of it. It is an humbling thought. It was an humbled and astonished man who cried, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix.6). His face was in the dust—but he owned the Lordship of Christ. So was he strengthened and his course directed. The time came when the elders of the assembly at Ephesus gathered around him and "wept sore that they would see his face no more" (Acts xx.38). But his words were in their hearts—and they were so similar to those of his Lord—"I make no account of my life as dear to myself, so that I finish my course, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the glad tidings of the grace of God" (Acts xx.24. J.N.D.).

Our beloved John Weston has finished his course. The servants are gathering to their Master, for He calls them from their labours; our eyes are dim with tears of sorrow at the parting, but he went to his Lord with joy of anticipation and the last notes of his earthly voice were heard in a song of praise.

EDWARD T. WOOD

TUESDAY EVENING

PERSONAL HOLINESS

(Read: Judges vi. 1,6 and 11-32)

HOLINESS in the Bible is defined as the state of being "wholly other": this is its literal meaning. It is equivalent to "sanctified"—or set apart—separated. It is first mentioned in Exodus iii.5. where God says to Moses "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." God's presence distinguished the very earth where Moses stood, making it "wholly other" than all ground elsewhere. The next mention is in Exodus xv.11, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? . . . glorious in holiness." There was a plenitude of gods among the heathen, but they

were idols: the God of Israel was "wholly other" than they all. Next comes the reference in Exodus xix.6 to Israel, "Ye shall be an holy nation." Israel was to be "wholly other" than the nations of the earth, amongst whom it was not to be reckoned.

The New Testament is very explicit, and in I Peter i.15, 16, God's holy nature is given as the reason for His people's being called to holiness. Most of our hymn-books contain a section headed "Desires after Holiness"; such desires are the very first results of the new birth. I should like to cite, by way of introduction, three deeply interesting examples of this.

In Exodus xxxiii., because of sin in the camp of Israel, Moses had moved his tent outside, and there God met with him, visibly to all. Associated with him was a young soldier, already attracted to God, who had waited on Sinai's lower slopes whilst the law was being given. When Moses returned to the camp (verse 11), his young servant "departed not out of the tent." He preferred to remain outside the camp, separated and "wholly other" from it. This was the secret of young Joshua's later leadership and success.

Isaiah vi. details the experience of the young prophet, whose vision of God's awesome holiness set him yearning for cleansing and "wholly other"-ness. Romans vii. gives the inward breathings after holiness of the young apostle.

The saints of sixty centuries have longed for, prayed and agonized so to be. Unregenerate men, as Eastern fakirs and Pharisees, have desired it, too, for self-glory, but for God's people it is indispensable. By it, the knowledge and enjoyment of God Himself is deepened. It alone enables them to worship Him acceptably. Further, it brings about increasing conformity to Christ here below, and nerves His servants' energies in service. It is, in short, that without which "no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews xii.14), and the prime means by which "I make my own that for which Christ Jesus has made me His own" (Phil. iii.12).

But there is a price to be paid "that I may win Christ." Are we prepared to meet the cost of holiness? It may be like revival, for which we are ready to *pray*, but less willing to *pay*. Paul said "All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." You *know* it is not going to be easy, but hard. Men

and devils will strive to stop you. But it will win for you an eternal weight of glory.

In the opening of young Gideon's life we learn something of all this. He discovered, to his utter astonishment, under the oak in Ophrah, that God was *for* him. He is *for* us, too. Here is the firm foundation of true holiness. Consider his circumstances.

1. Everything Was Against Him

- (a) The land was under the cruel pressure and spoliation of the Midianite intruders:
- (b) God's people were enslaved, and living in famine conditions in dens and caves of the earth:
- (c) His own father, Joash, was an idolatrous worshipper of Baal:
- (d) Worst of all, perhaps, Gideon's young eyes had seen better, halcyon days under that great prophetess Deborah, who had ruled, judged and fended for Israel forty long years.

He was deeply perplexed by the calamities which had overtaken God's land and people, but he gritted his teeth and continued his personal war against the enemy, withdrawn from his father's idolatrous household, and winnowing wheat in his secret and separated place, hidden from all but God's eye, determined to wrest a tiny harvest from the hands of the enemy. Here—doing just that—God found him; for God knew—and cared!

Three D's well describe young Gideon at this time: he was an amalgam of Desperation, tempered by Determination fanned by Desire—a desire for the Lord whom his father had forsaken. God's salutation further bewilders him, for to "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour" he responds, "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" We must note well the mistake he made, for it is one we often make too. God had not said He was with *them*, but with Gideon, who was resisting the declension and departure which surrounded him. Shall we not take courage from this? The day in which we live may be dark and ominous, the testimony may languish and decline, the Church at large may become colder and more

careless, but he who seeks "wholly other"-ness may still sing, "But God is round about me, and can I be dismayed?"

Many have sought the meaning of God's next word to him "Go in this thy might." What was this "might"? I would suggest that it certainly included (a) his "wholly other"-ness, for he stood apart from his family and nation deep-sunk in their idolatry: (b) the shame and humility he felt at Israel's disgrace: and (c) his commission from God Himself to go and save Israel.

Desperation, Determination, Desire: we must know something of them all if we are to be "wholly other."

2 Devotion Comes Next

Like Abraham before him (Genesis xviii.) and Manoah after (Judges xiii.), Gideon brings what he has as an offering, and the Angel of the Lord waits patiently while he does so, for the importance of this cannot be overestimated. Our Lord's words concerning Mary of Bethany were "She has done what she could . . . she hath wrought a good work *on Me*."

In the parable in Matthew xxv., He says to those blessed of the Father, who gave a cup of cold water, "Ye have done it *unto Me*." Beloved friends, are we doing "what we can?" Does our service bear this priceless odour that it is "for Him"? Only this can give it value. What we have to bring may be nothing in our eyes—less than nothing in the world's—but in *His*, whatever is truly done for love of Him is of inestimable worth!

3. Dedication is the Final Necessity

Read again the supreme test to which Gideon's devotion and earnestness are put (verses 25-32), and the noble way in which this young man rose to the occasion. What must he have felt when he discovered that all the intimate details of his father's menage were known to and not beneath the notice of this wonderful God? This, I judge, is the import of the Lord's reference to the "young, second bullock of seven years old" in verse 25. But how terribly hard is the task set him. Baal's altar is to be overthrown, the grove by it cut down, an altar to the true God erected—all this in his own father's house, whose very beasts

were to be sacrificed on the burning logs provided by the desecrated grove. Holiness is not for milksops, but for men!

Yes, it was hard, but God's way is ever, that before anything else, *our own house must first be cleansed*. Do you wonder that all this could not be done openly, and was accomplished under cover of night? But done it was, to await the cold light of morning. Now Gideon is "wholly other" indeed. His boats are burned behind him, and he is irrevocably committed to God and separated from his father and his fellow-citizens. A sure foundation is laid for the revival and victory which Israel was soon to know under his leadership.

Your own further study will show you the remarkable and powerful way in which God vindicated His servant and the triumphs that followed. Suffice it to say that the firstfruits are found in the conversion of Joash himself, who ranged himself with his son, on God's side. What a lovely and early reward for the man who was determined, in the fear of God, to pursue holiness. May we be encouraged to do so. L. A. JONES

WEDNESDAY EVENING

WORSHIP

Worship is NOT a ritual. It is the deep appreciation of Another which, coming from the very heart of the worshipper, flows out to the exclusion of all other impulses till ALL is given. It is NOT dependent upon mere words as a vehicle to convey it. IT IS FAR DEEPER THAN WORDS.

It is impossible to assess the value which God places upon TRUE WORSHIP when it has Christ for its object.

A "Place of worship" is unknown in the New Testament. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain" said the woman of Samaria; "neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem" said the Son of God—"the TRUE worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John iv. 20-23). There is no authority for supposing that Christ Himself ever entered the temple—only the temple precincts.

Let us consider TWO silent worshippers in TWO different houses. One is in the house of Simon the Pharisee; the other is in the house of Simon the leper. Both of these worshippers are *women*! And they differ each from the other, both in environment and in spiritual experience. Let no godly woman forget that though she be “silent in the assembly,” yet worship is not in high sounding phrases. “Now Hannah spake in her heart . . . her voice was not heard.” (I Sam. i. 13). “And the LORD remembered her” (ver. 19). She “returned” her Samuel to the One who gave him; she *received* and was thus able to *give*. This is true worship.

In the House of Simon the Pharisee

The silent woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii.) was of the same spiritual family as Hannah. Of all that company she was richest—she had *received forgiveness of sins*. Thus she was the only one who had aught to give. She was the **ONLY** worshipper—amid a select company of Pharisaical self-righteousness, stagnated with self-glory and impoverished of any act acceptable to God. Well may Luke exclaim, “Behold! a woman . . . which was a sinner . . . brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping . . . began to wash His feet with tears . . . did wipe them with the hairs of her head . . . kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment.” One may hear, in that silence of criticism, only the sobbing of a woman who *was* a sinner, but it was the unspoken worship of one who had received much—and so, loved much. It took time. How tenderly she performed it all. Mere ritual would be blasphemy by comparison. Of herself she gives all. Hers are the tears for the refreshing of His feet, and hers the glory of her hair that falls about them. No oil of useless ceremony could compare with the treasure of her alabastron, and “SHE HATH NOT CEASED to kiss My feet.” (ver. 45).

The thought-passages pass through and across the dining chamber of Simon the Pharisee. It is the Satanic “IF” that passes wordlessly through that censorious company. “This man, IF he were a prophet, would have known who and what

manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner." But He did KNOW—who better! And, in the awareness of this knowledge, her thought-impulse reaches out to Him—"He *is* my Saviour!" Her knowledge was not vast, as yet, but how very sure was its foundation. With this she worshipped and, as ever, He not only received it, but added to the slender store that she might give again. "Thy FAITH hath saved thee, go IN PEACE."

In the House of Simon the Leper

In Simon the leper's house (Mark xiv.) there is another silent woman. She, too, is a worshipper—unbidden, unacceptable, save to Him. But she comes with purposeful intent, carrying her offering of the precious nard in the vessel made to contain and preserve the fragrance of it. Her awareness of what Jesus is to her is more acute than that of the woman in the other house, though their feet are set upon the same path. She knew more than the peace of forgiveness of sins. She was aware that a price must be paid, for sin and death are near neighbours. There was One that must soon die in consequence of her own sin. So she made her way to the Giver of a Life more precious than her most precious possession. In the eyes of the company at meat her presence was unwelcome—inappropriate. But how incomparably better than Simon's provision was that which she poured out for Him alone! The value of Christ in His death was far beyond expression in mere words. This she knew. Death was all about Him. "The chief priests and scribes sought how they might take him by craft and put Him to death" (ver. 1), and Judas had already made his plans "to betray Him unto them" (ver. 10). So, with a swiftness beyond their control, she makes her gift—"she brake the box, and poured it on His head." It was her sacrifice of worship to which He gave instant response, setting her memorial world-wide. She had "come aforehand to anoint His body to the burying" (ver. 8).

At the Feet of Jesus

Both these precious women of long ago gave without reservation in their extravagance of loving worship—for

WORSHIP IS GIVING—IT IS SACRIFICE. In Luke xvii., ten doomed men had travelled together. They lifted up their voices together—**IT WAS THE DISCORD OF THE WORLD.** “Master, have mercy”—beyond the help of the world of men, they sought His never-failing mercy. “Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And . . . as they went, they were cleansed.” So did they step out into a newness of life. They had **ALL** escaped an horrible death, but one—only one—broke step and turned his back upon the law. His was the approach of a *worshipper*—he sought the Blessor with his face to the earth at His feet. With **SELF** in the death-dust from which he had escaped—he worshipped. The other nine had already forgotten the Blessor in their haste to rehabilitate themselves. **AND THE BLESSOR MISSED THEM!** He still misses those who owe their all to Him, until they come near in self-abasement to His feet. It is here that true worship begins, for the worship of Divine Persons is not in human energy; it is divinely **SUSTAINED** and it **PROGRESSES** from the **GIFT** to the **GIVER**.

In the Guest-Chamber

In his record of those steadfast witnesses of long ago Luke portrays their love for the **ONE** who **GAVE ALL** that He had for their purchasing. In Acts ii. he tells his friend Theophilus of their perseverance “in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in breaking of bread and prayers.” In his “former treatise” (Acts i.1), he has taken his friend into the “guest-chamber” (Luke xxii.11), that he, too, might enter into the good of that better redemption at the close of the last Passover. Now, once more, he recalls the memory of Troas and the first day of the week there—“Troas . . . where we spent seven days. And the first day of the week, we being assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed to them, about to depart on the morrow” (Acts xx.7). Precious occasions—the remembrance of the Lord in His death. The inflowing sense of His love, past and ever-enduring—the portion of every worshipping believer who can never fail, by faith, to hear “This is **MY BODY**—given for *you*—**MY BLOOD**—shed for *you*” (Luke xxii. 19,20).

So they in their day and we in ours may take the loaf—for there is but one—and, passing “the cup of blessing” one to another, REMEMBER HIM with worshipping hearts.

EDWARD T. WOOD

THURSDAY EVENING

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIS BIBLE

(Read: Joshua i. 1-8; Psalm cxix. 9-16; 2 Timothy iii.14-17)

It is of the greatest importance that every Christian, no matter how great the demands made upon him by his business and domestic circumstances, or even by the service of the Lord, should order his life so as to have time for the regular reading and study of the scriptures. For it is by the word of God that he must regulate his home life, his social contacts and his judgment in all things if he is to “fulfil daily that tiny part of God’s plan which falls within the compass of our doings, words and thoughts.”

Every day of his life the Christian is battling with the evil around him and within, and he needs the word of the Lord Jesus to fortify him for the struggle. Moreover he must dig for himself, and not rely entirely on being fed by others. Recently I watched a mother starling extracting from the lawn worms which she fed to her brood of four, all of whom, though her own size, followed her around with their mouths wide open. This may be good for starlings, but not for the Christian who wants to be virile.

I. The Revelation of God

When we consider the world in which we live as part of a wonderful universe created and sustained by God, how insignificant we feel! Is it possible for men to have contact with the Infinite? The Bible is the revealer of God: it reveals His might in creation and His interest in men through the person of His Son. As John expresses the matter, “No man hath

seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." The Lord Jesus was the expression of God's glory, and in this world He lived a human life which is a pattern for us all.

The Lord Jesus indicated three ways by which we may know that His revelation of God was a true one. First, in John vii. 17: "If any man will do His (*i.e.* God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." Until a man is prepared to co-operate by obeying the will of God, there is no inward endorsement of the truth.

Secondly, the Lord Jesus declared "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). He revealed the character of God so that men may understand, love and reverence Him. Christ is, so to speak, the aperture through which a glimpse of the greatness and glory of God may be obtained.

Thirdly, Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." No man comes to know God really except through Jesus Christ and the word which speaks of Him.

II. The Revelation of The Lord Jesus Christ

The Bible reveals the Son of God to us. By the gospel records we are able to gaze upon Him in the arena of this world; we see Him tempted, suffering, agonising. And we as look upon Him we cannot remain unmoved. Scripture tells us that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. His hand took the initiative in reaching out to the sinner. God provides, through His word, a light to lighten men's darkness. Read the scriptures, and keep on reading them, and you will find your Saviour in both Old Testament and New.

III. The Revelation of Ourselves

In the Bible I discover myself, the terribleness of my sin and guilt which made it necessary for the Son of God to yield up His life to bring me back to God. Peter writes of this when he says: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (I Peter iii.18).

And he follows that up with something very practical, which we are apt to overlook, when he says "Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind."

Jeremiah xvii.9 tells us "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" It is easy to think of this as referring to the thugs and thieves of this bad city. But the statement does not merely apply to such: God is speaking of the human heart generally, of us all. And there is nothing we can do save to come to Christ to be given a clean heart and a new spirit. We do well to recall the words of John (1st Epistle i.8,9) "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

IV. Our Reaction to The Word of God

What is our reaction to the purpose and will of God as revealed in His word? We can either resist—as the unbeliever does—or respond. We should be ready to go wherever the will of the Lord may call us.

In Acts viii, we read of Philip the evangelist who was having what we should describe today as a successful campaign in Samaria. The whole town was stirred. But the Lord called him away to the desert of Gaza where he would find a single earnest soul in need of his help. Philip might have been tempted to demur on the ground that the work in Samaria was too important for him to leave it. Nevertheless he obeyed the direction given him, and went. This indicates the way for us all. Let us arise and go whenever and wherever God calls.

V. The Reliability of the Christian

The believer should be dependable, especially in his business, serving those for whom he works "not with eyeservice as menpleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God" (Col. iii.22): "as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph.vi.6). God will honour such testimony.

In this matter of reliability we have the example of Caleb in Joshua xiv. It is said repeatedly of him that he wholly

followed the Lord his God. He relied wholly on the Lord, keeping himself fit for warfare (he was as strong at the age of 85 as he was when he was 40—verse 10), and bringing his family up to have a proper sense of values (Ch.xv.16-19).

VI. Reliance on the Word of God

Abraham was a man who relied upon the word which God had spoken. God directed him to leave the land of his upbringing, and “he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Hebrews xi.8). God promised that his seed should be innumerable as the stars (Genesis xv.5). Yet at the time he was childless. Nevertheless “he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform” (Romans iv.20-21). What reliance upon the word of God!

So was it also in the early days of the church. The apostles faced the threatenings of the powerful Council in Jerusalem with a bold declaration of their faith: “We ought to obey God, rather than men” (Acts v.29), and though this brought them physical suffering, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (verses 41,42).

VII. The Christian a Realist

Daniel was a realist. Occupying a position of highest authority in a foreign land where his God-given ability was placed at the disposal of a heathen monarch, he did not shrink from testifying to his faith in the living God. We wonder at his courage and outspokenness when he announced God’s judgment on Belshazzar (see Daniel v.).

Paul was like him, carrying the battle into the enemy’s camp, ceasing not to declare all the counsel of God (see Acts xx.18-27). He did not sit down to wait for men to come to

him; he sought out his fellow-believers wherever he went; he sought out the unconverted also, being "made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Cor. ix.18-22).

The essential thing for us all is to be acquainted with the divine Author of the Bible, and having come to know Him, to go on to know Him better.

JOHN BAKER

FRIDAY EVENING

THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST

Our text is in Ephesians, chapter iv., verse 11—"And He gave some . . . evangelists." I have been asked to say a few words on the work of an evangelist.

The literal meaning of the word "evangelist" is "a messenger of good." But every messenger of good is not an evangelist in the scriptural sense. There is a special spiritual gift from Christ called "an evangelist." A better reading of Ephesians iv.11 would be "He gave some to be . . . evangelists." It is not a natural endowment, although the Lord's gifts to His servants are according to their "several ability." The evangelist is a spiritual gift from the Head of the Church. There are many *preachers* mentioned in scripture, but an evangelist is not merely a preacher: he is one specially equipped by Christ for the winning of souls.

In the word of God, the gifts "pastor" and "teacher" are coupled together, but the evangelist is never joined with any other class. He has a very distinct gift. Only two are named as such in the Bible—Philip (not the apostle) and Timothy.

Paul's call to Timothy (2nd Epistle, iv.5) to "do the work of an evangelist" has been strangely misunderstood as meaning that Timothy was told to do an evangelist's work without possessing the gift for it. "For such a construction," says William Kelly, "there is not the shadow of a sound reason." It is something God would hardly do. He does not put square pegs into round holes, but fits men for the task he gives them.

The evangelist has one great object in life, and that is soul-winning. He says, in effect, "Let others feed the flock of God;

that is not my work." He may well deplore the fact that some of the sheep are half-starved through lack of feeding, and that others have wandered away owing to inadequate pastoral care. But he must not leave his own special work and attempt to perform the duties God has given to others.

The evangelist occupies a unique place of privilege and freedom given to him by God. He is not subject to any man or assembly in the exercise of his gift. He is therefore fearless to declare the whole counsel of God. No one dare say to him, for example, "Predestination may be in the Bible, but please don't say a word about it in your preaching." He serves God directly, with nobody between him and his Master to Whom he is answerable.

The Church has urgent need of evangelists. Paul says "Covet earnestly the best gifts." Covet the best gifts for the assembly, and for yourself. If you are a young person, pray earnestly to God for whatever gift you feel you would desire God to give you. He would not tell you to "covet earnestly the best gifts" if He did not intend to answer your prayer and give you what you have pleaded for, or something better.

Now a word about evangelising: to evangelise it is not necessary that one should be an evangelist. John the Baptist evangelised. What crowds he gathered! We know not how many people he was used to, but we read of several who were converted under his ministry. Nevertheless, he was not an evangelist: the gift had not yet been given. So with Andrew, who brought that great man Simon Peter to the Saviour. He too was evangelising. Then, Philip (the apostle Philip) who found Nathaniel and brought him to Jesus, was evangelising, but he is never called an evangelist in scripture.

The Christian who does not cultivate and manifest an evangelistic spirit is in a deplorable condition. Every one of us should attempt in one way or another to be evangelising. The same applies, of course, to the Church. Let an assembly give up evangelistic work and it will decline, until presently it will cease to exist, as so many have. "I feel," says J. N. Darby, "that at all times blessing within (the Church) is in the measure of the spirit of evangelism. God loves souls, and if we do not seek them He will set His testimony elsewhere."

Thank God, there are plenty of preachers, if but few evangelists. What the preacher (if not an evangelist) should have, is some definite sense of being sent to preach, and I think this is where we fail a great deal. If a man is not commissioned to preach, it is better that he should find some other work to do, for "How shall they preach except they be sent?"

The man who is commissioned of God to preach has within him an urge to do so—he *must* preach. Paul, whose converts are said to have numbered millions, heard of some preaching out of envy, strife and contention. But nevertheless, he thought, "How shall they preach except they be sent?" So he rejoiced that Christ was preached, however blameworthy these preachers might be.

"How shall they preach except they be sent?" Sent by whom? By the Church? Never in the scriptures. The gospel preaching is not a church meeting. The turning away of an unconverted woman from a gospel service because she is not wearing a hat could not be supported from the word of God. "The church is in no way identified with, or responsible for, the preacher's individual service. He is to carry on his work entirely outside the assembly. The preaching of the gospel is just as much an individual work as Peter's was when he raised Dorcas:" so wrote the late C. H. Mackintosh.

In Acts viii., Philip did not seek direction from Peter or John; he received divine guidance as to where he should preach (see verses 26 and 29).

There is, in certain quarters, a tendency to be unsympathetic towards evangelisation. But if ever there was a work which needed the active co-operation of other Christians, it is this. I knew some who used to pray very much for me personally, and when the Lord took them home there seemed less power in my preaching—there was something missing.

The bringing of salvation to men is a work in which the three Persons of the Godhead are engaged, and Luke xv. tells us of Their delight in it. This should speak to all our hearts. They were of course engaged in the work of creation, but none of us could help there. Now that They are engaged in bringing the gospel to fallen men and women, you and I are privileged to be associated with Them in the task.

When Christ was here, He spent the greater part of His active ministry preaching. It is almost pathetic, and certainly leaves the heart very tender, to read of *Him* going throughout all their cities and towns and villages preaching the gospel. He was not taken around by car: He walked, sometimes, perhaps often, "being wearied with His journey." But He was preaching to souls, and now He calls upon us here, and upon all His people on earth, to carry on the work He then began.

It will be remembered too, that when those to whom He preached were impenitent, Jesus wept over them (Luke xix.41). Every true preacher longs for the salvation of the lost, and often preaches with a breaking heart although he is expected to look happy when he is on the platform. The evangelist or preacher who is sent of God aims at conversions every time he preaches, and is saddened when there are none.

A true evangelist will never lack a congregation. That is another of the marks of one sent and commissioned of God. Again, an evangelist is so sure of his calling that he "pursues the even tenor of his way" against all opposition. He has a dynamic within him which compels him to go on and on and on. If he is refused in one place he goes to another. He allows nothing to daunt him. He must have souls or die.

JOHN WESTON

BRANDS PLUCKED FROM THE BURNING

DURING his address on the Friday evening, Mr. Weston mentioned the following remarkable cases of conversion as a result of his preaching in the open air.

I preached outside the Gloucester tavern in Croydon for some years, after the service in the Hall on Sundays. One night there was a policeman standing on the outskirts of the crowd with his back to me. When I had finished speaking he turned round and beckoned me. I went over to him and quite expected I was going to be charged with blocking the right of way for those who wanted to cross from one side of the street to the other. But he said to me, "Excuse me, I have been listening to you and I want to be saved. Don't think I am not interested because I keep looking about, but I am on point duty. Can

you tell me how to get this salvation you have been preaching about?" I presented the way of salvation to him, and there, on point duty, he received Christ with a heart as tender as that of a child.

Here is just a hint to some who are preaching in halls with a very small congregation. I was invited to preach in our Hall at Chelsea for three consecutive weeks. Arriving the first week I preached the gospel as well as I could. As I stepped down from the platform I was met by Dr. Hey, who said to me, "That was a very earnest gospel preaching, but we are all Christians." Well, I thought it over during the following week, and the next Sunday I arrived about an hour before the service in the Hall was due to commence, and stood outside the Hall and began to preach. People came round in large numbers. When the Hall was opened I said to the crowd, "Now, my dear friends, if you want to hear more, come along inside. I am going to continue the preaching in this Hall. Come along." Several came inside, and after the service a lady remained behind weeping. She asked if she might speak with me. She appeared to be very fashionably dressed, with painted lips and powdered face. I asked an elder sister if she would accompany us to an adjoining room. There I sought to lead the stranger to Christ. That night, in that room, she accepted the Saviour, and subsequently came into fellowship, and became a Sunday School teacher. She is now with the Lord. After she had left the Hall that night, Dr. Hey said to me, "That was an unusual case." I said to him, "Is that so? Why?" He replied, "She is a prostitute; a doctor can tell." How thankful I was to the Lord that He had led me to preach outside the Hall before preaching inside. It was something we often did in those early days, and was very fruitful in getting people to follow us inside for the ordinary gospel meeting.

JOHN WESTON

2

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LI

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CONTENTS

Blue, Purple and Scarlet	Inside front cover
The Church of the Thessalonians IX	21
Some Current Events in the Light of Prophecy	24
The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl	30

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

BLUE, PURPLE AND SCARLET

(See Exodus xxvi. 31)

Blue, purple, and scarlet are the colours enjoined, and, wherever mentioned, they are specified in this order. BLUE upon the pure white linen proclaimed in type that the Second Man was the Lord out of heaven (I Cor. xv. 47), that He came from heaven as the Bread of God (John vi. 33, 51), and that as the One who descended out of heaven He was the Declarer of heavenly things to man (John iii. 12, 13). A character was thereby impressed upon the Son of man never known in men before.

PURPLE upon the immaculate linen indicated that the perfect glories of faultless earthly government were revealed in the righteous and holy manhood of Him who was Son of man and Son of David. The wise men of the east beheld this kingly glory in the Babe of Bethlehem. Men like Nathanael confessed Him as the King of Israel. An idolatrous Gentile also announced His royalty to all men in the superscription he caused to be nailed with Him to the cross.

SCARLET upon the linen, bright as the latter was, with a whiteness beyond the fuller's art, bore testimony to the glory of Christ Jesus as the Pre-eminent and Peerless Man. Scarlet is the most conspicuous of all colours, and the Man, Christ Jesus, "could not be hid," though He was "of Nazareth," and "had not where to lay His head." Though He did not strive nor cry nor lift up his voice in the streets, as self-seeking leaders of men would do, the scarlet pre-eminence of His manhood was everywhere recognised by friends and enemies alike.

Whether in a wedding at Cana or at a funeral in Nain, in a storm at sea or in a famine ashore, in the temple at Jerusalem or in the synagogue at Capernaum, sitting at meat with a scornful Pharisee, or resting in the privacy of home life at Bethany, everywhere, though blue or purple might escape the casual glance, the scarlet colourings of the fine linen veil, ever white and clean, could be plainly seen.

W. J. HOCKING.

THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS

(IX. Chapter v. verses 1-13).

The well-known latter part of the 4th chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians deals with the future coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ for His own, a subject of deep comfort to believers. Chapter 5 turns to the different subject of the future Day of the Lord. This is spoken of largely in Old Testament prophecies, and involves the judgment of unbelievers in a sudden destruction with no possibility of escape. Believers need have no fear of that Day, but should in view of it maintain a serious sense of the value of their salvation, and let it have its due effect on their present life.

Verse 1. "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." This takes us back to the last recorded words of the Lord to His own before His ascension, Acts i, 7-8, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." The disciples had asked the Lord (verse 6), "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" They believed that Israel *would* be restored, and were curious to know *when* it would be. The Lord's reply was, in effect, "Do not ask when. God the Father has everything planned according to His divine purpose, but it is for you day by day to do His will and witness for Him as you are guided by His Spirit." We are in the same position today.

Verses 2 and 3. "For yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." The Thessalonian believers already knew of the Day of the Lord, no doubt from the Old Testament scriptures and also from Paul's verbal instruction (see the 2nd Epistle, chapter ii, verse 5, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?"). A reminder is however now given, for their and our profit.

To all unbelievers the judgment of the living will come in complete surprise and unexpectedness. So far from having

heeded God's warnings through His word and His servants, they will be deluded by Satan into thinking that they have attained a state of peace and safety — not perhaps so much conditions between men and nations, as the hardened conscience rejecting any possibility that God should intervene in man's affairs. Then it will be that divine judgment will fall; there will be no possible escape; the destruction, or ruin, will be sudden and complete.

The portion of believers is blessedly otherwise. Verses 4 and 5: "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that Day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." All true Christians are enlightened by the knowledge of God in Christ; they have been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. They shall not come into judgment. How impossible then that they could be involved in the terrors of the Day of the Lord. The words are clear, not in darkness, not of darkness and the night, but children (or sons) of light and the day. Needless to say, there is no room here for man's invention of purgatory.

The more we value our immense blessings, the more ready we shall be to answer to our responsibilities as believers. Some of the things we owe to God because of His grace to us are now expressed. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken (or get drunk) in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation" (verses 6-8).

The unbeliever is indifferent to spiritual things, and has no awareness of God and His coming judgment. He lives to enjoy the present, and the pleasures of sin deaden his senses to matters of spiritual life and death. For him, God is excluded, and he is therefore in night's darkness. With the Christian all is in fact different, and he is to maintain the difference in his daily life by continuing watchful, alert, alive

to God, not sinking down to the world's level, nor allowing the world's pleasures to attract and influence him. Being of the day he is to go on steadily with God, protected as with armour by the three active qualities of the Christian life we met in the first chapter of this Epistle, that is, faith, love and hope. So we are kept in touch with the Lord, near to Him, guarded from evil, and confident because of the bright prospect ahead for *us*.

Verses 9-11. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." We have seen how blessedly different is the Christian's outlook from the destiny of the unsaved. Here is pointed out the solid basis of the difference. It rests in God. He has appointed, placed, or set believers for this very thing—not wrath (the coming judgment of the living) but salvation.

Further, this salvation is not of our doing at all, but is solely by Another, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by what *He* has done; He has died for us, glorious fact of the gospel. For all who believe, this secures salvation which will be fully realised when we are with Him, when we live together with Him as we shall do at His coming, whether at that moment we are still watching or have died and so are sleeping. I deserved death, the wages of sin, but Christ died for my sins, and I who believe have eternal life and shall not come into judgment but am passed from death unto life.

It is by reminding one another of these wonderful things that we comfort and encourage one another, and build up each one the other, thus being strengthened in the wilderness journey, and especially for times of trial and sorrow.

Verses 12, 13. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves."

While all believers are called on to help one another in spiritual things, as opportunity offers, yet in every company of Christians there are usually some at any particular time who show themselves fitted for spiritual labour among the others, to take the lead (literally, stand before), and to admonish, that is, to warn by way of instruction. Such leaders are to be valued and held in much loving esteem, and this not because of any personal preferences nor as what is owing to the holder of an office, but in view of the actual service rendered by them to the Lord among His people.

Here, however, is a danger that one might be puffed up for one against another (I Corinthians iv. 6), and a danger of contention between the leaders themselves. Hence the word, "Be at peace among yourselves," not the peace of stagnation and barrenness, but the peace the Lord gives, as in Acts ix. 31 (after the conversion of Saul of Tarsus), "Then had the churches rest (literally, peace) . . . and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were *multiplied*."

W. H. L. GRAHAM.

SOME CURRENT EVENTS IN THE LIGHT OF PROPHECY

The feeling is widespread among Christians that the things taking place around us are signs that the end of the age is near. It is the purpose of this article to look at the more prominent of these events in the light of God's word, so that we may see to what extent this feeling is soundly based.

It is sometimes stated that such events do not concern the Church, because she belongs to heaven. To wait for the coming Saviour is her hope, and not to wait for events on earth. It is, of course, blessedly true that the Church belongs to heaven (Phil. iii. 20, 21), and it is the writer's firm conviction that the coming of the Lord for His saints will remove us from the world *before* the main events of "the time of the end" take place. But it is idle to talk of waiting for events, for they are taking place before our eyes. These things

may be but the setting of the stage for the final happenings; but when the stage is set the play is ready to begin. The final act is the appearing of the Lord to take His great power and reign, so that every event which brings that nearer has a voice for the Christian. If He comes *for* His own before He comes forth *with* them, then whatever shows the end near tells us that the blessed hope is nearer still.

ISRAEL

Probably the most important event of all is the setting up of the state of "Israel" in part of what used to be called Palestine. Christians have watched the developments leading to this for many years, but in our day it has at last come to pass! The world sees nothing in it, and we must certainly not think that it is the restoration of Israel of which so many Old Testament prophecies speak. That is to be God's own work, not man's (e.g. Isaiah li. 3; Jeremiah xxx. 3; Ezekiel xxxvii). But it is essential for the fulfilment of many prophecies that part of the nation should be back in their own land, *before* the Lord Himself sends His angels to gather His elect together.

For instance, Daniel, in chapter xii, and the Lord Jesus in Matthew xxiv., speak of the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. The holy place can be none other than the temple, which in turn must be at Jerusalem. Moreover, the Lord goes on to speak of people in Judaea praying that they might not have to flee on the Sabbath day—showing them to be Jews in their own land (for Christians keep the Lord's day, the first day of the week, not the Sabbath).

Again in Matthew x. the Lord's word "Ye shall not have gone over the *cities* of *Israel* till the Son of man be come," points to the same conclusion. See also Zechariah xii.-xiv.

Very important also is it in this connection to remember how for centuries past Christians had been accustomed to think of the Jews as completely cast aside, and to ignore scripture statements to the contrary. So that when we ponder the Lord's words to them "Verily I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth *till* ye shall say, Blessed is He that

cometh in the name of the Lord," it is quite startling to see the name "Israel" once again upon the map, in the land where He was once refused by them.

THE ARABS

Confident forecasts were made that the Arabs would soon annihilate the Jews when British support was withdrawn; but instead the growing strength of Israel, though faced with the continuing enmity of all the Arab states, has merely demonstrated how thoroughly up-to-date the scriptures are. "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (Psalm lxxxiii. 4), is exactly the language of these nations today.

The efforts of President Nasser of Egypt to keep the "United Arab Republic" in being are interesting in another connection. For Syria did join this group of countries at the beginning, but later broke away. Now Syria will form a major part, at least, of the territory of the "king of the north," whose headlong invasion of Israel, and subsequent passage into and attack upon Egypt (king of the south) is graphically portrayed in Daniel xi. 40-45. Thus Syria's alliance with Egypt showed that the final state of things had not been reached, yet how quickly the enmity which scripture speaks of showed itself! (See WORDS OF HELP, December, 1959, page 136).

EGYPT

Egypt's own recent rise to independence is most significant. All down the centuries she had been oppressed, by one foreign power after another; so that her condition, in vivid contrast to her ancient glory, has been one long illustration of Ezekiel's prophecy, "It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations" (Ezekiel xxix. 15). So that if now she begins to fulfil a different role, namely that of the king of the south of Daniel xi., it is surely because the time of the end is near. And as king of the south Egypt will be the foe of Israel's lawless king, just as Egypt is foremost in hatred of Israel.

It is also to be remarked that the ending of British power in the Middle East, its withdrawal from Palestine, Jordan and Iraq, and the French withdrawal from Syria and Lebanon, leave Israel exposed to the hatred of "the peoples round about" as Zechariah twice expresses it (Chapter xii, 2, 6). For Britain and France will form part of the empire of the "Beast", with whom Israel will be allied.

R U S S I A

While the menace of Russia hangs over the western nations, we are bound to enquire if scripture prophecy has any light to cast on the subject.

The application to Russia of Ezekiel's prophecy of Gog in chapter xxxviii, is not universally acknowledged, but does seem most probable. The words "Thus saith the Lord God, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal" (New Translation), together with his origin, "Thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts" (verse 15), and still more the R.S.V. "uttermost parts of the north," are most readily understood of Russia or of Russia and Turkey together. "North", of course, is north of Israel. The ancient Meshech and Tubal—nearly always mentioned together, as of neighbouring countries, are not readily identified with certainty, though often placed in Turkey. Tubal can hardly be Tobolsk, first as lacking the final consonants, and secondly as too distant from Meshech, whether this is placed in Turkey or identified with Moscow. But this difficulty still leaves the reference to Russia untouched.

Ezekiel's prophecy describes an invasion of the land of Israel by this northern power, along with many allies, at a time when Israel is gathered out of the nations, and is at peace and dwelling safely. Whenever this shall take place, it is to be noted that it agrees with the fact that Israel has thrown in her lot with the Western Powers, and not with Russia. For Jewish irritation with Britain, and Britain's support of Jordan, seemed at one time to make this unlikely; but once again, the alignment of the nations is in accord with the prophetic picture, and certainly Russia's animosity against Israel is most pronounced.

EUROPEAN UNITY

For very many years students of prophecy have been foretelling the eventual rise of a revived Roman Empire, whose head is spoken of in Revelation as the Beast (Rev. xiii. 1). This empire is also plainly shown in Daniel, both as the iron part of the image in Dan. ii. 33, 40-44, and as the fourth beast in chapter vii. Now, never did the Roman Empire exist in the ten-king form in which these scriptures prophesy its destruction by the Lord Himself; hence its revival for a short time under the power of Satan (Rev. xiii. 2) is thus rendered certain.

Now are not events in Europe plainly moving in the direction of unification of those nations which once made up the western part of the Roman Empire? For instance, the Common Market to which Britain is now seeking entry is an economic association of nations; but political union, as is well known, is envisaged as an eventual outcome. If Britain joins, other nations will certainly follow. This is far from the revival of the Roman Empire, but certainly points that way. Such political union has repeatedly been frustrated in the past. If it now comes about, it will show how much nearer the end is.

DIVISION OF GERMANY

The division of Germany into East and West is also significant. For the Roman Empire never extended eastwards of the Rhine, and though it by no means follows that the revived empire must have the same boundaries as of old, yet the exclusion of much of Germany from the Western sphere, and its attachment to the Eastern group of nations, is once again in agreement with what scripture reveals of the last days. Now this division of Europe has only materialised since the end of the last war, and the friendship between Western Germany and France is still news. We are justified, then, in feeling that the stage is being set as the prophetic word declares.

THE CHURCH OF GOD

It is not events in it, so much as the general state of the professing church, which speaks loudest to us of the approach of the end. For in many quarters there is a feeling of satisfaction, a feeling that the Church is at last becoming truly Christian in its concern to improve the condition of men in the world while ignoring the heavenly hope; truly tolerant and charitable, so as not to be able to see serious error anywhere, even in Rome itself, which should keep Christians from uniting happily; truly modern and scientific so as to be able to approve of teachings that conflict with basic Christian doctrines. Does not such satisfaction point to the fact that Laodicea is now upon us—that final phase of the Church which the Lord has declared so nauseous to Him? “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, etc.” (Rev. iii. 15-17).

For this belief that things are now improving is in strange contrast to so much lack of any real faith in the power of God or in the reality of His speaking to men; to the denial of man's utter ruin and need of divine righteousness, and of blindness to impending divine judgment.

Consider also the prophecy of II Peter iii., “There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” They admit a divine intervention when the Son of God was born (for these are “Christian” scoffers); but deny any other, either before that or in the future. Steady evolution of a world left to itself is now taken so much for granted that the possibility of anything different is ridiculed. Surely then the last days are upon us!

For many years the “approaching end of the age” has

been foreseen, but the rapid developments of the last few years are of another order altogether. Men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things that are coming on the earth, but the Christian may well rejoice. If the coming of the Lord is so near, our best preparation is in increased diligence and faithfulness in service and testimony to His name.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE AND THE COSTLY PEARL

(*Matthew xiii.*)

The fact that the series of parables in Matthew xiii. consists of seven in number is sufficiently obvious to arrest the attention of a very ordinary reader of the chapter. But it is further to be noted that Mark is commissioned to record an additional parable (that of the secret growth of the seed, Mark iv. 26-29), spoken (it should seem) on the same occasion but omitted by Matthew, while on the other hand, Mark does not give more than two out of the seven in the first evangelist, but adds that "with many such parables spake He the word unto them as they were able to hear it" (Mark iv. 33). This consideration justifies the thought, if indeed justification of such a thought be in any wise necessary, that the seven parables before us were selected by the Holy Ghost, and so arranged for some specific purpose.

Without illustrating by examples the remarkable prevalence of the number "seven" throughout the Holy Scriptures, it may be helpful to refer to a well-known series in the Old Testament and another in the New.

Under the law, the Israelites were commanded to observe seven feasts in the first seven months of the sacred years (Lev. xxiii.). Each of these was typical of succeeding events in the national history. The feast of the passover has a reference to the sacrifice of Christ, as I Cor. v. conclusively proves. This was immediately followed by that of unleavened bread, typifying the holy state which is the sure result of the shed blood of God's Lamb, true to faith now and universally in a future day. The sheaf of firstfruits undoubtedly points to

the resurrection of Christ on the third day; even as the feast of wave loaves, baken with leaven, shadowed forth the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was outpoured from on high and the church was formed. This feast was in Sivan or the third month, and the fifth feast was not arranged till the seventh month. After this considerable interval the feast of trumpets came at the new moon, with its prophetic reference to that still future and effective summons God shall make to His ancient people. This was quickly succeeded by the day of atonement, in which they were to afflict their souls. It will be duly fulfilled when Israel is restored and shares the results of Christ's death for them. Then shall ensue the millennial joy of which the final feast, that of tabernacles, was the appointed type.

This rapid sketch will suffice to show that the series of feasts of Jehovah was meant to outline a complete cycle of events in the history of God's people, part of which even now awaits fulfilment.

Somewhat analagous are the addresses to the seven churches of Asia (Rev. ii., iii.). They present successive phases in the history of the professing church from the decline of heart at Ephesus, through stages of indifference to, and abandonment of, the truth, on to the lifeless profession at Laodicea. These epistles therefore span the period from the apostolic days until the removal of the true and the destruction of the false church.

By these instances the way is prepared to see in the seven parables of Matthew xiii. a representation of the rise, progress, and end of the kingdom. But while this is true, it must be remembered that the Lord delineates the kingdom in that peculiar form which it assumes in consequence of the rejection of Himself the King and during the time of His absence. And this fact is very clearly and definitely conveyed in the former chapters of the Gospel. There it is very carefully shown that Jesus of Nazareth was undoubtedly Israel's Messiah, perfectly fulfilling what God had spoken beforehand by the mouth of His holy prophets. It is likewise shown with equal distinctness that, though He was undoubtedly the Saviour Who was to come, and though He wrought many

mighty works in proof of the same, the nation refused to own their King; so that the kingdom could not then be manifested in the glory of which the prophets had spoken. The implacable spirit of rejection was displayed by the Pharisees in a most unmistakable way when they ascribed the miraculous power He exhibited to a Satanic origin (Matt. ix. 34; xii. 24). No manner of sin or blasphemy could exceed this. It struck not only at the Son of man but against the Holy Ghost by Whom He was ever energised. It could not be passed over (Matt. xii. 31). Accordingly in the succeeding chapter we find that the Lord commenced to teach by means of parables the new form that the kingdom would assume in consequence of this irreconcilable opposition of the Jews.

The parables of Matt. xiii. are divisible into two groups, into one of which the first four fall as having been spoken to the multitudes, in contradistinction to the last three which were spoken privately to the disciples in the house. In the former group the manward aspects of the kingdom are portrayed: and in the latter those divine characteristics discernible alone to faith.

In the introductory parable of the sower and the soils, the Lord shows that all depended on the manner of the reception of the word of the kingdom. The sons of the kingdom would be not the natural seed of Abraham, but those who heard the word and understood it (ver. 23). In the other three parables of this group (the wheat and the tares, the mustard tree becoming a great tree, and the leavened meal) the Master unfolds the strange fact that, so far from evil being rooted out of the kingdom by the exercise of inflexible righteousness, it will spring up side by side with good, and eventually so permeate the kingdom as to impart its character to the whole.

The fulfilment of this prophecy, after the Lord went away, may be gathered from the inspired history of apostolic times, and may be observed in the condition of things surrounding us at the present moment. An absolutely pure Christian association is unknown. Evil men and evil principles creep in unawares, so that the Lord's servants are unable to distinguish between the wheat and the tares, and both are growing

together until harvest. The poor and despised assembly of God left its first estate and became a prominent worldly power in the earth, thus affording a shelter for the very emissaries of evil that in its early stage were its sworn foes. And not only does this debased state of Christendom arise from an unholy alliance with worldly power, but evil originates from within, going on to leaven the whole lump. So the apostle warned the Ephesian elders, both of the grievous wolves that should enter in, not sparing the flock and also of men that should arise from themselves, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them (Acts xx. 29, 30). Deterioration would originate from interior as well as exterior causes.

This then would be the outward aspect of the kingdom as existing upon the earth, subsequent to the Lord's departure and prior to His return when His angels will gather out of His kingdom "all things that do offend and them which do iniquity" (Matt. xiii. 41). Herein it afforded a direct contrast to the prophetic descriptions of the Old Testament. They describe a state of righteousness and peace when the Lord Jesus sits upon the throne of David. Then evil will be subdued; and "truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven" (Psalm lxxxv. 11). But until then, as these parables show, evil is seen in closest association with good, even in that which bears the Lord's name.

However, in the succeeding parables spoken to the disciples only, that aspect of the kingdom is given which can be apprehended by faith alone. The natural eye would never discern the truth foreshadowed in the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price. What appears among men as an indiscriminate and heterogeneous mass is here shown to contain what is valuable and beautiful. At these two parables it is proposed to look more closely (D.V.), on a future occasion. In the last picture the final separation is presented as it affects the good rather than the evil.

(To be continued).

W. J. HOCKING.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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CONTENTS

Symbols of Significance	33
The Hidden Treasure and the Costly Pearl (II)	36
Is the Lord's Hand waxed short ?	40
Essential Faith (verse)	<i>Inside back cover</i>

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

AS WE GO to print with this issue of WORDS OF HELP, the long spell of severe weather which has held most of the British Isles within its grip since Christmas appears to be coming to an end.

In a day when mankind is ever ready to boast of some new achievement, and men reach out for fuller control of human environment and destiny, it is salutary to be reminded of the One above—the only One—whom winds and waves obey. We may well challenge ourselves, as the Lord challenged Job (chapter 38), as to whether there is due acknowledgment in heart and mind of the Majesty of God and the greatness of His power.

In the memorable Spring of 1940, when favourable weather conditions were a decisive factor in enabling a large body of British troops to be successfully evacuated by sea from Dunkirk to this country, there were many who recognised the overruling hand of God. It is well to recall however, that on the previous Sunday (May 26), a special service of Intercession and Prayer had been held in Westminster Abbey, attended by the Prime Minister himself and other representatives of the nation. Who is to say that the exceptional calm which prevailed in the English Channel while the evacuation was in progress was not the gracious response of the Almighty to the appeal of a people in distress?

Believers may well pray that the ears of their fellow-men today may be open to the challenge of God's works as well as the message of His word.

Because of icy conditions outside, many elderly folk have been confined to their homes for weeks together, thus being restricted in their fellowship with other Christians, and deprived of what is ministered orally at public services. Such persons, as well as those who are similarly handicapped throughout the year by infirmity or illness, might well be glad to receive a copy of this Magazine. We ask our readers to bear this need in mind.

SYMBOLS OF SIGNIFICANCE

SHALL WE NOT give thanks for God's gracious care in giving us symbols which we can understand? He condescends to the homely things of earth that we may ascend in thought to the heights of heavenly things. So He speaks of a House.

But the symbol must be understood in relation to the subject which He is bringing before His people. The epistles were not all written to the *same* companies of believers. The principles set out under the guidance of the Holy Spirit were, and still are, divine. The circumstances in which they were written had, however, a distinct bearing upon their presentation. It would not be possible for us now to call for the elders of the church, as Paul did, and say to them, "The flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." If such overseers existed *now* it would be good indeed to submit to them! In kindred spirit we should enter upon the truth brought before the assembly at Corinth when Paul wrote his first letter to them. In that spirit and with intelligence we should read chapters xii.-xiv., not to play the part of Corinthians as though we possessed all the gifts of Corinthians (*e.g.* the gift of tongues) but to take knowledge of our condition by comparison and to do what we can within the limits of it. We must sorrowfully remember we are not the only light in our locality as the church at Corinth was. The light of witness is scattered, but there is no withdrawal of the Holy Ghost from His house—the gathered saints. It is for them to hold fast to God's principles in the present time—a day in which the hand of His discipline is upon all who name the Name of Christ.

The symbol of a house is again used by Paul in his second letter to Timothy. He sees the sinister shadow of "the last days"—the "difficult times" when "men shall be lovers of self . . . lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of piety but denying the power of it." In the second chapter of this epistle the apostle draws largely upon earthly symbols in his energy to minister to the beloved Timotheus. "Be strong . . . take thy share of suffering as a good *soldier* of Jesus Christ." In verse 5 he refers to the "*contender in the games*" who

“is not crowned unless he contend lawfully.” In verse 6 “the husbandman” is brought in, and the thought of his labour and ultimate enjoyment of the fruits. “Think of what I say” writes the apostle. In verse 19 he moves toward the thought of the *building*, and writes of the “firm foundation” which “stands,” for it is the foundation of God; the hands of men do not lay it. What, too, is the worth of their *human* “seal”—the words of their inscriptions—compared with the declaration divinely impressed “the Lord knows those that are His; and, let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity!”

From this point he goes inside the building, so to speak. “But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also wooden and earthen; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.” This is an earthly presentation which has a wider implication than the house symbol used for the gathered saints, in the sense that it embraces others—those who have no title to name the name of Christ—the dishonouring vessels. The Master is there (in the sense that His sovereignty is acknowledged), and the house is viewed, not in the way of close association, but as presenting a state of things in which the merely nominal as well as the real are to be found naming the name of Christ. In such a condition of things the call is to personal fidelity. The vessels in this house are many and diverse—it is a great house. The precious and the vile are there. We are not thinking of the assemblies of the saints—“an habitation of God through the Spirit,” which is wholly a divine conception from which the intervention of man is excluded.

There are vessels which present the thought of divine righteousness in golden splendour. There are others, honoured by the Master’s touch which shine with the silver of His redemption. The vessels, as of themselves, do not *produce* but they may *contain* much that is for the refreshment of the Master for His use in every good work. The humbler vessels of wood and pottery may not *all* be dishonourable. They too seem to be given an individuality—a personal responsibility for being untainted by corruption and dishonour. The true believer is

called to purge (to purify) *himself* from that which is dishonouring and vile lest he become defiled by that which is false and dishonouring to Christ. The house may become very "great," and the vessels in it much mingled, but it is not a question of leaving the house but of leaving the unmistakable evil. The responsibility is in correcting in *oneself* all complicity with what the Lord hates, for one cannot leave the house—whatever its state—without abandoning the Lord's name.

Today there is a movement towards a consolidation of sects and denominations such as has never been seen before in so-called Christian countries. The false prophet is on his way. The ecclesiastical power, long foretold, is building up. We see the shadows of coming events, and we know the substance of the shadows must be very near. The weakness and failure that are about us, as well as the conditions prevalent in the great house so repugnant to us, are the outcome of a departure in which we all have part. There is no group of believers anywhere that has title to declare it stands apart in lofty superiority. The great house bears evidence of the inroads of the enemy. We must bow in humble sincerity to a judicial condition. Sad as it is, we must submit to it as the judgment of God upon the church for her unfaithfulness. Such submission is true obedience. To make efforts to escape is but to add sin to sin. How useless to seek the mountain top in fleshly strength if the Lord be not with them (Numbers xiv.40) ! So, later, David bowed to the condition of kingship in Saul as being a divine judgment, and Elijah owned the sceptre of the ten tribes as parted from the throne in Jerusalem. The Chaldean sword brought death in executive judgment as did the Persian, the Greek and the Roman. The remnant in godly submission bowed to that which it discerned as the judgment of God, even whilst they died rather than bow to the image of the oppressor.

So it is well, indeed, that we discern our present condition in this order of things, and do whatever we can, without reluctance, and without affecting to bring about that which is beyond our power. The captives of Cyrus returned to Jerusalem "with vessels of silver and gold, with goods, and with beasts,

and with precious things" (Ezra i.6), but they acknowledged their poverty in regard to Urim and Thummim (Ezra ii.63), and they did not imitate the Cloud and the Glory or fashion something and call it the Ark. With a sense of weakness they trod the way of humility, and so knew and trusted the shelter of the Wings of the Shekinah of His Glory (Ruth ii.12). They did what they could. They set up the walls of the city; they built "the altar of the God of Israel," and set it upon its bases whilst "fear was upon them because of the people of those countries" (Ezra iii.3); they built the house of God, and the word of the Lord comes to them by Haggai the prophet, "Be strong . . . and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." (Haggai ii.4-5).

EDWARD T. WOOD

THE HIDDEN TREASURE AND THE COSTLY PEARL

(continued from February issue)

IT HAS ALREADY been intimated that, in the two parables or similitudes given in Matthew xiii.44-46, the intrinsic worth and spiritual beauty to be found in the kingdom of heaven are shown as existing, in spite of the intermixture of evil which is apparent to the cursory glance. The wheat mingled with darnel, the wide-spreading, umbrageous tree, the meal permeated with leaven were discernible to all, and must plainly set forth the general outward appearance. But the hidden treasure and the rare and costly pearl imply qualities that could only be appreciated by the finder. And so in the great mass of Christian profession, the eyes of the world are able to very readily detect the iniquity that shelters itself under the guise of religion; but only the Eye of omniscient grace is able to mark the internal worth and the indestructible unity existing beneath such an unpromising exterior.

The former of the two parables likens the kingdom of heaven to "treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he

hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (Matthew xiii.44).

The two prominent features in this parable are, first, the treasure hidden in the field; and second, the purchase of the field for the sake of the treasure.

In the first place then, what is signified by the figure of the hidden treasure? Some have hastily assumed from Proverbs ii.4 ("If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God") that the treasure is Christ; and that the parable has a figurative reference to the manner in which the blessings of the gospel are acquired. Without doubt, in Proverbs, the point is to inculcate a spirit of earnestness in pursuit of wisdom. As in seeking for silver and treasure, the energies are by that very fact stimulated, so it should be in the spiritual analogue. But in Matthew xiii. we have a similar figure used for a different purpose. Here it is not the diligence of the searcher, so much as the value of the treasure sought that is most prominent. Besides it is not the king but the kingdom that is likened to treasure hidden in a field.

If the general trend of the series of parables be borne in mind, the meaning of the figure before us appears on the surface. In the enunciation to the crowds of the similitude of the outward form of the kingdom in mystery, the Lord used figures that spoke of good being largely alloyed with evil. Subsequently, to His own disciples, He gave the interpretation of the wheat and the tares which in general intention resembled the leavened meal and the wide-branched mustard tree. The Lord then likens the kingdom to hidden treasure, using a similitude that suggested a pure, unmixed character and not an amalgam as before. In point of fact, the terms in which this parable is expressed forbid us to think of anything but a view of the kingdom of heaven contrasted with those that precede. In the latter, elements (such as the tares, the leaven, the birds) are introduced which tend to diminish the value it possessed in its incipient stage: but here there is nothing of the kind, its value is given without a single mark of qualification.

The first consideration of this truth leads to the reflection that God's ways of sovereign grace must be marvellous indeed when He finds, in spite of man's irreparable sinfulness and his invariable abuse of everything entrusted to him, that which from His own point of view He represents by treasure. For whatever may be the slowness of man's heart to believe all that is written, the truth abides, here and in not a few other scriptures, that God in and by means of Christ has found His good pleasure in men.

But though undoubtedly the New Testament gives us this blessed revelation in its fullest application, a similar expression is used in the Old Testament concerning God's chosen nation. From Mount Sinai, the word of Jehovah came unto the children of Israel:—"Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bear you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all peoples" (Exodus xix. 4, 5). On account however of the transgressions of the people under the first covenant, this purpose of God was never realised. Not that it was thereby abrogated, for it still holds good that Jehovah "hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure" (Psalm cxxxv.4). And in the millennial day this shall be owned by every nation, from the rising to the setting of the sun. For then Jehovah will save Israel, He will rejoice over her with joy, He will rest in His love, He will joy over her with singing (Zephaniah iii.17).

But in the present interval, while Israel is in strange lands, the Lord finds in the midst of His nominal kingdom where evil lifts its head in unrebuked defiance of good, that which His own heart esteems a special treasure. This treasure is not the favoured nation of Palestine, which, as has been shown does not come within the scope of this series of parables, but it is the New Testament saints in that ideal character which they possess in the mind and eternal purpose of God.

Now in the epistles of Paul, especially in that to the Ephesians, we have this character presented in the form of doctrine. In

Matthew the time had not come to give more than a figurative reference to what the great apostle of the Gentiles was subsequently commissioned to communicate in detail. In his writings therefore, we learn that the church is destined and designed to be the vehicle for the display of divine grace and wisdom.

Thus in Ephesians, we are not only introduced to the inexpressible fulness of our blessing in Christ, but also to the inconceivable fact that by means of us His holy Name will be magnified and exalted. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, *to the praise of the glory of His grace*" (Ephesians i.5, 6), and again, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: that we should be *to the praise of His glory*" (Ephesians i.11, 12). Here then (it is submitted with all due deference to the judgment of others) we see that character of the church in which it corresponds with the figure of "treasure" in Matthew xiii.44. Treasure is such because of the use that may be made of it. And the saints are of value simply because God has deigned to utilise them as the media whereby to display His manifold wisdom. So the scriptures declare the purpose of God to be that "now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known *by the church* the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians iii.10).

But this treasure is said to be "hidden in a field"; and the church, described in the Pauline epistles as a "mystery" (that is a secret, hitherto hidden but now made known) remarkably tallies with the figure. Compare Romans xvi. 25,26; Ephesians iii.4, 5, 9; Colossians i.26; ii.2, 3. In this respect the church affords a contrast to the nation of Israel. For when the Israelites were called out of Egypt to be Jehovah's treasure (Exodus xix. 4-6), it was not said to be hid in a field, because their deliverance from the oppressor and their introduction to Canaan was but the due accomplishment of promises made centuries previously to Abraham their forefather. But the calling and privileges of the church were never the subject of promise.

From Genesis to Malachi no revelation from on high was given concerning the church of the heavenly calling. The mystery was hidden from the sons of men, hidden in God. The divine Seeker alone was aware of its existence; He alone knew and appreciated its worth. Truly there is a day coming when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew xiii. 43). But Christ discerns beforehand and divests Himself of all to obtain the treasure—a treasure whose value is the product of His own grace and which apart from Him is worthless and worse.

W. J. HOCKING

(To be continued)

IS THE LORD'S HAND WAXED SHORT?

(Remarks on Numbers xi.11-23)

NOT ONLY HAVE we to contemplate failure on the part of the congregation of Israel; but even Moses himself is seen faltering and almost sinking beneath the weight of his responsibility. "And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness" (verses 11-15).

What then are we to learn from the remarkable outburst of feeling recorded in these verses? We learn this at least, that it is the wilderness that really brings out what is in the very best of us. It is there we prove what is in our hearts. And, inasmuch as the Book of Numbers is, emphatically, the book of the wilderness, it is just there we might expect to find all sorts of failure and infirmity fully unfolded. The Spirit of God faithfully

chronicles everything. He gives us men as they are; and even though it be a Moses that "speaks unadvisedly with his lips," that very unadvised speaking is recorded for our admonition and instruction. Moses "was a man subject to like passions as we are;" and it is very evident that, in the portion of his history now before us, his heart sinks under the tremendous weight of his responsibilities.

It will, perhaps, be said, "No wonder his heart should sink." No wonder, surely, for his burden was far too heavy for human shoulders. But the question is, Was it too heavy for divine shoulders? Was it really the case that Moses was called to bear the burden alone? Was not the living God with him? And was not He sufficient? What did it matter whether God was pleased to act by one man or by ten thousand? All the power, all the wisdom, all the grace, was in Him. He is the fountain of all blessedness, and, in the judgment of faith, it makes not one whit of difference as to the channel, or whether there is one channel, or a thousand and one.

This is a fine moral principle for all the servants of Christ. It is most needful for all such to remember that whenever the Lord places a man in a position of responsibility, He will both fit him for it and maintain him in it. It is, of course, another thing altogether if a man *will* rush unsent into any field of work, or any post of difficulty or danger. In such a case, we may assuredly look for a thorough breakdown sooner or later. But when God calls a man to a certain position, He will endow him with the needed grace to occupy it. He never sends anyone a warfare at his own charges; and therefore all we have to do is to draw upon Him for all we need. This holds good in every case. We can never fail if we only cling to the living God. We can never run dry, if we are drawing from the fountain. Our tiny springs will soon dry up; but our Lord Jesus Christ declares that, "He that believeth in me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

This is a grand lesson for the wilderness. We cannot get on without it. Had Moses fully understood it, he never would have given utterance to such words as these: "Whence should *I* have

flesh to give unto all this people?" He would have fixed his eye *only* upon God. He would have known that he was but an instrument in the hands of God, whose resources were illimitable. Assuredly, Moses could not supply that vast assembly with food even for a single day; but Jehovah could supply the need of every living thing, and supply it for ever.

Do we really believe this? Does it not sometimes appear as though we doubted it? Do we not sometimes feel as though we were to supply instead of God? And then is it any marvel if we quail, and falter, and sink? Well indeed might Moses say, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me." There was only one heart that could bear with such a company, namely, the heart of that blessed One, Who, when they were toiling amid the brickkilns of Egypt, had come down to deliver them, and Who, having redeemed them out of the hand of the enemy, had taken up His abode in their midst. He was able to bear them, and He alone. His loving heart and mighty hand were alone adequate to the task; and if Moses had been in the full power of this great truth, he would not and could not have said, "If Thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness."

This surely was a dark moment in the history of this illustrious servant of God. It reminds us somewhat of the prophet Elijah, when he flung himself at the base of the juniper tree and entreated the Lord to take away his life. How wonderful to see these two men together on the mount of transfiguration! It proves, in a very marked way, that God's thoughts are not as ours, nor His ways as ours. He had something better in store for Moses and Elias than aught that they contemplated. Blessed be His name, He rebukes our fears by the riches of His grace, and when our poor hearts would anticipate death and wretchedness, He gives life, victory, and glory.

However, we cannot but see that, in shrinking from a position of weighty responsibility, Moses was really giving up a place of high dignity and holy privilege.

This seems most evident from the following passage. "And

the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, *that they may stand there with thee*. And I will come down and talk with thee there; and *I will take of the spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them*; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone” (vers. 16, 17).

Was there any additional power gained by the introduction of seventy men? Not spiritual power certainly, inasmuch as it was only the spirit that was upon Moses, after all. True, there were seventy men instead of one; but the multiplication of men was no increase of spiritual power. It saved Moses trouble, but it lost him dignity. He was henceforth to be a joint instrument instead of the sole one. It may be said that Moses—blessed servant as he was!—did not want dignity for himself, but rather sought a shady, retired, humble path. No doubt; but this does not touch the question before us. Moses, as we shall see presently, was the meekest man upon the face of the earth; nor do we mean even to hint that any mere man would have done better under the circumstances. But then we must seek to bear away with us the great practical lesson which our chapter so impressively teaches. The very best of men fail; and it seems exceedingly plain that Moses, in the eleventh chapter of Numbers, was not in the calm elevation of faith. He appears, for the moment, to have lost that even balance of soul which is the sure result of finding one’s centre in the living God. We gather this, not merely from the fact of his tottering beneath the weight of his responsibility; but let us ponder the following paragraph.

“And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the Lord, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt: therefore the Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is

among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt? And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and Thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word will come to pass unto thee or not" (verses 18-23).

In all this we see the working of that spirit of unbelief which ever tends to limit the Holy One of Israel. Could not the Almighty God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, the Creator of the ends of the earth—could not He provide flesh for six hundred thousand footmen? Alas! it is just here we all so sadly fail. We do not enter, as we ought, into the reality of having to do with the living God. Faith brings God into the scene, and therefore it knows absolutely nothing of difficulties; yea, it laughs at impossibilities. In the judgment of faith, God is the grand answer to every question—the grand solution of every difficulty. It refers all to Him; and hence, it matters not in the least to faith, whether it be six hundred thousand or six hundred million; it knows that God is all-sufficient. It finds all its resources in Him. Unbelief says, "*How* can such and such things be?" It is full of "*Hows*;" but faith has one great answer to ten thousand "*hows*," and that answer is—God.

(From *Notes on the Book of Numbers* by C. H. MACKINTOSH)

“And THOU SHALT REMEMBER all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.”

(Moses—see Deuteronomy viii 2-4)

ESSENTIAL FAITH

Where are the men of God today,
Who have a faith that lives and moves
That works and acts and ever proves
That God is faithful, come what may?

The devotees of Mammon build
An altar to him, everywhere.
What will vain man not do or dare,
To have his house with Mammon filled?

To worship God and Mammon too,
To trust in riches and in God;
“This cannot be”, said One Who trod
The path of faith’s devotion true.

Have faith in God, and Mammon’s shrine
Will have no place within your heart;
Faith’s treasures are from gold apart;
“All things can be!” says faith divine.

Faith always honours God and learns
That God, in turn, faith honours still;
Awake, O faith, and many fill
With zeal that for God’s honour burns.

G. S. PURNELL

“*Abraham . . . looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. Wherefore also it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.*”

(Romans iv. 20-22. R.V.)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LI

APRIL 1963

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CONTENTS

The Inspiration of the Scriptures	- - -	45
The Church of the Thessalonians X	-	50
Spiritual Power	- - - - -	54
For the Lord's Sake	- -	Inside back cover

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

WE MAKE no apology for including another article in this issue on the subject of the Inspiration of the Scriptures. The recent article by W. J. Hocking, in September 1962, unfolded the scriptures' own teaching; the present article deals with some difficulties and misconceptions which often arise. The two should thus be read together. The reader is also reminded of the articles in June and July 1961, dealing with our Lord's attitude to the scriptures. This might be a good opportunity to re-read these articles also.

The article on Thessalonians is the last of the series on the first Epistle. We are pleased to announce that the writer proposes (D.V.) to continue with notes on the second Epistle in future issues.



THE BOOK OF BOOKS

READER, would you reach Canaan? Then cling to this everlasting guide. Search it day and night. Make it your chosen friend of every hour. Engraft it by prayer into the soul of every thought. Let it direct the helm of each desire. Think, as it thinks—speak, as it speaks—move, as it beckons—rest, as it counsels. Your steps will then be safe and pure. For the light of Scripture is the light of life. It is Christ's hand, Christ's heart. What was Israel's Pillar to our open Bible page?
(Extracted).

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

WHENEVER the truth of verbal inspiration is taught, the question always arises as to how this can be compatible with the noticeably different styles of different writers in the Bible. If the writer is but the channel of a divine communication, it is claimed that such differences should not occur. And to emphasize the point, the figure of the writer as a channel is replaced by that of a typewriter. But of the two figures that of the channel is vastly preferable, for a channel does shape the stream that flows through it, but if pure does not affect the purity of the water, whereas a typewriter does not influence the words typed at all.

Now although in this mechanical age people want to know *how* a thing is done, yet the Bible has very little to say about the method of inspiration, so that it is a mistake for us to be occupied with it. What is constantly emphasized is that the written word—for this is just what “scripture” means—is divinely inspired, or “God-breathed”. In fact, the attentive reader of the New Testament soon finds that the word “scripture” is *invariably* used in the sense of an inspired writing, so that it is, in effect, a technical word for this. Fifty out of the fifty-one occurrences of this word in the Authorized Version of the New Testament represent the same one Greek word; and when in 2 Timothy iii.15 Paul uses a different word, he qualifies it with the adjective “holy”: “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures,” while the word ordinarily used needs no qualification. By itself it *always* implies a holy or inspired writing.

It is true to say that the Bible *constantly* emphasizes this, for although the formal statement is contained in 2 Timothy iii.16, yet the attitude towards the scriptures of every New Testament writer underlines it.

We must read 2 Timothy iii.16 in the light of this use of the word. It says, “All scripture (or better, every scripture) is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Now while this obviously takes in all the Old Testa-

ment, to which Paul has just referred Timothy, we find both Paul and Peter using the same word "scripture" about portions of the New Testament. To Timothy Paul writes "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For *the scripture saith*, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward" (I Timothy v.17,18). The last sentence is an exact quotation of Luke x.7. Similarly, Peter writes "Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also *the other scriptures*, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter iii.15,16).

Hence it is quite untrue to say that the New Testament writers were unaware of the inspired character of their writings. Indeed, when Paul writes of the church as built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph.ii.20), it is plain that New Testament prophets are meant. Why should it be imagined that their words should be of less value than those of Old Testament prophets? And Paul himself writes to the Corinthians, "If any man be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are *the commandments of the Lord*."

Now if it be established that the vital point is that the word as it stands written is inspired, we may return for a moment to consider the question of the "how". The language of the Bible is quite definite as to this. The apostle Peter says that the prophets were "moved" or borne along by the Holy Spirit, while Paul tells us that the apostles communicated the truths revealed to them "not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, communicating spiritual things by spiritual words" (I Cor. ii.13, W. Kelly).

The words of scripture, then, were *taught* to the writers by the Spirit, not dictated to them. That is to say, their own minds

were first filled by the Spirit with His revelation, and were then brought by the power of the same Spirit to shape words suitable to convey the message to others. So far from their mental powers being quiescent, they were brought to the highest pitch of activity. Thus the scripture bears the imprint of the personality of the writer, while the words written are divinely chosen words.

Inspiration is a much more wonderful thing than any "dictation" theory would imply. For without doubt the Spirit has *made use of* the differing personalities and experiences of the writers to impress on each portion of the divine word its own characteristics. Thus it is Matthew, the ex-government servant, who portrays the royal character of Christ the King; Mark, first the unprofitable servant, who later became profitable (2 Timothy iv.11), gives us the picture of the perfect Servant of Jehovah; Luke, who had such opportunities of observing men in their weakness and sin, sets before us the holy, dependent Man who is man's Saviour; and John the aged apostle, as the fruit of long contemplation describes the incarnate Son—the Word made flesh.

Again, to foretell the sufferings of Christ the Spirit has made extensive use of the sufferings of David—Israel's anointed yet persecuted king. Yet it is perfectly evident that the psalms are not *merely* the record of David's experiences. Never did he have his hands and feet pierced, never was he abandoned of God, nor yet of his friends.

Inspiration then transcends natural experience and knowledge, while making use of them. It is quite unnecessary to suppose that the historical parts of scripture were written without reference to available records, but inspiration guided the writer to select and emphasize facts according to the divine purpose in each book. Why is the Ascension omitted in Matthew? Surely not because of Matthew's ignorance of it! Why is so little told of our Lord's boyhood? How much more man left to himself would have loved to tell! Nor can we account on human considerations for the faithful exposure of the sins of eminent and revered men. No, it is God's word throughout.

While dealing with the question of the differing styles of the writers, reference may be made to the attempts of modernists to portion out, for instance, the book of Isaiah among two or more authors, one being Isaiah himself and the others completely unknown. No one would deny that the first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah have many differences from the remaining twenty-seven, but Isaiah had a long life, and his style could easily change to the required degree. The difference of subject, too, is sufficiently distinct to produce such a change of style. Is not John's style in Revelation different from that in the fourth gospel? But as in all these supposititious authorships, Jewish writers knew nothing of them—they are modern inventions, and moreover, proceed (as far as prophets are concerned) from a disbelief in real prophecy of the future. Thus they leave out God and assume a human explanation for everything.

This is perhaps the place to deal with a difficulty and remove a misunderstanding. Many believers suppose that verbal inspiration implies a word for word recording of spoken words, and hence find a difficulty when different accounts, *e.g.* in the gospels, record different words. While in some cases these may refer to different occasions, this cannot always be the case. This is but another instance of the truth that words are used in the Bible in their ordinary sense, so that if we ask, "What did he say?" we do not necessarily require a word for word repetition of the speaker's utterance, else no witness in court could avoid perjury. But in truth, the search for "harmony" between the records may obscure the very things which the Holy Spirit is showing us—emphasizing here one truth and there another in the same utterance.

Thus if we compare the accounts of the parable of the sower in Matthew and Mark, it is quite certain that they refer to the same occasion, but there are certain differences. Matthew says "kingdom of heaven" in verse 11, while Mark says "kingdom of God" and so on. Can we not see how there is a breadth in the Lord's words which is not exhausted by one aspect only of their meaning? In Matthew the dispensational aspect is prominent, so he gives "kingdom of heaven."

In Mark (and also in Luke, where the occasion could be different) the moral aspect is indicated by the words "kingdom of God."

Similarly in describing events we often get a condensed account in Matthew, and a more detailed record in Mark, as for instance in the Lord's visits to the temple in Matthew xxi. and Mark xi. The reason is surely that in Matthew the *Person* of the King is prominent; in Mark the *acts* of the Servant are given in more detail.

Yet scripture is most exact in its language, when exactness is called for, and one of the major faults of the "New English Bible" is a looseness of translation which ignores this exactness (see article in WORDS OF HELP, May, 1962).

Now it is evident that verbal inspiration applies to the words as originally written, and does not guarantee correct copying of manuscripts, or correct translation, still less correct interpretation. All *these* things belong to the sphere of man's responsibility, though we have great cause for thanksgiving that the copying at least has been done with such painstaking care. Yet inevitably mistakes have crept in, but it is astonishing how very little effect they have had. The great spiritual and moral truths of the Bible stand out with undimmed beauty and clearness. Even bad translations cannot obscure the great message of the Bible.

Perhaps it is also needful to point out that inspiration has nothing to do with the uprightness or otherwise of the men whose words and deeds are set forth in the scriptures. Yet it is often tacitly assumed by objectors that the Bible cannot be a divine book, or that parts of it cannot be inspired, because of the shameful deeds recorded there, or that it cannot be a truthful record, because it often records men's lies without comment. These things when plainly stated almost confute themselves. The Bible proves up to the hilt the utter ruin of man, so making his need of a Saviour the more evident.

The ultimate proof of the claim of any portion of the Bible to the title of "scripture" rests upon its own inherent spiritual power and authority, and the "canon", as it is called, has been

settled by the recognition of this. Some books were in doubt, or their title disputed, but only for a time. And one of the most convincing proofs of the inspiration of the Bible is got by reading the books which were rejected—the so-called Apocrypha, whether of Old Testament or New. Even the best of these are wordy compared with the conciseness of scripture; their wisdom is easily comprehensible, as befits what comes from man's mind; they are often obvious imitations of inspired books. Their most obvious characteristic as compared with scripture is the lack of authority—of a “thus saith the Lord.” It is safe to say that no-one who has felt the power of the scriptures in speaking to his own heart and conscience could fail to discern this lack in the apocryphal books.

Hence while one may seek to remove certain misconceptions about inspiration, the final answer to all difficulties must be for us to read the scriptures themselves, not in dependence upon our own wisdom or understanding, but looking to the Spirit of God to make clear His own message. We must read, not as we read other books; for this is God's word to us. We must ask, what message has this for me? We must always look for God's revelation of His own grace in Christ, the key to all the scriptures.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN



THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS

X. 1st Epistle, chapter v. verses 14-28

THESE REMAINING VERSES of the Epistle consist for the most part of brief practical exhortations, concerning which the need is not only to read them, but also to carry them out in daily life. We thankfully receive the deep comfort which this epistle furnishes when in the sorrow of bereavement, and should we not at the same time take to heart the instructions which are also given in it to enable us to please God and glorify the Lord in the present ?

Verse 14: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." In the Christian community there are those who are naturally active and energetic, and such may tend to chafe at rules and to find it irksome to keep orderly, and therefore may need to be warned or admonished. At times they have to be kept back. On the other hand, some are weaker in certain respects, not feebleminded in the sense of mental deficiency but rather the opposite of strongminded. These are easily discouraged; better described as faint-hearted; they need comforting and encouraging, to be helped forward.

Then again, while no doubt all have times of weakness, there are those habitually lacking in strength, perhaps of knowledge, faith, purpose or endurance. These are not to be despised or overlooked, but supported and sustained by those who are able to do so. Further, all need patience or longsuffering with one another. Impatience is often natural to youth, but we must aim to possess depth without sacrificing zeal and energy.

Verse 15: "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men." Christ Himself is of course the great Example. When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not (I Peter ii.23). It is for us not only to admire Him, but to have grace to do as He did and so follow the steps of Him Who is goodness itself. In actively following what is good there is much practical deliverance from evil.

Some regard these exhortations, particularly those of verse 14, as addressed to the leaders mentioned in verses 12 and 13, but it is not clear how this can be proved. The epistle was addressed to the whole company of believers at Thessalonica (chap. i. ver. 1), and was to be read to them all (chap.v. ver.27). No basic line is drawn between the leaders and the rest, nor is there any thought of separate classes such as clergy and laity.

Now follow seven beautiful exhortations. Verses 16-22: "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove

all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil."

Rejoice. Pray. Give thanks. But is there not much to sorrow over? Should we not be doing as well as praying? Always giving thanks can surely become mere repetition quite easily. The answer (relating no doubt to the three exhortations) is, "this is the will of God." What a relief to know that these three happy activities are positively God's desire for us, and this "in Christ Jesus," exemplified in His life as Man in this world, and applying to us in the full Christian position as believers. We notice too the words, Evermore, Without ceasing, In everything. How divine grace *abounds*!

Quench not the Spirit. When the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost, there was the appearance of tongues of fire, and immediately the disciples "were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak" (Acts ii.). Now the fire is not to be quenched. The Spirit is not to be hindered in His action of giving utterance for the Lord, whether as regards oneself or others. If the Spirit would have me speak, speak I must; and if He would have another to speak, I must not hinder the word reaching myself and others.

Despise not prophesyings. In the New Testament it seems clear that the gift of prophesying (whether in an apostle or another) was the means God used to instruct believers in Christian truths, before the New Testament was written and circulated. Not to value such instruction then would be equivalent to our not valuing the New Testament today. We are not to despise any word of it (whatever difficulty we may find in the understanding of some portions), nor slight whatever help God may provide for us to profit by it.

On the other hand, we are not to accept blindly everything which purports to enlighten us in Christian things—whatever the source—but (because there is the enemy Satan ever at work) we are to test by the Scriptures what comes before us, and to hold fast what is good (verse 21). We may be sure that no truth of God can be upset or contradicted by another.

"Abstain from all appearance of evil." This is best under-

stood as refraining or turning away from every kind and sort of evil. What is good is simple, but evil takes many and diverse forms, whether of doctrine or practice, and from them all we are to hold aloof. May the Lord help us in these days to keep clear of evil wherever and however it shows itself.

Verses 23, 24: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it."

"Very God" means God Himself. He is the God of peace, the unchanging One, ever in perfect rest and repose in Himself, His throne never disturbed by anything whatever. The more we know Him, the more His peace and rest will fill our hearts and exclude evil. It is indeed upon Him we depend to be kept from evil, and for Himself, which is practical sanctification.

Let us remind ourselves that every believer is perfectly set apart by God for Himself, through the finished redemptive work of Christ at Calvary. The believer's sins have been completely put away, and he has received by faith a new nature as born of God, a nature which is perfectly holy in its desires and actings, with Christ as its object. So he is already perfectly sanctified, and made meet now to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light (Colossians i.12). It is because he is so blessed that the believer desires present practical sanctification, and the two verses before us express the Spirit's desire and confidence that God will accomplish the work of sanctification for the complete man in every believer. This complete man is made up of the spirit, by which we can know God Who is Spirit (John iv.24), the soul as the real "I", the seat of personality, and the body, the material organism which is animated by soul and spirit, and by which we express ourselves and communicate with one another.

This then is the goal, blameless at (not unto) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when all will through grace be perfect in glory. With the faithful God to trust and obey, how encouraged we should ever be in our Christian life here, waiting for the Lord to come. Some claim to reach perfection here and

now, that is, *before* the Lord comes, but it is better to say with Paul, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after" (Philippians iii.12).

Verses 25-28: "Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

Christian fellowship is helped powerfully by prayer for one another when apart, and an expressed greeting when they meet together. It is said that the kiss was a common way of greeting in the early days between persons of the same sex. The handshake can be just as expressive and is usually more convenient. The important thing is the showing of a true spiritual affection.

The Epistle was to be read to all, so that all should hear and understand and profit by the word of God. Thank God for the Bible, and that we have it in our own tongue. May God help us to heed it for ourselves and seek to get others to do the same. Woe be to those who would keep the Word from the people !

Finally, there is the blessed reminder that we are under grace, and it is grace that we know, the grace of Him who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich (2 Corinthians viii.9). Praise Him !

*Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be !
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.*

W. H. L. GRAHAM



SPIRITUAL POWER

(Note on Numbers xi. 24, 25)

"AND MOSES WENT OUT, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. And the Lord

came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease."

The true secret of all ministry is spiritual power. It is not man's genius, or man's intellect, or man's energy; but simply the power of the Spirit of God. This was true in the days of Moses, and it is true now. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah iv.6). It is well for all ministers to bear this ever in mind. It will sustain the heart and give constant freshness to their ministry. A ministry which flows from abiding dependence upon the Holy Ghost can never become barren. If a man is drawing upon his own resources, he will soon run dry. It matters not what his powers may be, or how extensive his reading, or how vast his stores of information; if the Holy Ghost be not the spring and power of his ministry, it must, sooner or later, lose its freshness and its effectiveness.

How important therefore that all who minister, whether in the gospel or in the Church of God, should lean continually and exclusively on the power of the Holy Ghost! He knows what souls need, and He can supply it. But He must be trusted and used. It will not do to lean partly on self and partly on the Spirit of God. If there be aught of self-confidence, it will soon be made apparent. We must really get at the bottom of all that belongs to self, if we are to be the vessels of the Holy Ghost.

It is not—need we say it?—that there should not be holy diligence and earnestness in the study of God's word, and in the study too, of the exercises, the trials, the conflicts, and the varied difficulties of souls. Quite the reverse. We feel persuaded that the more absolutely we lean, in self-emptiness, upon the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, the more diligently and earnestly we shall study both *the Book* and *the soul*. It would be a fatal mistake for a man to use professed dependence upon the Spirit as a plea for neglecting prayerful study and meditation. "Meditate upon these things; give thyself *wholly* to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." (I Timothy iv.15).

But, after all, let it ever be remembered that the Holy Ghost is the ever living, never failing spring of ministry. It is He alone that can bring forth in divine freshness and fulness, the treasures of God's word, and apply them, in heavenly power, to the soul's present need. It is not a question of bringing forth new truth, but simply of unfolding the word itself, and bringing it to bear upon the moral and spiritual condition of the people of God. This is true ministry. A man may speak a hundred times on the same portion of scripture, to the same people, and, on each occasion, he may minister Christ, in spiritual freshness, to their souls. And, on the other hand, a man may rack his brain to find out new subjects, and new modes of handling old themes, and, all the while, there may not be one atom of Christ or of spiritual power in his ministry.

All this holds good in reference to the evangelist, as well as to the teacher or pastor. A man may be called to preach the gospel in the same place for years, and he may, at times, feel burdened by the thought of having to address the same audience, on the same theme, week after week, month after month, year after year. He may feel at a loss for something new, something fresh, some variety. He may wish to get away into some new sphere, where the subjects which are familiar to him will be new to the people. It will greatly help such to remember that the one grand theme of the evangelist is Christ. The power to handle that theme is the Holy Ghost; and the one to whom that theme is to be unfolded is the poor lost sinner. Now, Christ is ever new; the power of the Spirit is ever fresh; the soul's condition and destiny ever intensely interesting. Furthermore, it is well for the evangelist to bear in mind, on every fresh occasion of rising to preach, that those to whom he preaches are really ignorant of the gospel, and hence he should preach as though it were the very first time his audience had ever heard the message, and the first time he had ever delivered it. For, be it remembered, the preaching of the gospel, in the divine acceptance of the phrase, is not a barren statement of mere evangelical doctrine—a certain form of words enunciated over and over again in wearisome routine. Far from it. To preach the gospel is really to unfold the heart of God, the

person and work of Christ; and all this by the present energy of the Holy Ghost, from the exhaustless treasure of holy scripture.

May all preachers keep these things before the mind, and then it will not matter whether it be *one* preacher or *seventy*, one man in the same place for fifty years, or the same man in fifty different places in one year. The question is not at all as to new men or new places, but simply and entirely as to the power of the Holy Ghost unfolding Christ to the soul. Thus in the case of Moses, as recorded in our chapter, there was no increase of power. It was the spirit that was upon him given to the seventy elders. God can act by one man just as well as by seventy; and if He does not act, seventy are not more than one. It is of the very utmost importance to keep God ever before the soul. This is the true secret of power and freshness whether for the evangelist, the teacher, or any one else. When a man can say, "All my springs are in God," he need not be troubled as to a sphere of work, or competency to fill it. But when this is not so, we can well understand why a man should sigh for a division of labour and responsibility O that we may all learn to lean, with an undivided heart, and unshaken confidence, upon the living God !

(From *Notes on Numbers*, by C. H. Mackintosh)

FOR THE LORD'S SAKE

(Note on I Peter ii.13)

BELIEVERS are in this passage exhorted to be subject to every ordinance of man *for the Lord's sake*. They are to render obedience to the legal enactments of the government where they happen to be domiciled, whether the State be autocratic or democratic in its form of rule. This they do "for the Lord's sake," that is, knowing that all power is given unto Him, although that supreme power is exercised secretly at the present time, its outward display being in abeyance.

W. J. HOCKING

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LI

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CONTENTS

The Church of the Thessalonians	- - -	73
God's Thoughts of the Poor	- - -	77
The Hidden Treasure and the costly Pearl	-	79
Why did John write his first Epistle?	- -	84
My Beloved (verse)	- -	<i>Inside back cover</i>

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

RECENT REPORTS IN the secular press of things which so-called christian ministers have spoken or written irreverently, even blasphemously, concerning God and His holy word, serve only to remind us that we are in the last days when, to quote 2 Timothy iv. 3, 4, "they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

It surely behoves all who desire to remain loyal to the scriptures to stand together so far as is possible in defence of the divine revelation on which their faith is founded. Indeed, scripture itself exhorts believers to "*earnestly contend* for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Alongside the denigration of the Bible, particularly of the Old Testament, so fashionable in christendom today, we are persuaded there exists a real and widespread hunger for that "sure word from God" which alone can satisfy the cravings of the honest heart and reverent mind. Let us indeed be grateful to God for every faithful minister of the gospel who remains true to the revelation of Himself which God has given us in Christ Jesus our Lord, and which is communicated to us men through the medium of the scriptures and the enlightening grace of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose and privilege of this Magazine is to offer, in all humility, "Words of Help from the Scripture of Truth," and we rely upon our readers to support its ministry by their prayers, and to help practically in its distribution as widely as possible.

"THE GRASS WITHERETH, AND THE FLOWER THEREOF FALLETH AWAY: BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOR EVER. AND THIS IS THE WORD WHICH BY THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED UNTO YOU" (1 Peter i. 24, 25)

THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS

XI. Second Epistle. Chapter i.

THE REASON FOR the writing of this second epistle to the church of the Thessalonians seems clearly to have been that further news about those Christians had reached the apostle Paul. We can put the news under three main headings, corresponding to the three chapters of the Epistle. First, persecution of the believers at Thessalonica was continuing. Second, some persons of ill-will were endeavouring to deceive them into thinking that the commencement of the Day of the Lord (the time of God's judgment of the living) had actually arrived; they had even forged a letter from Paul purporting to confirm this. Third, some in the church there were still living disorderly and needed stronger correction.

Paul then was led by God to write this second letter. He associates Silvanus and Timotheus with himself in writing it, as in the first epistle, and no doubt it was written soon after the first, perhaps a matter of months only, and also from Corinth (not from Athens as indicated in the Authorised Version Bibles). We do not read of Silvanus as linked with Paul subsequent to the visit to Corinth (see Acts xviii.5, "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia," and 2 Corinthians i.19, "For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, Who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus"), so no doubt it was written before Paul left Corinth for Syria. This second epistle is about half the length of the first.

Verses 1 and 2: "Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This opening is practically the same word for word as that of the first epistle. We are reminded of the unchangeableness of God. "Great is Thy faithfulness." "His saints He loves and never leaves." God ever cares for the individual Christian and for the assemblies. and His heart does not change toward them. We can always rest in divine grace and peace, whatever our circumstances may be.

In these two verses we have the repetition of the full divine Names, revealed only under Christianity—God the Father (not Almighty God, nor Jehovah), and the Lord Jesus Christ—which occur nearly thirty times in the two epistles.

Verses 3 and 4: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure.”

Here we see Paul being led as always in his epistles to mention first the things which are to be commended in those addressed. (The Galatian epistle is an exception with its early abrupt word, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed . . . unto another gospel,” no doubt because there the very foundation was at stake).

The hope of the Thessalonians was getting dimmed, but the apostle first commends their faith and love, and their patience in persecution. And a remarkable commendation it is. Their faith is said to be not only growing, but growing *exceedingly*. Is ours? Then their charity, which means and ought to read, love, was not only maintained but *abounded*, and this of each one toward another. Is it so with us?

We note that Paul thanks God for these two things, faith and love, and acknowledges them to the Thessalonians themselves for due encouragement. What will he write on the subject of hope? These believers' hope was getting clouded, but so far they had not wavered in the Christian faith, so the apostle will commend them for this, letting them know that he boasted to other assemblies of the patience and faith they were maintaining in their trials. This must have been most encouraging to them at such a time. More encouragement follows.

Verse 5: “Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer.” God's approval rests on those who believe Him, and are willing to suffer now while waiting to share in the glory of His kingdom in the time to come. He counts

such to be worthy of glory. Christ's way was first suffering, and then glory, and believers who suffer persecution are to rejoice as being partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding joy (1 Peter iv.13). Christian persecution is for the kingdom of God.

Verses 6-10: "Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

For the people of God, glory is not now but in the day to come. For the unrepentant sinner, the future holds only tribulation, vengeance, punishment, everlasting destruction. This is solemn but true, and must be firmly held if we are to be faithful to the Scriptures. The judgment of the quick (living), will be at Christ's appearing when He will come with the angels and also His people; that of the dead at the last day, the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation xx. So verse 6 is in general terms, and all those who persecuted the Thessalonian believers in the time of Paul have of course died, and will suffer tribulation at the last day. The unbelievers living on earth when the Lord comes are "them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," which some take to indicate Gentiles and Jews respectively. Coming with the Lord will be His saints, those that have believed, whom He will have previously caught up to be for ever with Himself, as we learned in the first epistle, chapter iv., verses 16-17. Their rest and blessedness will only then be publicly shown out to all, when the Lord is revealed to all the earth.

The foregoing is no doubt obvious to us who live in peaceful conditions, but in times of great and continued stress many doubts and questions can arise. During the world wars of this

century people often asked why God did not stop the terrible conflict. At such times the mind is agitated and confused, and men easily become prey to Satan's influence. We may be sure the Thessalonians in their tribulations needed this certain truth of God, and it is for our peace at all times. Suffering is to be expected now, but when the Lord comes in judgment on His enemies, His own (those who in this life have believed in Him) who come with Him in glory, will attract glory and admiration (wonder) to Him Who gives such astonishing favour to them.

Meanwhile, these Christians had to go on suffering, but are to know that others went on praying for them. "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (verses 11, 12).

The prayer is not for speedy relief, but that God would see them through and secure to them all the blessings He intended. In the Authorised Version the word "His" is in italics, signifying that it is not in the Greek original. We can read, "fulfil every desire of goodness and work of faith with power," in which case we must understand it as a prayer that God would answer every spiritual desire in the Christians for what is good, and confirm every way in which their faith showed itself in action, with divine power. The Greek word for "goodness" here is not applied to God in the New Testament, its only occurrences being Romans xv.14, Galatians v.22, and Ephesians v.9. However, all such desires of goodness in us come from God, as we know.

Verse 12 gives the end in view—glory to be brought to the Lord's name now in the present lives of His own, and glory in Christ to the believers in the day to come.

This chapter ministered strength to the Thessalonian believers in their sufferings, and by making clear the complete change in their circumstances to be shown publicly when the Lord appears in judgment, paved the way for dealing directly with the deceptive error which was troubling them, as we shall see in chapter ii., **D.V.**

GOD'S THOUGHTS OF THE POOR

WE ARE MADE to prove as we go on in the Christian pathway the truth of God's word given us in Isaiah lv.8, 9, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

How this is exemplified in His ways and His word concerning the poor, is a vast subject. Sometimes the reference is to those who are poor in the strict literal sense of being poor in this world's goods; at other times to the poor in spirit. In our Lord's outline of the principles of the kingdom of heaven, He begins, as is well known, with "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v.3). Similarly in Isaiah lxvi.2 we read, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word."

Of the poor in a material sense our Lord said, "Ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good" (Mark xiv.7), this being in keeping with Deuteronomy xv.11, "The poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee saying, Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."

How wonderful that we are told, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. viii.9)! None can tell the extent of His riches or His poverty. They are both the constant theme of scripture, as unfolded to the two sorrowing ones on the Emmaus road in the words, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke xxiv.26, 27).

Throughout the Old Testament there is frequent reference to the poor, Leviticus xix.9, 10, being an instance, "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the Lord your God." What a

pleasing example we find of this in the case of Boaz and Ruth in Ruth ii.! Boaz could speak of "the Lord God of Israel, under Whose wings thou art come to trust" (verse 12).

Among the many provisions for the poor under the law we have one in Leviticus xii. in the case of an offering in connection with childbirth, and in Luke ii. the poverty of our Lord's parents is seen in that they availed themselves of this, as we read in the 24th verse, "And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Surely we have in Psalm cix. the expressions of the Spirit of Christ in His sufferings as He takes the place of "the poor and needy man" in verse 16, and similar words in verses 22 and 31. This is followed by Psalm cx., depicting "the glory that should follow."

We need not be surprised that in the millennial psalms, foretelling the days of the coming kingdom, the poor have their place. Psalm lxxii. provides an illustration of this "A Psalm for Solomon"—"Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge Thy people with righteousness, and Thy poor with judgment" (verses 1 and 2). "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor" (verse 4): see also verses 12 and 13 in like strain.

Surely we have a foreshadowing of this when king Solomon came to the throne—see 1 Kings iii. God had promised him a wise and understanding heart, and immediately afterwards we are told, "Then came there two women that were harlots unto the king (is not one of these described in Psalm lxxii.12?) and presented their case. How patiently and wisely Solomon dealt with it, so that it could be written, "And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment" (verse 28). Remembering that this is the word of our God, well might we exclaim with the Psalmist, "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill" (Psalm cxiii.5-7).

No wonder that our blessed Lord could send the message to John the Baptist, "The poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matthew xi.5), for had He not stood up in the synagogue of Nazareth and read from the scripture, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor" (Luke iv.18).

Paul could speak of his experience, "as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (how blessed!) 2 Cor. vi.10. Among the many things he suffered for Christ's sake was, "in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Cor. xi.27). How few have followed in his steps!

What a place the poor have now in the thoughts of God, and in the coming kingdom! Let us listen to James as he writes, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him" (James ii.5)? And this is in keeping with our Lord's words to His disciples, "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke vi.20).

God has thus given us "His thoughts" and "His ways" in respect of the poor. May we have grace to profit thereby!

THOS. WILSON



THE HIDDEN TREASURE AND THE COSTLY PEARL (Concluded)

IN CONSIDERING THESE two parables, one can scarcely fail to be struck by their general resemblance. In both, the finder esteems his prize so highly that he is thereby constrained to part with all for the purpose of acquiring the same.

This points to the conclusion that the main subjects of the parables are intimately connected, if not identical. So that as the treasure has already been shown to indicate that nucleus of truth and faithfulness existing in the midst of a heterogeneous mass of profession, so does the pearl of great price figure that same nucleus, though of course in a different aspect. For the two parables before us give a double view of the "good" in the

kingdom of heaven, just as the third and fourth of the series give the two characters of "evil", viz: the mustard tree, showing the outward conformation to the world and its ways, and the leaven, marking the corruption that permeates to the very core.

The difference between the parables of the treasure and the pearl seems to be that the first views the saints of God in their individual capacity as precious in the sight of the Lord, while the second discloses the remarkable unity which is a distinct characteristic of the children of God during the present interval. The term "treasure" might include gold, silver or any articles of value, and thus be of a very composite nature; but the beauty and value of the pearl depends entirely upon its homogeneity. So we find that in the latter parable the merchant is especially declared to have found "*one pearl of great price.*"

It is of no small importance that the distinction thus laid down by these two parables at the very inception, so to speak, of the present order of divine things should be borne in mind. Dilating upon the privileges and responsibilities of the church to the obliteration of those of the individual is as far from the truth as exalting the individual at the expense of the church. To ignore, or even weaken either, must result in confusion of mind and failure of testimony.

And it was undoubtedly seen needful to unfold this dual relationship of the saints of God, at this juncture, lest it might be supposed that, in their remarkable unification, their recognition as individuals was thereby destroyed. We have therefore the parable of the treasure preceding that of the pearl. The interest of Christ in His own is shown to be towards them personally before it is collectively. They are said to be His, first severally, and then jointly.

We have this order in the presentation of these truths in the Epistle to the Ephesians even as here. The apostle there writes to the saints and faithful, and unfolds God's eternal purpose concerning them. He first enumerates the blessings they possess as individuals rather than as a corporate body. They were blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Chapter i.3). They were elected in Him before the foundation of the world (verse 4). They were predestinated to the adoption of sons (verse 5). They had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins

(verse 7). In Him they had obtained an inheritance (verse 11). In Him also, after they had believed, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (verse 13). These all are the sure portion of every soul saved in this day of grace, both at Ephesus and everywhere else, Gentile or Jew. The blessings are common, as is the mighty power of God which quickens and raises them though previously dead in trespasses and sins.

But more than this. It is then particularly dwelt upon that Jew and Gentile, so long and so widely separated, are now seen to be alike children of wrath, once alike dead in sins; yea, also quickened together, raised together, and even seated together in Christ Jesus (Ephesians ii.). To faith it is now displayed in the very heavenlies that the ancient distinction between Jew and Gentile is abolished. Indeed it could not be expected that any mere earthly privilege should hold good in the heavenlies, much less when all are viewed in Christ Jesus. Nothing could be a stronger affirmation of the establishment of an entirely new order of things than is here given. Far-off ones are made nigh in Christ Jesus. Both are made one by Him. He has made in Himself of twain one new man ("new" in point of character, not of time only). Both are reconciled to God in one body by the cross. He preached peace to the distant and to the nigh. Through Him both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Thus the Gentiles who were strangers and foreigners share, not only the personal blessings ("fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God"), but also the corporate ("are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"), Ephesians ii.

Clearly this was a revelation not heard of nor even hinted at before. Neither Old Testament history nor prophecy spoke of Jew and Gentile on one common platform. The mystery of Christ "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel" (Eph. iii. 5, 6). Here again it is declared that the Gentiles, beside being "fellow-heirs" which might not exclude class distinctions,

were of the "same body." So that the "unity of the Spirit" (Eph. iv.4) is of an altogether unique character, and neither known nor prophesied of before.

In the millennium, Israel most certainly will not be merged in the other nations, nor on the other hand will the Gentiles be advanced to the same level as the Jew. In that day God's ancient people shall be the "head" and not the "tail". The seed of Israel "shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited" (Isa. liv.3). The supremacy of the people shall be owned; for "many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before Jehovah. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, in those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii.22, 23). Again, "Many nations shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many peoples and rebuke strong nations afar off" (Micah iv. 2, 3). These scriptures are surely sufficiently explicit to decide that the pearl would be no suitable figure for the kingdom set up in power, when the Gentiles will be subordinate to the Jews, in no way brought into such an intimate unity with them as is described in the Epistle to the Ephesians as existing at the present moment.

In the Epistles the figure to which this unity is referred is that of the human body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii.12, 13). Compare also Romans xii.5; Eph. iv.12; Col. i.18. This figure is beautifully adapted to illustrate the unity resulting from the co-ordination of the various component parts. The members however diverse in themselves are harmonized by the Spirit of God and brought into a state of mutually interdependent relationship, so that each member is essential to the perfect unity of the body and also to the due

performance of its functions. And herein lies the difference between the two figures—the “pearl” sets forth unity joined with beauty and value, while the “body” indicates unity along with activity and mutual co-operation. In the parable the church is viewed as in the Divine mind and purpose, but in the Epistles as in actual life and practice upon the earth; hence the variation in the emblem.

The beauty and consequent value of the pearl in question transcended that of all other pearls. Here we are brought in presence of the inconceivable fact that the Lord Jesus saw that in the assembly which called out the ineffable delight of His heart. It is not ours to question here whether that quality be inherent or derived, though we may well be certain we shall never discover in ourselves any adequate cause. It befits us rather to ponder, wonderingly and adoringly, the words of Holy Scripture, “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present to Himself the church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. v.25-27). He then is the Lover of the assembly in its entirety; He gives nothing short of Himself for it. His object is to present to Himself the church perfected and unblemished in glory. And He lays claim to it because of His sacrifice. When He came to Israel, He came to “His own.” But “He gave Himself for us” (Titus ii.14). So that the Lord takes the church on the ground of His work on the cross, and not on that of promise or prophecy. In the expressive words of this parable, He “went and sold all that He had and bought it.”

We have seen therefore that, in this comprehensive survey of the kingdom of heaven in its corrupted form, two parables are given to assure the hearts of the Lord’s people, that however extended may be the influence of evil principles and persons upon that which professes His name, they themselves are too much upon His heart to allow His purpose regarding them to be thwarted. The Lord knows, loves, and rejoices over them that are His.

W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from *The Bible Treasury*—1894)

WHY DID JOHN WRITE HIS FIRST EPISTLE?

- (1) *“These things write we to you that your joy may be full”*
(i.4, N.T.)

The apostle brought out these particular truths that they might not only possess the spiritual “joy” which is the proper portion of every believer, but that their joy might be “full”—of the finest quality and in the fullest measure.

- (2) *“My children, these things I write to you in order that ye may not sin”*
(ii.1, N.T.)

John shows the utter incompatibility of sin with God Who is light, and he wrote this Epistle that each child of God might be restrained from sinning.

- (3) *“I write to you, children, because (your) sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake”*
(ii.12, N.T.)

In connexion with their responsibility not to sin, the whole family of God is reminded that the sins for which they were liable judicially were forgiven for His name’s sake.

Special messages are also sent to each of the three great divisions of the children of God, viz., to the fathers, to the young men, and to the babes.

- (4) *“These things have I written to you concerning those who lead you astray”*
(ii.26, N.T.)

Without specifying details of evil doctrine, they are warned against false teachers who would lead them astray into a denial of the Father and the Son, and of Jesus the Christ.

- (5) *“These things have I written to you that ye may know that ye have eternal life who believe on the name of the Son of God”*
(v.13, N.T.)

These writings are to establish those who believe on the name of the Son of God in the inward conscious knowledge that they possess eternal life. The marks indicating the presence of that life are stated (both directly and contrastedly) with great detail and emphasis in the Epistle.

(From *The Bible Monthly*, March 1930)

MY BELOVED

*“Love that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs”*

He said: “Upon this rock My Church I’ll build;
The gates of hell, with opposition filled
Against it shall not finally prevail!”

’Twas said to one who honestly could hail
The Speaker as both Christ and Son of God,
The righteous wielder of true judgment’s rod.

The Church, which is its Heavenly Father’s choice,
Has in obedience bowed to God’s own voice
From heaven sounding to earth’s fallen race,
Made righteous by beholding in His face
His deep desire to find an object meet
For His approval, bowing at His feet.

God’s only Son became a man to woo
A bride that He could with Himself indue
A nature that could rise to heaven’s height,
And be a glorious object in God’s sight.
Eye hath not seen nor human mind conceived
The glories that by such will be received.

God’s Son said: “As the Father has loved Me,
So you have I loved in the same degree;
Continue in My love, and let me share
All that I have with you as rightful heir.
All that belongs to God is truly Mine.
You will in heavenly beauty with Me shine!

G. S. PURNELL

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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CONTENTS

Present Joy of a future Day	85
Evidences of New Life	93
The Translation of Enoch	96
Your Gift from the Lord	Inside back Cover

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

Our first article this month is rather longer than usual, so much so that we were tempted to defer the latter half of it until our next issue. We felt however that if this were done the continuity of the theme might be lost, and that readers generally would prefer to have the whole in one piece, bearing in mind that the sub-headings indicate where reading can be broken off if necessary. We believe the article merits careful study, and commend it to our readers.

To obtain the maximum benefit from ministry of this kind, the scriptures referred to should certainly be read. These will not only supply the full context of those verses which the writer has selected for emphasis, but will enable the reader to pursue further the points brought out in the article. What inexhaustible treasure there is in holy writ for the diligent searcher to find as he looks to the Holy Spirit for enlightenment!



EXTRACTS

The Character of Scripture.—There is this character about scripture, that, being divine, it never can be mastered by intellect alone, but always appeals to the affections and conscience as well as mind. It needs the power of the Holy Ghost to connect it with Christ in order even then to feel, judge, and act aright.

Understanding the Bible.—We cannot understand the Bible by forcing the lock; what we want is the key. But if you have Christ, you have already the key. In faith apply Christ to the Bible, and you can understand it. It is not a question of a superior mind or of great learning; for the most learned have been the most foolish in their mistakes. The simple man who understands but his mother-tongue understands the Bible, if he with true simplicity submits himself to the Lord and his confidence in His love

W.K.

PRESENT JOY OF A FUTURE DAY

(or, The Spirit of Christ in Abraham)

John viii.56: "*Your father Abraham exulted in that he should see MY DAY, and he saw and rejoiced*" (New Tr.)

Four thousand years ago, at the seaward end of the fertile valley watered by the great rivers Tigris and Euphrates, dwelt a small colony of the children of Shem, the eldest son of Noah. They fed their flocks there. Where the mighty rivers flowed into the Persian Gulf stood Ur of the Chaldees — "City of Light." The silt of centuries has separated its ruins from the sea, but the mound of the temple dedicated to the Moon may still be seen. Ur was the walled citadel of a Hamite colony which had migrated during the four hundred years since the Flood, and the children of Ham were idolaters, following the oldest form of the Sabian religion which had begun with the worship of Jehovah, and had sunk to the worship of material manifestations of His creatorial power — the sun, the moon, and other celestial bodies.

From the Material to the Spiritual

Among the children of Shem was one who had heard the Voice from the unseen world. "Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, Get thee out of thy country . . . unto a land that I will show thee . . . and thou shalt be a blessing . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." So was Abraham exercised towards departure from the material to the spiritual, and took the faith-path toward a land all unknown to him. Many centuries later another man "full of faith" told of that past day and the outcome of it. Small wonder that the Council "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel," as he told them, "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts vii.). His hearers stoned him to death, but they could not extinguish the Light of that glory. It shone again on the road to Damascus, and the eyes of the young man Saul were blind for three days because of it. But the God of Glory had once more made Himself known to a man, "A chosen vessel unto Me" (Acts ix.15).

"So Abraham departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him,"

and the light of the God of Glory illumined his pathway as he turned his back upon Ur, the idolatrous "City of Light."

Peter, early in his first epistle, tells of the Spirit of Christ being in the prophets, "testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." He would remember the occasion, though perhaps thirty years past, when those who boasted descent from Abraham heard a divine testimony to this man of faith — "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My Day: and he saw it, and was glad." Abraham's exulting joy had a divine and inexhaustible source — a joy sustained by the Spirit of Christ which was in him. It enveloped him with strength unknown to those in walled cities, and clothed him with a character akin to the beautiful personality of Christ. It was a joy — not in his own things, but in the things of Christ. He exulted, not in his increasing herds, but in One whose day would dawn in the sorrow of a cross — and in its victory, but of Whose kingdom there would be no end.

The directional energy of the Spirit of Christ in Abraham is a treasured consideration. It supplies the impetus for spiritual movement; the first steps upon the pathway of faith are under its guidance, so that the testing times become gateways to fuller vision — vistas of the purposes of God in Christ.

Submission

The intrusion of a spirit of strife among the herdmen brings about a test in which we, in our day, as Matthew in his time, may rejoice in the unchanging Spirit of Christ. Matthew tells of the Lord of the Sabbath withdrawing from those who would destroy Him, but healing as He went (Matthew xii.14-21). "Great multitudes followed" the retreating One — "and He healed them *all*." And the writer sees the fulfilment of Isaiah's word of more than seven hundred years earlier, "Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen; MY Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased . . . He shall not strive, nor cry." But long before Isaiah's day the same gracious Spirit spoke in Abram, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee between thee and me . . . for we are brethren" (Genesis xiii.8). So, in the pathway of grace and submission he will not strive, even for that to which he has undoubted title,

and he will retreat to the extent of saying to Lot, "Is not the whole land before thee?" as though Lot had title equal with his own.

Actuated by the Spirit of Christ there can only be, for Abram, that sense of communion in security which does not depend on striving and discord, but rests in quiet submission. Both men lift up their eyes — but one does it with the avidity of self interest, while the other will wait for the divine invitation. "And Jehovah said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now THINE eyes, and look" (verse 14). So the vision of faith searches far into the unseeable north, and turns southward to limitless promise, eastward to the sunrising of that glorious Day — the herald of His appearing — and westward to the end of time, while the Divine Voice assures him, "All is thine — FOR EVER" (verse 15).

There is such a Royal overflowing in this assurance. The inexhaustible future is made sure by that impregnable promise, but there is still more! "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it" (verse 17). It is PRESENT ENJOYMENT — it is the NOW of our life in Christ. "For ALL THINGS are YOURS" (I Corinthians iii.21).

Shall we not, like Abram, enter into the excellence of this experimentally, and dwell in the spiritual energy of it? For this is the significance of his moving onward into the plain of Mamre (Vigour). "Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto Jehovah" (verse 18). Worship is the spontaneous outcome of "walking through the land." The extent of it — in its length and in its breadth — is beyond finite assessment, till amazement finds outflow in that worship which is most beautiful in Hebron — for Hebron speaks of COMPANY, and a harmony of worshippers delights the heart of God.

Conflict

In Genesis xiv. the Spirit of Christ in Abraham gathers strength for the deliverance of a brother. "They took Lot . . .

who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed” (Genesis xiv.12). Chedorlaomer was the Napoleon of his age. His punitive progress consumed kings in Ashteroth Karnaim and Mount Seir, and in the cities of the plain. Lot, whose name may be translated “Indistinguishable,” was just carried off as one who had no resource. It was Jehovah’s warning, for “the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly” (Genesis xiii.13). The abject failure of man in the flesh is depicted in the solitary fugitive who comes to Abram. He is not described as a soldier, or a citizen of Sodom. He is just “one that had escaped” — “There came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew” (Gen.xiv.13). This is the first mention of Abram as a “Sojourner.” The title carries the thought of hidden strength in one who is apart and untrammelled by the power politics of the world of men. He can be sought when all is lost, but his reserves of power are not for *display*. He has to *arm* his servants, BUT they were “trained” and “born in his own house.” These men on whom he now relied — and whom he was responsible to lead — had been influenced by his private life and trained in accord with his inner character. True power for deliverance in this holy conflict emanates from within the house. That is its birth-place. It is not an importation specially for the place of meeting. The might of the world impact is not overcome by pious phrases. It is a great privilege to deliver a brother, and it is a work reserved to the “spiritual” — he alone can “restore such an one” (Galatians vi.i). The swords of mercenaries may be available, but deliverance from the “power of the enemy” (Luke x.19) is wrought from within the secret place where the door is closed against fleshly energy, and the link with the Spirit of Christ is maintained in humble dependence.

The patronage of the world — more dangerous than open conflict — menaces Abram on his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer. “The king of Sodom went out to meet him” (Genesis xiv.17). It is, however, very beautiful to see that the approach of Melchizedek converges upon that of the king of Sodom, and that the former reaches Abram first — in the valley of “lowliness” (Shaveh). The Spirit of Christ is among His own, there, where the Most High God is honoured as “Possessor of heaven and earth,” and blessing is sought, and

worship given from hearts full of gratitude. There is sweet refreshment in the thought of conflict ended and evil overthrown. The bread and the wine speak of this and, in its fullest sense, of the future Day to which Abram looked in faith and rejoiced.

The Spirit of Christ, ungrieved, is adequate alike for conflict as for the insidious patronage of the world. The goods of Sodom cannot compare with the riches of what God is to Abram. Divinely directed, already he has judged the matter — “I have lift up my hand unto Jehovah, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take . . . any thing that is thine” (verses 22,23). His conflict was not for personal gain — all his energy had been for the deliverance of a brother. Paul writes to Colosse, “What great conflict I have for you . . . lest any man spoil you,” and the word he uses for “spoil” is “to lead off as plunder.” The Spirit of Christ still seeks the recovery of those who have been “led off as plunder” by the enemy of our witness for the things of God. To be engaged in this conflict is a great privilege — it is so near to the shepherd heart of Christ.

Intercession

In Genesis xviii, the Spirit of Christ is seen as intercessor. Abram “sat in the tent door in the heat of the day.” It was the noon hour of heat—the time for resting within. Yet we see a man at his tent door—one who waits and watches and cannot rest. Twenty years have passed since Lot was delivered from captivity, and the judgment of Sodom could not now be long delayed. The Spirit of the Intercessor stirred within Abram—he was anxious for Lot.

“And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him” (verse 2). The sudden appearance of the three men must have been in keeping with his fear for Lot. From the moment of their appearance he seeks to detain them. He is not unaware of their dignity. He is conscious of the presence of Deity. The Spirit of Christ ever gives awareness of this. It is the spiritual man who will know how he ought to behave himself in the house of God (I Timothy iii.15). But his anxiety is to delay what he fears is a coming judgment upon the city where Lot dwelt. “Pass not away, I pray thee, from thy ser-

vant: . . . rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on" (verses 3-5). So with elaborate care the repast is prepared. Three measures of fine meal are kneaded, and the calf is killed and dressed. There is butter and milk: "and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat" (verse 8). It is wonderful to see the sympathy that reaches out to Abraham in his scarcely hidden distress. He seems aware of the movement of death, and would fain stay its footsteps. So the Divine Person promises life as though to give antidote to death itself: "I will certainly return unto thee . . . and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son." Out of dead potentiality, life would come at the personal interposition of Jehovah.

It is after this strengthening reassurance that Abraham sees the men rise up and look toward Sodom (verse 10). He goes with them—his characteristic courtesy would "bring them on the way." Yet the interceding Spirit of Christ is, in reality, dominant in him, and it receives the occasion it seeks when, in grace, the subject is opened: "And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now . . . and the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord" (verses 20-22).

Judgment is clearly inevitable, yet he will plead with the Judge. It is little more than four centuries since the flood of judgment engulfed their ancestors, yet the cry of their wickedness is heard from afar—"Their sin is very grievous." The Spirit of Christ is beautiful in this character as the One who will "draw near" to stand "yet before Jehovah"—in the very way of judgment—in the path of anger—to intercede for men. From a hypothetical fifty, by careful stages of reduction, he pleads until that which is the symbol of human responsibility is reached in the "ten" of his final "peradventure" (verse 32).

"And Jehovah went His way:" and we may see Abraham "returning to his place" (verse 33), as though reluctant to end his intercession while still the sight of "all the land of the plain" is before him. But the dread of Lot's danger follows him, and early morning finds him again "at the place where

he stood before the Lord," and he looks "toward Sodom . . . and toward all the land of the plain" where "the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace" (Genesis xix. 27, 28).

"And it came to pass . . . that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt" (verse 29). Between us and destruction there stood a righteous Man—the only One—"Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews xii.2).

Vision and Provision

It is the Spirit of Christ that moves ever onward in Abraham, bringing him to his greatest triumph by way of his greatest trial. There is no stagnation in the things of God. They move forward to a deeper awareness of His great purposes in Christ until the believer experiences a sense of being within the sanctuary of His wisdom, far removed from the turbulent thoughts of men. Thus the divine impetus brought "the friend of God" (2 Chron. xx.7) to the Mount of Vision, upon the height of which he learned of the Divine Provision. "And he called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh . . . in the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Genesis xxii.14). The spiritual vista from this eminence is wide and wonderful—but it is very personal. The merely curious do not see it. The religionist and the legal-minded may climb to investigate—but they will never know the secret of that mountain height, nor the true meaning of its name. Abraham named it, for it was a divine revelation to him alone. It was there that he saw, as never before, the sacrificial plan in the Divine Mind. He exulted there, and it could indeed be said of him by the holy Antitype of Isaac his son, "Abraham rejoiced to see MY Day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John viii.56). He saw it by faith—it was not by wisdom—the ram caught in the thicket was BEHIND him, the living symbol of One, the strength of whose purposeful love would hold Him in the thicket of the world until the hour of sacrifice—the only effective Sacrifice "in the stead of" the sons of men. So the Spirit of Christ "testified beforehand the suf-

ferings of Christ, and the glory that would follow" (I Peter i.11).

Resurrection

There was rich aftermath to the testing on the Mount of the Lord. There was assurance of resurrection—there was also a healing of the mind—a refreshment of soul. For to Abraham the sight of the overthrow of the cities of the plain was an awesome spectacle—an holocaust of humanity etched upon his memory. It was death reigning as the aftermath of sin, and, in Jehovah-Jireh, the answer of triumph had been given him. "So Abraham returned unto his young men" (verse 19) with the blessing of Jehovah—far-reaching to "all the nations of the earth," speaking above all the discords of the world.

Under guidance of the Spirit of Christ the progressive experiences of the believer prepare him for and fortify him against the adverse events of this life. It is at these times he is able to draw upon resources, divine in their origin, but made good to him in answer to faith. Twenty-five years have passed since Abraham returned from the mount he had called Jehovah-Jireh. The *answer* to the death condition was known there, but the *experience* of death follows when Sarah dies. Abraham had loved her for more than seventy years with that deep protective love that would hold her against the powerful despots of his day. Traces of her great beauty have been seen in thousands of her descendant daughters in all lands, for was she not mother ancestress of them all?

"And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her" (Genesis xxiii.2). Her name—"Princess"—placed her above others. Typically, her death shows the passing of Israel until the coming day of repentance and regathering—that restoration to which faith looked with joy. Abraham weeps—there is no record of his having wept before the death of Sarah. Centuries afterwards came One who wept as He beheld Jerusalem—her house desolate—and His tears were bitter indeed, for He was Shepherd of Israel.

"And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth saying, I am a stranger and sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead" (Genesis xxiii.3, 4). He is still a

sojourner—as one who journeys on—and now his only possession is to be a grave. He “seeks a country” (Hebrews xi.14), typically, beyond the reach of death, and this is evident in his choice of place where to lay the body of his loved one. It is not just *any* burying place that he seeks. “Bowing himself” to “the people of the land,” he says, “Intreat for me to Ephron the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah . . . for as much money as it is worth.” The Spirit of Christ is with him in his righteous approach to Ephron, and in the equity of his dealing. To Ephron it was the sale of a field, with trees and a cave, a place suitable for a burying place at a price of four hundred shekels of silver. To Abraham it was the place of victory over death, for Machpelah means “Spiral”—an ascending—RESURRECTION! And Abraham had a SURE TITLE TO IT.

EDWARD T. WOOD



EVIDENCES OF NEW LIFE

The gospels record three occasions on which the Lord Jesus restored life to those who had died, and it is interesting and instructive to notice how the circumstances varied in the three cases.

First we may note that the interval between death and restoration of life was longer in the case of the young man of Nain than with Jairus's daughter, and longer still in the case of Lazarus. The spirit of the twelve-year old girl had departed from her while Jesus was on His way to the ruler's house, and although the hired mourners had begun their wailings when He arrived, the lifeless body of the damsel had not yet been removed from the couch on which she died. The young man of Nain was already on his way to burial when Jesus stopped the funeral cortège and ordered death to release its victim. In the case of Lazarus, the burial had taken place, for when the Lord commanded that the stone should be taken away from the tomb, Martha protested, “Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.”

In the presence of divine power, however, the interval, whatever it was, mattered not at all. The Lord's triumph over death was complete. On each occasion man's great enemy was utterly vanquished by His word of authority.

Bearing in mind that the restoration of physical life bespoke His power to impart spiritual life to those "dead in trespasses and sins," let us examine the results which followed the Lord's healing in each case.

The daughter of Jairus

Following the response of the damsel to the Lord's life-giving words "Talitha cumi," He "commanded that something should be given her to eat" (Mark v.43). The life that had been restored must be sustained, not by the continuing exercise of miraculous power, but by the ministration of those whose duty it was to see that the maiden was adequately nourished. The new life within her demanded food and refreshment.

Is there no parallel here in the case of the new-born soul? Was our Lord only concerned to see that the material needs of Jairus's daughter were met, or was He indicating by His action the duty that devolves upon all who have the care of those newly converted? Appetite for spiritual food there must certainly be when a soul is born again, and the Lord commands that such shall be fed and nourished in their most holy faith.

Note carefully that the command was not to the damsel to be diligent in seeking food wherever she might find it. The obligation was laid upon those whose child she was to see that her needs were supplied. It is true that, many years later, one who had been present in Jairus's house exhorts believers, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Peter ii.2). But later in the epistle he echoes the command of the Master to himself when he writes, "The elders which are among you, I exhort . . . Feed the flock of God" (Ch. v. 1, 2).

It need scarcely be added that believers derive spiritual nourishment from meditating in the book of God, who has given them the Holy Spirit to be their Teacher. Nevertheless ministry, both oral and written, is the means appointed by the Head of the church for the edification and building up of those who are His.

The young man of Nain

When our Lord touched the bier on which the young man

was borne, bidding him "Arise," we read that the young man sat up, and began *to speak* (Luke vii.15). One would dearly love to know what were the words that came from this young man, whose first moment of re-consciousness found him seated upright on a bier, surrounded by a crowd of bewildered mourners! What exactly *did* he say? Our natural curiosity is not to be satisfied, for emphasis is laid, not upon what he said, but on the fact that he spoke, demonstrating by this means the completeness of his restoration to life. May we not be quite sure of one thing at least—that his voice was heard amongst those who we are told "glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people." How could it possibly be otherwise!

The offering of praise and thanksgiving to God is one sure proof that a person has been "born again." The Samaritan leper of Luke xvii.16, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, falling down on his face at Jesus's feet, giving Him thanks. The woman of Samaria (John iv.29) opened her lips in testimony when she bade the men of her city "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" And the converted Saul of Tarsus as he lay prostrate on the road to Damascus, voiced the desire of every new-born soul when he cried, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Lazarus

In the record of the raising of Lazarus (John xi.), so rich in detail, we draw attention to one circumstance only. When the dead man came out from the tomb he was "bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin." Jesus said to the bystanders, "Loose him, and let him go."

Here again, as in the case of Jairus's daughter, the Lord did not continue to exercise His miraculous power once that which was beyond the competence of men to perform had been accomplished. Raise the dead those present certainly could not: but they *could* loose Lazarus from that which still impeded his movements. This the Lord bade them do.

Clearly Lazarus himself must have sought release from the wrappings which were the mark of his captivity to death. The

movement of his limbs as he struggled for liberty were the incontrovertible evidence that he was restored to life, and others are told to give a helping hand.

Do we not see a counterpart of this as we read in Romans vii. of the wrestle with the sin within him which tormented the mind and heart of Paul until he found deliverance? "For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." Is this not the experience of one who is struggling to be free of graveclothes? Maybe the apostle himself had no human help in the solution of his problem. But that is not to say we cannot help one another today, particularly with Paul's own word to show us the way. Paul surely found the answer, for he exclaims in triumph, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

How we long for the day when we shall all enjoy complete release from the things that hinder us here! Thank God we may say in confidence, as Paul wrote to the Philippians, "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Chapter iii. 20, 21).

E. A. Pettman



THE TRANSLATION OF ENOCH

(Note on Hebrews xi. 5)

How was Enoch translated by faith? Was it not an actual translation?

It was an actual translation, for Enoch did not "see death." The phrase "by faith" as it applied to Enoch is more fully to be understood from verse 6. Enoch pleased God because faith was the governing principle of his life. He believed that "He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." The reward of his faith was the exemption from death that was granted to him. His translation was therefore "by faith."

W. J. Hocking

(From "The Bible Monthly", July, 1924)

YOUR GIFT FROM THE LORD

(Note on Numbers iii. 14-37)

We, as Christians, are very apt to jostle one another; indeed we are sure to do so if we do not each one pursue his own divinely-appointed line of work. We say "*divinely* appointed," and would press the word. We have no right to choose our own work. If the Lord has made one man an evangelist, another a teacher, another a pastor, and another an exhorter, how is the work to go on? Surely it is not by the evangelist trying to teach, and the teacher to exhort, or one who is not fitted for either trying to do both. No; it is by each one exercising his own divinely-imparted gift. No doubt it may please the Lord to endow one individual with a variety of gifts; but this does not, in the smallest degree, touch the principle on which we are dwelling, which is simply this, every one of us is responsible to know his own special line and pursue it. If this be lost sight of we shall get into hopeless confusion. God has His quarry-men, His stone-squarers, and His masons. The work progresses by each man attending diligently to his own work. If all were quarry-men, where were the stone-squarers? if all were stone-squarers, where were the masons? The greatest possible damage is done to the cause of Christ, and to God's work in the world, by one man aiming at another's line of things, or seeking to imitate another's gift. It is a grievous mistake, against which we would solemnly warn the reader. Nothing can be more senseless. God never repeats Himself. There are not two faces alike, nor two leaves in the forest alike, not two blades of grass alike. Why then should any one aim at another's line of work, or affect to possess another's gift? Let each one be satisfied to be just what His Master has made him. This is the secret of real peace and progress.

All this finds a very vivid illustration in the inspired record concerning the service of the three distinct classes of the Levites.

(From "Notes on Numbers", by C. H. Mackintosh)

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

Vol. LI

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CONTENTS

"I press toward the Mark"	Inside Front Cover
Lord's Day Reflections	
XXX. Bar and all	97
The Church of the Thessalonians XII	99
God Working in Us	102
As He is, even so are we	106
The Seal of God's Foundation	108

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

“I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK”

(Philippians iii.14)

When persons are running a race, they are not looking about on things around; if they did they would stand a poor chance of reaching the winning post in time. Nor do they wear a heavy cloak which would impede their progress. The eye firmly fixed on the winning-post, and every energy called into play to reach it—this is the way men act in a race.

We should remark that Paul is not here speaking of himself as an apostle; if he were it would not be an example for us, as we could not, of course, aim at apostolic position. He is speaking of himself as a *Christian*, and therefore he is an example for us, as he says, “Be ye imitators of me.”

With what energy Paul pressed toward the mark! We may feel how poorly we follow him; how little the Christ in glory who has saved us has won the place in our hearts He ought to have. With Paul it was the attractive power of the Object; it is this only in the power of the Holy Spirit that can impart such energy to the Christian's life, as will enable him to say, “I have one object in life—Christ.”

You may say, “Have I not my business, my family affairs and many things to attend to?” Yes, and to neglect these would be a very bad testimony for God. We have to go through the ordinary circumstances of life; but what a power it would produce if this heart-affection for Christ so filled our souls that we were ever pressing onward towards the mark! There are the troubles and trials of the way, but what a brilliancy it would impart to the Christian path if our eye were fixed more decidedly on Christ!

F. G. BURKITT

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XXX. Bar and all.

(Read: Judges xvi. 1-3, and Matthew xxvii. 57-66)

IT IS VERY necessary when considering Old Testament characters as typifying Christ to distinguish, as the Holy Spirit will enable us to do, between that which can be related only to the men themselves and that in which the glory of Christ may be seen. For example, Jonah's disobedience in fleeing to Tarshish can in no way picture our Lord since He was obedient to His Father in all things: yet his consequent experience in the belly of the fish has typical significance, as the Lord Himself confirms (see Matthew xii.39,40).

So, in Judges xvi., the circumstances which brought Samson to Gaza were utterly improper and unworthy of a servant of the Lord. Nevertheless we may see in the spectacular manner of his escape from Gaza a foreshadowing of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Despite his failure in self-control, Samson was a man of true faith (see Hebrews xi.32), who was raised up of God to be the saviour of His people from the thralldom of the Philistines. His abnormal physical strength, due to his Nazarite rearing, made him more than a match for his enemies. Clearly this man had to be captured and subdued for the Philistines to have any hope of maintaining their hold over the people of Israel.

One night Samson is found within the walls of Gaza. The Philistines are jubilant at the thought that he is at last trapped within a stronghold from which he cannot escape. So confident are they that he is now within their power that they will leave his capture until the morning when, in the full light of day, they will arrest and kill him.

But Samson is aware of their designs against him, and at midnight rises from his bed, makes his way to the city exit, removes the doors from their fastenings and carries them away on his shoulders, bar and all, to the top of a neighbouring hill on the way towards Hebron. What a sight for Philistine eyes to behold as the sun rose next morning—the gates of their stronghold, bar and all, silhouetted against the dawn!

Are we not forcibly reminded of the closing verses of Matthew xxvii.? Jesus has actually died: loving hands have removed His precious body from the cross, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in Joseph's own new tomb which he had hewn out in the rock: and a great stone has been rolled to the door of the sepulchre. At last man has the Son of God where he wants Him! Satan surely has triumphed this time!!

So it may have seemed—but only until the third day.

Before we come to that however we must notice man's last act to frustrate the purposes of God. The chief priests and Pharisees, in their anxiety lest the disciples should remove the Lord's body and then put around a story that He has risen from the dead, seek Pilate's authority to seal the tomb. "Make it as sure as you can," says the Governor, maybe with some misgiving. For had not the events of that day become ever more mystifying? Had not the darkness which covered the land for three hours from noon something ominous about it? And had not the quaking of the earth and the rending of the rocks which followed immediately the death of Jesus dispelled all thought of security even for a tomb? However that may be, the stone is sealed and the watch set, to ensure there is no tampering with the grave of Jesus.

Believers, as they read these things today, join in the contemptuous laughter of heaven over the puny efforts of men against the Lord and His Anointed. Psalm ii. speaks of this, and declares the ultimate triumph of Jehovah: "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." There is no thwarting of *that* purpose. God will have His way. How comforting the thought!

So on the third day after Calvary, the gates of death were removed, bar and all! Jesus rose! As Peter declared on the day of Pentecost, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (Acts ii.24). Only man had been foolish enough to think otherwise; and man's wish had been father to his thought!

It could be that Paul had the incident in Samson's life in mind when he wrote to the Colossians concerning the accom-

plishment of Calvary, "having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Be that as it may, we can sing in holy triumph—

*Vainly they watch His bed—Jesus, my Saviour!
Vainly they seal the dead—Jesus, my Lord!
Up from the grave He arose,
With a mighty triumph o'er His foes;
He arose a Victor from the dark domain,
And He lives for ever with His saints to reign!
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!*

E. A. PETTMAN

THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS

XII. Second Epistle, Chapter ii., verses 1-4

WE NOW come to the second main subject of the second epistle to the Thessalonians. *Verses 1-2*: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand."

First, there is a mis-translation to be corrected. Reluctant as we may be to query anything in our excellent Authorised Version of the Bible, here is an error which quite obscures the meaning. The Greek word translated "is at hand" means not that, but "is present," and is so rendered in all other places where it occurs in the New Testament. See for instance Romans viii.38, and 1 Corinthians iii.22, "things present," contrasted with "things to come."

Evidently the Thessalonian believers, who were still being persecuted for their faith (see chapter i.), were now troubled by the idea that the day of Christ (or the day of the Lord) had actually come and was present. The Old Testament prophecies tell what a terrible time of judgment the day of the Lord will be. "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness"

(Zephaniah i.15). The thought that it had started, was present, would deeply confuse and distress these suffering Christians, and rob them of their joy of the hope of the Lord's coming for His own.

What caused these believers to make such a mistake? Evidently some persons were bent on misleading them, and to this end pretended that there was a spiritual message announcing that the day of the Lord had come. They taught this error in the assembly. They even claimed to have a letter from the apostle Paul confirming it. So Paul is led to write, "we beseech you . . . that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is present. Let no man deceive you by any means."

It was an attack of Satan aimed at troubling these believers and cheating them of their true, proper hope. This hope is the Lord's coming for His own, when He will descend into the air and catch up all who are His (whether still living or fallen asleep) to be ever with Him (1 Thessalonians iv.16,17). This must clearly be before and distinct from the Lord's coming in judgment to usher in His day. Hence the apostle writes, "we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him;" as much as to say, hold that hope fast, and other things will fall into their right place.

Verse 3: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." Some were aiming to mislead the Thessalonian believers. The apostle here warns them not to be deceived. Before the Lord comes in judgment, so commencing the day of the Lord, He will come in grace to gather His own up to be with Him. Other events also must take place before the judgment of the living, events which Paul had spoken about when he was himself at Thessalonica, and which he now repeats (by inspiration) for our learning.

The first event is "a falling away." This is better read, "the apostasy," that is, the general and public denial, giving up,

and abandonment of any faith in God, whether by professing Christians or Jews or those who acknowledge a Creator. When the existence is thus denied of any supreme Being whose law must be obeyed, the way is open for men to follow their own will entirely, without restraint, and this is the essence of sin, namely lawlessness. Of course human tyranny will still exist, and in particular the revived Roman Empire, the first beast of Revelation xiii., will have power "over all kindreds and tongues and nations."

The next step following the apostasy is for a man to set himself up in the place of God, and so we read, "and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." This individual is in terrible contrast, as the man of sin, with "Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John ii.1); and as the son of perdition, in contrast with the Son of God, the Author of eternal salvation (Hebrews v.9) and Saviour of the lost. He is no doubt "the King" of Isaiah xxx.33 ("For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared"), and Daniel xi.36 etc. ("and the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god"). He is the antichrist of John's epistles ("Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son"). He is also the second beast (coming up out of the earth) of Revelation xiii., and the false prophet of Revelation xvi.13 and xix.20.

Verse 4, first part: "who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped." At that time of evil reaching its climax in the denial of any being superior to the human race, this fearful character will arise, and, taking advantage of the religious element in men generally, will set *himself* up as the object of worship. "He that opposeth and exalteth himself exceedingly against every one called god, or object of veneration" (W. Kelly).

This is in further dreadful contrast with the Lord, Who being truly above all, and "in the form of God . . . made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philip-

pians ii.). How admirable and excellent is the story of Jesus! What do we not owe to Him who was filled with such divine grace? And His mind is to be in us. May we be delivered from pride, and follow in the lowly, holy footsteps of our Lord.

Verse 4, second part: "so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." For the man of sin, clearly, heaven and hell and the unseen world and eternity are all as nothing. He lives for this world and for the present only (as also do so many around us today who have no faith and no fear of God), and it will no doubt be in the rebuilt temple at Jerusalem where his blasphemy will reach its height. "So that he himself sits down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (New translation). How fearful will be the world's spiritual darkness in that day! How solemn a time for the apostate Jewish nation! See the Lord's words to the Jews in John v.43: "I am come in My Father's Name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

In these days of increasing lawlessness and opposition to the truth, we need to hold the more firmly to the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, in the fear of God and the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. W. H. L. GRAHAM

GOD WORKING IN US

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

(Hebrews xiii.20,21)

THE WRITER OF this grand epistle has finished his task. He has shown, in words which we love to read again and again, how the glories of Christ have supplanted the shadows of the old dispensation. And throughout the epistle, he has brought each truth home to the consciences of his readers by frequent exhortations. He is going to write "suffer the word of exhorta-

tion," lest any should chafe at some of his strictures on their slowness to make progress in Christian things. But before he adds this sentence, he pens a prayer to God for them.

Now it is a fact of which every Christian teacher or exhorter is soon made aware, that nine-tenths of what he says is quickly forgotten; and the other tenth will soon undergo the same fate, unless it is "worked into" the hearers by the power of the Spirit of God. For however much a man may *desire* to apply such exhortations to himself, and to change himself in accord with them, his ability to do so is strictly limited. Let the one who ministers the word then imitate the apostle, and follow up his ministry with prayer!

Let us examine this prayer in some detail. We shall see that every clause has relevance to what the writer had in mind.

The God of Peace and Victory

It is essential for us to hold fast the fact that victory is assured. The God to whom we look has brought to pass His eternal purpose of redemption; He has raised up from the dead our Lord Jesus, Whose sacrifice has made a sure foundation for the everlasting covenant. He is the God of peace, Who desires the peace and blessing of His creatures, Whose wisdom has found an answer to the trouble which sin has introduced.

"Peace on earth" the angels proclaimed at the birth of Christ, and this peace is enjoyed, on earth, by those whose faith rests in the Saviour, and in the God Who raised Him from the dead.

Peace with God we thus have, knowing that our sins are forgiven; but communion with the God of peace Himself we may also enjoy. This is His desire for us, as the Lord Jesus said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

Resurrection Power

It is not only that Christ risen assures us of His conquest of sin and death; it is also a reminder that the risen Christ is

the pattern of our new life. If by faith "we see Jesus (Hebrews ii.9) crowned with glory and honour," we are the less likely to be led away by the covetousness and place-seeking of this world. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

The Everlasting Covenant

It is called everlasting in contrast with the covenant of the Law, which was in its nature temporary, as the writer has argued in chapters viii., ix. and x. By this covenant God has in grace bound Himself to accomplish the eternal blessing of His people. Its terms are: "I will put My laws *in their hearts*, and in *their minds* I will write them; and . . . their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." That is, He will transform their inner being in accord with His holy will, and will blot out all their sin and failure. It is everlasting because it depends upon God Himself, and not upon man; its foundation has been laid in the precious blood of Calvary. Its blessings are for all whose trust is in that blood.

Some seem to argue as though the reference to Israel and Judah in Jeremiah xxxi, "A new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" hinders the appropriation of it by other believers. This is undue literalism. God will certainly fulfil to the letter His promise to His ancient people, but the everlasting covenant is a figure which describes God's own undertaking, and all who are Christ's share the blessing of the "New Covenant in My blood," as the Lord Jesus describes it in Luke xxii.20.

The Great Shepherd

He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep, including those "other" or Gentile sheep, which He must bring. While we are reminded by this context, of the title "the Good Shepherd," Who laid down His life for the sheep, there is special force here in the title of "Great Shepherd." It tells of power unlimited, to deliver from the many wolves that would harass the flock, and to lead His own in the paths of righteousness. As the Great Shepherd, too, He tends the great flock, of

every race and colour, and the least of us is not forgotten by Him. The prayer which follows is *through Him*, as all our blessing must be.

The Prayer Itself

“May He make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.”

Thus he prays, and it is *to this very thing* that our God has pledged Himself. It is His covenant. It is His declared purpose. The perfecting of the saints is what He has set His hand to, and that in *every* good work. *We* fasten our attention now on this good work, now on that, but *He* is determined that *every* good work shall be fulfilled in us.

Well we know how displeasing our ways often are to Him, but we have the assurance that He is ever moving to this end, that our lives should be full of what is well-pleasing in His sight.

What an encouragement! If sometimes we seem to be getting nowhere, let us remember that the matter is not left in our hands. Though it is true that we are responsible to work out our own salvation (not the salvation of the soul, which we receive as a matter of faith, I Peter i.9) from day to day, this is only possible because “it is God which worketh in us both to *will* and to *do* of His good pleasure.”

Through Jesus Christ

As His work has laid the foundation, and made possible all the glorious fruits, so God’s working *in us* is through the Lord Jesus. How is this? It is not easy to understand, but perhaps it is just this which gives us a glimpse of what is meant by God’s working in us. For the Lord Jesus *is* our life and the Holy Spirit works by transforming our lives into accord with the Pattern. “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,” says Paul. We can help by paying diligent heed to the exhortations of God’s word, but the living shaping power is that of God Himself.

“To Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

AS HE IS, EVEN SO ARE WE

It is a great blessing to the soul to lay hold of the divine purpose in the salvation of sinners. God has an end in view for all who have accepted Christ in undivided faith and absolute trust as their own personal Saviour. His purpose is that such shall become perfectly like His Son, and that they should be eternally with Him Who is the centre and theme of heaven's praise and worship.

It was for the joy set before Him that the Lord Jesus endured the cross, despising its shame; and having accomplished perfectly the great work of redemption He took His place at the right hand of God. Now He is engaged in the great task of bringing many sons unto glory, all of whom are to be conformed to His image for God's own joy and delight. This is the divine purpose, the great end which God has in view: the Lord Jesus Christ being established in the place of ineffable glory, in the midst of His own, the Object supreme of all, by all adored.

The apostle John (1st Epistle, Ch. iv.17) expresses in simple words the position and portion of all believers, namely, that they share the life of Christ and stand in His perfection before God. As the risen and ascended Christ has fullest acceptance in the Divine presence, so the believer is now "accepted in the Beloved." The sure knowledge of this blessing, his solely through God's sovereign grace, gives the believer full assurance, perfect peace, and boldness to come before God at all times.

This blessed "standing" in Christ is not a matter of human attainment, nor the exclusive privilege of a saintly class. It is the portion of every child of God who has become such by receiving the Lord Jesus (see John i.12). In ourselves we may lack knowledge and have many failings. All this is known to God. Yet our acceptance with Him is unaffected because it depends, not upon ourselves, but upon the work of His own dear Son at Calvary.

Notice the verse says "As He is." It is not, as He was, despised, disowned, disallowed indeed of men; but as He is, risen, ascended, accepted and enthroned at the right hand of

the Majesty on high. God views us as risen and exalted with Christ, as it is written: "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 hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians ii.4,6).

The knowledge of these truths calls for a lively response in the heart and life of the believer, who should no longer live to himself but unto Him who died for him and rose again. The Lord Jesus Christ took the place of the sinner in the distance and the darkness, that the believer might share *His* place in the light and glory of God.

While it is true that God will never bring the believer into judgment for his sins (see John v.24), He does nevertheless chasten His own when their ways and words are not in accord with their "standing." As his purpose is that they shall be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans viii.28,29), so He works in them by His word and by His spirit, by means of trials and difficulties too, that His children may be holy in character and blameless in conduct.

While the believer should evermore press forward toward the mark for the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus (see Philippians iii.14), full conformity to Christ awaits the day when his body shall be changed and fashioned like unto His own glorious body. John himself looked forward to that day when he wrote (1st Epistle, iii.2) "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." This is our hope: to be fully like Him, as His blood-bought brethren to surround Him, Who is the first-born, the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One, the Centre and Delight of heaven. This is God's immutable purpose, that the Lord Jesus Christ, in the place of supreme exaltation, shall be in the midst of those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren; while every knee will bow to Him, every tongue be vocal with His praise, and every heart bow in His worship.

THE SEAL OF GOD'S FOUNDATION

(2 Timothy ii. 19)

God's servant is called to strive diligently to present himself approved to God, a workman that has not to be ashamed, cutting in a straight line (as a mere man can never do) the word of truth. And this the more, because profane babblings prevail and must be shunned, as they surely advance to greater impiety and will not scruple to overthrow the surest truth and brightest hope. But His firm foundation stands, having this seal, "The Lord knoweth those that are His, and, Let every one that nameth the Lord's name stand off from unrighteousness." He in sovereign goodness and faithfulness knows His own and fails not: such is His side of the medal. Let every professor of His name withdraw from iniquity: such is our inalienable responsibility. Certainly this ought not to fail in those born of God, and redeemed by Christ, to whom God gave a Spirit not of cowardice, but of power and love and sobriety of mind.

The Holy Ghost discerned and announced then, even in apostolic days, the dismal change from early separateness to God in faith, love, and purity. Those bearing the Lord's name could be compared before Paul departed to a great house with its vessels, not only of gold and silver, but also wooden and earthen, and some to honour, as others to dishonour. The consequence of a phase so opposed to God's pleasure and nature is the appeal to individual fidelity. "If a man therefore purge himself from these (i.e., the vessels unto dishonour), he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work." In earlier days, when a person within became "wicked," the word of God was, as it still is, Purge out the old leaven; put away the wicked man from among yourselves. Now that vessels to dishonour are tolerated within, he that hears God's word and is by grace resolved to do His will must purge *himself* from among them.

Originally the Christian came out from among the idolatrous Gentiles (or the Christ-rejecting Jews), and was separate to the Lord with all that were His (2 Cor.vi.). The same prin-

ciple applies when this new disgrace befel His name—vessels to dishonour bearing it without shame on their part, or conscience on the part of the rest to put them away. It is not a question of leaving the house, even when become so great and mixed, but of leaving the unmistakable evil. If one cannot purge it out, one may and ought to purge oneself out: for how cease to do evil, unless one remove oneself from acquiescence in it? God is not pleased, nor mocked with words belied by facts. Am I not bound to cease from an evil communion, aggravated by a merely verbal protest which proves my conscience bad? Am I to walk with those manifestly evil men that bear the Lord's name? Refusal or even powerlessness to judge evil is faithlessness to the Lord, and the mother of all corruption. The call is the reverse of leaving the professing church; it is correcting in oneself all complicity with what the Lord hates. One cannot leave the house, whatever its state, without abandoning the Lord's name. But if I bear that name with conscience toward God, I am bound solemnly to clear myself from unrighteousness. Separation from, or avoidance of, a sect is a christian duty, instead of quitting the church or even Christendom so-called. On the contrary he who refuses to be of a sect, or to go along with corruption on the plea of unity, is alone walking in the house agreeably to its Master.

(Reprinted from "The Bible Treasury", February 1894)

E X T R A C T

The Lord will surely save His people with an everlasting salvation. No peril shall impede their triumph. No foe shall hinder. Trials and snares, afflictions and temptations shall make way. The grave shall not detain. Death shall yield up its prey. The true Israel shall reach the land of never-fading joy. With palms in their hands, and crowns on their heads, they shall ascribe, in ceaseless songs, all victory to the cross of Jesus.

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from the Scripture of Truth

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CONTENTS

I will not go out free	109
God and His Son glorified	113
Crying to God	116
The Money of the Bible	117

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A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

In these days when we tend to be dismayed by the evil that abounds on every hand, it is well to be reminded of that which God has given in His word for the comfort and strengthening of His people.

God Himself abides, and will bring to fruition all He has planned for His own glory and the blessing of His creatures. As Joshua was able to testify: "And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land *which He swore to give unto their fathers*; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, *according to all that He swore unto their fathers*: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. They failed not ought of any good thing *which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel*; all came to pass" (Joshua xxi 43-45). Thus it has ever been and thus it will ever be: for God remains faithful to His promises.

Then, to quote the apostle John, "we know that the Son of God is come." Manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and having completed the task of redemption on which all hope for mankind depended, He has taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, until, in the Father's good pleasure, His enemies become His footstool. For Christ *must* reign!

Meanwhile the gracious Spirit of God is active on earth, convicting men of sin and bringing them to repentance and faith in Christ. For God is not willing that any should perish. And if His longsuffering is salvation for many, who are we to complain over the delay in the Lord's return for His own! It would ill become those who owe everything to God's grace themselves to begrudge that grace to others.

So, praying for those upon whose shoulders rests the heavy burden of government, we wait patiently for the day of our translation to heaven, to be for ever with the Lord.

I WILL NOT GO OUT FREE

(Read Exodus xxi. 1-6)

SLAVERY IS AN UGLY WORD, and stands for an ugly thing, yet which seems to have existed everywhere and at all times in different forms and degrees. Even to-day it is not banished from the world. But no doubt it is a surprise to some to find it recognised in God's law, among God's people: "If thou buy an Hebrew servant (slave), six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing" (Exodus xxi.2).

NO PERFECTION BY THE LAW

The truth is, as Hebrews tells us, that the law made nothing perfect. To take a people from a condition of bondage in an alien land such as Egypt, and to fashion them into a nation fit for carrying out God's purposes, was a stupendous task, and they broke down at the very start. Hence in these detailed statutes it was essential to take account of their low state, their "hardness of heart" as the Lord Jesus expressed it (Matthew xix.8), and the wisdom of God is here seen.

The creditor in 2 Kings iv.1, who claimed the sons of the widow in payment for her husband's debts is an illustration of this. God's command "Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy poor brother" (Deuteronomy xv.11) showed what His will was; but the hard-hearted moneylender cared more for his money than his brother. Seldom indeed did Israel rise to the standard God set them! It is often overlooked that the command "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" originates not in Christianity, but in the Mosaic law, though only in Christ is there power to fulfil it. Yet Christians have no room to boast in this matter, as the history of slavery, both in this country and abroad, clearly shows.

In verse 16 we have the far worse evil of enforced slavery, which is unsparingly condemned: "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." In view of this, it is hard indeed to understand how professing Christians could engage in the slave trade. Yet they certainly did, and the hymn

“How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds,
 In a believer’s ear,
 It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
 And drives away his fear.”

was composed by the captain of a slave ship at the very time that slaves were groaning below. It is good to learn that he later learned the evil of it, and gave evidence which helped in the suppression of the trade. But the lesson for us is surely this, that the standards of behaviour of Christians can never be our guide, but the word of God only.

However, the word of God, and especially the Old Testament, must be read intelligently, comparing scripture with scripture, so as to distinguish, as in this case, between what was allowed and what was God’s own intention. Now if we ask what was God’s intention, it is plain that, as He had redeemed Israel from bondage in Egypt, He would have them remain free. So that verse 2 “If thou buy an Hebrew slave” is permissive only.

Further, knowing the evil heart of man, God has limited this permission even. “Six years he shall serve, and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.” Thus plainly did God show His mind for His people. They were *His*, and were not to be in bondage to man. So let us remember the word “Ye were bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men” (I Corinthians vii.23).

“If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him” (verse 3).

“If his master have given him a wife, and she have born him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master’s, and he shall go out by himself” (verse 4). This was painful indeed, yet in strict equity.

“And if the servant shall plainly say, *I love my master, my wife and my children, I will not go out free*: then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever” (verses 5 and 6).

No doubt this is an ideal case, for if the servant did not love his master the choice would be much harder; but what is here presented to us speaks of far more than human love, and gets its fullest meaning only when seen as a type of the service of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After completing six years' service, liberty now became the bondsman's right. But service to this master had not been bondage, for he had grown to love him. And so, loving his master, his wife and his children, he says, "I will not go out free."

It is beautiful to see the dark page of man's failure brightened by the working of love, but brighter far when we understand that the inspiring Spirit is here bringing Christ before us. No doubt as a type it falls short, and at the very beginning, for whereas the Hebrew servant sold himself into bondage under the pressure of need, or perhaps was sold by his parents, the Lord Jesus was from eternity in the form of God, and of His own free will took upon Him the form of a servant (Philippians ii.7). Likewise the love was in His heart from the beginning.

"I love my master." Utterly devoted to the Father's will, the Lord Jesus pursued His way in this world, sustained always by the mutual love between the Father and Himself. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." And, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." And at the end He was able to say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

IF HIS MASTER HAVE GIVEN HIM A WIFE

Service such as His amid a perverse, unbelieving people entailed constant suffering, but He was cheered by those who did believe, the "babes" to whom the Father revealed the need of repentance. All such He spoke of as the Father's gift to Him, as in John vi.37,39; x.29; and often in His prayer in chapter xvii. There He also spoke of those "who *shall* believe on Me through their word," and of His desire that they should be with Him in heaven. Such was His love!

Like the servant who was entitled after six years to return to freedom, the Lord Jesus could have ended His service and returned to His rightful glory without dying, for He was not as we are, subject to death; but then He must have returned alone. *We* could not be with Him unless He had gone to the Cross first. To win the Church as His bride, His companion in glory, He must first lay down His life. His love for the Church, and for those who comprise it, is foreshadowed in the words "I love my wife and my children: I will not go out free."

In this scripture the bondman plainly announces his renunciation of freedom—to make clear that it is his own voluntary act, and then is brought to the judges to give it legal sanction. Finally, his master brings him to the open door in order that, with the possibility of release set clearly before him, he shall submit freely to the boring of his ear. This has a double meaning. First, it signified irrevocable attachment to the house, the place of service. Secondly, it betokened the complete yielding of his ear to hear the master's commands, cost what it might. He became a servant for ever.

Thus did our blessed Saviour in Gethsemane devote Himself afresh to what the Father's service and our redemption demanded—the sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross. His words "Not My will, but Thine be done" show us this utter yielding of Himself. In the same way, His statement to Peter "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels," shows how perfectly voluntary His yielding was, for even then deliverance was His had He claimed it. But how then could the scriptures be fulfilled, yea, this very scripture we are considering? So He said, "I will not go out free."

How it calls forth our heart's affection to remember that His desire to have us with Himself for ever was one motive which sustained Him through all: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews xii.2).

A SERVANT FOR EVER

But the Cross was not the end of His service. Though now

in glory, He seeks to glorify the Father. Whether it be in sending forth labourers into the harvest, or in caring for those that already believe, He is continuing the work that is dear to the Father's heart. As High Priest He strengthens those who are weary in the way, and as Advocate He restores any who sin. He loves the Church for which He gave Himself and is occupied in sanctifying and cleansing it with the washing of water by the word (Ephesians v. 25, 26).

Lastly, in the day of His glorious kingdom He will still serve as God's King (Psalm ii), until finally He delivers up all in perfection to the Father.

E. H. CHAMBERLAIN

GOD AND HIS SON GLORIFIED

In the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth and seventeenth chapters of John's Gospel there are references to God being glorified, and to the Son of God having glory in various ways.

In Chapter XI., we have the record of the Bethany household in their sorrow over the death of Lazarus. This was allowed to take place "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (verse 4). The narrative shows vividly how these two objects were attained.

When Martha came to Jesus with her grief, He assured her that her brother should rise again, meaning that he would do so that very day. Her reply, however, reveals her thought that his resurrection must await the last day; that her brother had been too long in the grave for anything to be done at present. Friends, too, expressed surprise that Jesus had not exercised his healing power to prevent Lazarus from dying; resurrection, even at a future time, not being in their thoughts either.

After lifting up His eyes to heaven, however, to show His dependence upon His Father, Jesus "cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth." And the dead came forth. In this way, glory was brought to God, for those standing by beheld Jesus acting as the Sent One of God, doing the will of Him that sent Him. At the same time the Son of God was Himself glorified before the eyes of unbelieving men by the display of divine power over death and the grave.

In Chapter XII., the Lord says, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified."

A reference to Daniel vii., 13, 14, shows that one called the Son of man will come with the clouds of heaven, and that he will receive dominion and glory and a kingdom which shall not be destroyed. John xii. records how the Lord was received with honours on His approach to the royal city, the people saying, "Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." Also, the scripture was fulfilled which said, "Fear not, daughter of Sion; behold thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt." After the ascension and the descent of the Spirit upon them, the disciples understood what had been written and what had taken place. Even the Pharisees had to say, "Behold, the world is gone after Him (verses 12-19; see also Zech.ix.9.)

Then follows (verses 20-23) the incident of the Greeks desiring to see Jesus, with Andrew and Philip telling Him of it.

The combination of events recorded in this chapter seems to have brought before the Lord's mind a preview of the fulfilment of the prophecy in Daniel noted above, and the glory that should be His as Son of Man. This in turn leads Him to speak of the death He must accomplish first, for "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (verse 24). All blessing for mankind depends upon the death of Christ. That which God bestowed in times past before Christ came, was in view of it; that which believers possess now is by virtue of it; and the future blessing of a repentant and restored Israel, as well as that of the Gentiles, is dependent on His sacrifice.

"Oh, mystery of mysteries!
Of life and death the tree;
Centre of two eternities,
Which look with rapt, adoring eyes,
Onward and back to thee!
Oh, Cross of Christ, where all His pain
And death—is my eternal gain!"

(J. G. DECK)

In Chapter XIII. 31, 32, our attention is called to the Saviour's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, and the glory resulting from it.

Jesus and His disciples were gathered in the upper room. The betrayer had gone out, Jesus saying to him, "That thou doest, do quickly." It would appear that the whole matter of the cross had come before His eyes; He could see the end of His course of obedience. Obedience is the glory of a man; nothing further is expected of him. So Jesus says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." It was meat and drink to Him to do the will of Him that sent Him.

Jesus Himself was glorified in that sense. Through His sufferings, God's eternal purposes would be fulfilled. That being so, He could go on to say, "God is glorified in Him." Of all others the verdict is that they come short of the glory of God (i.e. of glorifying Him) Romans iii.23.

God the Father found great joy as He beheld His Son, who was always able to say in every step of the path of obedience, "I do always those things that please Him" (John viii.29). The result of this is that "God shall also glorify Him in Himself." Very soon, every mark of dishonour was to be heaped upon the thorn-crowned brow of the suffering Saviour. But God would ensure that all the depths of His Son's sorrow were answered by commensurate glory. God would glorify Him in His own Person. Once atonement had been completed, the interval during which Jesus should lie in the grave was measured, and when all was fulfilled the Father straightway glorified the Son who had done it—see Psalm xvi. 10, 11.

Chapter XVII. makes a large contribution to the subject of glory. It opens with Jesus lifting up His eyes to heaven—as He had done at the grave of Lazarus—and requesting that He might be glorified on high, in order that He might thence continue to glorify the Father by giving eternal life to those whom the Father gave to Him (verses 1 and 2).

Furthermore He asks "And now glorify *Me*, *THOU* Father, along with Thyself, with the glory which I had along with Thee before the world was." This is a special category of glory which belongs uniquely to the Son.

In verse 22 the Lord speaks of a glory which He will share with His own, who bore His name during the time of His rejection. They are joint heirs with Him even now.

Lastly in verse 24 we have an added desire by the Son on behalf of those whom the Father had given Him. This is nothing less than that they should be with Him, so that there, in that blissful place, they should behold the glory the Father would give Him in answer to His request. This glory is related to the love that existed between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world.

P. WHITE

CRYING TO GOD

(Thoughts on Psalm cxix. 145-7)

“I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord:

I will keep Thy statutes” (ver. 145).

This is *how* he cried, and surely it is instruction for us as to the manner of our crying to God—it must be with the *whole* heart (see Proverbs iii.5). Also with the conscience awake, for he adds “I will keep Thy statutes.” Is it not written, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”?

“I cried unto Thee; save me, and I shall keep

Thy testimonies” (ver. 146).

This is to *Whom* he cried. He needs deliverance, and, as another psalm declares, “vain is the help of man.” So he cries “Save me,” and expecting deliverance adds “And I shall keep Thy testimonies.”

“I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried,

I hoped in Thy word” (ver. 147).

This is *when* he cried. Before the daylight brought its comfort to his heart, he called upon God, and this kindled hope in his soul.

We do not know who wrote this psalm, but we are reminded of David's words in an earlier psalm, “My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up” (Psalm v.3).

Turning now to the New Testament, let us see what is written concerning God's perfect Servant, our Lord Jesus. After a busy day and presumably retiring to rest in the house of Simon, we are told of Him, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place and there prayed" (Mark i.35), reminding us surely of Psalm v.3.

Perfect servant, adorable Lord and Master! May we be given grace to follow in His steps, until the moment when we shall see His face, and "Hope shall change to glad fruition; Faith to sight, and prayer to praise." THOS. WILSON

THE MONEY OF THE BIBLE

Many interesting and important truths are associated in Scripture with references made in the text to the currency of the period. It is (D.V.) proposed in a series of short papers to examine some of these references with the intention of ascertaining what special instruction they afford.

I. THE LOST DRACHMA

In the second of the three parables recorded in Luke xv., the Lord introduces the figure of a great search which a woman made for a lost piece of money. He said, "Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and seek diligently until she find it?" On turning to the margin of the Revised Version, it will be seen that the word translated "piece of silver" is *drachma*, which is different from the word used by Matthew for the blood-money of Judas (Matthew xxvi.15). The term, drachma or dram, only occurs in the New Testament in this place (Luke xv.8, 9).

The *drachma* was a Greek coin, and therefore not properly a legal tender in Palestine, though it corresponded very closely in value with the Roman penny (*denarius*) which was at that time the authorised unit of currency in Jewish territory under Roman rule. On account of this correspondence, it has been supposed by some that, although the native Greek word,

drachma, occurs in the parable, the Roman penny was meant by the speaker, just as some British persons now speak of a dollar when they mean a five-shilling piece.

There is no substantial ground, however, for this surmise. We find, on the contrary, that Luke was quite familiar with the Roman penny, and that he uses the term three times in his Gospel (Luke vii.41; x.35; xx.24). There must, therefore, be some special reason for the occurrence of the Greek term in the parable.

On consideration, it appears as might be expected, that pieces of the Roman silver currency would not be equally suitable to the purpose of the parable. As Greek coins the pieces would not be legally current for dealings in trade, and for that reason they would be the more likely to be formed into some article of personal adornment for the head, neck, or arms. This ornament the women would highly prize, and would naturally wish to preserve it intact for its sentimental rather than for its intrinsic value.

Hence the loss of one of the ten coins would occasion the diligent search by the owner, and its recovery the summons to her friends and neighbours to rejoice with her. Clearly, the lost *drachma* had in the woman's eyes some special value beyond its potential power to purchase goods in the market. So we can understand that most persons today would prize ten Tudor shillings, for instance, more than ten shillings dated 1920; and the loss of one, spoiling the complete set, particularly if made into a necklace or what not, would be greatly deplored, because of the difficulty of replacement.

It will be found that this feature, which supposes a special personal value in the lost coin to its owner, enables us to detect more readily the structural resemblance between the three parables of Luke xv. In each case the personal interest of the active agent is strongly marked. We see it at once in the interest of the shepherd for the sheep, straying to its destruction, and also in that of the father for the younger son, wandering in the paths of sin to his peril. But what caused the special interest in the second parable? Only if she were very poor, or if she were a destitute widow, can we quite understand her feverish anxiety over the loss of a tenth part of the contents

of her purse, which, after all, a day's wages would replace. But when we know that the pieces were Greek coins, constituting her own special treasure, we readily recognise the faithfulness of the picture and the appropriateness of her diligent sweeping by the light of her candle for the lost piece, and of her exuberant joy at her successful search.

By the recovery of the lost piece, the completeness of the collection of ten coins was restored. Whether the ten pieces were the woman's heirloom or a marriage portion is uncertain, but we must not miss that salient feature of the parable which is quite certain, viz., that the lost drachma had an exceptional value in the eyes of the woman. So much so that when she found it she called together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost."

Expositors have had some difficulty in arriving at the interpretation of this parable, and they vary considerably in their final conclusions. Perhaps the most general opinion is that the woman represents the church, or the Lord working through the ministrations of the church. But this view is out of harmony with the unity we might expect to find in three parables spoken by our Lord on the same occasion and spoken for the particular purpose of vindicating His reception of publicans and sinners, which was called in question by the Pharisees (Luke xv.2). The Lord's defence, if we may use the term, was the divine joy in heaven that resulted from the repentance and recovery of the sinful. In a threefold way He showed that God *rejoiced* in saving sinners, and that fact was in itself a complete answer to all human cavil.

In the three associated parables the Lord Jesus set forth that the three Persons in the Godhead were Agents in the work of man's rescue. Can we doubt that in the first parable we have God the Son shown us as the Shepherd seeking the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew xv.24)? Or that in the third we have God the Father, Who is kind to the unthankful and evil (Luke vi.35), welcoming home the returning prodigal son? The harmony is complete when we see that in the second parable, not the church, but God the Holy Spirit is pictured

by the woman, zealously active to discover and to deliver the lost.

Thus by grouping the three parables under this common purpose we discern that the stupendous truth of revelation is therein displayed that God the Son, God the Spirit and God the Father are equally energetic in Their love for sinful man, and in rejoicing over his salvation. Further, as we also find elsewhere, the redeemed constitute God's own peculiar possession (Ephesians i.14; I Peter ii.9), being of special interest and value to Him.

It is clear the gospel is preached to men by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (I Peter i.12), and the woman of the second parable prosecuting her search in the house apart from the public gaze is an apt emblem of the Holy Spirit, Who carries out His invisible service in the world (John xvi.8), and whose secret actions are likened by the Lord Himself to those of the wind that bloweth where it listeth (John iii.8).

The coin, too, we observe, is inanimate, and in this respect unlike either the lost sheep or the prodigal son. And it is the function of the Spirit to give life to those He finds, all of whom are said to be "born of the Spirit," though formerly "dead in trespasses and sins."

Many instances of the searches of the Spirit of God are chronicled in that book, which perhaps would be more fitly designated the Acts of the Holy Ghost than the Acts of the Apostles. To refer to only one case out of the many, who but He called away Philip the evangelist from the gospel activities of Samaria to find and deliver the enquiring eunuch, who was returning to Ethiopia without the knowledge of Jesus, the suffering Servant of Jehovah, of Whom Isaiah had spoken?

Ethiopia was indeed a dark corner into which the light of grace and truth had not as yet shone. But the light shone, the lost one was found, and the end of the search was joyous triumph. For we read that the treasurer of Candace went on his way rejoicing, even as there had also been great joy in that city of Samaria where many other lost ones had been found (Acts viii. 8, 39).

Just as the woman conducted her search for the missing treasure with a lighted lamp, so the Spirit of God in His search

for lost souls, sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, uses the word of God, which is the medium of spiritual light for man (Psalm cxix.105; Proverbs xx.27). Those who go out into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature go and preach as they are led by the Holy Spirit.

The interior of the Eastern house was gloomy, being built with a view to exclude the light and heat of the sun. The stray coin, lying in some dark corner, hidden among the rushes, which strewed the earthen floor, is neither of use, nor an ornament. But when the owner's light shines upon it, revealing its whereabouts, it is reclaimed. The owner knows its worth, and when found, can use it as she will.

So in the ministry of the gospel to men, the light of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, shines into dark and blinded hearts (2 Corinthians iv.4-6). Sinners are thereby brought out of darkness into light. Those who come short of the glory of God are made to rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans iii.23; v.2; Ephesians v.8).

The work of salvation is the work of God, in which the Spirit has an equal part. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel xxxiii 11), but He rejoiceth when "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust; He lifteth up the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes and inherit the throne of glory" (I Samuel ii.8, R.V.). W. J. HOCKING

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THE SCRIPTURES

One God is the living centre from which all flows; one Christ the living centre round which all its truth circles, and to which it refers, though in various glory; and one Spirit the divine sap which carries its power from its source in God to the minutest branches of the all-united truth, testifying of the glory, the grace, and the truth of Him whom God sets forth as the object and centre and head of all that is in connection with Himself, of Him who is, withal, God over all, blessed for evermore.

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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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CONTENTS

Lord's Day Reflections				
XXXI "Heard . . . seen . . . handled"	121
The Church of the Thessalonians XIII	124
The Lord Keeping Silence	128
Work for the Lord	131

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

IN THESE DAYS when interest in the truth of God is at a very low ebb in many lands, it is refreshing to read the following paragraph in a letter from a missionary in the Congo:

“We returned yesterday from one of the most encouraging and satisfactory Conferences we have ever had at Loto . . . I think the most outstanding feat was that of the Djonga contingent. Of the party of over twenty, thirteen men and women walked on their feet a distance of 300 miles, which took them 13 days, to be present . . . and in the party was . . . a woman of over seventy years of age.”

How different is present day experience in places nearer home! All too often it is the speaker who is called upon to travel a long way to address a mere handful of folk who already know most if not all of what he has to say. The number who attend is but a small proportion of those that could be present if desire for the ministry of God's word were sufficiently keen for them to bestir themselves to come along.

We can but commend our brothers and sisters abroad for their zeal and for the truth, and for the value they set upon Christian ministry and fellowship. We are sure the Lord rewards them for their diligence, and pray that their example may arouse others to a due sense of their privileges and responsibility.

It will be remembered that the apostle Paul used the forwardness of believers in Achaia in the matter of giving to those in need, to provoke those in Macedonia to similar effort. How beautifully he adds, “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (2 Corinthians ix. 8).

May the Lord stir up His people everywhere to greater effort and diligence in laying hold of the truth!

LORD'S DAY REFLECTIONS

XXXI "Heard . . . seen . . . handled"

"That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen* with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have *handled*, of the Word of Life" (1 John i.1).

IT IS PROBABLE that the apostle John was an old man when he penned these words, and it is certain he did so in view of the apostasy which, even in his day, was beginning to cast its deadly spell over professors of the name of Christ. We may imagine his dismay as he contemplated the downgrade movement within Christendom which parables spoken by the Lord Himself (see Matthew xiii.) must have led him to expect; and also the earnest enquiry within his own heart whether there was anything he could do before departing this life to strengthen the confidence of the faithful. So we find him led to look back over the past, recalling the wonderful days he spent in the company of his Saviour when here on earth.

The early years of John's life appear to have been uneventful. Not until he made the acquaintance of Jesus of Nazareth did the humdrum existence of this Galilean fisherman give place to the adventure of discipleship and lifelong witness for the One whom he left his fishing nets to follow. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth," we hear him say, as he strives to pass on to others something of the glory of the Person whom he had come to know so intimately.

Neither John nor his fellow apostles sought to perpetuate their witness to the Son of God by the erection of a monument or other material edifice. They committed their testimony to scriptures which God's providence was to preserve until copies were multiplied and broadcast to the world.

"That . . . which we have HEARD." Centuries previously, when Jehovah came down to speak with Moses in the hearing and sight of Israel, the people "saw the thunderings, and the

lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus xx. 18, 19). The audible accompaniments of God's presence terrified the people, so that they stood afar off.

When the Lord Jesus came into this world to proclaim the word of God, how different were the conditions! We read that publicans and sinners *drew near* to listen to Him. Could the apostles ever forget the wonderful sayings which they received direct from their Master's lips? Could they not recall His gestures, the very tones of His voice and the expressions of His face, by which He drove home the points of His lessons? Even the officers sent by the priests and Pharisees to apprehend Him had been compelled to protest, "Never man spake like this man!" Yet for those who shared the apostles' faith it was no question of hearing the voice of a mere man. The Word had become flesh and had dwelt amongst men: those who had been privileged to hear the voice of Jesus listened to the unfolding of the mind of God by Him who was Himself the Word of God. Says John, "We heard Him: and what we heard we declare to you." Precious revelations these! Priceless treasures of wisdom and grace beyond all the world can offer!

Amongst men, testimony passed from one to another tends to become distorted, and so unreliable. Those seeking the truth endeavour therefore to eliminate intermediaries and trace the person who actually heard what was said in the first place. Such an one John, in company with others who shared his experience, declares himself to be. How thankful we should be for this first-hand witness!

"Which we have SEEN with our eyes." It is as though John was face to face with sceptics who were suggesting that what he had declared and taught had no foundation in fact: that he was giving fancies of his imagination the status of reality in order to impress his hearers. In such circumstances today a man will say, "But I saw it with my own eyes." So here, John goes out of his way to convince gainsayers when he refers to that "which we have *seen with our eyes*." The Word become flesh and dwelling

amongst men! What a sight! And this, sober fact, not fiction. For John himself there was no possibility of doubt: he had seen with his own eyes.

Nor was John the sole witness. His fellow-apostle, Peter, uses similar language: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were *eyewitnesses* of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven *we heard*, when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Peter i. 16-18).

Thus John's testimony is corroborated by Peter, and the witness becomes adequate, and, indeed, unassailable. What more can men do to help and satisfy their fellows than to testify truthfully as to what they have themselves heard and seen?

Then, as if to emphasize the matter still further, John adds, "Which we have looked upon," or contemplated. This is the same word that he uses in his Gospel (John i. 14), "We *beheld* His glory etc." How privileged were those men, to be given no mere passing glimpse of the divine glory, as were Israel at Sinai, but the opportunity to contemplate steadily the Word become flesh and dwelling amongst them!

"And our hands have HANDLED." Consider again the giving of the law by Moses. When God came down to speak with him, Mount Sinai had to be cordoned off: the people (and beasts too—see Hebrews xii. 20) were forbidden to touch even the border of it under penalty of death. For sinful man needs to learn that he cannot stand in the presence of God's holiness.

In contrast with the giving of the law John tells us (John i. 17) "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Was it not fitting therefore that men should be permitted to "handle" Him? Indeed, to touch Him was not to die, but to be healed (Mark vi. 56). A sinful woman found an outlet for her heart's worship when she kissed His feet and anointed them with ointment (Luke vii.). The disciples too felt the touch of His gracious hands when He performed the menial task of feet-washing (John xiii.).

We are reminded too of the Lord's words in the evening of the resurrection day, when the disciples to whom He appeared in the upper room at Jerusalem, were terrified because they supposed they had seen a spirit. "Handle Me, and see," He said, "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Was it not a wonderful thing that failing men should be permitted to "handle" the Son of God, the Word become flesh and dwelling amongst them? How emphatically John declares later in his epistle, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." May God give us to hold fast the truth of His word, and to reverence, love and worship His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. E. A. PETTMAN

THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS

XIII Second Epistle, Chapter ii, verses 6-10

THE SECOND CHAPTER of the second epistle deals with the erroneous teaching that the Day of the Lord had already arrived.

Such error is still being taught in our day. In at least one leading British newspaper this summer, was a page-length announcement (comprising over 1,300 words) of a public meeting about to be held in London, at which it would be shown that the Day of the Lord commenced in the year 1933, that Israel was restored in 1948, and that Christ will descend "in power and great glory" in 1971. We shall not be misled by such errors if we give due attention to the Scriptures, depending upon God to be taught aright and not trusting to our own thoughts.

We have seen from the chapter now before us, that the Day of the Lord will not come until the apostasy takes place, and the man of sin is revealed. No doubt this development in the age-long struggle between good and evil is a great objective of Satan. His aim is to turn men away from God, in order to

make way for complete self-will, which is lawlessness; and as this is achieved, man comes fully under Satan's power. In Christendom in the present day there is an increasing repudiation of the truth of a personal God, and of any obligation on man's part to own and obey Him. But so far, the enemy, while working secretly towards this end, has been hindered from fully succeeding. When God allows it, the hindrance will be removed, and then the man of sin will rise into view.

Verses 6-8: "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked be revealed."

"Mystery of iniquity" is properly, mystery of lawlessness. This is the secret working of Satan (alluded to above), to impel men to turn from and deny all divine authority. "Withholdeth" and "letteth" are basically the same word in the original, meaning to keep back, restrain, check. We may read, "And now ye know that which restraineth . . . only there is one that restraineth now until he be out of the way" (W.K.). So there is a restraint, and one who maintains that restraint. The Thesalonians knew what the restraint was in their day; identities may change through the years, but all is under God's hand, and nothing can develop before His time.

At the beginning of human history, after the fall of Adam and Eve, man without restraint became so evil and so filled the earth with violence and corruption, that God destroyed all flesh by the Flood, except Noah and those with him in the Ark.

After the Flood, God imposed two restraints. One was human government—"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The other was the dividing of men into nations at Babel—"And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let Us go down, and there confound their language . . . so the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis ix. and xi.).

Thus down the centuries and to the present time, there have been both the power of human government ("the powers that

be are ordained of God," Romans xiii.), and the balance of power between nations preventing the rise of universal opposition to God.

Also God has always had His own people upon earth, comprising His spiritual kingdom, and in particular, through the Christian dispensation, the church of Christ on earth indwelt (as none before) by the Holy Spirit come down at Pentecost. So in the darkest times there has been some spiritual light maintained by divine power, preventing the darkness of Satan's kingdom from completely covering the world.

We cannot doubt that when the Lord has come and has taken up His own to be with Himself above, an immense change must come over the world-scene below. The Holy Spirit will no longer be dwelling here in the church, though working among both Jews and Gentiles for blessing. God will then allow human government set up by Him to be overthrown, and out of the chaos will emerge the king which Satan will raise up, and the antichrist or false prophet.

Verse 8: "And then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming." From the days of the apostles, Satan has been at work to bring in and spread lawlessness, and so overthrow all that is of God in the world, but because of the restraint of Gentile dominion, his working has been hidden and secret. When God allows that restraint to be removed, the apostasy will take place in the open abandonment of any acknowledgment of God, and "that wicked," or lawless one, the antichrist, will appear on the scene.

Events will then develop rapidly; the Great Tribulation must take its course for three and a half years; immediately after which Christ will appear in glorious power, to destroy His enemies and deliver those (including a Jewish remnant) who trust in Him and await His coming. So the antichrist will meet his fearful end, "whom the Lord Jesus shall destroy with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming," as we may read it.

The words "breath of His mouth" signify the inherent energy

of divine power. They are used of the work of creation, in Psalm xxxiii. 6, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." A similar expression is used in the Old Testament in connection with divine judgments, as for instance in 2 Samuel xxii. 16, "At the rebuking of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils."

Sudden destruction will then fall upon the man of sin, bringing him down from his blasphemous self-exaltation, reducing him to nothing, by the manifestation, appearance, or shining forth of the Lord's coming.

Verses 9-10: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

These two verses follow on from the middle of verse 8, and we might well put the latter part of verse 8 in brackets. The passage, in Mr. Kelly's rendering, then reads, "And then shall be revealed the lawless one (whom the Lord Jesus shall destroy with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His coming), whose coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness for those that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved."

In verse 4 we had the blasphemy of this false prophet of the future, and his self-exaltation even to usurp God's place in the earth. Here is shown his fearful work of seducing men to their utter destruction. He will be truly Satan's man, the embodiment, incarnation, of evil, without one redeeming feature, awful even to contemplate. His solmen contrast with the blessed Son of God emphasizes the enormity of the evil.

Christ Jesus being in the form of God, humbled Himself, and obeyed God even to death (Philippians ii.). How different from the antichrist who exalts himself in disobedience. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke of Christ (Acts ii.), "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles

(deeds of power) and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you." What a contrast with Satan working in the antichrist in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, deceit, unrighteousness, to cause men to perish. The Son of God is "Jesus Christ the righteous," "He that is holy, He that is true," and whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. Christ is the *Saviour* of sinners.

How can we ever be thankful enough to God for His love in the gift of His Son, and for His salvation in Christ, delivering us from the power of darkness, that we might belong for ever to the Lord Jesus Christ.

W. H. L. GRAHAM

THE LORD KEEPING SILENCE

(Read: Matthew xv. 21-28)

WE HAVE THE promise of God that He will listen to our prayers. Yet oftentimes the answer is delayed. It seems as though our prayer is ineffective, as if the Lord had not heard and the heavens were made of brass.

In Matthew xv. we have a story that may help us to understand why sometimes the Lord remains silent when we appeal to Him. The Canaanitish woman, by birth a Syrophenician, was a Gentile. She only knew by hearsay that Jesus was able to exorcise demons and heal. But these rumours were sufficient for her to make up her mind to go to Him. Necessity indeed compelled her to go, and she received a great blessing as her reward.

Her prayer "Have mercy on me," was simple, short, and a clear expression of the desire within her. By means of it she appealed to the compassion of the Lord's heart. How effectively she disclosed the sorrow of her own heart inseparable from the sufferings of her daughter! Was it possible that Jesus could help them?

"Thou Son of David," she cries. Did she know anything historically of the relations that had existed between Hiram and David? If so, that might have sown a small seed of confidence and hope in her heart. "My daughter is grievously vexed with a

devil" (verse 22): though a pagan, she knew the underlying cause of her daughter's misery.

The First Trial of Faith

In the woman's short prayer, all the elements of success were present. Yet the Lord did not answer her a word. It appears from the context that she repeated her request, but without result, for the Lord continued to be silent, and His silence must have raised questions, if not doubt, in the heart of the woman. Nevertheless her faith stood the test: for she persevered in prayer.

Why did the Lord remain silent? In the first place He maintained the purpose of the mission on which God had sent Him, namely to bring salvation to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And secondly, the woman's faith needed to be exercised and strengthened.

It was not the Lord, but the disciples who broke the silence. They expressed their regret that He had not sent the heathen woman away. She was not entitled to expect help or support, and was browbeaten by their harsh words.

That the keeping of silence may prove God's love for men is clearly seen when His well-beloved Son poured out His heart on the cross, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Heaven was silent. "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent" (Psalm xxii. 2). Not God's omnipotence, but His love was active in those dark hours of Calvary: love of which sinful men were the object, and for whom He gave the Son of His love. Should the Lord keep silence when we call to Him, let us never doubt His love, sympathy and compassion.

The Second Trial of Faith

The Lord was silent because He was not ready to bless the Canaanitish woman yet. When at last He did speak, it was a refusal of her prayer with the words, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." That was truth indeed. Was there to be no exhibition of grace? For the moment it

would appear there was not. The answer was a hard one.

The woman might well have returned home at once, disappointed with the treatment she received. That would have been natural enough. But faith does not pay attention to words only; it keeps fast hold of its object, the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we read, "Then came she, and worshipped Him." No bitterness of heart, but a worshipping at His feet, and then the impressive prayer, "Lord, help me." It could not have been shorter, and is as short as any prayer in the Bible.

The Third Trial of Faith

Even this prayer, however, did not have the direct result the woman hoped for. The trial was not yet over. First, silence; then follows the Lord's humbling word to her, "You are not a child, only a dog: you have no right to My help, no title to the blessing: there is no obligation on God's side." The woman must learn, and acknowledge too, that an appeal to God's compassion was not enough; she had to realise it was grace which would provide for her need.

Fortunately the last word she speaks shows that her faith had been purified. She had stood the test. "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

The moment had then arrived for Jesus to help; for Him to divest Himself of the restraint which He had imposed upon Himself during His dealings with the woman. With admiration of her faith, He exclaims, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Her faith was the key by which the woman found access to the Lord's heart. What was the secret of the woman's faith? On the one hand He was mighty to heal her daughter; on the other, there was the perseverance in faith which the Lord Himself had given her. She realised that behind the apparently hard words of Jesus, was a heart tender with love.

This is indeed one lesson of the story for ourselves. "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians v. 17); "Continue in prayer,

and watch in the same, with thanksgiving" (Colossians iv. 2); "He giveth more grace" (James iv. 6).

(Translated from the Dutch MESSENGER OF PEACE by J. Mol, Senr., former teacher at a Bible School in Holland).

(The woman's use of the title "Son of David" was presumptuous for a Gentile: only an Israelite ought to address Him so. This is perhaps one reason for the Lord's seeming harshness. But when she realized this, her faith not only accepted the lowly position, but claimed Him as *her* Master as well as Israel's—EDITOR).

WORK FOR THE LORD

THE SIMPLE INQUIRY, recorded as the first utterance of Paul to our Lord ("Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?") is the duty and expression of every one distinctly awakened to the claim Christ has on him. This inquiry cannot be too earnestly instituted, and the reply to it rigidly attended to. The inquiry is the offspring of a soul sensible that the Lord has entire and full claim on me, without the knowledge which authorises it. The soul feels "I am taken out of the world, and I am given to Christ, and hence I look to Him for my place and future occupation in it." If we are given to Christ "out of the world," it is evident that it is He alone who has the right to determine our way and course in the world.

I could not say, if I believe that I am given to Him "out of the world," that I have any right to re-occupy any place or engagement which I had previously held in the world. True, He does not require or permit me to infringe on any legal lord under whom I was held before I was given to Him. But, excepting where the rights of others would be compromised, I am Christ's bondman. Vested legal rights are not to be compromised, because of my being given to Christ. But I am Christ's bondman; and necessarily if I am, both from duty and inclination, my inquiry ought to be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

The more I own and realise the relationship between us which now exists through grace, the more simply and continuously will this be my whole-hearted cry to Him. Now if it is, I will of

course accede and attend to whatever He may intimate to me, and this only. That is, the heart true and devoted to Him, making this request, will wait on Him for guidance and counsel. It would find no real satisfaction in being anywhere or doing anything which was not according to His mind. Our place and our occupation here would be only determined by the pleasure of Him Whose we are and Whom we serve. Any departure from the tie or rule of this relationship would sensibly interfere with the mutual satisfaction therein known. There would be a break in upon, and a disturbance of, the true order of life, and the blessings connected with it.

Nothing else so simple and nothing so important in our walk down here! I belong to Christ, and I find it His pleasure and my happiness to do nothing but as He desires and instructs me. I live where He likes, and I do what He likes. If we do this, there would be no mistakes one side or the other. But we do make mistakes on both sides: on one side at one time, and on another side at another time. At one we plan our work for ourselves; and at another we do none at all.

Now the first is the most difficult to deal with, simply because the counterfeit deceives one; and hence, while it is comparatively easy to convict the Martha that she is unwisely occupied, the work seems so right and necessary, that it appears almost impossible that there could be any plan in it. Nothing so deceives and leads astray as the conscience working at a distance from Christ. For instance, if I feel in my conscience that I ought to be Christ's servant (true enough, I am His bondman); but if I am not near Him, if I am not in His confidence, and I begin to do something to satisfy my conscience, there is no doubt I am doing it legally, and not as simply suits Him. It is to make myself easy and satisfied. When this is the case, I do not consult what He would like me to do, but I do what I think best to be done. It is not His pleasure guides me; it is my own mind, as to what is suitable and proper. It may be quite necessary, as Martha's service; but Martha was evidently thinking of the services which were incumbent on her to render, and not governed by the pleasure of Christ.

Here is where we fail, undertaking to serve where it is in a

degree creditable to ourselves, or we get disappointed (if we are true-hearted) because we have not the acknowledgment of His pleasure. How can He acknowledge what we have undertaken and done to satisfy our own conscience, and to please ourselves therein? It is evident that when I am occupied with services (however useful and necessary, which I have undertaken of myself, feeling that they devolved upon me), that I must lose the sense of His presence. Sitting at His feet, Mary-like, is lost and neglected. There is no growth of soul up into Christ. Self is in the service from beginning to end. It is most blessed to work for Christ, it is fruit-bearing; but if my work engrosses me more than Christ, there is damage to me, and I am not working for Him. "Without Me ye can do nothing." If I am really working for Christ, and growing up into Him, sitting at His feet is the natural posture of my soul. Whenever you find any one serving without sitting at His feet, you may be assured they are Martha-like. When any are sitting at His feet, hearing His word, they will not be behind in true and pleasing service.

If you begin with serving (as many do nowadays), you will never sit at His feet; whereas if you begin with sitting there, you will soon serve wisely, well, and acceptably. The serving quiets the conscience, and the sitting is overlooked and neglected. The enemy gains an advantage; for it is at the sitting the conscience is more enlightened, and the pleasure and mind of the Master are better known. Hence there is damage done, and loss is sustained by the soul, when service pre-occupies one to the exclusion of sitting at His feet, or where service is most prominent.

I never met with any one making service prominent who knew what it was to sit at His feet. But, thank God, I know indefatigable workers who enjoy sitting at His feet above any service. And it is clear that they who sit most at His feet must be competent to serve, and most in His confidence, which after all is the clue to all efficient service.

J. N. DARBY



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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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CONTENTS

Correspondence	<i>Inside front cover</i>
The Basis of Christian Confidence	133
Money of the Bible—II: The Half-Shekel and the Stater ..	137
Companions of the Christ	142

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

CORRESPONDENCE

REFERRING TO THE article in September issue, in which the writer points out that the parables of Luke xv. "set forth that the three Persons in the Godhead were Agents in the work of man's rescue," and that in the second parable "God the Holy Spirit is pictured by the woman," I wonder if your readers have noticed that different terms are used in the first and second parables.

In the first we are told, "And when he *cometh home*, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise *joy shall be* in heaven over one sinner that repenteth etc." In the second, we have the words "Likewise, I say unto you, *there is joy* in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Psalm xii. 6 tells us "The words of the Lord are pure; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." This being so, there must be a reason for the difference in the expressions "joy shall be" and "there is joy." Surely the first picture carries us on from the finding of the lost sheep until the final home-coming; from the moment when the Lord saves us until He sets us down in the glory above, saying, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me" (Heb. ii. 13). The other expression is in keeping with the present action of the Holy Spirit when He quickens dead souls into life: there is at that very moment joy in the presence of the angels of God.

THOS. WILSON

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm ciii. 13, 14)

THE BASIS OF CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE

“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life”
(1 John v. 20)

THE BELIEVER TODAY, as he surveys conditions around him, cannot fail to be impressed by many things which betoken those “last days” to which the epistle-writers of the New Testament make reference. And while he may well take comfort from the thought that these things indicate that the Lord’s return is very near, he must feel nevertheless the seriousness of the increasing spiritual darkness, leading on to the apostasy which will bring down finally God’s judgment on the world.

Living as we do in a country which has enjoyed for many years standards of conduct founded upon, and flowing from, Christian teaching, we are shocked by recent revelations of sinful living and criminal activity, the extent of which is so serious a problem for those whose duty it is to administer the laws of the land. But this should not surprise us in view of the warning of scripture that “in the last days perilous times shall come,” and that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

In addition, there is man’s increasing arrogance and sense of self-sufficiency. If humans have succeeded in sending men into orbit round the earth, and recovering them safely, is there any limit to the conquests they may be expected to make in space and beyond? “Is anything too hard for man?” seems to be displacing the dependence upon Almighty God which has marked the devout since mankind inhabited the earth.

Furthermore, who can fail to be aware of the departure from the faith which is so widespread today? Scarcely a week passes without prominence being given in the daily press to some remark, by a responsible person, which is derogatory to the holy scriptures. Granted of course it is only the derogatory remarks which hit the headlines, how comes it to be that so

many of that character are available for citation? Moreover even amongst those who remain loyal, how few seem to have either the desire or the competence to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Guardianship of the truth does not appear to make a wide appeal in our day.

With so much to dishearten and dismay, where is the believer to turn for comfort?

It is clear that the apostle John saw things much as we do. There were in his day the beginnings of that decline within the church which in our day is so far advanced, even as he must also have beheld the sinfulness of his own ungodly generation. So he writes an epistle to place on record what he had seen and knew, in order that the faithful might be strengthened to hold fast the truth. And in the penultimate verse of chapter v. he summarises the grounds of his own confidence, and gives us something which abides for us all.

The Coming of the Son of God

First of all, says John, "We know that the Son of God is come." He was not referring merely to the historical fact that the Son of God had come into the world—and, for that matter, gone again. He must surely have had in mind the great purpose and accomplishment of that coming, and the far-reaching results that have yet to flow from it. Maybe he recalled, as he wrote this verse, the occasion recorded in the first chapter of his Gospel, when his namesake, the Baptist, had exclaimed: "Behold! The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Most readers will be able to remember a day when someone in their home was stricken with serious illness, and the doctor was sent for urgently. On his arrival he was probably greeted with some such remark as, "We are so glad you have come." This was not because those in the house liked the look of his face, nor that they were glad to have someone fresh to talk to: it was because they had confidence that the doctor would be able to cope with a situation utterly beyond themselves. Thus, when John says, "We know that the Son of God is come," he is

declaring the sure ground of Christian confidence that all the wrong of the world is to be brought under control and set right. As he says in chapter iii. verse 8, of his epistle: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." Sin will be taken away, men put and kept in their place, by Him who came first of all to lay the foundation of universal blessing by His atoning death at Calvary. There is therefore no ground for despair, for we know—not merely as something learned from external testimony, though to begin with the knowledge was acquired by that means, but as a matter of assured inward conviction—that the Son of God is come. The future is therefore secure, and hope will not make ashamed.

The ungodly accept the existing state of affairs in the world as inevitable, however deplorable they consider untoward things which interfere with human comfort. They merely hope for the best—perhaps with little expectation of real improvement. The unbelieving Jews of John's day, as indeed those of our own day, having rejected the Lord Jesus, look for a Messiah yet to come to bring them prosperity and salvation from their enemies. But the Christian has the secret of sure and certain hope: the Son of God *has come*. And though He has returned to heaven for a season, He will come again and will set everything right. The believer knows the Son of God to be the One whose "name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed" (Psalm lxxii. 17). And he adds his own Amen to the concluding verse of the Psalm, "Blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory: Amen and Amen."

The Knowledge of God

Then there is a second thing: the Son of God has "given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true." The latter phrase refers to God Himself, and accords with the Lord's own words in His prayer to the Father (John xvii.), "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent."

The conflict between right and wrong, between God Himself and Satan, who has ever sought to usurp divine authority, power and glory, was raging when John wrote, and rages still. The true God must and will prevail, or He would cease to be God. In the meantime however it appears often enough as though Satan, who is not yet bound, has the mastery, and the human race halts between two opinions, as Israel did in Elijah's day (I Kings xviii.). Nevertheless, as Peter writes (II epistle, chapter iii., verse 10), "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

In the interval before that takes place, there are, as Peter foretold there would be, "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming?" They do this because they have no faith. But the Son of God gives to those that believe an understanding that they may know the true God. Such knowledge is the highest privilege accorded to a creature, and carries with it every possible blessing, peace, joy, confidence in a Father's love, and the assurance that God's power will ultimately triumph over Satan. It enables us also to appreciate not only God's longsuffering grace that lingers long over a guilty world because He is "not willing that any should perish," but also the wisdom that works all things after the counsel of His own will, for the eternal glory of His great name.

Of all such things, however, men of the world are willingly ignorant. But the Christian is given an understanding that he may know Him that is true, and is therefore qualified to live his life on earth as one who is enlightened and intelligent concerning God's will and ways.

The Believer's Security in God

There is however further comfort still for the believer, for John adds: "And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." We are not therefore mere onlookers, albeit intelligent spectators of what God is doing as regards the world at large: we have our own vital part in it all, our own place of

perfect security. As another (W.K.) has written, "the manner for us to be in the unfailing security of the true God is by being in His Son; and this we know from His own words in John xiv. 20: 'At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father and ye in Me and I in you'—not only to be in Him, but to *know* this and all else here stated."

The apostle Paul emphasises this truth. Writing to the Corinthians (First epistle iii. 22, 23) he says, "All things are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's:" and again to the Colossians, "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (chapter iii. 3). The things of this world may, and indeed they will, be shaken, but our place as believers amid it all is secure, for "we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ."

Beloved friends, these words were written by the apostle John centuries ago, but they are for our comfort and strengthening today. May we respond in greater measure to the grace that has been shown us! For the knowledge of the true God, through Jesus Christ His Son, is life eternal.

E. A. PETTMAN

THE MONEY OF THE BIBLE

II. The Half-Shekel and the Stater

THE HALF-SHEKEL was twice the value of the silver drachm, which is mentioned in the parable of the lost coin (Luke xv. 8, 9). The technical name of this Greek coin was didrachm, and in currency value it appears to have been equal to the bekah, or half the Jewish shekel (Exodus xxxviii. 26). The shekel itself was equivalent to a four-drachm piece, which was also called a stater.

Each of these two coins—the didrachm, or half-shekel, and the stater—is named once only in the New Testament, and the occurrence of both names will be found in the account of the beautiful incident in the life of our Lord given in the first Gospel only (Matthew xvii. 24-27).

If this passage is read from the Revised Version, it will be seen that in verse 24 the words "tribute money" and "tribute," are replaced by the words "the half-shekel," and in verse 27, "a piece of money" by "a shekel," with a marginal note that

the word in the Greek is "stater." And it is necessary to note especially these new translations in order to appreciate the full beauty of the sacred narrative.

The Narrative

When our Lord and the disciples who were with Him came to Capernaum on this particular occasion, those who received the didrachms, or half-shekels, said to Peter, "Does your Teacher not pay the half-shekel?"

This tribute was paid by the Jews to the priests and Levites for the maintenance of their own temple-worship at Jerusalem, and must be distinguished from the taxes imposed upon the Jews by the Roman Government, and which the Jews, as a conquered people, were compelled to render to Caesar (Matthew xxii. 15-22).

The temple tax originated in the contributions which were first required by Moses, the servant of God, from the children of Israel in the wilderness. Then Jehovah enjoined that every male Israelite above the age of twenty, whether rich or poor, should make an offering to Him of one bekah, or half-shekel (Exodus xxx. 11-16), when the census of the people was taken. The amount collected, which was 603,550 bekahs, or 301,775 shekels, was utilised in the construction of the tabernacle (Exodus xxxviii. 25-28).

We read that in the days of Joash, the king of Judah, this tax was collected from the people, and used to pay the expenses of the restoration of the house of the Lord, which at that time was greatly in need of repair (2 Kings xii. 4; 2 Chronicles xxiv. 5, 9).

After the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, Nehemiah and the people agreed to charge themselves with an annual contribution towards the service of the house of God (Neh. x. 32). The amount named on this occasion was a third, not a half, of a shekel. Possibly their extreme poverty prevented them from giving the half.

The question put to Peter, therefore, was not that of an overbearing tax-gatherer in the employment of the Romans, pressing for compliance with the exactions of a foreign civil law, but a Jewish inquiry whether the Prophet of Nazareth would not pay

the customary tribute of the half-shekel for the upkeep of the temple and its services. It was a matter of conformity to a religious practice rather than of obedience to a political claim.

Peter was ready instantly to stand sponsor for his Master's pious observance of every requirement made under the law. Accordingly, without any qualification, he answered in the affirmative, and entered into the house to lay the matter himself before our Lord, and perhaps to inquire how the money was to be obtained. But the Lord "prevented" him; that is, He anticipated Peter's purpose, and corrected the hasty and mistaken utterance of His apostle.

Those who had questioned Peter had not had the many exceptional opportunities that the apostle had of learning that the great Prince of the house of David had come. Some excuse might be made for the inquirers, but none for Simon Peter, whose reply was altogether inconsistent with his own recent confession of the glory of the Person of Jesus and his vision of that glory in the holy mount. By the revelation of the Father, he had said to the Lord Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew xvi. 16), and his own eyes had seen the transcendent beauty and majesty of the King, while his own ears had heard the witness from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew xvii. 5).

Surely Peter was altogether forgetful of these claims of the Lord and of his own full admission of them, when he so hastily assured the tax-collectors that his Master would pay the half-shekel. It might have been assumed of Isaiah, or of Ezekiel, but was it not more fitting that the Son of God, the King of Israel, should receive tribute rather than pay tribute? The incongruity of the question should have been apparent to Peter of all men.

Before the apostle could say a word, however, the Lord said to him, "What thinkest thou, Simon? The kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons or from strangers?" And when he said, "From strangers," Jesus said, "Therefore the sons are free."

In these words of quiet and gentle reproof, the Lord, within the circle of His own followers, maintained the dignity of His

own person, and the rights that were His by virtue of His Sonship. Even according to earthly usage royal families were exempt from the taxes imposed upon the subjects of the kingdom, and Jesus, though of Nazareth, was David's Son and David's Lord. The temple at Jerusalem was His Father's house (John ii. 16). He was indeed a Son over His own house, and not a servant in the house of another. As Son of God and King of Israel, He was absolutely free from all liability to a tax levied to meet the expenses of the service of God.

The Lord, however, would not assert His rights to the tax-collectors themselves. Though King of the Jews (Matthew xxvii. 11), He deigned to be here as a subject, and not as a ruler and divider (Luke xii. 14). He showed that He was ready to comply with the request made, and to pay the temple dues. For our sakes He had become poor, and, for the payment of the tax, there was no silver in the purse (*cp.* Matthew x.9). Yet though He was poor, as men speak, He possessed all things. And He proceeded to show to the forgetful apostle that He was Lord of all, that the sea was His, and He made it, and that He had dominion over whatsoever was passing through the paths of the sea (Psalm viii. 8).

The Lord, accordingly, in His word to Peter, added, "But, lest we cause them to stumble, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a stater (that is, a coin equivalent to two half-shekels): that take, and give unto them for Me and thee."

Although the Jews made the commandments of God of none effect by the tradition of the elders, the Lord would not, by an apparent disregard on His part of a religious obligation, give them an occasion of stumbling. In His humiliation unto the death of the cross, He Himself would be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to the nation (Romans ix. 32, 33), but in the matter of the temple-tax He would remove all excuse for disbelief. He therefore satisfied the collectors by the payment of the money claimed. The method by which the coin was obtained for the payment was for the apostle's special instruc-

tion, and not, so far as we know, for the tax-collectors'. To Peter, the Lord proved that He was more than the King of Israel, that He was the Lord of creation, and a fish of the sea was the keeper of His privy purse.

The Work of Wonder

The Lord Himself laid down the conditions under which the capture of the fish should be made. And on reflection it will be seen, as has been pointed out elsewhere, what a striking demonstration the miracle affords of the omniscience and omnipotence of Christ, which are ever a resource for His followers.

For the due fulfilment of the Lord's words to Peter, It was necessary:

- (1) That something in the sea should be captured;
- (2) That it should be captured immediately, although sometimes fishermen might toil all the night and catch nothing;
- (3) That the capture should be a single fish caught by a hook, and not be one of a number enclosed in a net;
- (4) That the fish should contain money;
- (5) That the money should be in the mouth of the fish;
- (6) That the first fish caught should contain the money;
- (7) That the money found should be a single coin of the exact currency value required.

It is not actually stated in the Gospel that the miracle took place, but there can be no doubt that Peter, in obeying the directions of the Master, found that all these conditions were duly fulfilled. The stater was in its assigned place, and it provided the exact sum required to pay the tax for the two—as our Lord expressed it, “for Me and thee.”

In the law given by Moses, it was said, with reference to this contribution, that the rich were not to give more than the half-shekel, nor the poor less (Exodus xxx. 15). And here the riches of the grace in Christ abounded over the poverty of the law to meet in perfect equity its righteous requirement, if the temple tax could be regarded in the light of a binding obligation. There was exactly a half-shekel for each, no more nor less.

One Coin for the Two

The mouth of the fish did not contain two half-shekels, one for each of them, nor one half-shekel for the Lord only. The Lord would not dissociate Himself from His servant and follower. Peter had left all to follow Him who had nowhere to lay His head, and as he was sharing His poverty, so the Lord showed His disciple that he should share His affluence. Peter should see that the silver and the gold were His, and the fish in the sea also. "The stater thou shalt find is for Me and thee," the Lord said.

The utterance is a revelation of the magnificent grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards a confessor of His name. Peter was one of the Lord's own who were in the world, of whom He said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be" (John xii. 26). The disciple should be as his Master, poor as He, persecuted as He, rich as He, glorified as He. To the overcomer in Laodicea, the Lord promised, "I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father in His throne" (Revelation iii. 21, R.V.). He who has fellowship in the sufferings of Christ shall also enter into the joy of his Lord. The essential feature of this great partnership, of which the Gospel and the Epistle testify, was exhibited that day at Capernaum: one stater "for Me and thee." In these gracious words we see:

"The love, that gives not as the world, but shares
All it possesses with its loved co-heirs."

W. J. HOCKING

(Reprinted from *The Bible Monthly*, February 1921).

COMPANIONS OF THE CHRIST

THE APOSTLE PAUL writing in Hebrews iii. makes in one brief verse a summary of what is contained in the preceding chapters.

As "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," we are summoned to "consider the Apostle"—the One who came down from God in chapter i., and "the High Priest," the One who has gone in to God for us in chapter ii., Christ Jesus.

To this consideration we are exhorted as having ourselves a heavenly calling. The earthly people of God were called with an earthly calling, but the calling of the Christian confession is a heavenly one. There is no promise of wealth, ease or fame here given to the companions of the Christ.

Here it is the Apostle and High Priest of the Christian confession whom we are to consider, and surely there is no subject so sweet to our hearts as His blessed Person. He is God (Who is Spirit, Light, Life and Love) yet manifested in flesh, and entering into everything human except sin, while feeling fully the sorrow and grief that sin had entailed upon men, then finally suffering for sins and dying for sinners. Christ Jesus—God and Man in one blessed Person.. For ever and ever the mystery of His incarnation and atonement, while baffling the creature intellect, will evoke the worshipful wonder of unfallen and redeemed intelligence.

We love to ponder His Person as our eyes are directed to where He now is, by this Epistle written to “develop and maintain the present glory of Christ as He sits on the right hand of God on high having accomplished redemption.” He, the first-born among many brethren, inspires by His present position and condition, the many sons whom God is bringing to glory by Him. Some to whom this exhorting word, “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of your profession” came, had left things tangible, material, and venerable and were being tempted to give up and go back to the old earthly calling. Hence the Lord Jesus is set out as being Himself better than the best of the old economy. The key-word of this Epistle hangs on the door of the very first chapter, to open up its treasure house to the pilgrim sons, “Better.” Christ, “better” than angels, Moses, Joshua and all else of every kind, is the soul satisfying and inspiring theme of every page of this Epistle; and in verse fourteen of chapter iii, the cheering and stimulating word is found: For we are made partakers of Christ (are become companions of the Christ, new Trans., J.N.D.) if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

The word "if" makes us pause, and good indeed that it should, for they who most heed the warnings of Scripture are ever those who least need them; while others, alas! whose conduct clearly calls for such stern reminders, appear wrapped in comfortable spiritual complacency utterly oblivious of the fact that an apostle of the Lord bids us "*give diligence to make your calling and election sure*" (2 Peter i. 10).

We only prove our election by our perseverance, and many who fared forth hopefully on the pilgrim road have halted, turned aside, gone back, and, in some cases, openly denied the Lord who bought them. Therefore we are warned and exhorted in every New Testament scripture to take heed. We may sing, "This world is a wilderness wide," but only as we are in the companionship of the Christ whom the world has refused, do we at all realise it. As soon as our eyes are off Him, and our attention taken by other persons or things, we begin to doubt whether the world is, after all, such a wilderness as certain, conventionally, assert it to be.

But we are called to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our Confession where He now is, and thus passing through the world using but not abusing it, so to comport ourselves as becomes companions of the Christ, "If we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end." What was the beginning of our confidence in God? We had no confidence in God until we believed His love in giving Christ to die for us, and in raising Him up again for our justification.

Christ was the *beginning of our confidence*, as I Peter i. 18-21 confirms, that our faith and hope might be in God. This is a very great stay for our faith, for when we so believe in our hearts that it practically affects our lives that God has raised Christ from the dead and given Him glory, we have discovered a solid ground for praising God that nothing can ever move; but we only realise it as we look to where Christ now is.

Christ is also the *present basis and substance of our confidence* in God—"because I live ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19); "We shall be saved by His life" (Romans v. 10). The Lord Jesus is the Bread of Life; made available to us upon the cross that we

might eat and live for ever, but also now the sustenance of our confidence in God, the food of our renewed nature, the daily bread of the Christian life. "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God" (Galatians ii. 20). As we abide in Him and His words abide in us, so we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast. He, who in grace made Himself responsible for all who by Him do believe in God, has entered in for us to appear in the presence of God, and we are held fast in our confidence by an ever-growing knowledge of that Blessed One who is its sole basis. Day by day we are saved by His life, and borne onward to the rest that remains for the people of God when travelling days are done. Christ Himself, too, is the *blessed end of our confidence*. Not heaven, but Christ, is the hope of our believing hearts. Our hope is to see Him, be with Him, and like Him; so shall we ever be with the Lord. As He is the gracious beginning so is He the blessed end: "The First and the Last."

The companions of the Christ begin with Him, go on with Him, and end with Him. "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of your profession, Christ Jesus . . . for we are become companions of the Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

W. G. TURNER



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Words of Help

from the Scripture of Truth

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CONTENTS

Studies in the Humanity of our Lord	145
The Church of the Thessalonians (XIV)	149
Money of the Bible—III: The Widow's Mites	153

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WORDS OF HELP

A Monthly Magazine for Believers

EDITORIAL

We are delighted to have for publication in this final issue of 1963, the first of two articles by Mr. E. Chamberlain, entitled "Studies in the Humanity of our Lord". In a day of abounding error, how necessary it is to take care that our thoughts, particularly concerning the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, are governed by the word of God.

It is for this reason we allow so many scripture references in the text; more perhaps than some consider desirable in the interests of free reading. But, as has been mentioned previously, it is probably wise to pass over these references when reading an article for the first time, in order to capture the writer's theme. The scriptures can be referred to during a subsequent and critical consideration of what has been written.

For the kind indulgence of our readers in regard to any errors that may have crept into the text, we are thankful, and trust the ministry of WORDS OF HELP has again proved helpful, especially to those who may have to depend for much of their spiritual help upon a magazine of this type.

In conclusion may we pay our tribute once again to the goodness of God in enabling this ministry to continue for another year. Let us remind ourselves of the faithfulness of our never-changing God in the testimony of Joshua to the people of Israel as his life drew to its close:—

"Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Joshua xxiii. 14).

Copies of the special issue of this Magazine in January, 1963, covering the ministry of the late Mr. John Weston, and the addresses given at Wildfell Hall, Catford, during the jubilee week in May 1962, are still available, and may be obtained free of charge on application to the Editor.

STUDIES IN THE HUMANITY OF OUR LORD

WITH WHAT fear and trembling must one who seeks to expound this stupendous subject approach the task! Human wisdom is here utterly at fault, as is conclusively proved by the many false teachings with which the Church has been troubled. The only safeguard is to let the word of God form our thoughts under the teaching of the Holy Spirit. We may examine the word of God as carefully and fully as we like, so long as we do not add to it or subtract from it.

The Fact of Incarnation

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth”
(John i. 14).

We must note carefully the words ‘was made flesh,’ or became flesh, as it is better rendered. It was something new, what He had not been before. Also, flesh was not a mantle put on, it was what He *became*.

The word “dwelt” in the next clause, is literally tabernacled, or dwelt in a tent. But it is important to see that the plain statement “the word became flesh” comes *before* the figurative expression “tabernacled among us,” lest we should think that the Divine Word merely clothed Himself with a body as a dwelling place.

Truly He dwelt among men in flesh, not as of old merely manifesting His presence in a tent of curtains; but this blessed truth does not nullify the preceding one of His *becoming* flesh. Need it be said that in doing this He did not cease to be God—a thing in its nature inconceivable?

“Became flesh” is in itself more emphatic than “became man,” which may be why it is used here. We have a similar statement, and the reason for it, in Hebrews ii. 14, 15, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Complete yet Sinless Humanity

There was nothing lacking in His coming down into manhood. This is made plain in verses 17, 18 of the chapter already quoted: "Wherefore *in all things* it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make *reconciliation for the sins of the people*. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able also to succour them that are tempted." It is also confirmed in chapter iv. 15, 16, "For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was *in all points* tempted like as we are, yet without sin." The word "yet" supplied by the translators is better omitted, and the clause rendered "but was in all points tempted as we are, *sin apart*."

The Lord Jesus is able to sympathize with His people in suffering and weakness, and to succour them in temptation, because of His own experiences in this world. He was thus as truly man as we are, with this one most significant exception, "sin apart." That form of temptation from indwelling sin He could not experience, for "in Him is no sin" (I John iii. 5.). But in the conflict with Satan who tempted Him to forsake the path of dependence, in the daily trial of rubbing shoulders with sinful men, and above all in the fiery testing of His obedience on the cross, He suffered far more intensely than we can ever do, by the very fact of His purity.

Some argue that if He was not tempted by indwelling sin, He could not sympathize with us where our need is greatest. But this is to overlook our constant tendency to excuse our sins, instead of condemning them. We feel we need sympathy when our real need is for self-judgment.

Let us now examine scriptures which speak of His early life. First His

Conception and Birth

It is worthy of remark that the three scriptures (Matthew i. 18-25; Luke i. 26-38 and ii. 1-14) which tell us of this are simple records of fact. It is therefore our wisdom to receive them with implicit faith, and with worship, not seeking to build on them any theory or explanation of what must ever

be beyond our understanding—*how* the Creator took a place in His own creation.

Both Matthew and Luke emphasize that His mother Mary was a virgin, and Matthew adds that she remained so till after His birth. Doubts cast upon this by modern writers are unbelief pure and simple. The fact does not rest merely upon the meaning of the Greek word translated “virgin,” but equally upon statements such as Matthew i. 20, 25; Luke i. 34. And it is no more contrary to modern science than to ancient knowledge. Science is the study of the ordinary working of nature, but this was a miracle, and how worthy of God!

These scriptures, then, tell us that the conception of Jesus was of the Holy Spirit instead of normal human generation. “Therefore,” it was added by the angel Gabriel, “that which shall be born of thee shall be called holy, the Son of God.” No other, born of woman, can be called holy—all, including Mary herself come of the fallen race and need a Saviour. He was to be called Jesus, meaning “Jehovah the Saviour,” because He should save His people from their sins.

Son of God from eternity, He is called Son of God as born into this world. As the prophetic psalm had said, Jehovah addresses Him thus, “Thou art My Son, *this day* have I begotten Thee.”

Come Under the Law

In Galatians iv. we are told, “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” This subjection to the law (of God) is brought out first in Luke ii., in His circumcision the eighth day, and in His presentation as a first-born son (though the sacrifice offered was of course for the mother). Every first-born son was holy to the Lord, an ordinance which He fulfilled in Himself. Then in His life that Law, which was ever a burden to sinful Israel, was always His delight, as Psalm xl. declares, “I delight to do Thy will O My God, yea, Thy law is within My heart.” Is not this set forth by the ark, keeping unbroken the tables of the covenant? He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it.

His Early Life

The reticence of God's word concerning the boyhood and youth of the Lord Jesus is in remarkable contrast with what men have foolishly imagined about it—such puerilities as His giving life to birds He had made of clay. What the Bible does reveal no man would have imagined.

The visit to the Temple with His parents when He was twelve years of age brings out many points of great significance. First, His consciousness of being the Son of God, and His preoccupation with His Father's things. Second, the comeliness of His listening to the doctors and asking them questions, but not yet teaching them. Third, His wonder at His parents' lack of understanding: "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Lastly His subjection to them, as He went back with them to Nazareth.

This is a picture of a boy of twelve, yet more than a boy. If we understand it, we shall not be surprised to read next that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men." It was the unfolding of the perfect bud into the perfect flower.

His Baptism and Anointing

John's baptism was above all a baptism of repentance from sins, but Jesus submitted to it to "fulfil all righteousness." Neither then nor at any other time did He ever confess to sin or failure, but He insisted upon being baptised to demonstrate that it was the right path for all the godly in Israel to take. But when we consider how the holy men of old without exception confessed their sinfulness—whether Moses, "faithful in all Mine house;" or Job, "a perfect and upright man, who feared God and eschewed evil;" or David, "a man after Mine own heart;" when we ponder these, the challenge of the Lord Jesus to His enemies, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" is of the utmost significance. So we have also His positive claim, "I do always those things which please my Father."

Immediately after His baptism He saw the Holy Spirit descend in bodily form as a dove upon Him. This was the well-known symbol of purity, and on Him, the Holy One of

God, the Holy Dove could rest in peace. Of us it is written, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh," but there was no such conflict in Him.

The voice of the Father from Heaven, saying "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased," lets us into a divine secret—the delight of the Father in His Son, as in eternity, so also now in His manhood. Upon those thirty years of obscurity in Nazareth He had looked down in delight—here was a Man indeed after His own heart! What grace it is that, as heaven was opened to Him that day, we should be allowed to share in the Father's thoughts!

E. H. Chamberlain.

(To be continued)

THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS

XIV. Second Epistle, Chapter ii., verses 11-17.

Verses 11-12. "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

In these verses we are still at the end of this present dispensation, when Christendom becomes apostate and falls fully under the power of Satan. It will end in divine judgment; the word "damned" should read "judged" as for example in 1 Peter iv. 6, where the same word is used, "that they might be judged according to men in the flesh."

In verse 10 we are told of those who will be judged, that they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Here it is added that they believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. They had heard the gospel of the grace of God, and knew the truth concerning His salvation in Christ, but would not believe. They preferred their sins and unrighteousness to being saved, and hardened their heart against any love for the truth. They are therefore left behind on earth when Christ comes for His own. To such, God will then act in judicial hardening, sending "strong delusion," or, a working of error, so that they will readily believe falsehood (as it should read), and will receive the antichrist with his blasphemous claims and Satanic deceptions. Then they

will come under God's righteous judgment because they refused good and chose evil.

Verses 13-14. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The chapter commenced with an earnest appeal to the Thessalonian believers not to be misled into thinking that the persecutions and tribulations which they were suffering meant that the day of the Lord's judgments had overtaken them. That could not be so, because certain public events must occur first, which were obviously still future; and only after that would the judgment of the living take place.

Now in these verses 13 and 14, the apostle further reassures these believers, by declaring again that God had chosen them from the beginning for salvation (not judgment). They had believed the gospel, were beloved of the Lord, had been wrought in by the Holy Spirit, and were destined by God for glory (not judgment)—the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ His Son.

In connection with the "sanctification of the Spirit," we may remind ourselves that the Israelites of old were set apart for God by their natural descent from Abraham through Isaac and Jacob—they were sanctified by the flesh. Peter declares Christians to be sanctified by the Spirit (1 Peter i. 2). It is the Holy Spirit who works in sinners of every nation to repent, believe the gospel, and receive Christ as Saviour, thus being born again of the Spirit and set apart for God as His children.

All this is in complete contrast with the unrepentant unbelievers who will fall into the terrible power of Satan and his antichrist, and come under the solemn judgment of God. Paul grieved, we may be sure, that his converts were in suffering and trouble, but he rejoiced at the same time in giving thanks to God always for these believers, and did not weary in exhorting them to persevere in the Christian path, however difficult it might be.

Verse 15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." Being now delivered from erroneous ideas about the day of the Lord, these Christians were now to stand fast in the faith, and to hold firmly what the apostle had taught them.

Several times in the New Testament reference is made to the traditions of men, that is, human teachings given over (or handed down) to be kept. For instance, in Mark vii., verses 3 and 5, we have "the tradition of the elders;" verse 8, "the tradition of men;" and verse 9, "your own tradition." The Lord condemned all that. Here however, the traditions were the Christian teachings given by the apostle of the Lord, as also in chapter iii., verse 6, "the tradition which he received of us," and in 1 Corinthians xi. 2, "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances (literally, traditions, being the same word as that used here in 2 Thessalonians) as I delivered them to you."

"Whether by word or our epistle:" it appears that "our" applies to word as well as to epistle. The literal rendering is, "whether by word or by letter of ours." In other words, the reference is to apostolic teaching both by word of mouth, and also in writing as we have it in the New Testament.

In large areas of Christendom today, it is maintained that the Bible alone is not sufficient, and that the traditions of the church must also be observed by the faithful. Others hold that we must understand the Bible according to the tradition of the early Christian leaders, the "Fathers." In such ways Satan aims to set aside the direct authority of God in His word, and to force open the door to uncertainty and error.

The Bible states the truth as to itself: "The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy iii, verses 15-17).

The Bible also declares that believers have the Holy Spirit as their Teacher, and need no other. "But the anointing

which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1 John ii. 27).

Thus everyone is bound to receive the scriptures as God speaking directly to him, without human intermediary; and is responsible directly to God for believing and obeying His word. This is not to say that we should refuse help in understanding the scriptures offered by those who are able to give it; indeed we are all to be helpers one of another in this, as in other good things.

This section of the Epistle closes with an inspired prayer. Verses 16-17: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work."

God the Father has revealed Himself in God the Son, the God of love and grace Who would have His own to enjoy unending consolation (or encouragement) and good hope, whatever may be their actual circumstances in this needy world. So the prayer is addressed to our Lord and to our Father as one God, and request is for the heart's encouragement at a time when the believers were liable to discouragement through prolonged persecution and tribulation. We too in our day have trials and sorrows, but we can always count upon the God of love for His wonderful comfort and encouragement.

The prayer then asks that the believers should be established, that is, firmly fixed, in every good word and work (or as some read, work and word). Many words said (or written), and many things done, go to make up the daily life of the Christian, whether in the home, or with neighbours, in the company of other Christians, or in contact with unbelievers at work and elsewhere. These ought all to be *good* words and works, and that regularly and continuously, so that we are firmly fixed in them. May God produce this in us by His gracious Holy Spirit, for the praise of our Lord and the blessing of all those whose lives we touch.

W. H. L. Graham.

THE MONEY OF THE BIBLE

III. The Widow's Mites

(Read Mark xii, 41-44)

We have in these verses the case of another offering of money made for religious purposes, but in coins of a different denomination and value. These offerings were not collected in Galilee and elsewhere, as in the case of the silver half-shekel (Matthew xvii. 24-27), to which reference has already been made in a previous article. They were voluntary offerings made in the precincts of the temple itself by those who went there to worship. The proceeds would be used to defray the expenses of the priestly and Levitical services and of the maintenance of the temple buildings. On this particular occasion, the feast of the passover being at hand, special offerings were no doubt made to meet its expenses.

The incident of the widow's generous gift occurred at a very solemn juncture in the ministry of our Lord. It was three or four days only before His crucifixion. The hopeless spiritual condition of the nation was vividly exhibited just previously to the disciples by the fruitless fig tree which after our Lord's curse withered away from its roots. The day following was marked by encounters in the temple courts with the chief priests and scribes and elders (Mark xi. 27), who sought to entangle the Lord in His talk by their questions. Baffled in their schemes to find some ground for formal accusation against Him, they departed, and the Lord sat down over against the treasury, where on a previous occasion He had sat down and taught the people (John viii. 20).

We gather from Jewish sources that this part of the temple cloisters was so called because of a number of chests or boxes which were placed there for the reception of such offerings as the pious were inclined to give. It is said that the boxes were provided with wide apertures or mouths which tapered down to narrow throats, and were known as "trumpets" because of this shape.

We read that the Lord beheld, or rather was observing, how the multitude was casting money into the offertory boxes. Many of the contributors were rich, and they apparently were throwing in much, that is, many coins, ostentatiously, as it is

the habit of many to do on such occasions.

But an instance of giving of an altogether different order came under our Lord's observation. It was an exception to the general rule. A woman came to the boxes alone (see margin, "one"). She was a widow, and desolate, as so many of that class were in that land. Moreover, it is specially noted that she was poor, a pauper in fact, perhaps one who had been impoverished by the rapacity of the scribes, who, as the Lord had just said, had made it a practice to "devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers" (verse 40).

The woman's poverty and distress had not soured her heart, or dried up the springs of her gratitude to God. She would not be denied the joy of giving to the Great and Good Giver. She went up to the house of God with her offering, and cast into the large box her two small mites (lepta), which, as Mark explains for the benefit of Roman readers of his Gospel, make one farthing (kodrantees, or quadrans). The widow then, unconscious it would appear of the observant eyes of the Lord Jesus, went her way, bereft of all visible means of support for the future apart from such labour as she might be able to undertake. She had parted with all her substance, and in effect committed herself to the tender mercies of Jehovah, Who is, in His holy habitation, to which she had come, the Judge, especially of the widows and fatherless (Psalm lxxviii. 5; cxlvi. 9).

The Mites, or Lepta

The coins named in this account were not made of silver, but of brass or copper, and therefore of comparatively small circulating value. The rich folk were each casting into the treasury chests many of the brass or copper pieces, as they could easily do out of their abundant wealth.

The two coins contributed by the poor widow were called lepta. The name, lepton, is of Greek origin. There was such a coin extant at that day, and, in point of fact, its name is still retained in the Greek currency of our own time. The two pieces were equivalent to one kodrantees, or quadrans, which was a small Roman coin. The quadrans, being a Roman coin, could not itself have been used as an offering.

since the use of foreign money was forbidden in the temple service. On this account, money-changers, whose tables the Lord had overturned on the previous day (Mark xi. 15), plied their calling in the sacred courts, for the convenience of those who, like the Ethiopian eunuch, for example, came to Jerusalem from afar, and did not possess the requisite Jewish currency.

The copper mite, or lepton, of which the widow was able to offer two pieces for the service of God, was no doubt the Jewish coin, known as the perutah. It was the tiniest coin in circulation, and weighed only 15 grains. Coins of a similar weight are still produced for currency. A bronze coin corresponding in weight is struck in London for use in Malta, where it passes current as one-third of a British farthing.

Besides the parallel passage in Luke xxi. 1-4, allusion was made by our Lord to the small face value of the mite or lepton on one other occasion. Referring to the present penal condition of the guilty Jewish people under the figure of the imprisoned debtor, the Lord said, "I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the very last mite" (Luke xii. 59, R.V.).

What the Mites Teach

(1). We cannot but recall that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Proverbs xv. 3). Especially in "the temple" does He scrutinize our acts. Before the day of the judgment-seat He passes under review our motives and the extent of our abilities. Our gifts are appraised, even as they are given, and their relative merits infallibly assigned.

Sitting over against the treasury, the Lord saw some, no doubt, who gave a tenth of their possessions. But on whatever scale they taxed themselves, they all, in his estimation, fell short in comparison. He did not say their gifts possessed no value, but that of the widow woman was superior. Her offering was judged by its "quality" and not by its "quantity." Such was the Lord's standard of value at that time, and the record is given that we may apply the test to our own offerings today.

The widow gave to God out of her penury, unlike the

rich who contributed out of their overplus. A similar spirit of sacrifice was exhibited by the assemblies of Macedonia, who in a time of much affliction showed abundant joy, and in their deep poverty displayed rich liberality (2 Corinthians viii. 2).

(2). God beheld the works of His creation, and saw that they were good. Moreover, God *loves* a cheerful giver. Was it not some joy to our Lord at the close of a day of conflict with the hollow formality of the religious guides of the people to observe the simple piety and noble munificence of a destitute widow? In vain He looked among the priests and scribes and the thronging crowds for those who understood and sought after God. The refreshment and delight of His spirit was found in that excellent saint (Psalm xvi. 3), despised though she would be by the Pharisees. He Who had Himself become poor "for our sakes," Who "sold all that He had," saw some feeble likeness to His own great sacrifice.

The incident provided one of those glorious gleams of light and comfort granted to the Man of sorrows in the dark and darkening hours of that closing week. There was a joy for Him in the widow and her mites, in the Hosannas of the children, in Bethany and its precious ointment, in the robber's confession and appeal. Thankfully, joyfully, the obedient Son accepted these favours from the Father who sent Him. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." "Of such is the Kingdom of God."

(3). It is important to perceive what is the divine basis of valuation. The standard of the sanctuary is quite different from that of the market-place. In the house of God "actions are weighed." It is therefore possible that thirty grains of copper may there become greater in value than thirty talents of gold.

The magnitude of the donation does not count so much in the assessments of the heavenly kingdom as the amount reserved. The rich still retained an overplus, but the widow nothing. God does not refuse the poor offerings of the poor, but He will not accept the poor offerings of the rich (Malachi i. 13).

It has been said that a practical test of the quality of our gifts is the inquiry to oneself, Do I feel this gift? Does it really affect me? If the answer is not honestly in the affirmative, I should increase my gift. For instance, if I have given £1 without feeling it, let me try what is the effect of £5.

(4). Prudent and cautious persons sometimes excuse themselves for their lack of generous giving by the plea that their money may be misused by the recipients. It is possible that the widow's mites may have helped to provide the fee paid by the chief priests to Judas, the traitor. It is certain, however, that the Lord with His commendation brought the gift specially to the notice of the disciples. She did not know the foul scheme of the priests and Judas. Her gift was to God, and the Lord looked at the purpose in the heart of the giver (2 Cor. ix. 7). In due time the Lord would take account of the deeds of Judas and the responsible leaders of the people.

An erroneous application of the Lord's commendation of the widow's act is sometimes made. Persons speak of contributing their "mite", meaning thereby that they have consciously subscribed a small sum, or a smaller sum than they might have done. But their remark nevertheless assumes that they can claim the Lord's approval of their "mite" equally with the widow of old. But before such a claim is made it should be remembered that the widow did not give only one of her mites, but both; she did not give the "half of her goods" like Zacchaeus, but "all her living."

W. J. Hocking.

(This article was written in 1921, and is reprinted from "The Bible Monthly" of April in that year. This should be borne in mind when considering the references to current coinage.)

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