



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Contents

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

COMMITTEE NOTES

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY BIBLE CLASS

by J. Riddle

TESTIMONY IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

by I. McKee

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN A MODERN WORLD

by W. A. Boyd

PAUL'S METAPHORS

by J. A. Davidson

JEHOVAH'S PASSOVER

by W. W. Fereday

**THE PERPLEXED PROPHET:
AN OVERVIEW OF HABAKKUK**

by G. Hutchinson

SPARROWS

by J. Burnett

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by J. W. Ronald

GOOD TIDINGS FROM HEAVEN

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

This is a bi-monthly magazine for the propagation of the Word of God and thus the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (028) 9062 1343.
E-mail: AT@bcurrie.free-online.co.uk

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (028) 4062 4238.
E-mail: AT@wmneill.free-online.co.uk

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

—————∞)∞—————

This magazine is supported solely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. No member of the committee, author of articles or any other person connected with the magazine receives payment, remuneration or gratuity of any kind. This magazine is not to be sold.

Friends wishing to support the work of this magazine may kindly forward their practical fellowship to:

William Neill, at the above address.

Please make all monetary contributions payable to "Assembly Testimony Magazine." Money orders and Bank Drafts please make payable in U.K. currency.

Please address correspondence for new orders, back numbers, changes of address and cancellations to William Neill.

You can help us by stating the NUMBER of copies required, with NAME and ADDRESS, including POSTAL CODE, IN BLOCK LETTERS, please.

© This magazine is copyrighted. For permission to reproduce any article or part thereof please contact the Editor.

EDITOR'S MESSAGE

Many of the world's leaders want us to believe that society is getting better and better and is evolving into some kind of a great Utopia and the age of Aquarius, when every problem will be solved and all men will live in peace and prosperity. This is just the opposite to what is taught in the Scriptures of truth. 2Tim.3.13 states clearly and unambiguously, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." 2Tim.3.1 tells us that such is a mark of the last days, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."

There is little doubt that we are presently in such days. It is most interesting to note that the word for 'perilous' is only used on one other occasion in the New Testament and that is in Matt.8.28, "there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding **fierce**, so that no man might pass by that way." It seems clear that these demon possessed men were showing features which would be widespread in the last days. Such features were, devoid of clothes; deranged mind; dwelling among the tombs and destructive power. These are seen on every hand. Immodest dress, an interest in the occult, pornography and a rejection of authority are acceptable now in society. Not only in society generally, but in what we know as Christendom. Note v5, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof:"

What resources do we have in the midst of this? What will keep us in touch with heaven until He comes for His bride? Do we join in and have some great ecumenical umbrella? The apostolic command is clear, "from such turn away." The first resource we have is **A PARTING FROM EVIL**, even or perhaps, especially, when it is in a religious guise.

The latter part of the chapter gives us four more resources. These are:

- **v10-12 - PATTERN OF PAUL:**

Timothy was thoroughly acquainted with Paul and his life. This was more than mental knowledge; it implies to carefully note with a view to reproduce. What was the basis of Paul's life? Note what is first, "my doctrine." This is the basis of all else. My convictions control my character; my beliefs control my behaviour. Only then does he speak of his, "manner of life." My dear brethren, if we are not right in doctrine we will not be right in anything.

- **v11 - PRESENCE OF THE LORD:**

We may say that such a life will be hard and costly. Paul tells us of another precious resource, v11 "but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me." He is still the same and we can rely on His companionship and presence when we do what is right and Scriptural. Very often it is in the storms of life that we experience His nearness in a special way.

- **v14 - PERSISTENCE IN THE TRUTH:**

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*:".

He was to abide in the unchanging character of truth and not be blown about by the sin that was all around. Error is always looking for something new and novel but we remember 2.2, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, **the same** commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

The character of those who taught underpinned the truth. Good men teaching good things will produce good Christians.

• **v16 - PROFITABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES:**

“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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Scripture is PERFECT since it is given by inspiration and it is PROFITABLE. Scripture is “inspired” which means, God breathed. Not that the authors were breathed into, but the words of God were breathed out. This is NOT superintendence; suggestion; direction; elevation of writer’s mind. It is God breathing without destroying the personality of the human instrument.

Since this is so, we should spend time over the inspired record and carefully note and weigh every word. If we want to know the will of God, it is revealed exclusively in the Scriptures. God will never guide contrary to the Scriptures, nor should our personal experiences override the Scriptures. This wonderful book is the only guide book for believers.

The study of the Word and obedience to that which is revealed will ensure that we are “perfect” - complete, entire and mature thoroughly - and “furnished” - completely fitted out - unto all good works. Thus the man of God, in following the word and ways of God, is in total contrast to the defiled society at the beginning of the chapter.

Let us fully utilise these resources and thus be preserved until we see His face which may not be long delayed. Rom.13.11, “for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

COMMITTEE NOTES

In our reflections on the year that is past, we recall the passing of beloved brethren in Christ who were marked by a knowledge of God. Steadfast, highly principled and guides in the assembly for many years, such are no longer with us. We cherish the memory of these dear brethren who are now in the presence of the One Whom they loved and served.

Sadly too, in our reflections, we feel that the spirit of the age has left its mark upon us in many ways. Do we not lament at times the absence of blessing in the Gospel? Are we not conscious of a barrenness in our gatherings - especially as we meet to remember our Lord Jesus on the first day of the week? Do younger brethren have the same interest and convictions regarding the assembly as that of a previous generation?

As we examine ourselves spiritually and personally we feel a lack of love and true devotion to the Person of our Lord Jesus. How relevant the words of Christ Himself “... and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold,” Matt.24.12. Thankfully God has not changed. He knows us with all our failure and sin and graciously pardons and restores where repentance and obedience to His Word are seen. May the Lord enable all of us to take stock and adjust our lives accordingly, in view of the brevity of life and the nearness of His coming.

The aim of the Assembly Testimony magazine always has been the circulation of written ministry that aims to assist in the understanding of the Scriptures and thus is for the edifying of His people. We greatly appreciate our editor, secretary and accountant who give of their invaluable time and skills in this work. We are also indebted to those who contribute articles to the magazine or help by their prayers and financial support.

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

DEUTERONOMY

(1) INTRODUCTION

The Hebrew name for the fifth book of Moses is *Haddebarim* “The words,” and the title is taken from the first verse of the book: “These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness.” Our title, Deuteronomy, was first assigned to this book in the Septuagint Version, made towards the end of the third century B.C., in which the Old Testament Scriptures were translated from Hebrew into Greek. The name is taken from the Greek *deuteros* (second) and *nomos* (law). We must not think, however, that Deuteronomy is simply a repetition of previous instructions, with particular reference to the new generation of Israelites who had grown up in the wilderness. This is clear from 29.1, “These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, *beside* the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.” As we shall see, the book of Deuteronomy sets out the terms and conditions on which Israel could enjoy their inheritance in Canaan.

In our introductory study, we must consider:

- (1) The position of the book,
- (2) The purpose of the book,
- (3) The plan of the book.

1) THE POSITION OF THE BOOK

There is a progressive spiritual order in the first five books of the Bible. In fact, it has been said that the Pentateuch can be regarded as the Bible in miniature. In Genesis, we have *ruin* through man’s sin; in Exodus, *deliverance* by “blood” and “power;” in Leviticus, *communion* on the basis of atonement; in Numbers, *direction* under the guidance of God; in Deuteronomy, *destination* provided by God. While each of these is a study in itself, the five books together comprise a beautiful picture of salvation.

There are other ways to look at these books. For example, in Genesis, the doctrine of *election* is clearly taught. The sovereign choice of God is seen throughout the book. In this connection, notice Paul’s observations in Rom.9.11 on God’s choice of Jacob as opposed to Esau. In Exodus, the elect people are *redeemed* from bondage in the same way that those who are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” have been “redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” 1Pet.1.2, 18-19. In the book of Leviticus, the redeemed people are engaged in *worship and priesthood* in the same way that those “redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ” are “an holy priesthood” and a “royal priesthood,” 1Pet.2.5, 9. In Numbers, the priestly are engaged in *service, walk, and warfare* in the wilderness in the same way that

priestly people today are equally “strangers and pilgrims” who must “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul,” 1Pet.2.11. In Deuteronomy, the wilderness gives place to the land of *inheritance and possession* in the same way that whilst we are at present “partakers of Christ’s sufferings,” we will be “glad also with exceeding joy” when His glory shall be revealed.” Then, we will enjoy to the full our “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” 1Pet.5.13, 1.4. We shall see, of course that, strictly speaking, Canaan is not a picture of heaven, and that this only makes the lessons of Deuteronomy all the more relevant to ourselves. However, Deuteronomy is not only the last book of the five: it beautifully and properly *completes* the Pentateuch, both for Israel, and for us. This brings us to:

2) THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

The grand purpose of Deuteronomy was to show God’s people the way to permanent enjoyment of the “good land,” 1.25, 1.35, 3.25, 4.21-22, etc. The narrative of the book is punctuated with such expressions as “the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it,” 15.4. “Inherit” and “possess,” and their associates, are key words, and are found frequently. God wanted His people to enjoy their inheritance, but this demanded high standards, and failure to maintain them could only bring dispossession. This is spelt out with overwhelming clarity in ch.28. Note the consequences of obedience in v1-13, and of disobedience in v15-68. Possession and enjoyment of the land depended on obedience to the Word of God. Divine blessing is *always* dependent on obedience. This is why *we* are to be “obedient children,” 1Pet.1.14. There is nothing mysterious about spiritual enjoyment and spiritual strength. The Lord Jesus taught this clearly: “Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock,” Matt.7.24.

While we must obviously recognise, as a matter of sound exegesis, that the book of Deuteronomy was written for Israel, we must also remember that “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning.” The “statutes and judgments” stress principles which are common to both Old *and* New Testaments, and we must make it our business to identify these lessons. Deuteronomy, with its 34 chapters, should not be a formidable proposition, but a powerful tool in Christian living. It can help us to possess and enjoy our spiritual inheritance *now*, for whilst we do have “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved *in heaven*,” we also have a *present* inheritance in Christ. We have been “blessed ... with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,” Eph.1.3. Those blessings are enumerated in the epistle. For example, “chosen ... in Him;” “predestinated ... unto the adoption of children;” “accepted in the Beloved;” “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins,” 1.4-7. Surely we want to possess and enjoy such a rich inheritance! Deuteronomy will help us here, for whilst Canaan cannot be a picture of our eternal inheritance in heaven, it is certainly a picture of our current inheritance in Christ. Our eternal security is never in question once we have received Christ as Lord and Saviour, but the enjoyment and possession of our blessings in Him can be speedily lost without submission and obedience to the will of God in our lives. This is the broad lesson of Deuteronomy

for us. With this in mind, we should add that whilst, historically, Israel entered the wilderness before they entered the land, Christians know what it is to be in “the wilderness” (Numbers) and in “the land” (Deuteronomy) simultaneously!

It is worth pointing out that Israel, disobedient and stiff-necked, has never ceased to be God’s people, even when dispossessed of their inheritance in Canaan. The latter chapters of Deuteronomy will make this clear, and it is hardly necessary to add that both Old and New Testaments concur in this. See the powerful arguments of the apostle Paul in Rom.9-11.

3) THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

The book of Deuteronomy can be divided into two main parts:

(A) The retrospective section, ch.1-11 and

(B) The prospective section, ch.12-34.

A) Looking backwards. Chapters 1-11

This section of Deuteronomy is historical in character, and does two things. In the first place, it states certain facts, ch.1-3, and the second place, it applies those facts, ch.4-11.

i) **Ch.1-3** are ‘Bald’ history. They relate historical facts without comment. (Apart from 1.11, “the Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as He hath promised you!”). Moses traces the journey from Horeb, via Kadesh-barnea, to the plains of Moab. This section emphasises the need to know the *facts* of the Bible. We must know what it actually *says*. The teaching of the Bible is rooted in *fact*. One of the most significant verses lies on the threshold of the section. “There are eleven days’ journey from Horeb, the way of mount Seir, unto Kadesh-barnea,” 1.2. It is a very solemn warning of the consequences of disobedience and unbelief. Eleven days ultimately became thirty-eight years. See 2.14.

ii) **Ch.4-11** interpret the facts. They give us their significance. In these chapters Moses emphasises the *lessons* of their history. In ch.4-7, he reviews events at the *beginning* of the journey: in ch.8-10, he reviews events *during* the journey: in ch.11, he describes the land at the *end* of the journey. These chapters deal extensively with the qualities required in God’s people. Great emphasis is placed on the fact that Israel was to be utterly devoted to Him, with corresponding devotion and obedience to His Word. This is emphasised by the repeated expression, “The Lord *thy* God,” which occurs on countless occasions in the book. Ch.11 concludes with these words: “Behold I have set before you this day a blessing and a curse: a blessing if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God ... and a curse, if ye will not obey.”

B) Looking forward. Chapters 12-34

This section of the book gives us the final instructions of Moses to Israel, ch.12-30, and the final actions of Moses before his death, ch.31-34.

i) **The final instructions of Moses, ch.12-30.** The teaching of Moses commences with the words, “These are the statutes and judgments which ye shall observe to do in the land.” Previous references to the “statutes and judgments” are general in nature, and emphasise *how* they were to be kept. A right attitude to divine authority must be established before attention can be given to details. Divine instructions

would become a mere chore without obedience flowing out of devotion. See 6.5-6, reminding us of the words of the Lord Jesus, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments," Jn.14.15.

The "statutes and judgments," enumerated in ch.12-26, are most comprehensive, and embrace all aspects of national and individual life. They begin with particular emphasis on the "place which the Lord your God shall choose," 12.5, 11, 18, 21, 26. The subsequent instructions include the procedure to be followed in cases of reported idolatry, ch.13, dietary regulations, ch.14, cities of refuge, ch.19, and divorce, ch.24. These are just samples of the wide variety of subject-matter in these chapters! We can consider this to be the central section of Deuteronomy: it is rich in lessons for the believer. We learn that the Word of God touches every part of our lives.

Ch.27-28 extend ch.12-26 by enumerating the results and consequences of obedience and disobedience. The subsequent history of Israel has shewn the accuracy of these predictions. In ch.29-30, the whole body of teaching commencing with ch.4 is presented in the form of a covenant. The covenant enumerates the conditions in which Israel would possess Canaan, and has particular reference to the nation's restoration from dispersion and captivity following repentance.

ii) *The final actions of Moses before his death, ch.31-34.* These chapters cover the charge of Moses to Joshua and the Levites, ch.31, the song of Moses describing the faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of Israel, ch.32, the blessing of Moses upon the tribes, ch.33, and the death of Moses on Mount Nebo, ch.34.

Sir Winston Churchill described Moses as 'the greatest leader the world has ever seen,' but the Bible says, "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."

In our next paper, we will address the historical details given in Chapter 1.

—to be continued (D.V.)

Testimony in Troublous Times

by Ian McKee (Northern Ireland)

Paper 11 — THE MAN FOR THE MOMENT (Ezra Chapter 7.1-10)

There is a period of 58 years between Ezra chapters 6 and 7. This was a time of considerable political significance when the expansion of the Persian empire was checked, in the west, by the Greeks at the battles of Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis. Of this, nothing is recorded in Scripture.

However, the Divine record does bear testimony to the exercise and faith in this period of the devout Jew Mordecai who, under the hand of God, preserved from annihilation all Jews throughout the Persian empire. That story is recounted for us in the book of Esther. It is commended as associated reading because the history from Ezra chapter 7, and in Nehemiah, is a direct result of Mordecai's, and Esther's, faithfulness and courage at the Persian court. Using them, God preserved the Jews, including Ezra, Nehemiah and all their worthy contemporaries.

The events we will now consider occur at Babylon “in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king,” Ezra 7.7. This is BC 458, some 78 years from Zerubbabel’s return in the reign of Cyrus, Ezra chapter 1. Although Artaxerxes Longimanus, the son of Xerxes I who married Esther, is an important historical figure, Scripture focuses only on his association with Ezra’s and, later, Nehemiah’s expeditions to Jerusalem. It is also important to note that it is not Artaxerxes’ genealogy and the history of the Persian dynasty that is here recorded, but Ezra’s lineage from Aaron.

Ezra’s ancestors (Ezra 7.1-5)

Ezra was a direct descendant, probably a great-great-grandson, of Seraiah the High Priest who had been executed by Nebuchadnezzar, 2 Kings 25.18-21. Now, 129 years after that day of infamy, Ezra is preparing to return to Jerusalem. In his genealogy he could also count Hilkiah the High Priest who “found the book of the law in the house of the Lord”, which was instrumental in revival in the reign of King Josiah, 2 Kings 22.8. Also in his lineage was Zadok, who remained loyal to David in both the Absalom and Adonijah rebellions and was rewarded with the position of High Priest in place of the treasonable Abiathar, 1 Kings 2.35. Further back still was Phineas who used the javelin to oppose Israel’s compromise with the Midianites and stay the plague from Israel, Num.25.7,8. Also there was Eleazar and Aaron. What illustrious lineage!

The secret of Ezra’s greatness (Ezra 7.6-10)

However, it was not his links with noble forebears that determined Ezra’s greatness. “He was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the Lord God of Israel had given”, Ezra 7.6. A man of the book, he interpreted, unfolded and taught the meaning of God’s Word to God’s people. He was learned in the Scriptures, having made the written law the subject of detailed investigation. Ezra was the principal example in his time of the type of men we long to see raised up in our day: those who give themselves to the study of God’s Word, who become expert in the understanding of its meaning and skillful in its teaching.

But what was it that developed these abilities? Simply this, “Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments”, Ezra 7.10. First of all, he recognised that the Scriptures had been given by the Lord God of Israel. This gave him a reverential appreciation of the sacred text. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him”, Psa.25.14. And our appreciation should be no less than his because “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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”, 2 Tim.3.16,17.

Secondly, with self-judgment he sought to acquire the highest possible knowledge of God’s mind and will through sacrificial, diligent, methodical study of the Scriptures. This required whole-hearted, resolute, personal application. He was not only devoted to the study of God’s Word in a general way, but was disciplined to seek its precise meaning and purpose. “O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day”, Psa.119.97.

The third aspect of the secret of Ezra's greatness for God was in his preparedness to apply those same Scriptures to his own life "and to do it". It was not a matter of academic study to secure a reputation for knowledge and ability. Rather he aimed to scrupulously obey God's Word, become the embodiment of those truths and fulfil the will of God. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine", John 7.17. This attitude brings its own reward. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed", Jms.1.25.

It was only after he had applied doctrine to himself that Ezra would "teach in Israel statutes and judgments". Thus he had moral authority. Without such authority, teaching is powerless. But where moral authority exists, it will have influence upon succeeding generations. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also", 2 Tim.2.2.

Let us not pass over this lightly for men of this calibre are rare and greatly needed. Ezra became a great man for God in his day because of his single-minded, thoughtful, character-forming exercise in the secret place. What he became was in direct proportion to the quality and quantity of the time he spent in private in God's presence with God's Word. Surely there is a lesson here for us?

(to be continued, DV)

Christian Conduct in a Modern World

by Walter A. Boyd (South Africa)

Paper 19

No.5 - THE CONSECRATED SERVANT (Continued)

(B) Paul and the Poor Saints (Romans 15.25 - 29).

In our last paper we noticed that the paragraph comprising ch.15.25-29 divides as follows:

1. The Special Commission (v25).
2. The Saints' Contribution (v26).
3. The Gentiles' Indebtedness (v27).
4. The Servant's Commitment (v28,29).

We dealt with the first two and now we come to sections 3 and 4.

3. The Gentiles' Indebtedness, (v27). The Apostle demonstrates that all the Gentiles are indebted to the Jewish believers and that the Gentiles in Macedonia and Achaia responded willingly to that obligation.

(A) Their Moral Obligation. Paul uses three terms to add emphasis, and points to the fact that the gift was the discharge of an obligation upon the Gentile saints.

i) "*Yea, it hath been their good pleasure,*" (R.V.). He not only re-states the

pleasure of the Gentiles to send help (see v26, “For it hath pleased them...”), but he goes on to explain why they were pleased so to do. This was more than philanthropy; it was motivated by a deep spiritual debt.

ii) **“And their debtors they are.”** In ch.11 Paul speaks at length of the nature and extent of the debt owed by the Gentiles to the Jewish nation. The Gentiles have been brought into the rich blessings of salvation, having been grafted in as a wild Olive shoot. They must, therefore, be careful to avoid boasting or pride. They need to remember that they are in the position of a debtor, 11.18-20. While that is true nationally, Paul is speaking here more particularly of the debt of the Gentiles in Macedonia and Achaia, who heard the gospel through the sacrifice of Jewish believers. As the Jewish saints travelled away from their city in fulfilment of the commission by the Lord, they eventually reached the Gentiles in “the uttermost parts of the earth,” Acts 1.8. Many were scattered among the Gentiles by persecution, and took the gospel of the risen Christ with them. The Gentiles were continually under an obligation - they were debtors.

iii) **“Their duty is also to minister to them.”** Their moral obligation must be discharged - it is a duty. The Gentiles have been made partakers of their “spiritual things.” The word “partakers” is from the same root as “contribution” in v26. The contribution is an exchange in mutual fellowship: one is spiritual, the other is material. The practical implications of this section are clear. Those who receive spiritual help are debtors, with a duty towards their helpers. This supports Paul’s stance in v22-25, when he mentions his intention to visit Rome, and receive their practical help to move on towards Spain. That visit was planned so that he might impart some spiritual gift to the saints in Rome, and have fruit in the gospel in their city. The fellowship that Paul expected the saints in Rome to extend to him, 15.24, would help him on towards Spain. Thus, the diversion to Jerusalem, en-route to Rome, would provide a practical example of what he is teaching in respect of the duty and debt in spiritual things.

(B) Their Willing Response. “To minister to them in carnal things” is to provide a service to the needy saints at Jerusalem in relation to bodily things. Obviously their poverty was extreme, and affected them physically. James addresses the same subject in his letter where he asks, “If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, ‘depart in peace. Be ye warmed and filled’; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” Jms.2.15,16. The saints in Macedonia and Achaia were not heartless like that, they responded willingly and with pleasure in a way that met the need in Jerusalem.

4. The Servant’s Commitment, (v28,29).

In these verses we see the Apostle’s commitment to the service he has to perform, and to the saints for whom he will perform it. The gift being sent by his hand was motivated by spiritual love and was given in acknowledgement of a spiritual debt by the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Paul recognises this in his use of the words, “perform,” “seal” and “fruit.” To him this was not a perfunctory task, he felt the responsibility of his service in a three-fold way. *His Service* in delivering the gift to the saints in Jerusalem is shown in the phrase, “Performed this,” v28, which links to

his “ministry” to the saints, v15. *His Stewardship* in the safe delivery of the gift for the saints in Macedonia and Achaia is seen in the expression, “and have sealed to them this fruit,” v28. *His Service* towards the saints in Rome in declaring the truth of God, is seen in the words, “When I come, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ,” v29 R.V.

i) His Service to the saints in Jerusalem (v28). The word “perform” indicates a task fully accomplished, or finished in detail. Such was the significance of this ministry, v25, that Paul could not leave it undone or half done. Whatever his hand found to do, he did it with all his might! Amidst a busy life in the service of Christ, with all its appointments and pressures, he is not tardy in any task he undertakes. Nor should we be. Whatever we have to do, we should ensure that it is completed. If a job is worth doing, it is worth doing well.

ii) His Stewardship for the saints in Macedonia and Achaia (v28). For Paul, the task will not be completed until he has ‘sealed to them this fruit’ What exactly is meant by the word “sealed” is not certain. In those days seals were prominent in Jewish life. Offerings brought to the Temple were inspected, and when the temple officer was satisfied as to its suitability it was sealed. When a farmer brought his grain to a merchant for purchase, and upon inspection of it the merchant was satisfied with the quality and quantity, he sealed it. This may well be what Paul had in mind for the gift. When he offered it to the needy saints at Jerusalem, and they checked it for quantity with an accompanying letter from the saints in Macedonia and Achaia, it would be accepted and received from Paul’s hand. Paul’s practice when handling money was always transparent as he sought to “provide things honest in the sight of all men,” 12.17. We ought to ensure the completion of any task in the same manner, so that our honesty will stand the closest scrutiny.

iii) His Service to the saints in Rome by declaring the gospel (v29). Paul intended that when he arrived in Rome he would make full use of the opportunity the visit afforded. He would not while away his time in sightseeing or leisure activities. There was serious business to be done. Notice his confidence in the will of God. He has intended for some time to visit them, preach the gospel among them, and see fruit for his labours, ch.1.11,13. He speaks now in ch.15 with the calm assurance and confidence of a servant who has seen God bless his earlier labours in many regions. His intended journey is subject to the will of God; and while he could not have looked forward and seen in detail how and when he would arrive in Rome, yet he was confident he would reach there.

He was equally confident that when he did reach Rome, it would be in the full complement of the blessing of Christ. The word Paul uses in 15.28, “I will come to you” is the same word used by the Lord when He said “I will come again,” Jn.14.3. It means not only his arrival, but all the blessings and benefits that would attend his arrival. Paul is sure that as he travels and when he reaches the destination, he will have with him the fullness of the blessing of Christ. This is the full complement of spiritual blessings that we are afforded by Christ. Every blessing they needed would be supplied in fullest measure. This full blessing was to be experienced through the labours of a truly consecrated servant of God, in touch with the resources of his Master in heaven, and the needs of saints on earth. —to be continued, (DV)

“PAUL'S METAPHORS”

by J. A. Davidson (Northern Ireland)

PAPER 8 — ACCOUNTANCY : PART 1

The events of September 11, 2001, struck hard at the symbols of World Trade. As we draw near to the end of the age, the nations of earth unite their currencies and set up trading blocks in preparation for the Mark of the Beast and rise of commercial Babylon. “The merchants of the earth waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies,” Rev.18.3.

The emphasis on every High Street in our towns and cities is upon Financial Institutions, Banks and Building Societies. Stock market values, deposit accounts, interest rates, security and profits are only of interest to the worldling in this scene of inflation, devaluation and corruption.

The Saviour said; “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Earthly gold is in danger from the **robber**, material things will be attacked by the **rust** and the grain can be destroyed by the **rodent**. The believer's interest should be Riches in Christ, revenue of Heaven and wealth in the Bank of Glory. We should be trading now in the untarnished currency, the intangible commodities, the unperishable cash of eternal wealth laid up in a deposit account, as the Apostle Paul says; “against that day,” 2Tim.1.10.

INVESTMENT:

The financial account has a major part to play in the decisions of the board in running any business. The Church of the Laodiceans boasted of earthly riches but the Lord of the Churches said: “I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire (**value**, precious, durable) that thou mayest be rich: and white raiment (**virtue**, pure, practical, costly) that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve (**vision**, perception, long range sight) that thou mayest see,” Rev.3.18.

Paul in his writings tells us about the long term faith of Abraham, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted (reckoned by calculation, accredited by imputation) to him for righteousness,” Gal.3.6. Abraham abandoned the short term life of Ur, he parted with Terah (the older man), he separated from Lot (the worldly man) he sent away Ishmael (the carnal man), he even yielded up his beloved Isaac; “accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead,” Heb.11.19. By faith in God’s promises, with his eye upon the future inheritance’ “He went out, not knowing whither he went,” Heb.11.18. “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,” Heb.11.10.

Another good accountant was Moses. “Esteeming (accounting) the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,” Heb.11.26. Moses handled the treasures of Egypt, he held proximity to the throne, he shared in the wealth of the palace. Providence brought him in, faith led him out. In the short term, he exchanged

riches for reproach, as to the present he might have had the pleasures of sin for a season and a pyramid at the end. Instead he identified with despised brick makers as the people of God, he endured as seeing Him Who is invisible and in the long term of faith made a good investment; "He had respect unto the recompence of the reward," Heb.11.26.

It has been well said: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose," (Jim Elliott).

CREDIT AND DEBT:

The keeping of a ledger of profit and loss was a matter first introduced to us before salvation. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mk.8.36 The use of this commercial metaphor in the Lord's teaching is, of course, in the context of training His disciples in true allegiance to Himself and to the Gospel. The parables of the pounds and the talents guide us in trading in the wealth of the Kingdom. The Lord spoke of the Merchant Man seeking goodly pearls "Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it," Matt.13.46. We will be eternally thankful that; "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," 2Cor.8.9.

Paul changed his principles of accountancy when he got saved. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for (on account of) Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but (to be) loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung (offal, that which is thrown to the dogs), that I may win (gain) Christ," Phil.3.7-8. Paul is showing us the profit and loss columns of his new spiritual ledger. As he looks back upon his unsaved days those national, tribal, ceremonial and legal privileges which he once counted as gains, he moved across to the debit side. Assets changed to liabilities, pluses became minuses, gains were really damages, things to let go to the dogs. We should never waste the time of an audience detailing these things which marked us in unsaved days no matter how commendable, never mind exploiting for popularity's sake, the grosser depths of folly without Christ. In Phil.2, we read of what Christ gave up: in Phil.3, what Paul gave up. After 30 years of faithful service, he counts the "gain" of the past as refuse untouchable, the droppings from the table, the wipings of the hands. His present "gain;" the blank side of the balance sheet is filled by Christ, the surpassing devotion to the Lordship of Christ, the costly experimental knowledge of the excellency which really belongs to Christ Himself. Paul's dealings were not speculative. "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain."

—to be continued (D.V.)

ERRATA:- In the November/December issue a poem was printed on page 129 by J. Paterson. There were two errors. Verse 3 should have commenced with "He laid Him" and the last line of verse 4 should have read "was rolled away for empty tomb display." Please accept our apology.

Jehovah's Passover

by W. W. Fereday

PAPER 7 — “WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD”

If the instructions to Israel were very explicit, so that no one could well misunderstand them, they were also severely inflexible. No room whatever was left for human opinion as to what was right and proper that night, and no deviation was permitted from the strict letter of the divine word. The blood of the lamb was the divine requirement, and nothing else could be accepted in its stead. Here is Jehovah's message to the people: “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast: and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am Jehovah. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt,” Ex.12.12-13.

Suppose some in Israel had pleaded that their lives were so much better than their neighbours, that therefore there was not the same urgent necessity for putting the blood upon the door-post, what would have happened? The angel of death would have swept through that dwelling, even though the people therein were in very deed the most upright and the most religious in the land. Jehovah did not say, “When I see your excellent lives, but, “When I see the blood.”

Again, suppose some had objected to slaying the lamb, their minds revolting from the gruesomeness of shedding blood, and had instead tied the living animal to the door-posts of their houses, would this have been accepted? By no means. Jehovah did not say, “When I see the lamb,” but “When I see the blood.”

The blood was the confession on the part of those who sprinkled it that they were personally only worthy of death and that they sheltered themselves under the death of another. To God the blood witnessed that death had already entered the houses upon which it rested; and this justified Him in bidding His ministers of judgment pass such houses by.

How simple are these lessons, and yet how difficult it is to get men to take them in, albeit their moral and religious lives as if excellent living should exempt them from the holy judgment of a sin-avenging God. Again, how many profess respect for the living Christ, admiring His perfect ways and acclaiming Him as the great Preacher to whom all men would do well to hearken. “Back to Christ,” they say. “Let us live according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, and all will be well.” Vain delusion! False hope! Men's great need is not a holy example nor a teacher of good, but a sin-atonement sacrifice. This is found alone in the precious blood of Christ. He has made peace through the blood of His cross, Col.1.20, and in no other way could peace ever have been made between men and God. “Apart from shedding of blood is no remission,” Heb.9.22. A millennium of holy living and divine teaching on the part of the Son of God would have left the sin question just where it was before He came to earth. Sin could only be expiated by blood.

God be praised for the atoning death of Christ. It has made it righteously possible for Him not only to exempt from judgment the sinner who believes, but also to take such an one into His heart of love for ever and ever. No wonder the redeemed on high ascribe all worthiness and glory to the Lamb who was slain.

—to be continued (D.V.)

The Perplexed Prophet: An Overview of Habakkuk

by Graeme Hutchinson (N. Ireland)

PAPER 3

In 1.12-17, the prophet found it difficult to reconcile the character of His God with the thought that a nation like Babylon would be used to punish Judah for her transgressions. In the ensuing chapter (ch.2), the prophet receives an explanation. We may note:

THE ANSWER OF THE ALMIGHTY

Just as the Lord had answered the prayers of men such as Moses, Aaron and Samuel, Ps.99.6, He did the same for Habakkuk. How gracious the Lord is to allow His servants to have a little understanding of His ways and plans. However, in 2.2-3, the prophet was given prior instruction/assurance before the prophecy was unfolded. We have:

2.2a - the documentation of the message. The instruction from the Lord was clear and unmistakable: 'Write the vision and make it plain upon tables.' The Lord was about to unfold His plans and it was incumbent upon Habakkuk to preserve the words so that the truth could be proved in the future. This would demonstrate the truth of 1Cor.14.33: 'God is not of confusion.' For believers today, God has carefully preserved His full and complete revelation - the Scriptures. Having gone to such lengths, it is vital for us to read and study the Word.

2.2b - the delivery of the message. It was insufficient for Habakkuk to merely *preserve* the record of God's word, it had to be *publicised* as well: 'that he may run that readeth it'¹. Clearly the spread of the message was a matter of great urgency and the Lord desired as many as possible to hear it. The Word of God is still of such value today that it must be spread abroad and not kept solely within any one individual. Remember the pattern of the great commission in Matt.28.19-20 is reach, preach and teach!

2.3 - the dependability of the message. God informed His prophet that the vision he was about to receive would be fulfilled, but only according to the divine timetable. As we shall observe, the prophecy related to the fact that the captors of Judah, namely Babylon, would, themselves, be punished. The prophet (and others

1. 'This phrase has been mistaken by some to signify that the messenger should be able to read the tablet on the run. On the contrary, the point is that the messenger would read it and then run to spread the news to others.'

(J. Ronald Blue, Habakkuk in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Victor Books, 1986, p.1512).

who were righteous in the nation) could take comfort from this truthful and unerring word, Heb.6.18. It may be delayed, but it would come!

In Heb.10.37 the writer adapted the words of 2.3 to speak of the second Coming of Christ. Suffering saints, no matter in which period they live, may take comfort from the fact that the day is coming when the Lord shall reign on earth in perfect justice, and then the righteous will have no fear from persecution. Just as Habakkuk and his readers could be sure of the vision, so too we can be sure that: 'He that shall come *will* come and will not tarry.'

THE FAITH OF THE FORGIVEN

Ch.2.4 is perhaps the central verse in the whole prophecy. The prophet lived in dark days and it was vital for him to live in close harmony with the Lord. Faith in the Lord and faithfulness to His word still remain the essential ingredient for those believers who stand justified/forgiven in the sight of God, 2Cor.5.7. However, given the prominence of this verse throughout the Scriptures, it is important to consider the following:

The Quotation of Hab.2.4. On three separate occasions, this verse is quoted in the NT. The OT prophet established the important principle of faith, but the NT writers then applied the principle in a number of ways. Firstly, in Rom.1.17 the Apostle Paul stated that the individual who is righteous (or just) has the possession of eternal life, not because of keeping the Law but rather because of a humble, steadfast reliance upon the truth of God's Word - the exercising of faith! In Gal.3.11 the Apostle does much the same thing, as he argues against those who felt that the keeping of the law plus salvation was essential. Remember that the law could only bring a knowledge of sin, Rom.3.20, but salvation brings a removal of sin, Rom.3.26. Then in Heb.10.38 the writer again stresses the importance of faith, just before he develops it further in the great chapter of faith, ch.11, where many OT characters are used as examples. Therefore, throughout the NT we are constantly reminded that not only are we justified by faith, but a justified person ought to live by faith as well!

The implication of Hab.2.4. Given that faith is so important for present day Christian living, it is possible to enrich our understanding of this principle by considering what it meant to Habakkuk. Firstly, we may note *THE CONTRAST*. In 2.4a the character of the Babylonians is summarised: 'behold his soul is puffed up' (JND). They prided themselves in their own power and strength and it only inflated their notion of self-importance and self-trust. The righteous person, however, was one who willingly conformed to God and His will.

Secondly, we may note *THE CONVICTION*. What is faith? To be like Habakkuk, ch.2.3, and the Apostle Paul, Acts 27.25, and believe that God cannot lie nor fail. As the hymn-writer would express it 'Where He may lead me I will go for I have learnt to trust Him so.'

Finally, we may note *THE CONFIDENCE*. In 3.17-18, the prophet seems to have applied the lesson of 2.4 - for he declared that irrespective of outward circumstances he was prepared to maintain his reliance (and rejoicing) upon God. Perhaps, for a spiritual man like Habakkuk, his role model was that of Abraham, the great man of faith (see, for example, Lk.19.9; Rom.4.3 and Heb.11.8-10, 17-19).

THE WOES OF THE WICKED

The Lord was able to inform Habakkuk that the mighty nation of Babylon would, like Judah, be punished for its sin and iniquity. The way in which this message was unfolded was by a series of 'woes,' 2.6, 9, 12, 15, 19. The term was frequently used by the OT prophets (see, for example, Isa. 5.8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22), and it simply highlighted the distress that would be caused by God's punishment. In considering each of these pronouncements, we may note the following:

No. 1: The Woe of the Greedy! In 2.6 the nation of Babylon is compared to those who increase their wealth by ill-gotten means. Similar to 1.2, the question was posed: "How long will this continue? The answer, in v7-8, is unmistakable. The *oppressed* would rise up in *opposition* and those *spoiled* would begin to *spoil* themselves. These verses would teach another important principle: '... whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," Gal.6.7. Babylon sowed terror and so then they would reap the same. The believer does well to remember this principle in the light of his service, Gal.6.8-9.

No. 2: The Woe of the Covetous! In 2.9 the aim of the sinful nation was exposed. They sought their own self-advancement by desiring and securing the possessions of others. In order to elevate themselves above the rest, they trampled other nations down, v10. However, God would bring judgment upon the proud, v11. This would bear out the testimony of 1Pet.5.5: 'God resisteth the proud.'

No. 3: The Woe of the Violent! In 2.12 the third woe stresses the barbaric nature of the Babylonians - murder and bloodshed were used to build their empire. However, in the succeeding two verses our attention is directed to the Lord. In v13 the Lord states that all their effort was in vain: 'They shall weary themselves for nothing' (Scofield), whereas in v14 the Lord's glory would, in contrast, fill the entire earth. In 2.14 the prophet is quoting directly from Isa.11.9, where the coming millennial kingdom is described. Both prophets then anticipated the time when the Lord would establish His kingdom, a period when the Lord's glory would be visible to all, Matt.24.30. We too look forward to this period when the claims of the Lord shall be truly vindicated.

No. 4: The Woe of the Seductive! The nation of Babylon is then pictured as one who tries to seduce other nations to follow along similar paths of sin and helplessness. These verses would remind us of what happened to Noah after the flood, Gen.9.21-25, and they demonstrate the cunning devices of the devil and his emissaries, Eph.4.14; 1Tim.4.1.

No. 5: The Woe of the Idolatrous! In the final woe of the passage, the fixation with idolatry is unreservedly condemned. How futile it is to cry 'Awake ... Arise,' 2.19, to those pieces of wood or cold stone (see 1Kgs.18.26-29) that are completely inanimate. The contrast with the Lord is startling, 2.20, for He is in His holy temple, and instead of the need to shout at Him to awake or listen, all the world must remain in silent awe and worship before Him.

Therefore, as the final woe closes in the chapter, the prophet is called to exercise his faith. Believing that God's word would soon be accomplished, Habakkuk's portion was to remain patient and confident. This is what the Lord expects from all His children, 2Thess.3.5; 1Jn.2.28.

—to be concluded (D.V.)

“Sparrows”

Psalm 102.7. Also Matthew 10.28-31; Luke 12.4-7

by Jim Burnett (Scotland)

PAPER 2

In the previous article we considered this verse in the light of the Psalmist's own experience. We shall now apply it to the glorious Person of our blessed Lord. Again we shall keep before us the same four interesting thoughts.

Note things in the verse that are marked by their absence.

- I. “I watch” — NO RELAXATION:
- II. “Am as a sparrow” — NO ESTIMATION:
- III. “Alone” — NO CONSOLATION:
- IV. “Upon the house top” — NO PROTECTION.

I. NO RELAXATION:

When we thought of the Psalmist we readily saw the reason as to why he said, ‘I watch.’ He was in danger of being ensnared in some temptation. This, of course, could never be said of our Lord Jesus. There was no possibility of Him straying from the path of obedience to the will of God. He did say, “... the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me,” Jn.14.30. There was absolutely nothing that could respond to sin.

There are many fundamental truths that are most surely believed among us in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, one of which is His Sinless Perfection. Some teach that He did not sin and we can agree wholeheartedly, but the statement does not go far enough. We must go further and say He could not sin. To say only that He did not sin does not eliminate the possibility that had He chosen to He could have sinned.

The truth is only correctly expressed when we assert that He did not sin and could never have sinned. He was absolutely holy in all His ways. He is uniquely different from all others.

There are four ways in which men entered into the world:

1. Adam — by way of CREATION:
2. Eve — by way of FORMATION:
3. All others — by way of GENERATION:
4. The Lord Jesus — by way of INCARNATION.

Of Him the poet wrote:

“In every feature flawless,
In every aspect fair,
The search of sinners lawless
Could find no blemish there.”

The sinless perfection of Christ is seen in seven lovely expressions of Scripture:

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1. Purer than | — Hab.1.13: | 5. Stronger than | — Lk.11.22: |
| 2. Fairer than | — Ps.45.2: | 6. Better than | — Heb.1.4: |
| 3. Greater than | — Matt.12.42: | 7. Higher than | — Heb.7.26. |
| 4. Mightier than | — Lk.3.16: | | |

A careful, prayerful examination of these Scriptures would enhance greatly our appreciation of who He is and what He has accomplished both for God and for us.

Three things were firmly implanted in us in early days:

1. As our Mediator — HE MADE THE LINK:

2. As our Great High Priest — HE MAINTAINS THE LINK:

3. As our Advocate — HE MENDS THE LINK (not of union but communion).

But we may ask how can we apply the words 'I watch' to our Lord? Just in the sense that as a Man before God He was ever sensitive to the Spirit and Word of God. He was God's diligent, devoted Servant. While in the garden the disciples slept, oblivious to the great drama unfolding before them, the Lord was fully awake, alert as always to the Father's will. We can never forget those tremendous words of devotion, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." Lk.22.42.

II. NO ESTIMATION:

We have seen in the former paper that the sparrow is really the WORTHLESS bird of the Bible. Such was our Saviour in the eyes of the world. No beauty that they should desire Him. Such was our position until our eyes were opened to behold Him as 'altogether lovely.' Men in the darkness of sin mock Him. To them He is as the worthless sparrow. It is still true:

"Our Lord is now rejected and by the world disowned,
By the many still neglected and by the few enthroned."

Let us who love Him continue to give Him His rightful place in our affections.

III. NO CONSOLATION:

This can be highlighted by considering the fourth lonely cry from the cross, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We know He spoke on seven occasions from the tree. The late Dr. Campbell Morgan said that in the first three we see His PITY for men in the matter of their sin; His POWER towards those who trust in Him; His PROVISION for those He loves. In the last four we stand in amazement as the greatest work ever done was accomplished. Victory reached through suffering — a victory far reaching, all full of glory.

As we come to the central cry, the fourth, we stand on ground that is most holy. There is no consolation; none to pity; none to deliver. He bore it all alone. Listen again in holy wonder to this lone mysterious cry which came from the depths of Calvary, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Truly He was the sparrow alone upon the housetop.

He was never forsaken of His Father. As the eternal Son His dwelling was always in the bosom of His Father. But here on the cross He is forsaken by God. This is a mighty ocean of truth and we stand on the shore gazing in wonder. Let the Scripture speak, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," 2Cor.5.21.

We noted that there are two experiences that we fear most — loneliness and poverty. He knew both. 2Cor.8.9, "For 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." He knew both in His life. He was misunderstood and deserted by friends and rejected, despised and betrayed by foes. Yet all comes to climax at His death. Remember Isa.53.9, "... with the rich in his death ...". The word 'death' is really in the plural, 'deaths.' Does this mean He died more than once? Of course not, "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God," Heb.10.12. The plural teaches us the

intensity of His death as well as its far reaching consequences. He died firstly to vindicate God, secondly to redeem poor sinners and also to recover creation and remove every trace of sin for ever from before the face of God.

IV. NO PROTECTION.

The sparrow on the housetop is exposed to the elements — rain, wind and storm. There was no hiding place. Such was the experience of the Saviour. He could have called twelve legions of angels, but He went to the storms of Calvary all alone. We watch, wonder and worship, but cannot fully understand.

“We do not know, we cannot tell

What pains He had to bear:

But we believe it was for us,

He hung and suffered there.”

We cannot begin to fathom the depths of sorrow and grief.

“None of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed,
Or how dark was the night the Lord passed through, to find the sheep that was lost.”

In conclusion let us note three things about the cross:

1. It is THE MEANS OF SALVATION:

2. It is THE MARK OF SEPARATION:

3. It is THE MOTIVE OF SERVICE:

We may well join with JMS Tait of Lerwick and exclaim,

“Be still proud heart, how can I stand and gaze,

Upon that head, so humbly bowing low,

And not lament with tears and shame of face,

Thy wilful ways, rebelling, murmuring so?

Oh! For the grace, in every earthly loss,

To bow the head to God, as He did on the cross.”

—*Concluded*

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (80)

by James W. Ronald (Canada)

From early childhood the words of Paul regarding Timothy were true in our home. “That from a child thou has known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation,” 2Tim.3.15. It was my privilege to have God-fearing parents who instilled into their six children a respect for God, a reverence for His Word, a need of salvation, and a love for the gospel. In our home there were regular family devotions morning, noon, and evening, and the assembly and meetings were a priority. My father served full time in gospel work and to my mother was delegated many additional responsibilities. Of the many impressions of youth in the home, I make mention of two that were outstanding. Both the prayer life of my parents and the hospitality shown others are remembered. It seemed every decision had to be thought through and prayed about. Many individuals and needy persons received a meal, a kind word, and a gospel tract or invitation to attend a meeting as they stopped by the home. Gospel preachers and missionaries were also entertained

in the home and what a delight to listen to their report, to hear a story of the grace of God, or receive a postage stamp to add to my collection. In our home the most important item seemed to be the gospel message lived out in daily life and the word spread abroad.

From a young age the reality of God, the personal guilt of my sin, salvation through Christ alone, the imminent return of the Lord Jesus, and the joy of living for Christ, were emphasised. I had no reason to question the importance and the necessity of God's salvation. I could honestly say I believed it all and now reasoned, at the age of eight years, I should confess Christ and tell others I was saved. Since I believed, why couldn't I say I am saved and this would also save me the embarrassment of telling others, like the preachers, I was not saved. I lived the next several years in doubt and fear and had no inner peace or assurance of the forgiveness of sins. At the age of twelve I approached my father with the problem of my doubts and very wisely he did not question but opened his Bible and read again the Scriptures I knew so well and many I had committed to memory. Three Scripture references stand out till this day. From 1Pet.3.18 the question was put to me, "Who was the Just One and who was the unjust one?" Finally, my father left the room and I now read again the words of Isaiah 53.5-6. Wounded for me! In that late evening hour I simply took God at His Word and the promise of Jn.1.12; "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." I realised that Christ dying in my place satisfied God and this was the answer to all my sins. There was nothing I could do and my prayers, asking, tears, or believing could not save me. In giving all else up, I found rest and peace in what Christ had done for me at the cross of Calvary. It was with great joy that I confessed the next morning to my mother that I was saved and had peace about the matter and all doubts were gone. Now I had a God given desire within to tell the gospel message to my school classmates and the customers on my paper route.

I must say how important assembly life was in my early and formative years. I was baptized at the age of thirteen and received into assembly fellowship the following year at Portage la Prairie, MB, Canada. The Portage assembly provided a good healthy spiritual environment and encouraged one in both Bible study and gospel outreach. A year later our family relocated 400 km. north west of Portage, where my father was preaching the gospel and a new assembly had commenced.

There were a number of gospel efforts in the area and I was encouraged to help out in open air evangelism, tract distribution, a Sunday school class, and contribute in home Bible studies. It was a joy to witness the power of the gospel, Rom.1.16, in the transformed lives of believers.

To further my education I moved to Winnipeg and am again thankful for the support and fellowship of the local assembly. We were encouraged to be involved in open air meetings in the park, the tract band, Sunday school teaching, and tract distribution. Upon the completion of my studies in education I took a teaching position in the community of Minitonas, about 500 km. north west of Winnipeg. Here I could be a help in a small assembly and reach out in the gospel especially during the summer vacation. Meetings for both children and adults were held in the

community hall and in the summer I worked together with other young men in carrying the gospel to several northern communities in the province of Manitoba.

In 1970 I married an effective and suitable partner in life and in the gospel work. My wife has been influential in others coming to hear the gospel and, as well, she has ministered a spiritual role in the lives of our four children.

At a summer prairie conference in 1972, a spiritual shepherd and elder from the Portage assembly expressed to us his appreciation for our involvement in the gospel work. He further suggested our commendation to the gospel work and all this went to confirm our exercise to serve the Lord in the gospel. In December 1972 our home assembly, Minitonas, joined with the Portage assembly in commending my wife and myself to the grace of God and the work of the gospel. We appreciate that God uses many different circumstances to make His will known and His call to serve in the gospel. I cannot speak of a specific call to full time gospel work, but rather trace the circumstances and appreciate a God begotten desire to serve the Master. How important to be sensitive to what the Word of God says; "Son, go work to day in my vineyard," Matt.21.28. I thank God for godly parents, spiritual assembly guides, the encouragement of others engaged in the work of the Lord, and for a spiritual partner in life, all assisting me to detect the will and call of God.

For the first twelve years of our married life and gospel work we lived in five different centres and did visitation, held home Bible studies, and had both children and adult meetings in community centres. For twenty years I joined with my father and others in village gospel work during the summer months of July and August. A mobile trailer unit was used for the preaching of the gospel in four or five centres each summer. My father would systematically map out and cover an area in visitation and would often use a public sound system in the open air followed by nightly gospel meetings. From my father I learned many practical lessons including a simple trust and confidence in the Lord, and realised that God's ways are best for carrying out the work of the Lord. Many souls heard the gospel and a number were saved in these country districts and to God be the glory.

In 1984, we moved our young family to the city of Saskatoon and the gospel work was approached in much the same way with visitation, tract distribution, home Bible studies and short series of gospel meetings in a number of community centres. The Lord blessed His Word and souls were saved, baptized, and encouraged to meet together for fellowship and Bible study which was often in our home. In 1990 a company of believers met together to "break bread" and have continued to the glory of God in assembly testimony and gospel outreach. Our responsibility is to sow the good seed. "In the morning sow thy seed and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good," Ecc.11.6.

I would stress in conclusion that God is faithful and we may fail but not our blessed Lord. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you and keep you from evil," 2Thess.3.3. We would also like to encourage others who have a God begotten exercise, to trust the Lord and serve full time in the gospel.

Good Tidings from Heaven

DON'T KNOW

It is a very rare thing to hear anyone say "I don't know." We are very slow to admit our ignorance. We hear people say in a general way, "everybody knows this or that." However, there are things that we don't know and it would be good if we were prepared to admit it!

There was a company of people in the Bible who professed they had everything. They said, as a collective company, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." They were totally self satisfied, did not need nor did they want any external assistance. In their estimation they had all they desired, they wanted for nothing and were proud of it. However, there was another who also made an assessment and that was God. He said that they knew, "not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Revelation 3.17. It would be good for us to assess our state before God and accept His infallible summary of the human race, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," Romans 3.23. Please, when asked of your condition before a Holy God do not say that you don't know because after reading the above paragraph you now do know!

It is recorded in John's gospel chapter three, that a very religious man came to the Lord Jesus Christ one night to ask Him about eternal matters. The Lord Jesus, God's only and eternal Son said to him, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This really confused the religious man who answered, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" He was thinking in terms of being born physically and perhaps there were the seeds of the nonsense of reincarnation. However the Lord Jesus was speaking of a spiritual birth from above. Only those who have been born again will ever enter the heavenly kingdom. This is not religion, philosophy, deeds of kindness etc., it is being born again into God's family to be one of God's children and to enjoy God's heaven for all eternity. The religious man ought to have known about these things. In v10, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Religious men who profess Christianity should know these things and should preach them. They are like the Pharisees of the Bible days of whom the Lord Jesus said, "woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in," Matthew 23.13.

How this new birth could take place was Nicodemus' problem. The answer is in v14-16, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Through the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross, where He was lifted up and our belief in Him, God promises to give us, as a free gift, "eternal" or "everlasting life." This is not so much endless existence, which is the portion of every person, but eternal life is enjoying the life of God now and entering into it in all its fulness in eternity.

You may say I have plenty of time to think about this and will deal with this matter before I die. But there is another thing which we don't know. Proverbs 27.1, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." Those thousands of people who left for work in New York and Washington on 11th September 2001, didn't know what was about to happen. Their plans were made, their lives stretched out before them, they probably were looking forward to family occasions and happy times and suddenly, literally out of the blue there came disaster. My dear reader, are you ready to meet God? The prophet Amos told the people of his day, "Prepare to meet thy God," Amos 4.12; 2 Corinthians 6.2, "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Tomorrow may be too late!



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Contents

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY BIBLE CLASS

by J. Riddle

TESTIMONY IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

by I. McKee

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN A MODERN WORLD

by W. A. Boyd

PAUL'S METAPHORS

by J. A. Davidson

JEHOVAH'S PASSOVER

by W. W. Fereday

THE PERPLEXED PROPHET: AN OVERVIEW OF HABAKKUK

by G. Hutchinson

BEHOLD MY SERVANT

by W. F. Naismith

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by R. Plant

GOOD TIDINGS FROM HEAVEN

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

This is a bi-monthly magazine for the propagation of the Word of God and thus the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (028) 9062 1343.
E-mail: AT@bcurrie.free-online.co.uk

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (028) 4062 4238.
E-mail: AT@wmneill.free-online.co.uk

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

—∞(0∞)—

This magazine is supported solely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. No member of the committee, author of articles or any other person connected with the magazine receives payment, remuneration or gratuity of any kind. This magazine is not to be sold.

Friends wishing to support the work of this magazine may kindly forward their practical fellowship to:

William Neill, at the above address.

Please make all monetary contributions payable to "Assembly Testimony Magazine." Money orders and Bank Drafts please make payable in U.K. currency.

Please address correspondence for new orders, back numbers, changes of address and cancellations to William Neill.

You can help us by stating the NUMBER of copies required, with NAME and ADDRESS, including POSTAL CODE, IN BLOCK LETTERS, please.

© This magazine is copyrighted. For permission to reproduce any article or part thereof please contact the Editor.

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

DEUTERONOMY

2) REVIEWING THE JOURNEY: FROM HOREB TO KADESH-BARNEA

Read Chapter 1

Deuteronomy ch.1-3 trace the journey of the children of Israel from Horeb, via Kadesh-barnea, to the plains of Moab. Apart from one delightful comment, 1.11, these chapters simply recite historical facts, but that does not make them unimportant. In subsequent chapters, Moses builds on those facts. We must never forget that Bible teaching is based on fact, and this explains why unregenerate men take every opportunity to either cast doubt on the historical accuracy of the Bible, or deny it completely. After all, doctrine is valueless if it is based on fiction! Just think of the consequences if we try to jettison the opening chapters of Genesis! It would even cast doubt on the veracity of the Lord Jesus. *He* did not believe in evolution! See Matt.19.4.

Whilst it is tempting to leap over these three chapters without further comment, we should at least prove that they are worthy of further study! Deut.1 commences with a general introduction to the book, v1-5, followed by a review of the journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea, v6-19, and events at Kadesh-barnea, v20-46.

1) INTRODUCTION, v1-5

i) *Where Moses addressed the people.* "These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel *on this side Jordan* in the wilderness," v1, see also v5. Moses describes the occupancy of the land while they are still in the wilderness. The blessings of our inheritance, now and in the future, make current privations and current hostility bearable!

ii) *When Moses addressed the people.* It was after God had demonstrated that He was actively *against His people's sin*. "In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month." Compare Num.14.34. Note, again, the significant information in v2, "There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea." What should have taken eleven days, took thirty-eight years: see 2.14. Unbelief and disobedience will always push us 'off course.' It was also after God had demonstrated that He was actively *for His people's blessing*. "After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites ... and Og the king of Bashan." If we are going to enjoy our present inheritance in Christ, we will have to remember both lessons.

iii) *Why Moses addressed the people.* It was to convey "all that the Lord had given him in commandment unto them." Enjoyment of the inheritance is contingent on obedience to the Word of God. Nothing has changed. See Jn.15.10-11.

2) THE JOURNEY FROM HOREB TO KADESH-BARNEA, v6-19

A) The purpose of the journey, v6-8

This was to possess the land. “Ye have dwelt *long enough* in this mount: turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites.” Compare 2.3. The words “long enough” do not imply criticism, but they do remind us that we should be progressing in our Christian lives. “The mount of the Amorites” evidently refers to the hill country north of Kadesh-barnea, and implies that there was fighting ahead. The children of Israel would not possess their inheritance without difficulty. This is still true: see Eph.6.12. Notice:

i) *The provision of the land.* “Behold *I* have set the land before you.” God had provided their inheritance, and there was nothing boring about it! Look at its variety in v7. We have every reason to be excited about *our* inheritance! God doesn’t bestow second rate blessings.

ii) *The possession of the land.* They were to “*go in* and *possess* the land” set before them, v8; see also v2,39. The word “possess” occurs approximately fifty times in Deuteronomy, plus other related words. The words “inherit” and “inheritance” occur almost forty times. This emphasises the great lesson of the book. God still says, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you,” Jos.1.3. We must ‘possess our possessions.’

iii) *The promise of the land.* It was “the land ... which the Lord swore unto your fathers.” The children of Israel were about to enter the inheritance promised centuries beforehand. We must not forget that the promises made to the fathers were unconditional, and will be ultimately fulfilled. If God had predetermined Israel’s inheritance, just think of the way in which He has predetermined *our* blessings!

B) The problem of administration, v9-18

This section evidently refers to Ex.18, rather than Num.11, although the two passages have certain similarities. We should notice:

i) *The difficulties of the work.* “And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you *myself alone*,” v9-10. The increasing problems and difficulties accompanying the population explosion, taxed Moses to the limit: “How can I *myself alone* bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?”, v12. Most assembly elders can empathise with Moses here. We must remember that they ‘watch for the souls’ of the saints, and we must therefore take steps to ensure that they can do this “with joy, and not with grief,” Heb.13.17.

The statement, “I am not able to bear you *myself alone*,” must be read in conjunction with “Thou hast seen how the *Lord thy God* bare thee,” v31. See also Ex.19.4. His description of Israel recalls Gen.15.5. It is lovely to notice that the difficulties of the work did not turn Moses into a bitter and resentful old man: “The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as He promised you!”, v11.

ii) *The delegation of responsibility.* “Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you,” v13. We could call this ‘the appointment of under-shepherds.’ Notice the following:

(a) *The job qualifications.* “Wise men, and understanding, and *known* among your tribes,” v13. See also v15, “Wise men, and *known*.” Amongst other things, they were to be men whose qualities were already acknowledged. That is precisely how an assembly recognises its elders! Sheep always know their shepherds.

(b) *The job titles.* “Rulers,” v13; “heads,” v15; “captains,” v15; “officers,” v15; “judges,” v16. Compare 1Thess.5.12.

(c) *The job specifications.* “Judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God’s,” v16-17. While there is not an exact parallel in New Testament teaching, there are lessons here for assembly overseers. See 1Pet.5.1-3.

C) *The passage through the wilderness, v19*

“And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of (‘on the way to,’ JND) the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us, see v7; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.” This world is certainly a “great and terrible wilderness.” It was impossible for Israel to settle in such territory, but many Christians seem quite happy in this environment. We are, properly, “strangers and pilgrims,” 1Pet. 2.11, and the world through which we pass should never cease to appal us. This brings us to:

3) *UNBELIEF AT KADESH-BARNEA, v20-46*

This section can be divided with reference to the expression “go up.” See v21-22, 26, 28, 41. There was:

A) *Encouragement to go up, v20-24*

i) *Encouragement, v20-21.* “Behold, the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: *go up* and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.” But they were discouraged, see v28.

ii) *Exploration, v22-24.* Notice that it was the people themselves who suggested that the land should be reconnoitred. Although God evidently granted their request, Num.13.1-3, it would have been better if they had proceeded in faith! After all, God had promised them possession, and had proved His ability to deliver them from all enemies. Israel said, “we will send *men* before us,” v22, but Moses said, “The *Lord your God*, which goeth before you, he shall fight for you,” v30.

B) *Refusal to go up, v25-40*

i) *Refusal by the people, v25-28.* They refused to “go up” in spite of the good report. “Notwithstanding ye would not *go up*, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God,” v25-26. Notice that they *doubted God’s love*: “Ye murmured in your *tents* (rebellion began in their homes: it often does), and said, Because the Lord hated us, He hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us,” v27. Notice that they were *discouraged by their brethren*: “Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our heart,” v28. See 9.1-2. The Lord’s people can still be ‘wet blankets!’ We should be like the brethren in 1Cor.16.17-18, and Tychicus in Col.4.8.

ii) *Remonstrance by Moses, v29-33.* God had proved both His power and His love for them. They had no reason to doubt Him. They had His power *in Egypt*, v30. They had proved His power *in the wilderness*, v 31. But it was to no avail: “Yet in this thing ye *did not believe* the Lord your God, Who sent in the way before you,” v32-33. Can we say with Paul, “I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me?”, Acts 27.25.

iii) *Response by God, v34-40.* He was angry with *the people*: “And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and swore, saying, Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swear to give unto your fathers.” The exception was Caleb, who had “*wholly followed the Lord*,” v34-36. God was angry with *Moses*: “Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go thither,” v37-38. Notice that Joshua was to be encouraged: more about this in 3.21,28. We learn that unbelief is an insult to God, and that faith brings Him pleasure. Notice too that there is nothing arbitrary about His judgment: “Moreover your little ones ... which in that day had *no knowledge between good and evil, they* shall go in thither, and unto *them* will I give it, and they shall possess it. But as for *you*, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea,” v39-40.

C) Determination to go up, v41-46

“We have sinned against the Lord, we will *go up* and fight ... And the Lord said unto me, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you.” But they “went presumptuously up into the hill.” Israel behaved illogically. They would not go up *with* God, v21, 40, but they were willing to go up *without* Him! In the first place they were told to “go up,” but they *refused*. In the second place, they were told not to “go up,” but they *went*. It was a recipe for disaster, v44. Their words were impressive: “we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us.” But however pious the covering language, sin and rebellion will always bring defeat. Moses was obliged to remind them that they “*rebelled* against the commandment of the Lord,” v43, and “*returned* and wept before the Lord, but the Lord *would not hearken* to your voice, nor *give ear* unto you,” v45. Alas, we can be just like Samson who said, “I will go out, as at other times before, and shake myself, And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.”

Moses’ review of their journey through the wilderness continues in Chapter 2.

—to be continued (D.V.)

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.

— Phil. 3:21

*It may be in the glory-cloud
His blessed voice will first be heard,
The living changed and those that rise
Shall meet the Saviour in the skies.*

*Oh, happy day; oh, happy day,
Forever with the Lord to stay;
No tears, no pain shall ever dim
The joys of those redeemed by Him.*

Testimony in Troublous Times

by Ian McKee (Northern Ireland)

Paper 12 — DECREE AND DOXOLOGY

(Ezra Chapter 7.11-28)

The journey of Ezra and his companions from Babylon to Jerusalem took four months. The fact that it was accomplished successfully is stated first, Ezra 7.9. But of the development of the specific exercise, which led Ezra to determine this course of action, we are told nothing. Nor are we apprised how he acquired favour with Artaxerxes Longimanus, the Persian Emperor.

The Decree of the King (Ezra 7.11-26)

The imperial authority given to Ezra is recorded in a letter from Artaxerxes, the text of which is here preserved for us in Scripture. It is remarkable in its references to the name of God, to His will and to His worship.

Following a typical Persian preamble, the letter grants permission to Ezra to go up to Jerusalem with as many as wish to accompany him. There is one proviso: those who go must be “minded of their own freewill” to do so, Ezra 7.13. Nothing of a truly spiritual nature will be accomplished by coercion. After all, the demands are such as to require a wholehearted application. And if such wholeheartedness is not present, then that exercise will crumble in the face of adversity. The Lord Himself was explicit in regard to the demands of discipleship: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me”, Mt.16.24.

Ezra was commissioned by the King and his Privy Council to conduct an inquiry. Although the precise terms of reference are not stated, he is to investigate the conditions of the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem with regard to the law of the Lord that he studied, understood, practiced and taught, Ezra 7.14. This task may have been unanticipated, but Ezra’s competence to perform it was recognised by the highest in the land. Private exercise results in public acknowledgment.

He was also authorised to transport a considerable sum of money to Jerusalem to support the temple sacrifices, Ezra 7.15-18. This funding came from three sources. The first was a generous endowment from the King and his counsellors, which foreshadows a future day of millennial glory when the wealth of the nations shall be brought to Zion, Isaiah chapter 60. Funds were also donated by non-Jews in the province of Babylon plus freewill offerings from the Jewish residents. Whereas the funds authorised by Cyrus in Ezra chapter 1 were for the capital costs involved in temple reconstruction, these from Artaxerxes were for maintenance costs. This included the purchase of animals and other materials for sacrifice and Ezra and his companions were given discretion in relation to the use of the monies remaining.

In addition, unspecified vessels were also given for the Temple service, Ezra 7.19. These may have been the twenty basins of gold and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold, detailed in Ezra 8.27. And Ezra was given authority to fund from

the royal treasury whatever other things were found to be needful, Ezra 7.20.

Artaxerxes then addresses the Persian treasurers in Syria to order them to facilitate Ezra's needs, Ezra 7.21-24. This was to be done speedily to a budget limit of one hundred talents of silver, almost 4 tonnes! Did not Haggai declare to the Jewish remnant, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts" Hag.2.8. Also given were one hundred measures of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil and as much salt as they needed. These commodities were needed for sacrifice.

The provincial officers and treasurers are commanded to carry Artaxerxes' orders completely into effect and provide tax exemption. He expresses sentiments similar to those of Cyrus and Darius; "for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons" Ezra 1.2-4; 6.10; 7.23. Artaxerxes clearly seeks to avoid wrath from God and desires Divine favour for his benefit and that of his dynasty. Had he been impressed by the reverence and awe that Ezra, and possibly others, accorded to Jehovah? If so, he is not the last person to read the Scriptures in the lives of the saints!

Finally Ezra is given civil authority to establish a judicial system, Ezra 7.25,26. This includes the appointment of magistrates and judges and the enforcement of legal sanctions including forfeitures, imprisonment, exile and even capital punishment. And why was he given such sweeping powers? Because Artaxerxes recognised that Ezra had been entrusted with the law of God, was scrupulous in determining the Divine mind and in carrying His will into effect. He could therefore be trusted to observe the law of the land and be faithful to the King's command. Few men had such recognition in Gentile courts. In this regard Ezra stands alongside Joseph, Daniel, Mordecai and, later, Nehemiah.

But the Jews within Ezra's jurisdiction, irrespective of their prior knowledge of the Word of God, were to be taught Divine truth. This is an important precept of particular relevance today as far too often those who teach God's Word take for granted that truth is already known. Ezra made no such assumption and taught from first principles. So should we. Otherwise the rising generation will be deprived of a goodly heritage.

The doxology of Ezra (Ezra 7. 27.28)

This personal narrative, which continues to the end of chapter 9, begins with praise. Ezra blesses "the Lord God of our fathers" who inspired the policy of the king to adorn and beautify "the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem", Ezra 7.27. He does not become proud and self-centred as a result of the honour bestowed upon him. Rather he is humble as he considers how God blessed him before the king and all his courtiers and the result of that strengthening was that he "gathered together out of Israel chief men to go with me", Ezra 7.28. His humility led to enlargement of exercise and endeavour. May we have more of that humility today and see chief men raised among the brethren!

—to be continued, (DV)

Grace should magnify the God who shows it,
and humble those who receive it.

J. Douglas

Christian Conduct in a Modern World

by Walter A. Boyd (South Africa)

Paper 20

No. 5. THE CONSECRATED SERVANT (Continued)

C. Paul and Prayer (Romans 15.30-33)

The last four verses of chapter fifteen give an insight into the heart of the Apostle Paul, as he contemplated his intended journey to Jerusalem. In the previous section (15.25-29), we saw his clear and resolute intention to complete the task of taking practical help to the saints in Jerusalem, before making his way on to Rome. In this present section it is clear that Paul knew there were considerable dangers to be faced in such a journey. He realised that, when he reached Jerusalem, he would face the malicious intentions of *them that believe not* (15.31). Even though this was the case, the Apostle, just like his Master, did not hesitate to take the journey. His primary precautions for such a dangerous journey were to submit to the will of God (15.32), and solicit the prayers of the people of God (15.30). His commitment to the task in hand, and courage in the face of danger, are without question. The section has three main components;

1. His Request for prayer (v30)
2. The Matters for prayer (v31,32)
3. His Apostolic prayer (v33)

1. His Request for prayer (v.30).

This is the second of three specific requests that he makes in the epistle. Each commences with the words, *I beseech you brethren* (12.1, 15.30, 16.17). In the first he deals with **consecration**, in the last with **identification**, and in the present one with **supplication**. There are three matters to consider in his request for prayer.

A. The *Incentive* for prayer is two-fold:

For our Lord Jesus Christ's sake and for the love of the Spirit. Paul affectionately addresses the saints in Rome as his "brethren." When his letter would be read among the saints in Rome they would find it difficult to refuse his request, because of the grounds and graciousness of his appeal.

By our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, is a complex phrase. It most likely means that he makes his request by the Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, and he expects them to respond because of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love which the Spirit gives.

B. The *Intensity* in the prayer is found in the word *strive*. By their prayers, the believers at Rome will be striving together with Paul for the accomplishment of his mission in the journey to Jerusalem. To strive, has the idea of joining side by side in the combat with the great Apostle. By using this word, he is letting us see that he expects a real conflict when he reaches Jerusalem. Paul appreciates his fellow-

believers, and he is ready to engage their help in his labours. He is not beyond accepting the help of others.

C. The *Intercession* of their prayer is found in the words, *to God for me*. What a comfort to Paul, that saints as far away as Rome were interceding directly with God on his behalf. The commitment of praying saints gives courage and confidence to many a weary servant of God, as he faces danger and opposition in his work. Can we be relied upon to respond to such a request for prayer today? Perhaps we are too glib when we promise to pray for those in need. Do we keep every promise we make in this respect?

2. The Matters for prayer (v.31, 32).

Paul has three clear objectives before his mind for his journey to Jerusalem, and these are conveyed in the details of his request for prayer. It is not just a general request, like “pray for me.” There is no fuzzy thinking here. He knows exactly what it is that he wants to accomplish, and can thus make specific requests for prayer to that end. He wanted them to be precise in their prayers: a brief, “God bless Paul,” would not suffice! They were asked to pray for:

A. *The Deliverance from his enemies* (v.31). Paul knew well the character of those in Jerusalem who would oppose him. Perhaps they had been his cohorts in earlier unconverted days. The translation, *them that believe not*, is too weak; and is more accurately, *them that are disobedient*. These people have heard the gospel and rejected its claims, and demands for obedience. Those who at one time would have applauded his evil deeds against the Christians in Judea, are now opposing him, and he recognised the dangers that he faced from such people. Therefore, this is no melodramatic exaggeration in order to gain the sympathy of the believers in Rome. When you read Acts ch.21-28, where his eventual arrival in Rome and the treatment he received there are recorded, it is clear he had every reason to fear the worst. But, however real those fears were, he remained undeterred. The wickedness of men’s hearts, the witness of the Spirit, the warning of the prophet Agabus, and the weeping of concerned saints, would not change his plan to travel to Jerusalem, in the will of God. Only God could deliver from these dangers, and take him safely with the gift from the Gentile assemblies. That being so, what more does he need to do than commit himself to God, and ask for the prayers of fellow believers?

B. *The Acceptance of his service* (v.31). What Paul speaks of here, is more than the safe deposit of the funds that he was carrying to the Christians at Jerusalem. It includes the idea that Paul was anxious that the Jewish believers would heartily accept the gift from Gentile believers, as well as his part in its delivery. Perhaps the gift would be refused, because of where it came from; perhaps it would not be accepted, because of who carried it. These real concerns were committed to God in prayer, and Paul was happy to invoke the prayerful help of others to ensure the success of his mission. The Jewish acceptance of a Gentile gift would be a vindication of Paul’s teaching that, as Christians there is neither Jew nor Gentile, they are both one in Christ Jesus. His arrival in Jerusalem with a gift from Gentile assemblies would be a real test as to the acceptance and progress of his ministry among the Christians, as well as the possible cause of a tumult among the unsaved.

C. *The Realisation of his plans* (v.32). In ch.1.10,11, Paul expressed a longing to visit them in Rome. He is now asking them to pray with him to that end. Not just that he would reach Rome, but that he would reach them with joy, and be refreshed by his visit to them. Paul's work was subject to the will of God, and his pursuance of that will guaranteed the joy he anticipated on reaching Rome, after successfully completing his service in Jerusalem.

3. His Apostolic prayer (v.33).

The Apostle's benedictory prayer is closely linked to similar expressions found earlier in this chapter:

15.5 - *Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded ...*

15.13 - *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing ...*

15.33 - *Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.*

If they are going to live peacefully (be likeminded), and be filled with peace in believing, they will need the God of Peace to be with them. Paul wants them to experience and enjoy Divine peace in all its fullness and blessing: peace of heart, peace of mind, peace of conscience, peace of soul, and peace in relationships.

The *Source* of peace - *The God of peace* - His Person

The *Substance* of peace - *Be with you* - His Presence

The *Scope* of peace - *With you all* - His Plenitude

—to be continued (D.V.)

“PAUL'S METAPHORS”

by J. A. Davidson (Northern Ireland)

PAPER 8 — ACCOUNTANCY : PART 2

DEPOSIT ACCOUNT:

The apostle encouraged other investors, used his own account to the benefit of the Lord's people and spoke of the day when each would have his account examined. He writes to the saints at Philippi: “Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account,” Phil.4.17. In contrast to Corinthian *narrowness* and Galatian *foolishness*, Paul commends Philippian *devotedness* to the work of God through their practical gift to him. This assembly exercise he considered as a high yielding account, a good return on their investment, recompense from the Lord in the day of reckoning. In the context of partaking and imparting material things, the verb, ‘to communicate’ has the idea of gaining shares with. “But to do good and to communicate forget not,” Heb.13.16.

Paul writes to Philemon, to intercede on behalf of Onesimus (his name means ‘Profitable’). “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account (reckon to me)”, Phil.18. Here we have an example of how to act toward a

brother to develop the virtues of Christ in him and how difficulties among the Lord's people can be turned in God's mercy to blessing and increase.

When Paul comes near to the end of his stewardship in the dismal surroundings of his prison cell, soon to be executed as a criminal, he is not defeated or disappointed. "For which cause I also, suffer these things; but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep (guard, safe keeping) for that day the deposit I have entrusted to Him. Have an outline of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Keep, by the Holy Ghost which dwells in us, the good deposit entrusted," 2Tim.1.12-14 (JND). Paul would never be free again yet he had the settled assurance, the absolute conviction that all which he as a believer and servant had entrusted as a deposit to the safe keeping of God, would be guarded by the power and might of God against robbery or loss. All that Paul valued, not only in salvation but in service, he had deposited with God. God does the keeping of all that is entrusted to Him, it is in the vault of Heaven, safe in the bank of Glory, as an account with God in light of the future time of reward. "Henceforth there is laid up (deposited, stored away, reserved) for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing," 2Tim.4.8. It is to be noted that in the meantime Paul has kept (as a deposit) the faith, ch.4, and Timothy likewise, has been entrusted with the deposit of sound words. In a day of carelessness and compromise, if we squander the treasures of sound doctrine and scriptural truths, we will sustain serious spiritual losses now and find in that day, that the account is shamefully empty.

PROFIT:

The adjective form of the noun 'profit,' Mk.8.36, is often used by Paul in the pastoral Epistles:

Godliness of Life: "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1Tim.4.8.

Guidance of the Scriptures: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2Tim.3.16.

Good works: "That they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men," Tit.3.8.

A godly, consistent life in obedience to the Scriptures is the secret to the profit taking (advantageous, beneficial) side of Paul's ledger. He finds that bodily exercise has little profit in that it pertains to this life, and that some strive about words to no profit at all.

Soon our stewardship of the riches of Christ, the treasures of the Scriptures, the wealth of the Gospel and the precious truths of the Assembly will be called to account. What we have gained or lost will be manifested. For we must all appear (to be made manifest) before the judgment seat of Christ," 2Cor.5.10. "The day shall declare it," 1Cor.3.13. That day shall make evident what may be obscured at present. The true assessment of penetrating judicial discernment shall reveal the Lord's estimate of what is in the account. Better to have His approval than even if we do

not have man's approval now. The 'reward' of past service will be in the nature of 'hire' for future service (Newbury). What we put into it now is determining our capacity to serve Him in His future kingdom.

LOSS:

The word which the Saviour used to describe the loss of Mk.8.36 is a very strong word involving the thought of a penalty, literal translation: "To be fined the soul of him." Paul also speaks of loss. "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by (through) fire," 1Cor.3.15. Much of what seems to be large and imposing lacks substance and quality and is of no essential value. Such investment will come up with a low interest rate, loss of reward, as a bad workman suffers loss of wages. This involves the total rejection not of the man but of his account. He himself will pass through the fire to safety but he will experience the pangs of testing which will consume all that is worthless in his deposit.

May the Lord anoint our eyes with the heavenly eyesalve to set our affections on things above and to invest as a faithful and wise steward. Such wisdom will receive an hundredfold now, in this time and in the world to come, eternal life.

—(Concluded)

Jehovah's Passover

by W. W. Fereday

PAPER 8 — "I WILL PASS OVER YOU"

The significance of Jehovah's pledge to Israel — "I will pass over you," is frequently misunderstood. By many it is taken to mean mere exemption from destruction; whereas, in reality, a great deal more than this is involved in the words. We will quote Ex.12.23 at length in order that we may have the whole pledge before us: "Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians: and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and upon the two side-posts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you."

Jehovah "passing through" is thus one thing; but Jehovah "passing over" is quite another. Our inquiry just now is as to the latter. What does it mean? Isa.31.5 (R.V.) will help us here. "As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem: He will protect and deliver it, He will pass over and preserve it." The language of Isa.31 is thus very similar to that of Ex.12, and its meaning is transparent. It gives the idea of a mother-bird hovering over her nest, anxiously watching it, and mounting guard over her young. This is what Jehovah promised to do in Egypt for all who, in obedience to His word, sprinkled the blood upon their houses. He would Himself stand between them and all harm. "I will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you."

This presents to us a truly delightful view of the God with whom we have to do. He positively ranges Himself upon the side of those who, in faith, have sought the shelter of the blood of Jesus. The fact that He has raised His Son from amongst the dead is the public proof that every requirement of His throne has been fully met. In perfect consistency therefore with His own character of righteousness. He against whom all our sins have been committed is now able to constitute Himself the guardian of His believing people. Faithful to His word and to the precious blood of Jesus. He will never, while eternal ages roll, permit judgment to touch His own. This being most certainly true let us get rid of all servile fear. There is no room for dread in our relationships with such a God.

The men of Israel might well sit down in quiet confidence that night. Even if others' wail of distress reached their ears they had no occasion for alarm. They had put the blood of the lamb between themselves and the destroyer and they had Jehovah Himself standing sentinel as it were, outside their sprinkled doors. Had anxious thoughts been entertained by them, they would have cast dishonour upon God — His faithfulness and truth. In like manner the unbelieving apprehensions of many in our day who truly love the Saviour's name are a deep affront to the God of our salvation. As Toplady's lines put it.

From whence this fear and unbelief,
 If God, my Father, put to grief
 His spotless Son for me?
 Can He, the righteous Judge of men,
 Condemn me for that debt of sin,
 Which, Lord, was charged to Thee?

Impossible!

—to be continued (D.V.)

DIVINE SPIRIT

*Jesus, my sorrow lies too deep
 For human ministry;
 It knows not how to tell itself
 To any but to Thee.*

*Thou dost remember still, amid
 The glories of God's throne,
 The sorrows of mortality,
 For they were once Thine own.*

*Yes, for as if Thou would'st be God,
 E'en in Thy misery,
 There's been no sorrow but Thine own
 Untouched by sympathy.*

*Jesus, my fainting spirit brings
 Its fearfulness to Thee,
 Thine eye at least can penetrate
 The clouded mystery.*

*And is it not enough, enough,
 This holy sympathy?
 There is no sorrow e'er so deep
 But I may bring to Thee.*

1823 Lady Powerscourt (1800-1836)

Written after the death of her husband, Viscount Powerscourt, a year after their marriage. Lady Powerscourt was then only 23 years of age and she herself died at the age of 36.

The Perplexed Prophet: An Overview of Habakkuk

by Graeme Hutchinson (N. Ireland)

PAPER 4

The final chapter in Habakkuk's prophecy represents the climax in God's dealings with His prophet. In ch.1 the atmosphere was one of *depression*, particularly as the prophet contemplated the sins of Judah and the fact that divine retribution would come through Babylon. In ch.3 the atmosphere changes to one of *jubilation*, for the prophet was living by faith, 2.4. However, faith must always be exercised in something, and for the prophet, his faith was placed in the prophecy of ch.2, or perhaps more accurately, the God of the prophecy! Our present focus is on the prayer/praise¹ of ch.3, where we may learn the following important principles:

APPROACHING GOD'S PRESENCE

From 3.2 we may learn some lessons as to how we should approach the Lord in prayer. Whilst times have changed, the Lord has not, Heb.13.8, and thus it is incumbent upon us to learn from these holy men of God, 1Pet.1.21, particularly as to how they approached God. Consider the following:

Habakkuk's prayer was reverent. The prophet, similar to Jeremiah, Jer.32.17, commences his prayer by showing the utmost respect and honour: 'O Lord!' In our prayer life, we must always be conscious of the One whom we approach. Whilst Habakkuk's description of God in 1.12-13 would perhaps promote feelings of fear as we approach Him in prayer, the NT believer can take comfort from the truth that He is our Father, Jn.4.23, and we are invited to approach Him, Heb.4.16. Remember to be reverent!

Habakkuk's prayer was humble. In 3.2 the prophet indicated that he had heard God's report (concerning Judah and Babylon) and it had filled him with fear. In other words, the prophet acknowledged that whilst he could not understand God's plans, he would stand back in awe. A healthy dose of realism is always important for effective prayers. Remember who we are and who He is!

Habakkuk's prayer was orderly. The sequence by which the prophet approached the Lord is interesting.

First, he *ADDRESSED* the Lord with reverence.

Second, he *ACKNOWLEDGED* his own weakness and limitations.

Then (and only then) he *ASKED* the Lord for two specific items:

- (a) that the Lord's work - punishment of Judah by Babylon (see ch.1.5) - would be fulfilled and
- (b) that in these acts of judgment, God would still remember mercy.

¹ Clearly from Hab.3.1 the chapter can be interpreted as the prophet praying to the Lord. However, the threefold repetition of *Selah*, (v3,9,13) suggests that the chapter may also be a musical psalm, which may explain the concluding phrase: 'to the chief singer on my stringed instrument.'

Therefore, whilst it is important to avoid any prescriptive or 'how to' approach in prayers, we can still learn from this experience of Habakkuk. Only petition the Lord on the solid foundation of reverence (who He is) and realism (who we are). Remember that God is a God of order, 1Cor.14.33,40, and thus it is important that He is approached in an orderly fashion.

APPREHENDING GOD'S POWER

The largest portion of ch.3 is found in this section, v3.15, where the prophet speaks of God and His awesome power. It may be subdivided into two:

The description of God's power (3.3-7). In the first part of v3, the prophet recalled how God came down to the nation at Sinai to establish His covenant with them. The record of Moses in Deut.33.2 would bear testimony to the accuracy of Habakkuk's words. Then, after a moment of contemplation (Selah), the prophet further describes the power of God.

First, there is *THE COVERAGE* - God's power/glory is visible in both the heavens and the earth, v3b. Isaiah could speak in a similar way in Isa.6.1-3.

Second, there is *THE CHARACTER* - God's power is akin to the penetrating brightness of the sun. Indeed, such is the extent of the power, it cannot be fully revealed, v4, for if it was, the whole earth would be consumed.

Finally, there is *THE CAPABILITY* - God's power can bring havoc upon those who oppose Him, v5-7, for He is all-powerful. Cushan (Ethiopia) and Midian were two nations that lay on either side of the Red Sea and the mighty act of dividing the sea brought terror and distress to the souls of these nations, Ex.15.14-16; Deut.2.25; Josh.2.9; 5.1.

The display of God's Power (3.8-15). Far from God's power being reserved to mere theory, the prophet is able to pinpoint specific cases that demonstrate this omnipotent power. In nature, God has often used the natural forces to demonstrate His power. In the case of rivers, v8-9, we may consider the smiting of the river Jordan, Josh.3.14-17. Concerning mountains, v10, the appearance of the Lord at Sinai had caused this particular mountain to quake, Ex.19.18.

Also, the experience of Joshua at Beth-Horon, Josh.10.12-13, demonstrated that God could hold the sun and moon still, v11. However, aside from demonstrating His power *in nature*, God has also manifested it amongst *the nations*, v12-15. The interesting question to pose is — Why? Was God merely venting His power to illustrate His strength? The answer to this is given in v13. God has used His power - particularly in the context of the Israelites in bondage in Egypt - for a threefold purpose.

First, for the *EMANCIPATION OF HIS PEOPLE* - 'Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people.'

Second, for the *EXALTATION OF HIS SON* - the anointed, Psa.2.2; Dan.9.26.

Third, for the *ERADICATION OF EVIL* - 'thou woundest the head ... of the house of the wicked.'

Whilst we presently live in a different dispensation (of grace), these principles still prevail in our age. For example, the supreme display of God's power now, is in

the salvation of a lost soul. This act will, at the one time, emancipate the sinner, Jn.8.36, and exalt the Son, 1Cor.1.30-31. Moreover, the wonder of it all is that the sinner can be declared righteous in God's sight, Rom.3.26, and can then anticipate the day when the sinful nature will be eradicated altogether, 1Cor.15.53-57.

ACCEPTING GOD'S PATHWAY

The lengthy consideration that Habakkuk gave to God's power was designed to strengthen his trust in the dealings of God, particularly as they related to Judah and Babylon. As the prophecy is drawn to a close, we may note the progression in the concluding four verses:

In 3.16 there was inward fear. In 3.2, the prophet stated that he had heard God's programme concerning Judah and Babylon and he was afraid (Strong 3372 - frightened). Now, upon considering the omnipotent power of God, the prophet stated that he trembled (Strong 7264 - a violent emotion that provokes feelings of fear and wonderment). This fear is surely something that we ought to experience, particularly in our own days of distress. Almost every area of the prophet's being was affected: belly (inward parts - NASB), lips and bones. However, in response to such a fearful state, the prophet could remark that his supreme desire was: "that I might rest in the day of distress" (JND). Clearly the review of God's power in the past, v3-15, had reassured the prophet that whilst Judah was to be invaded, the invading force would itself come under God's wrath. From this we can glean one practical truth. When faced with the storms of life, there can only be one source of comfort - the Scriptures that contain the record of God's dealing in the past. The Lord Himself is the supreme Example of this, Matt.4.4,7,10.

In 3.17 there was outward failure. Habakkuk outlined the most disastrous scenario that might befall the nation in times of invasion. The complete failure of the crops (figs, grapes, olives and grain were those items that the nation depended upon for food) and the destruction of the livestock (sheep and cattle). As we shall observe in the succeeding two verses, the prophet had clearly reached the point where he acknowledged that inward peace was not dependent upon outward circumstances. Job and the apostle Paul were two other servants of God who had reached this pinnacle of faith. Job 13.15: 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.' Phil.4.11: 'Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.'

In 3.18-19 there was upward faith. The prophet's faith in God was such that, although the invading force may bring complete destruction, v17, he would still *rejoice* in the Lord. This is much more than merely accepting God's path in an unbegrudging fashion. The prophet would be joyful! In v17 the prophet's peace was not found in outward circumstances, but rather in the confidence he placed in the God of his salvation, v18. The prophet likened his feet to that of a deer - an active and swift-footed animal. Just as such creatures can progress quickly through dark forests with confidence, so Habakkuk states that he would do the same during the dark days of invasion and punishment. Moreover, he states that he would be enabled to walk upon the 'high places.' Whereas having feet like deer gives *stability*, walking above the trial would give *satisfaction*, for it is only in such a position that

the circumstances are placed in order. J. Ronald Blue remarks on this: 'The Sovereign Lord gives triumph over circumstances to those who trust Him. The way to get out from under the load is to get right under the Lord. To be under the Lord is to be over the circumstances' (Habakkuk in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Victor Books, 1986, p.1522).

As the prophet draws his book to a close, we are impressed with the strength of his faith. Babylon will invade Judah, but Habakkuk looked to the Lord to establish justice and righteousness. Little wonder that C I Scofield could state that these verses give us one of the strongest manifestations of faith in the Scriptures (Scofield Bible Notes).

—(Concluded)

Behold My Servant

by W. Fraser Naismith (Scotland)

What an elixir for the soul of the servant of Christ is found in a consideration of Jehovah's perfect Servant!

God, on more than one occasion, had alluded to an illustrious person as "My servant" — and possibly Isaiah might have wondered to which one the Spirit referred. God had said — "My servant Moses ... is faithful in all mine house;" and addressing Satan stated — "My servant Job ... there is none like him in the earth." Such remarkable encomiums are worthy of note; yet neither of the servants alluded to could answer the description given by Isaiah. It must, therefore, be some other servant to whom Isaiah referred. Most of us must confess "we are unprofitable servants." Of this One we learn "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." The One who is declared to be "My Son;" "My King;" "My Shepherd;" "My Fellow;" is now described as "My Servant." Paul reminds us — "He took upon Him the form of a servant;" and Peter states — "He left us an example, that we should follow His steps."

"He shall not fail"

The work which Christ came to accomplish for the satisfaction of His Father and God is threefold. He came for *Revelation*; for *Salvation*; and for *Subjugation*. Has He failed in *Revelation*? Nay! "The only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." The unveiling of the Father is marvellous. He has also revealed His truth and grace. He was the witness to the truth; and His unbosoming of the Father has brought to light the secrets of His great heart of love. Has He failed in *Salvation*? The redeemed answer — "neither is there salvation in any other!" For "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared;" and "the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Will He fail in *Subjugation*? Paul answers — "He must reign, till he hath put *all* enemies under His feet."

“Nor be discouraged”

There have been remarkable characters such as Elijah who fearlessly entered the presence of the king and made a startling observation without dread or fear; yet that same man became the despondent servant as he sought that God might take away his life, not knowing that God meant to take him to heaven without dying! Opposition is often great, but not any greater than that which confronted God's Perfect Servant. He was dauntless; for He wielded with marked dexterity one weapon — the Word of God — and with it defeated all who sought to oppose Him.

The world, the flesh and the devil all gathered their forces to attack Christ. To the threefold temptation of the devil, Christ made reply: “It is written.” He quoted from Deuteronomy three times and defeated the devil.

The world approached, and to it He replied — “ye search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me.” The flesh approached in the form of three companies — Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees. The first company presented a *political question*; the second came with a *philosophical question*; whilst the third asked a *theological question*. When Christ had answered them we learn “neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.”

The success of the Perfect Servant lay in His absolute dependence on God, Ps.16.1. He had His ear opened morning by morning to hear as the instructed, Isa.50.4. The wise man tells us of the blessedness of the man “that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors,” Prov.8.34.

The Perfect Servant came to a hostile realm and was faithful amidst all unfaithfulness. Are we faithful in a scene of opposition? If we are, there awaits us the great commendation of the Lord Himself — “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

*Lord! when I'm weary with toiling,
And burdensome seem Thy commands:
If my load should lead to complaining;
Lord! show me Thy hands:
Thy bleeding hands; Thy cross-torn hands:
O! Saviour, show me Thy hands.
O! Christ, if my footsteps should falter
And I be prepared for retreat:
If desert or thorn cause lamenting;
Lord! show me Thy feet:
Thy nail-pierced feet; Thy cross-scarred feet:
O! Saviour, show me Thy feet.*

Lord! dare I show Thee *my hands and my feet?*

Ecclesiastes — the heart is larger than the object.

Song of Solomon — the object is too large for the heart.

J. Douglas

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (81)

by Robert Plant (England)

By its nature this must be a personal paper so, at the outset, we beg the reader's forgiveness in the frequent use of the personal pronoun.

I was born during the early sixties in the village of Rochford just outside Southend-on-Sea in Essex. I have one sister, Anita, who is eighteen years my senior. My parents, although professing to be "Christian," knew nothing of salvation and hence the only occasions that would find me in a church building of any sort was for wedding and funerals. By the time I was old enough to remember anything of family life my sister had left home, and at the age of four my parents and I moved to Harrogate. There I soon made friends with a lad who lived opposite us and every weekend we would be found playing some form of sport: cricket, football, rugby, golf. The only time he was not available was on a Sunday morning when he attended the local Church of England Sunday School. I was invited to go and even encouraged by my parents, but five days of school was enough for me without going on Sunday as well, so I never did go; but the fact that he went has always stayed with me as being something rather unusual.

As I grew up my interest in cricket really took off and as a very young teenager I was selected to play for the Harrogate under sixteens' and under eighteens' teams at the same time. As well as the cricket I also became interested in a country and western singer who had died a few months before I was born. He became my idol, I longed to be able to sing like him, but the Lord gave me a hopeless flat voice! During the next four or five years I amassed some eighty LPs and over 120 cassette tapes of this particular person. I also wrote all over the world to other fans as well as the singer's widow in America. My parents also had season tickets to watch Leeds Rugby League Club who used to play every other Sunday at home; so needless to say I thought nothing of spending a Sunday afternoon among the ungodly crowd of the terraces. Truly Satan had filled my heart and mind with anything and everything to keep me from Christ. However the Lord had His purpose.

During this period I met Wesley Downs at school who was in the same year as myself, he had 'accidentally' been lowered a grade and put into my class. Everybody in the class knew that there was something different about Wesley but we were never really able to find out just what it was until his birthday, when we asked him what his parents had given him as a present. Without any hesitation he replied "a New Schofield Reference Bible." Sad to say in the mid seventies I had no real idea what a Bible was, never mind a Schofield Reference Bible! We discovered that Wesley was a Christian. Well, in fact, he wasn't! He was brought up in a godly home, attended all the meetings in the local assembly, even told me how to be saved, but he wasn't himself! How like so many young people today, having the most blessed privileges of being brought up in a Christian home and knowing the Gospel

and the claims of Christ upon their never dying souls, yet not saved and still on the road to hell. It is good to relate that Wesley did get saved a year or so later and this renewed his desire to tell me the Gospel. It came to such a point that to keep him quiet I said "Alright I believe it all, everything in the Bible except the bit at the beginning about Adam and Eve. It has been categorically proved that we came from monkeys!" I really thought that would have him stumped, but his reply was direct and simple, "Prove it, where's the evidence, how do you know, were you there when it happened?" I had never thought of any of those things for I was only repeating what I had heard so often in the media. After four years of testimony we were coming up to the 'O' Level exams. We both knew that we would be going our separate ways once these were completed so Wesley asked his father, "What can I do about Robert, he just doesn't seem interested in salvation." His father's reply was very wise, "If you want to see God open a door you must first shut a door and pray earnestly about the matter." That was what Wesley and his family did. Whilst they were praying God was working.

Alongside my bed there was a pile of books from Radio Bible Class. Wesley had passed them on every month and I just added them to the pile unopened. One month before the exams in May 1981 I had a night where I just was not able to sleep. I tossed and turned until a brilliant idea came into my mind. "Read one of the booklets Wesley has given you, that will surely get you off to sleep." I picked up the first book "Heaven our eternal home." It spoke of Heaven and what it was like, what was there and what was not there. I read all thirty-two pages straight off and never even felt sleepy. At the end of reading it I knew two things; Heaven was real and my sin would keep me out of it. I picked up the next title "Heaven and how to get there." Just what a poor lost anxious hell bound soul required. It explained from the book of Romans three vital things "Man's Ruin," 3.23; "God's Remedy," 5.8; "Man's Responsibility," 10.9. Having read this right through I knew the way of salvation and God spoke to my soul once again. This time under deep conviction I got out of bed and down on to my knees and prayed properly for the first time in my life. What a night that was when God in mercy looked upon me in all my lost ruined condition, showed me His Son upon Golgotha's tree and saved my soul. That little patch of carpet in my parents back bedroom is the most precious place on earth to me.

Well now I was saved, what next? I had never been taught anything about separation, had never been to a meeting, but realised that the cricket and its various practise nights plus weekend games and the kind of life that went with it were not in keeping with the life of a Christian, so I gave it up. Shortly after I was saved I went to the Rugby League match as usual on the Sunday afternoon. I immediately knew that this was not a place where Christians ought to be. I made up my mind before the Lord that from now on the Sunday (although it wasn't until later that I learned it was the Lord's day) was for God alone. At a later date I also sorted out my record collection having heard ministry on worldliness that covered music and especially country and western music! Wesley's father Mr. Stephen Downs took me under his wing and in fact I was almost adopted into the 'Downs' family for the ensuing years, being able to see what a Christ honouring home should be like where Christ and the Scriptures were everything. I was taught something of the beauty and

preciousness of Christ to the believer, how to study the Bible and the great truths of the local assembly. In November of the same year I decided to ask for baptism having been convicted about this matter for a good period of time. I made up my mind to speak to the elders at the Gospel Hall in Harrogate on a Monday night after a ministry meeting with the late Jack Hunter. That night Mr. Hunter stood up and said "I am aware that I have indicated that I would be speaking from Nehemiah during the week but all day I have been exercised to talk on the subject of believers' baptism!" I could have fallen through the floor. He had seven points none of which I can remember although I tried very hard thinking the elders would ask what they all were when I met with them. Needless to say I was able to relate my salvation to them and the seven points were not even raised. I was baptised later that month and for the first time my parents were in the Gospel Hall. In January of 1982 I was received into fellowship at the assembly in Harrogate.

The first time that I ever felt that God may be speaking to me about His service was about five years after being saved and this took place at a ministry meeting in Leeds being taken by our late brother Bill Craig. He spoke on Matt.24 but took the passage out of its context to speak on the Lord's return to the air and what were we doing in the light of it to reach the lost. Later the same year whilst attending the New Year conference meetings in Harley Street, Scotland, I heard Ian Rees of Botswana speaking on a verse from the Proverbs, "My son give me thine heart and let thine eyes observe my ways." How that short message spoke to my soul. Many other events occurred in subsequent years far too numerous to mention. In November 1988 whilst living in South Wales, I was attending a series of meetings being taken by Albert Leckie in Nantgarw. On the Thursday morning I was contacted at work and told that Mr. Leckie had been called home. That night I told the Lord that I could never be what Mr. Leckie had been but I would do whatever He desired of my life.

In 1990 another homecall spoke possibly even more forcibly and vividly to me. I had spent some time working in Scotland and had good fellowship with the saints at the Mayfield assembly. Hence I got to know Robert McPheat and he greatly helped and encouraged me in the things of the Lord. Perhaps, Wesley's father apart, he had the greatest influence upon my life. What a man of God he was. In July of that year he was called home. I remember telephoning one of the elders in Mayfield to confirm that the news was true, he said to me, "God calls His servants home but He raises up others to carry on His work." I determined then that if that was what the Lord wanted me to do I would do it.

During 1992 and 1993 the company for whom I worked, as a safety manager was desirous to send me on various courses in order to gain further qualifications. I had put them off as long as I felt I could and it seemed during this time every conference or ministry meeting that I attended was on the same subject, i.e. going out and working for the Lord. My daily Bible readings continuously seemed to support this exercise. I just could not get away from the call of God. Also at this time the number of meetings that I was being asked to take far outweighed the number of holidays that I was permitted to have. Something had to go.

I had also been praying for a year about a particular young lady in Lancashire

called Karen. I had met her on several occasions and judged that she was a good spiritual girl with a deep love for the Lord, His Word and work. The Lord very graciously brought us together and we were married in April 1994.

The year prior to our marriage I had met with my elder brethren on a number of occasions both collectively and individually to put my exercise before them. After much prayer, in September 1993, the assembly at Harrogate gave me the right hand of fellowship and commended me to the Lord's service. We acknowledge our own nothingness and worthlessness before Christ, continually marvelling that the Lord ever saved us let alone called us. He alone is faithful and has never let us down in any way despite our often lack of faith. We look back and say with the Psalmist "The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad."

BACK TO BASICS

*Back to Basics — hope forlorn,
The Word of God "they laughed to scorn." (2Cor.30.10)*
*Back to Basics — hopeless cry,
Back to Basics — Do or Die. (Deut. 27.26; Gal.3.10)*
*To do, is simply to obey,
To die, result of saying "Nay."
No other gods preceding Me, (Ex.20.3)
Nor bow down in idolatry. (Ex.20.4,5)
Nor take the Name of God in vain, (Ex.20.7)
Blasphemy's unforgiven stain,
Remember, sabbath's holy day, (Ex.20.8)
(Lord's Day is Resurrection's lay)
Honour father, and thy mother, (Ex.20.12)
Despising not the one or other. (Prov.19.26; 23.22)
Sixth commandment, shall not kill, (Ex.20.13)
Blood for blood, is God's will, still (Num.35.33)
Do not commit adultery, (Ex.20.14)
Britain's immorality.
Thou shalt not steal is number eight, (Ex.20.15)
"Thieves and robbers" at God's gate, (Jn.10.8)
False witnesses with every breath,
Condemned "True Witness" unto death.
Tenth, do not covet any thing, (Ex.20.17)
For God accepts no offering
Save first accursed upon the Tree, (Deut.21.23; Gal.3.13)
One sacrifice for you and me.
Back to Basics is absurd
Unless 'tis back to God's own Word.*

— John Glenville

Good Tidings from Heaven

ARE YOU SLEEPING?

A court in the UK found a man guilty of causing the death of folks on a train because he fell asleep at the wheel of his car, lost control and the car careered down a bank onto a railway line where it caused a train crash with resulting fatalities. It appears that if the driver of the car had been awake the disaster would not have happened.

To be sleepy at the end of the day is natural and to have a good night's sleep is the way in which our bodies and minds are refreshed. In fact the Scriptures acknowledge, "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet," Ecclesiastes 5.12. There are many dear people who would love to enjoy a night's undisturbed rest. However, as the case mentioned illustrates, there are times when it is dangerous to be asleep.

Do you know that there are people reading this paper who are fast asleep. You may say, "How could they read in their sleep?" Such a notion is very foolish. When a person is asleep they are unconscious of all that is happening around them. That is why a patient is put to sleep in the operating theatre and they become impervious to their surroundings and their pain. Thus the concept of sleeping is a very apt illustration of the spiritual state of people who have never been awakened by the gospel message to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

John described the world in his first epistle chapter 5 v 19, "....the whole world lieth in wickedness." The idea he is conveying is that the whole world lieth in the lap of the wicked one. He is saying that the wicked one, Satan himself, has taken the world's population in his arms and, like a mother, has rocked them everyone to sleep. This has left them, and you dear reader, unconscious of what is happening all around.

Many illustrations are to be found in the Bible, where the condition of physically being asleep depicts the spiritual state of an unbeliever. Space dictates that we must suffice with two.

Sisera was unconscious of the proximity of death, Judges 4.21, "Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died." My dear reader, how close is death to you? If you knew, you could prepare for death and its ensuing consequences at your last moment, but since you do not know, you need to prepare now. This was the message of the Old Testament prophet, ".....prepare to meet thy God," Amos 4.12. Why is such a preparation needed? Let the Scriptures answer. Hebrews 9.27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment".

Samson was unconscious of the proximity of weakness, Judges 16.19, Delilah "made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him." Previously he had strength to fight and overcome the enemies but now he was weak and impotent. With regard to your salvation you are weak and impotent and unable to effect your deliverance. Romans 5.6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Here is the only way of escape and salvation - through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He died that you might live. He "gave Himself a ransom for all," 1 Timothy 2.6.

Do not allow yourself to be duped and further deceived by the devil until it is too late and you are lost forever in the judgment of God. Be aroused, be awake to your need and "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." Acts 16.31. It is stated in Romans 13.11, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep..."



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



Contents

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY BIBLE CLASS

by J. Riddle

TESTIMONY IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

by I. McKee

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN A MODERN WORLD

by W. A. Boyd

JEHOVAH'S PASSOVER

by W. W. Fereday

THE GARMENTS OF THE SAVIOUR

by Jim Flanigan

RECEPTION TO GOD'S ASSEMBLY

by D. Richards

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

by W. F. Naismith

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by W. Buckle

GOOD TIDINGS FROM HEAVEN

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

This is a bi-monthly magazine for the propagation of the Word of God and thus the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (028) 9062 1343.
E-mail: AT@bcurrie.free-online.co.uk

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (028) 4062 4238.
E-mail: AT@wmneill.free-online.co.uk

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

—∞)∞—

This magazine is supported solely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. No member of the committee, author of articles or any other person connected with the magazine receives payment, remuneration or gratuity of any kind. This magazine is not to be sold.

Friends wishing to support the work of this magazine may kindly forward their practical fellowship to:

William Neill, at the above address.

Please make all monetary contributions payable to "Assembly Testimony Magazine." Money orders and Bank Drafts please make payable in U.K. currency.

Please address correspondence for new orders, back numbers, changes of address and cancellations to William Neill.

You can help us by stating the NUMBER of copies required, with NAME and ADDRESS, including POSTAL CODE, IN BLOCK LETTERS, please.

© This magazine is copyrighted. For permission to reproduce any article or part thereof please contact the Editor.

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

DEUTERONOMY

3) REVIEWING THE JOURNEY: FROM KADESH-BARNEA TO GILEAD

Read Chapter 2

As we know, Deuteronomy chapters 1-3 trace Israel's journey from Horeb, via Kadesh-barnea, to the plains of Moab. This chapter covers the period from Kadesh-barnea, through the wilderness, back to Kadesh-barnea, after which Israel turned east through Mount Seir, north through Moab, across the Arnon, through Ammon, and into Amorite territory.

The actual wilderness wanderings are covered by v1: "Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by way of the Red Sea, as the Lord spake unto me (see 1.40, and Num.14.25): and we compassed Mount Seir many days." The march to Canaan begins with v2-3, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward."

Notice the three warnings against meddling in the affairs of the people through whose territory they passed. See v5, 9, 19. We must endeavour to ascertain why Israel was *not* to meddle in the affairs of "the children of Esau," the Moabites and the Ammonites, or engage them in battle, v9. After all they *were* to possess the territory of Sihon and Og, and "contend," v24, with them in battle. We must also attempt to explain why are we given details of the previous inhabitants of these three territories. We will suggest some answers, without taking an entranced view, as we proceed with this study. Bear this in mind as we read on.

1) *PASSING THROUGH MOUNT SEIR, v4-8*

"Ye are to pass the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir, and they shall be afraid of you." Perhaps the answer to our first question lies here. "The coast of *your brethren* the children of Esau," see also v8. The Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites, were all related peoples. This is stressed in v9 and v19, where the Moabites and Ammonites are both called "the children of Lot." Notice, however, that there was to be:

i) No interference. "Meddle not with them." Israel were "strangers and pilgrims," and involvement in the affairs of other nations was not their business. Like Israel, we must remember *our* calling. "Our citizenship is in heaven." The kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ is "not of this world." As "strangers and pilgrims" we are to have "our conversation honest among the Gentiles" and "submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," 1Pet.2.11-17. But this does not mean participation in the politics of this world. The greatest service we can undertake on behalf of our fellow-men is to pray for them, and preach the gospel. Nothing must

move us from this objective. Not even the ballot-box. We need to “take ... good heed” to ourselves in this matter, v4.

ii) No inheritance. “I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession.” Deut.32.8 now becomes compulsory reading. While the children of Israel, as true pilgrims, were authorised to buy meat and water, v6, they had no need to occupy Mount Seir. The reason follows: **“For the Lord thy God ... knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.”** The Lord Jesus taught extensively on this subject. Our object must be to “lay up ... treasures in heaven” (Paul calls it “fruit that may abound to your account,”) rather than amassing possessions on earth, and in pursuing this goal, we can trust God implicitly. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things (the necessities of life) shall be added unto you,” see Phil.4.19. We should ‘mark, learn, and inwardly digest’ the Lord’s teaching in Matt.6.19-34. The God who “knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness,” is our Father and He hasn’t changed. “Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”

An earlier request for passage through Edomite territory was made from Kadesh, Num.20.14, which was evidently also known as Kadesh-barnea. The request was refused, and “Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand.” Quite clearly, this is not the event described here, for God specifically states, “they shall be afraid of you,” v4, and passage was evidently granted. See v8, 29. We should note however, that Edomite animosity continued until the sack of Jerusalem. Read the book of Obadiah.

2) PASSING THROUGH MOAB, v9-12

“We turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab. And the Lord said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle.” Notice the same pattern.

i) No interference. “Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle.” This is a little different to the instructions regarding “the children of Esau,” and reminds us that we are not to be contentious people, either amongst ourselves as believers, or in the world. “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man,” Col.4.6. Some believers do seem to love a fight! We must certainly “earnestly contend for the faith,” Jude 3, but setting out to pick quarrels is rather different! The Lord Jesus did not “strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street,” Isa.42.1-3. The servants of God are to resemble the perfect Servant, see 2Tim.2.24-26.

ii) No inheritance. “For I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.” This repeats the instructions given in connection with Mount Seir, and reminds us that as “pilgrims and strangers,” we are to “set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth,” Col.3.2.

Moabite territory was previously occupied by the Emims, see Gen.14.5, who are described as “a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; which also were

accounted giants, as the Anakims,” v10-11. This is followed by reference to the previous occupants of Edomite territory (the Horims: see Gen.14.16), v12. Bear these facts in mind until we reach v20-23. The words, “as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the Lord gave unto them,” evidently refer, not to Canaan, but to the possession of territory formerly occupied by Sihon and Og, see 3.12.

3) CROSSING THE ZERED, v13-18

“And the space in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come to the brook Zered was *thirty and eight years*; until all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as the Lord sware unto them.” We should now turn to Jn.5.5, “And a certain man was there (at the pool of Bethesda) which had an infirmity *thirty and eight years*.” He was a true picture of Israel, and the imparting of health to him by the Lord Jesus was one of the “signs” that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” Jn.20.30-31. Jehovah, Who had given new life to His people after thirty-eight years in the wilderness, was present to give new life to a man who had been incapacitated for the same period! For Israel, the period of judgment was over and, continuing the parallel, the Lord Jesus said to the man, “Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” The loss of “all the generation of the men of war,” reminds us that sin and disobedience will not go unpunished.

4) PASSING THROUGH AMMON, v19-23

“And when thou comest nigh over the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them,” v19. This repeats the pattern in connection with “the children of Esau” and the Moabites. Once again, there was to be no interference and no inheritance.

As in the case of Moab and Edom, v10-12, the previous inhabitants of Ammon are named: “Giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims (evidently called Zuzims in Gen.14.5); a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims (and the Emims, v10).” Now, it seems, we come to the reason for these details. “But the *Lord* destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead: as *he* did to the children of Esau, which dwelt in Seir, when *he* destroyed the Horims from before them,” v21-22. We have an added piece of information in v23, which tells us that the Caphtorims destroyed the Avims, and occupied their territory. Whatever else we make of all this information, it is perfectly clear that none of these events were ‘quirks of history’ or ‘the fortunes of war.’ *God* removed these people, illustrating the well-documented lesson that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.” He “putteth down one, and setteth up another,” Ps.75.7. But God does not act in an arbitrary manner, and we must conclude He destroyed these peoples because of their sin. The name “Emims” evidently means ‘terrible ones,’ and “Zamzummims” means ‘noisy ones,’ although Matthew Henry gives the meaning as ‘crafty men’ or ‘wicked men.’ The variation just proves that it is inadvisable to build theological skyscrapers on weak foundations!

5) CROSSING THE ARNON, v24-25

“Rise ye, taking your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have

given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite (the ‘iniquity of the Amorites was full,’ Gen.15.16) ... This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven.” Now read Josh.2.9-11. God gave Israel an awesome reputation, not because they were frightening warriors, but because He was with them. How does the world perceive *us*? What kind of testimony do *we* bare? We may not reach the heights of the early preachers of the gospel, of whom it was said, “these that have turned the world upside down (‘in tumult,’ JND) are come hither also,” Acts 17.6. But we ought to be known as people who love the gospel, and take every opportunity to share it with others.

6) **CONFLICT WITH SIHON, v26-36**

We should read Num.21.21-31 in conjunction with this section of the chapter. Notice that “words of peace,” v26, were met with hostility. Peter refers to God’s word to “the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ ... whom they slew and hanged on a tree,” Acts 10.36-40. The “gospel of peace,” Rom.10.15, was almost invariably met by opposition and persecution in the book of Acts, and this has continued ever since. There is increasing evidence that past apathy towards the gospel in Great Britain is changing to opposition, and in view of proposed European legislation, there is no doubt that this will increase.

But this should not fill us with alarm and despondency. Israel triumphed over Sihon and his fellow Amorites. “The Lord our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people.” Similarly, in the book of Acts, God’s people witnessed the triumph of the gospel in the teeth of bitter opposition, see 2Cor.2.14. We now live in a society which strikingly resembles the paganism of the First Century, and if the Gospel was effective then, it must be effective now. God’s power enabled Moses to say, “there was not one city too strong for us: the Lord our God delivered all unto us,” v36, and the Gospel remains “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

We should not be alarmed by the fact that God “hardened his (Sihon’s) spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into thy hand,” v30. The conquests of Israel on both sides of the Jordan were far more than military triumphs. The sword of Israel was the sword of divine judgment on unrepentant sinners. Remember the “iniquity of the Amorite.” Their failure to repent brought judicial hardening. Compare Pharaoh, who first “hardened his heard,” Ex.8.15, 32; also 7.13 JND. The chapter ends with reference to Israel’s obedience. A much happier note! God’s prohibitions were carefully observed: “Only unto the land of the children of Ammon thou camest not ... nor unto *whatsoever the Lord our God forbid us*,” v37. This speaks for itself, for “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

Moses’ review of the journey continues in Chapter 3.

—to be continued (D.V.)

EVERY

- ... knee shall bow to [Him], Rom. 14.11
- ... tongue should confess [Him], Phil. 2.9-11
- ... eye shall see Him, Rev. 1.7

by H. A. Barnes (England)

Testimony in Troublous Times

by Ian McKee (Northern Ireland)

Paper 13 — THE SECOND RETURN TO SERVICE

(Ezra Chapter 8.1-20)

The first fourteen verses of Ezra chapter 8 are a diminutive of chapter 2. They enumerate those who return with Ezra from Babylon to Jerusalem in 457 BC. Although reference is made here to only some 1,500 persons, they were each as precious to God as the 50,000 who had returned with Zerubbabel and Jeshua some 80 years before. All were similarly known. Everyone counted.

The men who returned (Ezra 8.1-14)

Chiefs of their fathers, or 18 heads of houses, are first mentioned. Fathers with sensitivity to God's guidance who can provide a good example to their families are ever of immense value. An outstanding example was Abraham of whom the Lord said, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment," Gen.18.19.

As well as considering these principal guides we should also reflect upon the potential spiritual growth of families. It would be peculiar to conclude that the rising generation could not, by God's grace, achieve more than the one that preceded it! After all, the "chiefs of their fathers" were themselves emulating the faith of those who had gone before. With the exception of the sons of Joab, Ezra 8.9, all those named were related to the returnees in ch.2, although the number of families and constituent members are less numerous. But consider the joy of reunion at Jerusalem, reviewing generations of family history and similar experience with God.

The family heads first mentioned are of priestly and royal lineage. Gershom and Daniel are of the lineage of Phinehas and Ithamar respectively and Hattush is a great great grandson of Zerubbabel and a descendant of King David. However no details are given of the number of their accompanying family members. Then we have the names of 15 other, dare we say, ordinary family heads together with a total of 1,496 accompanying males. This indicates that for everyone with a name prominent among the people of God there were at least a hundred others, with an equal exercise in returning, whose names are not recorded. Yet these unknown saints were of a calibre that they could be counted. Also, while family size varied between a total of 28 and 300 males, the small families received equal recognition with the large.

Assembling at the Ahava and the Challenge at Casiphia (Ezra 8.15-20)

Having commenced their journey on the first day of the month they reach the Ahava River nine days later, where they rested for three days, Ezra 7.9; 8.15. However, this was not a time-wasting delay. It provided time for physical and spiritual recuperation, plus opportunity for Ezra to take stock and plan for the future. These seasons are necessary. Remember God ordained night to follow day and gave

one day of rest in every seven! Also the Lord Himself said to His disciples, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile,” Mk.6.31.

However it was during this period of rest at the Ahava that he “viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi,” Ezra 8.15. Rest, review and reflection allowed Ezra to recognise a deficiency that, otherwise, might not have been apparent: namely while two priests were returning, there were no Levites. Yet there must be Levites to bear the vessels of the Lord. Deficiency in spiritual energy will lead to unhallowed methods. Unscriptural innovation will lead to tragedy, 1Chron.13. Ezra therefore sends for nine chief men plus another two with understanding, Ezra 8.16. He was not guilty of selecting boys to do a man’s task! Only men with moral influence, whose word carried weight, together with those skilled in understanding and communicating Divine truth, will do.

These eleven men are sent to Casiphia to speak on Ezra’s behalf to Iddo, who obviously had oversight of this Jewish community. The request they carried was clear. It was for “ministers for the house of our God,” Ezra 8.17. Their task was successful and the two men of understanding recruited another “by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding,” namely Sherebiah, Ezra 8.18. Like begets like. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do His commandments,” Ps.111.10. And Sherebiah did not come alone for his sons and brothers joined him. Then Hashabiah and Jeshaiiah with brothers and sons also associated with them to provide a total of 38 Levites. Also 220 Nethinims joined them and “all of them were expressed by name” as God also honours menial service, Ezra 8.18-20.

This passage provides evidence for the productivity of sanctified rest. During this period a particular need was identified. Ezra brought eleven men into his confidence and commissioned them to perform a special task, which they performed to the letter. Men of understanding gained a companion, who was the inspiration for the exercise of others together with their sons and brothers. In turn 220 Nethinims joined them. Action following rest and due consideration achieved far more than dogged, unthinking determination. “Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding,” Prov.4.7.

Prolonged tiredness leads either to despondency or fractiousness, neither of which is of any benefit among the saints. But the recognition of deficiency by a spiritually clear-sighted and rested man led to purposeful exercise and productive results. This should lead us to reflect on the composition of our lives. For instance, have we a healthy balance between the legitimate secular and the essential spiritual, and between public service and private devotions? Or, have we lost, in large measure, the cultivation of holiness, of spending time in prayerful reading and reflection upon the Word of God? If we achieve an appropriate balance we may have a beneficial influence on others. But only by “the good hand of our God upon us”!
—to be continued (D.V.)

The Lord does not delight in His people's suffering, but in what the suffering produces of Himself, which is precious to God.

W. Reid.

Christian Conduct in a Modern World

by Walter A. Boyd (South Africa)

PAPER 21

No.6 - THE CONCLUDING SALUTATIONS

(A) His Commendation of Phebe (Romans 16.1,2)

The benedictory prayer at the end of chapter fifteen has led some to think that the epistle concludes with the word "Amen," and that chapter sixteen is an appendix, or postscript. This is not the case, as can be confirmed by a careful reading of the final chapter, which reveals firm links with the earlier fifteen chapters. Therefore, chapter sixteen must be regarded as an integral part of the whole letter. In our consideration of this chapter, we will note some of the links as we come to them, and discover that many of them serve as examples of what Paul had taught in the previous part of the epistle. It will be sufficient at this stage to point out that the features of the gospel that he mentions in ch.16.25-27 are a repetition of truths taught in chapter one. Chapter sixteen serves as a very fitting conclusion to the letter.

In his conclusion, Paul greets his friends in Rome, and passes on the greetings of friends who are with him in Corinth, from where he is writing. He commends Phebe to those in Rome, and mentions the names of so many individuals, including a word of warning against division-makers. The chapter can be divided into five sections;

1. His Commendation of Phebe v1, 2.
2. His Salutations to Rome v3-16.
3. His Admonition and Encouragement v17-20.
4. His Salutations from Corinth v21-24.
5. His Concluding Benediction v25-27.

1. His Commendation of Phebe (v1,2).

While it cannot be proven conclusively that Paul entrusted Phebe with the safe conveyance of this epistle to the saints in Rome, it is not unreasonable to accept this as an explanation for her name being singled out for special commendation at the start. If that is so, it is clear why her name should have such prominence in this chapter, amongst the associates of the Apostle Paul. When she would arrive as a stranger in Rome, the commendation of the Apostle to the Gentiles would give her a ready acceptance among his many friends in assembly fellowship, in the capital of the Gentile world. In addition, it would relieve his friends in Rome of any anxiety as to the genuineness of the bearer of a letter that had his signature. The mention of so many names in Rome and Corinth would have given weight to the authenticity of the letter. If Phebe did convey this letter to Rome, what a noble service she performed for those to whom Paul wrote, and indeed to every Christian throughout the present dispensation. The mention of Phebe's name in this letter did not constitute a letter of commendation of exactly the same sort as Paul states in 2Cor.3,

but the principle is the same. A letter of commendation, carried by a believer moving from one assembly to another, is quite scriptural, and is still required today. The mention of her name in v1 was a testimony to her genuineness, and was necessary when she arrived in Rome. Another principle is noteworthy: Phebe was engaged in a service for the believers, and as such had to be of commendable character. The world watches on with far more interest than we are aware of, and careful attention should be given to ensure that those who are engaged in public or private service of the saints are of good report.

A) Her Introduction to the saints in Rome (v1,2). Phebe, whose name means “pure,” appears only here in the New Testament. She is commended in a three-fold way, that highlights her — *relationship*: “sister”; *responsibility*: “servant”; *resources*: “succourer of many.” She was a sister in Christ, a servant in the church, and a succourer of the Christians. That relationship in Christ led Paul to describe her as “our sister.” She may never have met any of the believers in Rome before, yet she was related to them as a sister in Christ. The use of the word “servant” does not identify the office of deaconess. It simply indicates that she used her time and energy in the service of other Christians in the assembly. Ecclesiastical history may have formalised the office of deaconess, but that gives no warrant for assemblies to adopt the practices of Christendom. Since Paul was happy to commend such a servant, her service would have been within the limitations for sisters that he teaches in other epistles. Her service was not public; it was not preaching, nor was it pastoring. These types of service by a sister are not sanctioned by Scripture.

One idea in the word ‘succourer’ is a person who affords protection for a stranger. As an itinerant preacher, the Apostle would have needed such a ministry. This is still a noble service for any exercised sister, and when done for the Master and His people it will reap a rich reward.

B) Her Reception by the saints at Rome (v2). Paul asks that she should be received and assisted. It is important to observe that her reception is to be “in the Lord.” She was to be received in the fellowship of the Lord, or because she belongs to the Lord. Her obedience to the Lord as Master, and their submission to the same Master, would combine to provide a willing reception of Phebe. To do so is becoming of those who are saints; or, in other words, it is acting worthily towards the Lord. If some in Rome were of a mind to reject Phebe, they would be rejecting her Lord, and acting unworthily of the name of saints. This is why Diotrophes comes in for severe censure by John in his third epistle.

Phebe was to be assisted in whatever business she required. She should be made to feel at home among them, with warmth and Christian love. This would include asking her how they could help in the furtherance of the purpose of her visit to Rome. This is a practical responsibility that we should fulfil, when a visitor bearing a letter of commendation comes to our assembly. Help should be readily available for whatever needs they have. The writer knows of some assemblies where this is manifested today; and young believers away from home, at University or College, are assured of practical help, as well as the fellowship of the various meetings of the assembly. The availability of a mature believer to help young saints in a hostile world has been a great blessing to many, and has proved to be a significant spiritual

help and preservative in their young lives. It also forges links of fellowship that are lasting, and a testimony to the grace of God. How sad, when a believer arrives at a new assembly, to be greeted with nothing more than a suspicious glance, or icy stare. When we do that, we have failed!

Paul had every confidence that Priscilla and Aquila (v3), Mary (v6), or the mother of Rufus (v12), to name but some, would do as he requested in the reception and help of Phebe. His past experience of their fellowship assured Paul that they would extend the same to Phebe. This is one reason for the list of names in the section from v3-16. Paul was not 'name-dropping,' in order to get on in life, as some would do. He was showing the sterling character of those Christians that he knew in Rome. He was confident that they would worthily receive Phebe, and honour his request. If Paul were writing to the assembly in your locality, would your name appear in a list of those in whom he could have confidence?

—to be continued (D.V.)

Jehovah's Passover

by W. W. Fereday

PAPER 9 — "EAT THE FLESH"

The blood of the lamb having been sprinkled according to the ordinance of Jehovah, the flesh of the animal was to be cooked and eaten. Here also for every detail there was divine legislation: nothing whatever was left to the decision of the people. So we read: "They shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof," Ex.12.8-9. Eating has in Scripture the double force of appropriation and identification. In Jn.6.51-57 the Saviour insists upon the necessity of eating His flesh and drinking His blood in order to have and enjoy eternal life. It is folly to drag the Lord's Supper into Jn.6, for it had not been instituted at the time our Lord thus spoke. The meaning is that not only must He be slain in order to meet the need of sinful men, but men must distinctly appropriate Him in faith in that character. Hence the language of the new song in heaven: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood," Rev.5.9. They who surround the throne adoringly acknowledge that their every blessing is due to the Saviour's death. Israel's feeding upon the lamb in Egypt is thus typical of our appropriation today of the once-slain Christ.

But there is more than this. It was distinctly forbidden to boil the flesh, as also to eat of it raw. It must be "roast with fire." Fire is the emblem in Scripture of the holiness of God in judgment. It is not enough for me to know that Christ died; it is

essential that I should believe that He died atoningly, having first exhausted all the judgment of God that my sins deserved. "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," 1Pet.2.24. Feeding, as it were, upon the roast lamb, I enter in some measure into the awful judgment which fell upon Christ as my sin-bearer, and I realise that but for His self-sacrificing love I must myself have remained under the wrath of God for ever, Jn.3.36.

A sense of this doubtless weighed heavily upon the soul of Saul of Tarsus in Damascus when for three days he could neither eat nor drink, Acts 9.9.

The "bitter herbs" which accompanied the roast lamb are suggestive of the same principle. The realisation that sin, my sin — is of such exceeding gravity in the sight of God that nothing could expiate it, and thus save me from eternal ruin but the death of Christ, and that in the midst of circumstances of unparalleled grief and shame, is bitter indeed, though the knowledge of redemption yields ultimately and for ever exceeding joy.

Anything that remained of the Paschal lamb was to be destroyed in the morning. The sacrifice in all its ceremonial was to be completed within a single night. "Ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire." The rising sun was thus to see no trace of the slain lamb. In like manner the atoning work of Christ in process of being accomplished; it has been accomplished definitively and eternally. As a fragrant and hallowed memory Calvary's costly sacrifice abides with God and the redeemed for ever, but the sacrifice itself is past and completed. So divinely efficacious is it that nothing further could ever be required or accepted. For God's suffering Lamb the dark night of judgment is no more and He lives on high in the eternal sunshine of divine favour and love.

—to be continued (D.V.)

THE GARMENTS OF THE SAVIOUR

by J. Flanigan (Northern Ireland)

1 — THE GARMENTS OF DEITY

It is perhaps well known that garments in Scripture speak of character. It is therefore interesting to consider the garments of the Saviour with a view to meditations on His life and ministry, and a study of the great fundamentals touching the glory of His Person. All His garments are fragrant with memories of Himself, whether the swaddling bands of His infancy, or the coat that was without seam, the purple robe of mockery, the grave clothes in which they finally wrapped Him, or the other garments which He wore during the days of His flesh.

However, in Ps.104.1-2 it is said of Him, "Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment". Here we look back before Bethlehem and the incarnation. In the dateless, timeless past, in the uncalendared days of eternity, He who voluntarily became Man to be our Saviour was robed in light. "His train filled the temple," Isa.6.1. His glory filled the holiness

of the heavens and every intelligence there acclaimed His inscrutable greatness. Seraphim and cherubim veiled their faces while myriads of angelic beings hastened to do His bidding, and the Scriptures confirm that it was indeed the glory of the Lord Jesus that Isaiah saw in his awful vision, Jn.12.41. He wore the garment of light, covered with honour and majesty.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.

Well did the hymn writer conclude - "Tis only the splendour of light hideth Thee."

The truth of our Lord's Deity is assailed on every hand. It has always been so, since the beginning, and the earliest New Testament writers had to defend and emphasise it. But the Saviour wears titles which are the titles of Godhood, He exercises attributes which are the prerogative of Deity alone, and He accepts honours which can be ascribed only to One who is God. It is somewhat difficult to understand how anyone with an open honest mind can read even the two Scriptures already referred to and still deny that Jesus is God, Isa.6.1; Jn.12.41.

Note that the title "Son of God" infers and implies a relationship within the circle of Divine Persons and has ever been seen by Jew and Moslem alike to be a claim to Deity, Jn.5.18. They told Pilate, "By our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God," Jn.19.7. The relationship of the Son to the Father is unique and eternal. He alone is the Son of the Father in a timeless intimacy which makes Him the Only Begotten. He is the Son ever in the bosom of the Father. Though He came by incarnation into our world yet He never left the Father's bosom, and though He was, by grace, found in fashion as a Man, yet that word is always true, "Who, being in the form of God," Jn.1.18; Phil.2.6.

He is Immanuel, God with us. He is the Ancient of Days, the Father of eternity whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, Micah 5.2. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending. He is the Word, the revelation of God to men, and He is the great "I AM", without beginning of days or end of life. He is both the root and the offspring of David, so that King David might well have said, as John Baptist did, "After me cometh a Man which is preferred before me: for He was before me," Jn.1.30. He is eternal, inscrutable, and incomparable. He is God!

During His lifetime Jesus exercised the attributes of Deity. Omnipotence and Omniscience belong to God alone. Omnipotence is All-Power and Omniscience is All-Knowledge. The Saviour had both. As the omnipotent One He made water wine, He calmed the winds and waves with a word, and He walked on the troubled waters. He once bade a fish bring a coin to Peter, He multiplied bread and fish, the harvest of land and sea, to feed the multitudes, and He withered a barren fig tree with a word. He healed leprosy, palsy, blindness, and deafness. He made the dumb to speak, He delivered from demon possession, He healed all manner of diseases, He cured the incurable, and even death itself had to obey Him. He was omnipotent indeed.

The deep, the demons, and the dead,
Were subject to the word He said,
Unveiling thus His power and might
To exercise His Godhead right.

In His omniscience He knew all things. How often He answered the unspoken reasonings in the hearts of the scribes, saying, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" Mk.2.8. On His last evening with His disciples He revealed His knowledge of all things. See Jn.13.1,3,11,18. "Jesus knew that His hour was come." "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God". "He knew who should betray Him." "I know whom I have chosen." He knew too, what His enemies were planning. On His last journey to Jerusalem He knew what lay before Him. He knew about the Garden, the betrayal and the arrest, the House of Caiaphas, Peter's denial, the Judgment Hall and Golgotha, thorns, nails, thirst and spear. In His omniscience He knew it all, yet set His face determinedly to go to Jerusalem nevertheless, Lk.19.51.

All this was evidence of His Deity. He therefore had a right to accept honours which were due to God alone. "My Lord and my God" said Thomas, and the Saviour accepted that. All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, He had taught them. He had expounded to them a five-fold equality of the Father and the Son, Jn.5. Eight times throughout our Bible Jesus is directly called God.

- Isa.9.6 "His Name shall be called ... the mighty God;"
Mt.1.23 "His Name Emmanuel ... God with us;"
Jn.1.1 "The Word was God;"
Jn.20.28 "My Lord and my God;"
Rom.9.5 "Who is God over all, blessed for ever" (JND);
Tit.2.13 "Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (RV; JND);
Heb.1:8 "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (also Ps.45.6);
1Jn.5.20 "His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God."

Some things are too big for our tiny human intellects. Sometimes we can but bow in wonder, and worship. How can we understand that the Omnipotent should become dependent? That the Son of the Father should become the Son of Mary? That the Ancient of Days should become an Infant in time? Yet this is what we shall find as we continue to consider the garments that He wore. "What manner of Man is this?"
—to be continued (D.V.)

He speaks best for God who speaks often to God.

J. Douglas

* * *

The wealth of Heaven passed through this world
characterised by the poverty of death.

J. Douglas

Reception to God's Assembly

by D. Richards (Canada)

PAPER 1

These papers are designed to help believers who are gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, seeking to follow the pattern of the local assembly as seen in the New Testament, to understand what the Bible teaches about the subject of the reception of believers. There are differences of opinion among assemblies as to whether we should receive to the Lord's supper believers who have no assembly association. The writer will try, in a sensitive way, to present what he is convinced the Bible teaches on the subject.

Read Rom.15. 5 - 7; 1 Cor.11. 28.

Some believers in assembly fellowship find it difficult to accept that when they bring a relative or friend, who is saved but not in assembly fellowship, to the Lord's supper, that individual will not be received to break bread. And one of the things that believers from denominations find most offensive about assemblies is not being received to break bread, even though they are living godly lives.

The texts above have been used to justify assemblies receiving denominational Christians at the Lord's supper, as long as they are not known to be living sinful lives. An expression commonly used in certain circles is "we receive on the ground of the **One Body**," by which they mean, "we receive to the Lord's supper all believers, who are in the body of Christ, **as long as they are not living in sin.**" One of the texts they will use to support this is Rom.15.7, "Wherefore, receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God." First of all, this text is not referring to receiving to the Lord's supper, nor even receiving to the fellowship of the assembly. Those being addressed in this verse were already in assembly fellowship, but, because of coming from different religious backgrounds and different cultures, were tending to sit in judgment upon one another. The whole context, from ch.14.1-15.7 is dealing with this problem of **intolerance**. Paul was exhorting them to accept their differences and have fellowship with one another. Secondly, even if Rom.15.7 was referring to receiving to the Lord's supper, it does not say anything about, "as long as they are not living in sin." Christ did not wait until we had cleaned up our lives before He received us; He received us just as we were. A moral change was not a precondition to Him receiving us, but the result of Him receiving us. Hence, if we use this verse for receiving to the Lord's supper, we cannot insist on only receiving them if they "are not living in sin." Thirdly, if we receive "on the ground of the one body" then we cannot expect the sisters to be silent, for "there is neither male or female" in the body of Christ, Gal.3.28. Also, we cannot exercise discipline upon a sinning Christian, because there is no excommunication in the body of Christ. All believers are in the body of Christ, and

since the Bible teaches that we can never lose our salvation, we can never be excommunicated from the body of Christ. Clearly, this verse has nothing to do with receiving to the Lord's supper.

The other text that people often quote is 1Cor.11.28, "But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." This verse very definitely has to do with the Lord's supper. The appeal is that we are not to examine the man, but he is to examine himself, and decide if he should partake. What they fail to see is that this chapter was addressed to the assembly in Corinth, and that all the saints were exhorted to examine themselves before partaking of the Lord's supper. If the context be examined, 1Cor.11.17-34, it will be seen that there was a lot of sinful behaviour amongst the saints at Corinth, particularly preceding the Lord's supper. God had seriously disciplined many as a result, v30. Paul's point here is that we should all do an inventory on ourselves, before we remember the Lord, rectify any wrongs, and then partake (not abstain). The verse has nothing whatever to do with receiving someone from outside the assembly.

Four questions that must be answered.

- 1) To what should we receive?
- 2) Who do we receive?
- 3) How do we receive?
- 4) What is the responsibility of those who are received?

1) To what should we receive? Read Acts 9.26-28; Rom.16.1,2.

There are two different views among assemblies of the Lord's people on this subject. The one view is that we should receive believers to the Lord's supper. The other is that we should receive believers to the full fellowship of the assembly. Which is correct?

In Acts 9: 26 Paul "assayed to join himself to the disciples." The verse says nothing about the Lord's supper, although undoubtedly that would be included. Clearly, he was wanting to be part of the assembly in Jerusalem. So that, when he was eventually received, "he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem." Likewise, in Rom.16.2 there is no reference to the Lord's supper. Phebe was a business lady visiting the imperial city, and the saints were exhorted to "receive her." Are we to understand by this statement that Paul was merely asking them to receive her to the breaking of bread? Not at all! They were expected to receive her into the fellowship of the assembly for the duration of her time in Rome. Reception, in the New Testament, is never to the Lord's supper, it is always to the full fellowship of the assembly. The Lord's supper is an assembly function, therefore to partake of the Lord's supper we must be in the fellowship of the assembly.

It is the practise of some well meaning believers to break bread as a family if they are away from an assembly for whatever reason. Others will "take the emblems" to a sick Christian at home or in hospital. While this is a noble gesture it is totally contrary to the Word of God. The whole context of 1Cor.11.17-34 indicates it is as an assembly that we break bread.

2) **Who do we receive?** Read Acts 2.41,42; 9.6,18,26.

In Acts 2.41, firstly, “they gladly received His word,” secondly, “they were baptized,” thirdly, “they were added.” Having been added “they continued steadfastly ... in the breaking of bread.” In Acts 9.6 Saul was converted, in v18 he was baptized, and in v26 “he assayed to join himself to the disciples.” In the Scriptures believing always precedes baptism, baptism always precedes reception to the assembly, and reception always precedes participating in the Lord’s supper.

—to be continued (D.V.)

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

by W. Fraser Naismith (Scotland)

The Lord has given His people a “Blessed Hope,” Tit.2.13; a “Steadfast Hope,” Heb.6.19; and a “Purifying Hope,” 1Jn.3.3. Despite the many great and precious promises, some, in our day, believe that the saints of this present dispensation will undergo the terrible throes of the Great Tribulation. “To the law and to the testimony,” said Isaiah; so we shall proceed to examine the Holy Scriptures to ascertain what God has declared regarding this time of severe testing and trial.

There are six definite and direct allusions to the Great Tribulation in the Word of God at which we may profitably look. (There are numerous indirect references, to some of these also, we may refer).

The first is in Jeremiah 30.7, and reads thus: “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even *the time of Jacob's trouble*; but he shall be saved out of it.” Note the words, “the time of Jacob's trouble.” Who was Jacob? He was the wrestler of Gen.32 who had his name changed to ‘Israel.’ Paul distinguishes the peoples of this earth in 1Cor.10.32 saying, “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.” Born again souls in this economy are in the Church of God which Christ loved, and for which He gave Himself, Eph.5.25. Promethean hate has kindled the flames of persecution throughout this long period of divine grace, and many of the dear saints of God have won the martyr's crown for their unswerving fidelity to Christ and the truth of God's Word. The persecution, or tribulation spoken of by our Lord in Jn.16.33 has no reference to “The Great Tribulation,” called “The time of Jacob's Trouble.” This period of time relates to God's earthly people Israel; and exemption must be claimed for those who compose the “body of Christ,” the Church.

The second Scripture to which we would refer is found in Dan.12.1: “At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of *thy people*: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” It is worthy of note that Michael has always a special association with God's earthly people: see Dan.10.13,21; Jude 9;

Rev.12.7. Michael is alluded to as “the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people.” Who was Daniel? He was a Hebrew captive in Babylon. His people must have been Hebrews. There is going to be a time of trouble such as never was since national history began, and at that time Daniel's people are going to be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. The history of Israel has been a chequered one! What has the Church to do with that history or that particular nation? Surely there is only one interest and that is the salvation of the souls of the personnel who are Israelites.

Both of the Scriptures quoted are culled from the Old Testament Scriptures: and it should be kept in mind that the Church is not the subject of Old Testament declaration, but of New Testament revelation. Those who try to find the doctrine of the Church in the Old Testament are like the blind man in the dark room looking for a black cat that isn't there. How necessary to accept the exhortation of Paul to Timothy: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth,” 2Tim.2.15.

The third reference to the Great Tribulation is found in Matthew's Gospel, ch.24. The Olivet Discourse is the greatest prophecy extant, because it was given by the greatest Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ. Two questions were asked by the disciples in Matt.24.3 — the first — “When shall these things be?” was answered in Lk.21. The second — “What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?” was answered in Matt.24,25.

It should be carefully noticed that the context of the first section of the Olivet Discourse, Matt.24.4-44, has a definite Jewish bearing. Note v14 where reference is made to “*the Gospel of the Kingdom*,” which shall be “preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and *then* shall the end come.” The following verse refers to “*the abomination of desolation*, spoken of by Daniel the prophet”: see Dan.9.27. In v16 “Judea” is alluded to, and those living there are warned to flee: V20 refers to the “Sabbath Day”, which was the day of rest for Israel, Ex.31.16-17. In verse 21 the Tribulation is referred to in such terms as “tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” V22 speaks of the “*elect*”— this has no reference to those who are “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world,” but to the elect of Israel. See. Deut.7.6 and Ps.139.16.

Perhaps the greatest evidence that it is not the Church period which is in view in this first section of the Olivet Discourse is in the usage of the term “Son of Man” six times: see v27,30,37,39,44. This title was first used by Christ to indicate His rejection, then afterwards to affirm His universal authority as supreme ruler. It is not a title used in the epistles relative to the Church, and found only in Rev.1.13 to indicate that Christ is the One who discriminates and judges as He moves among the lampstands.

There is nothing in this section of the Olivet Discourse to indicate that the Church is in view: in fact, it is quite the reverse. (The divisions of the Olivet Discourse are as follows: Matt.24.4-44, Christ's coming in relation to His earthly people. Matt.24.45-25.30 is the second division and relates to Christ's coming to Christendom. Matt.25.31-46 presents His coming to the living nations). The whole context of the first section, in which a lone reference is made to the Great

Tribulation, has a definite bearing on the Jew and not on the Church.

The fourth reference is found in Mark 13.19. In this passage there is presented the Olivet Discourse, and it would be unnecessary to cover the same ground again. In v20 there is the shortening of the days and these are confined to 1,260 days, Rev.11.3; 12.6; or 42 months. Rev. 13.5; or “a time, and times, and half a time,” Rev. 12.14; Dan.7.15; 12.7.

The fifth reference is found in Rev. 3.10: “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” The foregoing is part of the statement made by Christ to “the angel of the church in Philadelphia.” The writer accepts the outline of Rev.2,3 as a preview of church history. The period alluded to in the message to Philadelphia is this epoch of time in which our lot is cast: in fact the last three messages, to Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea run concurrently to the close of church history. With the darkening clouds gathering, and paucity in numbers characterising the saints — “thou hast a little strength;” and loyalty to divine truth being maintained — “thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name;” the promise of the Lord is, “I will also keep thee *from* the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” The Lord did not say, “I will keep thee *through* the hour;” nor did He say, “I will keep thee *in* the hour;” but “I will keep thee *from* the hour.” The *hour* is not sixty minutes: it is a measured span of time, e.g., Jn.12.27; Mk.14.35; Lk.22.53. The hour referred to in Rev.3.10 is a period of three and a half years — the latter half of Daniel’s last week. The question may be asked, “How will the Lord keep the saints of this Church period from the Great Tribulation? He will take them into eternity, free forever from the limitations of the inveterate hate and fierce fires of the Tribulation. Isn’t it simple? Isn’t it sublime? Why then do people desire to pass through the Great Tribulation? It is a blessed hope we have, and not a haunting nightmare. If it could be established that the saints of this present dispensation must go through the Great Tribulation then there would be sleepless nights, and a haunting spectre of carnage such as has never been experienced on earth before would invade our hearts and minds; then we would seek death, as did Elijah. Lift up your heads! The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

The sixth and final allusion to the Great Tribulation is found in Rev.7.14. This chapter is a revelation of the purposes of God — relative to Israel, and consequent upon that in relation to the nations of the earth. The hundred and forty-four thousand of the tribes of Israel are sealed: that is, they are set apart to God. Today the believers are sealed, Eph.1.13, the sealing is Godward, as the ‘Earnest’ of the following verse is manward. So in that coming day God will set His soul on the remnant who will be preserved through the Great Tribulation, so “all Israel shall be saved;” compare Rom.9.27; 11.26. This will be the nucleus of the nation which will people the Millennial Earth as the head of the nations and not the tail. There will also be an innumerable company of all the nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues who shall be prepared for, and blessed through the Millennium. When John sought to know who this latter company was he was informed “these are they which have come out of Tribulation the great one, and have washed their robes and made

them white in the blood of the Lamb.” They are morally before the throne of God. (Daniel has been cast into the den of lions alive and Darius made a decree when he was preserved there, thus: “that in every denomination of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel”). This was not a scene in heaven, any more than that of Rev.7. It is a scene characteristic of those who are on the earth who have been cleansed and prepared for the delights of the Millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It will have been noticed that there is not even a trace of a suggestion that the Church will pass through the Great Tribulation. Let us therefore be satisfied with the divine revelation which clearly teaches that the Great Tribulation is not a fire kindled for the purification of the Church: Christ does that “By the washing of water by the word,” Eph.5.26. It relates to God’s earthly people of whom He says, “I will sow her unto Me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, Thou art My people! And they shall say, Thou art my God,” Hos.2.23.

Lay your head on your pillow in the blessed hope of being out of this scene when the Great Tribulation rages: “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

THE APPROBATION OF THE LORD

(J. N. DARBY)

It should be joy to anyone who loves the Lord Jesus to think of having His individual peculiar approbation and love; to find He has approved of our conduct in such and such circumstances, though none know this but ourselves who receive the approval.

But, beloved, are we really content to have an approval which Christ only knows? Let us try ourselves a little. Are we not too desirous of man’s commendation of our conduct? or at least that he should know and give us credit for the motives which actuate it? Are we content, so long as good is done, that nobody should know anything about us — even in the church to be thought nothing of? that Christ alone should give us the “white stone” of His approval, and the new name which no man knoweth save only he that receiveth it?

Are we content, I say, to seek nothing else? Oh! think what the terrible evil and treachery of that heart must be that is not satisfied with Christ’s special favour, but seeks honour (as we do) of one another instead! I ask you, beloved, which would be most precious to you, which would you prefer, the Lord’s public owning of you as a good and faithful servant, or the private individual love of Christ resting upon you — the secret knowledge of His love and approval? He whose heart is specially attached to Christ will respond, “The latter.”

Both will be ours, if faithful; but we shall value this most; and there is nothing that will carry us so straight on our course as the anticipation of it.

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (82)

by Wallace Buckle (Canada)

I was born and raised in a little fishing village on the Labrador Coast, Newfoundland., Canada. Some years later, I got a job with a mining Company at Seven Islands, Quebec. At first I put money away and even sent some home, but soon I began to drink and gamble and the money went as fast as I made it. After many a night of drinking we would put the little motor car on the railway track and head back up the line, not knowing at what corner we would meet a train.

One weekend a young man came to me and said, "Newf, let's go to town for a good time." This is what we thought was real happiness. We went down the sixteen miles and got our room and booze for the weekend. The 'good time' ended in a brawl on Sunday night so I took a taxi to Mile 12 and walked the rest of the way home.

The first news that I received the next morning was that my buddy had been killed! After walking to the scene of the accident, I saw something I will never forget. As I looked down at the mutilated remains of my buddy, I thought of his family, and what sorrow and grief this would bring to them. I thought about home and I longed to see my own loved ones again. I left for home soon after. When I arrived back home, (Forteau) there was talk of a new religion in our village. I went out to listen one night and the preacher spoke of heaven and hell. He said that those that die without Christ would be in hell. I became so angry that as I left I tore the door off its hinges. But when I got home I started to think: "if what he says is right, then I'm wrong!"

I had never read the Bible before, but I had always thought it to be true, so I got out Eaton's catalogue and ordered a Bible. Thank God, that was one time Eaton's didn't send a substitute!

After reading it for two months, one night in my room I came to the verse: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 2.21. That very night I trusted Christ as my Saviour. I can truly say, the worst day I've had since I've been saved has been better than the best day I had before I was saved. The forty and more years that have passed since I received Christ as my Saviour have been the happiest years of my life. Above all, I know for sure that whenever this life comes to an end, it will be heaven and home for all eternity.

Will you not, right now, trust Christ as your Saviour? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Acts 16.31.

Approximately three years after trusting Christ as my Saviour, my wife Olive and I were residing in Toronto, Ontario and were gathered with the Saints at Pape Avenue Gospel Hall. I was working as an automotive mechanic and attending training classes in that field. We felt the Lord was directing us to move back to the south Labrador coast. A new roadway was being developed, linking the small coastal communities and I saw an opportunity to open an automotive repair shop.

This allowed me to move back and pursue my desire to do a little work for God in the area where I was born and raised.

Mr. Herb Harris encouraged me to participate in the effort to spread the Gospel by going to coastal Newfoundland and Labrador communities in a small cabin cruiser because I had grown up in a fishing community and had knowledge and experience around small boats. I agreed to go and my wife stayed at home and sold automotive parts from our little business.

After visiting a number of fishing communities we stopped at Rocky Harbour, on the West Coast of the Newfoundland Island. We had nightly open-air meetings from the boat and there seemed to be a good interest. Encouraged by the level of interest we fixed up an old garage in the community and moved our meetings inside. Souls got saved and Mr. Herb Harris asked me if I thought my wife would move there so that the work could continue through the winter.

Olive, my loving wife, was more than willing to make the move to see souls saved and along with our firstborn daughter we made Rocky Harbour our new home in 1961. I sold my business, Mr. Harris stayed with us and together we began to pursue the Lord's work in the area. My wife and I also had a second daughter and our first son during our four year stay in Rocky Harbour.

The Elders of Pape Avenue wrote me to inquire whether I intended to go into the Lord's work full-time, but I was still intending to go back into my business. Those plans were gently altered by God's will and I was led to get involved in new outreaches at Fogo Island and then Flowers Cove. I was later commended to the Lord's work full-time in 1965 from the English Point, Lance au Loup, and Red Bay Assemblies in Southern Labrador.

We moved to Flowers Cove in 1966 and helped with the work there for about five years, then spent one year in Corner Brook in 1971 to help with the construction of a new Gospel Hall there. Then we moved back to English Point for two years where our second son was born. We moved back to Flowers Cove in 1974 where we stayed until 1983 when we moved to Goose Bay, Labrador. Since moving here to Goose Bay we have seen a number of souls saved, and a new Assembly formed.

We would appreciate the prayers of the Lord's people for ourselves personally and for the preservation of the work in which we are involved for the Lord's glory.

SEVEN BLESSED THINGS IN REVELATION

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, 1.3

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth, 14.13

Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, 16.15

Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb, 19.9

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, 20.6

Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book, 22.7

Blessed are they that do His commandments, 22.14

by H. A. Barnes (England)

DIVINE ORDER — Acts 2 v 41, 42

*The Apostle's trump, gives no uncertain sound,
And only in the sacred page 'tis found;
This hallowed ground we tread with unshod feet
No room for haughty spirit or conceit.*

*The wise and prudent may of knowledge boast,
But babes in Christ the Bible treasures most;
The pilgrim's manna, gathered day by day
Pillar of fire by night, to lead the way.*

*Christ is the only Saviour for the lost,
To save a poor soul think of what it cost;
Christ is the gathering centre for His own
Unto His Holy Name, and His alone.*

*All rival names throughout all Christendom,
Names of great persons, and of doctrine some,
These split the Church of God in petty sects
Unlike the church in chapter two of Acts.*

*Hiss of the serpent in all sects we see,
Who hates the sight of Godly unity;
A unity so pleasant and so good
For which the Godly in all ages stood.*

*A unity we are not told to make,
Here zealous ones have made the same mistake;
Distinguishing themselves with good intent
Such practise they o'er look, God never meant
Simple the order of God's grand design,
To break the bread and drink the cup of wine;
Privilege of those in fellowship to share
And also in His Name to meet for prayer.*

*To Scriptural order let us warmly cling,
In loved obedience to our Heavenly King;
Baptized and gathered to His lovely Name
Outside the camp to bear reproach and shame.*

*The unbeliever and unlearned may gaze,
As the Assembly raise their songs of praise;
Outside the fellowship none do partake
It is Assembly privilege that's at stake.*

*Thus commendation letters were the rule,
To guard against the "open table" school;
The table is the Lord's and not of man
So let us stick to Acts Two's all wise plan.*

*And when the Lord descends the open air,
All blood bought ones shall in the rapture share,
But not one sect or party shall arise
Christ's the great gathering centre in the skies.*

*Then open table and its advocates,
Will have to leave the sectarian names and states;
And to one Name and Lordship humbly bow
Better to take the step and do it now.*

— R. Hull (Belfast)

Good Tidings from Heaven

A SOUND INVESTMENT

It would be easy to be confused with the choice of investments available today — ISAs, AVCs, With Profits Bonds, Endowment Policies, Private Health Care, Critical Illness and Long Term Care Policies and many have discovered the advantages of tax havens where interest rates are appealingly higher. Insurance companies market aggressively in an effort to combat consumer lethargy and the notion that 'it could never happen to me.' There are policies to cover almost any eventuality in life and some are complacent in believing that they have watertight security for the years ahead. It is also a fact that more people are living longer and so there is an emphasis on investing for the future.

It all seems to make sense and yet how many people have absolutely no preparation for eternity. You may live to collect your pension but on the other hand you may never enjoy the nest-egg you are storing away — BUT you will be in eternity and there is no avoiding that. You will have to leave every penny behind. Have you been obsessed with material things, planning a retirement free from financial worries? Surely you have not been so foolhardy as to neglect ensuring your eternal welfare.

Do you think it will be a step in the dark? Are you merely hoping that all will turn out well? Surely you would not be so foolish as to try to console yourself that there is nothing beyond death or have you tried to persuade yourself that a God of love would not send any of His creatures to a place of torment forever? Allow the Word of God to settle this issue conclusively — "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" Hebrews 9.27

My dear friend, there is no need for uncertainty in these all-important matters; you can know here and now where you will be going when life is over. Would it not be wisdom to make this your top priority and be sure that all is well for eternity?

The apostle John wrote in 1John 5.13, "These things have I written unto you ... that ye may know that ye have eternal life." No one can possess anything of greater value than eternal life and all the wealth of the world could not purchase it. However, you can receive it as a free gift according to Romans 6.23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" Nothing has cost God so much to provide and yet He offers it freely to all who feel their need of it. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3.16.

No one will ever be able to calculate how much Christ had to pay before salvation could be procured. "... the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2.20. Before He expired on the Cross the Lord Jesus proclaimed with a loud voice "It is finished" indicating that the full price of salvation had been paid.

If you want to make the safest investment you could ever make and know for certain that every risk regarding eternity has been removed, then trust Christ and ...

"Know with assurance thou never cans't die
Since Jesus thy righteousness lives."



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



Contents

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY BIBLE CLASS

by J. Riddle

TESTIMONY IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

by I. McKee

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN A MODERN WORLD

by W. A. Boyd

JEHOVAH'S PASSOVER

by W. W. Fereday

THE GARMENTS OF THE SAVIOUR

by Jim Flanigan

RECEPTION TO GOD'S ASSEMBLY

by D. Richards

DEVICES AND WILES OF SATAN

by C. Jones

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by S. Mountstevens

GOOD TIDINGS FROM HEAVEN

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

This is a bi-monthly magazine for the propagation of the Word of God and thus the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (028) 9062 1343.
E-mail: AT@bcurrie.free-online.co.uk

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (028) 4062 4238.
E-mail: AT@wmneill.free-online.co.uk

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

————∞()∞————

This magazine is supported solely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. No member of the committee, author of articles or any other person connected with the magazine receives payment, remuneration or gratuity of any kind. This magazine is not to be sold.

Friends wishing to support the work of this magazine may kindly forward their practical fellowship to:

William Neill, at the above address.

Please make all monetary contributions payable to "Assembly Testimony Magazine." Money orders and Bank Drafts please make payable in U.K. currency.

Please address correspondence for new orders, back numbers, changes of address and cancellations to William Neill.

You can help us by stating the NUMBER of copies required, with NAME and ADDRESS, including POSTAL CODE, IN BLOCK LETTERS, please.

© This magazine is copyrighted. For permission to reproduce any article or part thereof please contact the Editor.

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

DEUTERONOMY

4) REVIEWING THE JOURNEY: FROM GILEAD TO BETH-PEOR

Read Chapter 3

In this chapter, Moses completes his review of Israel's journey from Horeb, via Kadesh-barnea and the wilderness, to Beth-peor. "So we abode in the valley over against Beth-peor," v29. It was in this area that Moses was buried by God, see 34.6. As in ch.1-2, he relates historical facts without comment. As we have already said, we cannot rightly understand what the Bible teaches, unless we know what the Bible actually says! In ch.4-11, Moses enlarges on the important lessons arising from their forty-year journey.

The chapter can be divided as follows:

- (1) The defeat of Og, v1-11:
- (2) The division of the land, v12-17:
- (3) The directions for conquest, v18-22:
- (4) The desire of Moses, v23-29.

1) THE DEFEAT OF OG, v1-11

Deuteronomy commences with reference to the defeat of "Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Ashtaroth in Edrei," 1.4. They are often called, "the two kings of the Amorites," see 3.8. Og ruled territory to the north of Sihon, and his domain stretched as far as Hermon, see v9. The combined territories therefore lay between the Arnon in the south, and Hermon in the north, v8, and comprised Israel's possession to the east of Jordan. As always in historical passages, there are valuable lessons here:

i) The victory promised, v1-2. "Then we turned, and went up the way to Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And the Lord said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand." Israel went into battle with assurance of victory. John reminds us that when confronted with "the spirit of antichrist," we have superior resources: "ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world," 1Jn.5.5. We must not underestimate our spiritual opposition, and we must not underestimate the power of God for "if God be for us, who can be against us." Our forebodings and despondency are an affront to God's power and provision for us.

ii) The people destroyed, v3. "So the Lord our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining." Our comments in connection with the defeat of Sihon, see 2.26-36, are equally applicable here. The defeat of enemies on the east and west of Jordan

were acts of divine judgment on wicked people, rather than military conquests. The complete elimination of Sihon and Og and their peoples, also reminds us that we have to act ruthlessly in connection with a wicked enemy. Israel was commanded to extinguish the original life in these territories, and we are also commanded to deal with our 'old life' in the same way. See Col.3.5, "Mortify (put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

iii) The cities captured, v4-7. The initial battle was followed by possession of his territory, and this included cities which were "fenced with high walls, gates and bars," v5. Like Israel, we have to face enemy strongholds, see 2Cor.10.4. Paul defines them, as "imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." The word, "imagination," means 'reasonings.' As A. McShane observes: 'Whether we think of the Greek philosopher, the Roman imperialist, or the Jewish ritualist, they each had this in common, that they resisted the message of the cross.' (*What the Bible Teaches - 2 Corinthians*). Paul came to Corinth preaching "Christ crucified," 1Cor.1.22-24, and he calls this "the weapons of our warfare" which are "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." It is only through the Gospel, that man's rebellious thoughts are brought "into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Nothing else will be effective.

iv) The territory possessed, v8-10. "And we took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites the land that was on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto Mount Hermon. (Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir). *All* the cities of the plain, and *all* Gilead, and *all* Bashan, unto Salchah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan." This is an important statement. There were no pockets of resistance left. It was a 'clean sweep.' Sadly, this did not continue, and Israel's failure to completely occupy Canaan, to the west of Jordan, resulted in disaster. The warning in Num.33.55-56 went unheeded. Israel became past-masters at compromise, and it wasn't long before they were worshipping the gods of the very people they should have destroyed. Does the Lord Jesus have pre-eminence in our hearts and lives?

v) The bed described, v11. "For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants; behold his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? Nine cubits (at least 13'6" or 4.11m) was the length thereof, and four cubits (at least 6' or 1.83m) the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man." Matthew Henry calls Og 'a very formidable prince,' and continues: he was 'very strong, for he was of the remnant of the giants, v11; his personal strength was extraordinary, a monument of which was preserved by the Ammonites in his bedstead, which was shown as a rarity in their chief city. You might guess at his weight by the materials of his bedstead: it was iron, as if a bedstead of wood were too weak for him to trust to: and you might guess at his stature by the dimensions of it; it was nine cubits long and four cubits broad, which, supposing a cubit to be but half a yard or 46cms (and some learned men have made it appear to be somewhat more), was four yards and a half long, and two yards broad; (4.11x1.83m) and if we allowed his bedstead to be two cubits longer than himself, and that is as much as we need allow, he was three yards and a half high (3.2m), double the

stature of an ordinary man, and every way proportionable, yet they smote him, v3. Note, when God pleads His people's cause, He can deal with giants as well as grasshoppers. No man's might can secure him against the Almighty.' We need say no more!

2) THE DIVISION OF THE LAND. v12-17

Compare Num.32.33-42. The *southern* part of the conquered territory east of Jordan was allocated to Reuben and Gad, see v12, 16-17. This comprised the land from the Arnon in the south to mid-Gilead in the north. The eastern border was fixed by the Jabbok: the further side of the Jabbok, where it runs from south to north before turning west, was Ammonite territory, see 2.37. The western border was the Jordan, from Chinnereth in the north to the Dead Sea in the south. The words, "half of the valley," v16, probably indicate the southern section of this border. The *northern* part was occupied by "the half tribe of Manasseh." This comprised "the rest of Gilead, and all Bashan," see v13-15. Particular reference is made to the inheritance of Jair, v14, and Machir, v15, both sons of Manasseh, reminding us that the inheritance was for the collective and individual enjoyment. Both Jair and Machir were given what they had taken, see Num.32.39-41. A prosperous assembly is made up of saints who, like Gaius, 3Jn.2, have prosperous souls. This places a responsibility on us *all* to 'possess our possessions.' "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you," Jos.1.3.

3) THE DIRECTIONS FOR CONQUEST. v18-22

In this section, Moses recalls his instructions to the two and a half tribes, and to Joshua, in connection with the invasion and conquest of Canaan.

i) Instructions to the tribes, v18-20. "And I commanded you at that time, saying, The Lord your God hath given you this land to possess it: ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all that are meet for the war," see Num.32.16-32. If they would not do this, then "be sure your sin will find you out," Num.32.23. The principle was one of equity: all Israel had helped them to subdue territory *east* of Jordan: it was therefore equitable that they should help their brethren to subdue the territory *west* of Jordan. This illustrates the fact that "there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another," 1Cor.12.25. It is called 'fellowship.'

ii) Instructions to Joshua, v21-22. "And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God He shall fight for you," see Num.27.18 etc. Past victories gave assurance of future victories. We should remember too that Joshua was not 'thrown in at the deep end.' He had been trained for forty years, and his first lesson could be entitled 'How to overcome the enemy.' Read Ex.17.8-16.

4) THE DESIRE OF MOSES. v23-29

i) Moses' request, v23-25. "And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, Thou hast begun to shew Thy servant Thy greatness, and Thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to Thy works, and according to Thy might? I pray Thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is

beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon.” He besought the Lord to *live*: Elijah besought the Lord to *die*! Centuries later they were both in the company of the Lord Jesus Who said, “I am He that liveth, and was *dead*; and, behold, I am *alive* for evermore.” Moses, and Elijah, had a remarkable ‘exodus,’ but the subject of conversation on the mount of transfiguration was the ‘exodus’ (AV “decease;” Greek ‘*exodus*’) of the Lord Jesus! See Lk.9.31.

ii) God’s reply, v26-28. “But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes (see also 1.37), and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter.” It has been said that Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan because ‘he broke a type!’ It is far better to stay with the Scriptures, and note that under severe provocation, “he spake unadvisably with his lips,” Ps.106.32-33. This refers to Num.20.10-12. No such charge could ever be levelled at the Lord Jesus. They said of Him, “Never man spake like this man.”

Moses was allowed to see the “good land” from Pisgah. Like Abraham, Gen.13.14, he looked in all directions, but the responsibility for leading God’s people into Canaan was to rest on the shoulders of Joshua. “But (*a*) charge Joshua, and (*b*) encourage him, and (*c*) strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.” As he neared the end of his journey, Moses was to ensure that his successor was suitably prepared for leadership. The training and encouragement of future generations is emphasised in both Old and New Testaments. See, for example, Ps.71.17-18, Ps.78.5-6, 2Tim.2.2.

The review section of Deuteronomy ends where Numbers ends, see 36.13, with Israel encamped “in the valley over against Beth-peor,” v27, which was “in the land of Moab,” 34.6. In our next few studies, we will notice the lessons which Moses drew from this review of Israel’s history. *—to be continued (D.V.)*

Testimony in Troublous Times

by Ian McKee (Northern Ireland)

Paper 14 — WAITING UPON GOD (Ezra Chapter 8:21-23)

Having identified and then corrected a deficiency among the returnees, namely the absence of Levites, Ezra “proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God,” Ezra 8:21. This is the only fast recorded in the book of Ezra, although two are recorded in Nehemiah, 1.4; 9.1. In each case there is a direct link between fasting and an intense seeking of the mind of God in relation to matters of particular importance.

The fast is here occasioned by a desire “to seek of Him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance,” Ezra 8.21. Humiliation of spirit in the presence of God and a deep understanding of their dependence upon God led them to fast as they contemplated the journey and tasks before them. The burden of inward exercise was eloquently expressed by outward fasting. Their exercise to

return to Jerusalem was not entered into lightly with either a blithe spirit or sense of bravado. Rather the intense reality of their purpose drove them, for a period, to abstain from all that the flesh would feed upon. That which is natural will not sustain that which is spiritual. They recognised this.

The context of this fast was the reluctance of Ezra to request a military escort “because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him; but His power and His wrath is against all them that forsake Him,” Ezra 8.22. Prudence might have sought a band of soldiers and horsemen, but this would have led to the compromising of a spiritual exercise and a denial of God’s ability to preserve. Ezra’s attitude was similar to that of David’s, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God,” Ps.20.7.

Yet Ezra is not foolhardy. He recognises the dangers of the way. He understands the needs of wives and children. And he assesses the provisions they will all require. But alongside this he believes that God’s providential care will attend those who seek Him. If their exercise is according to the will of God and if they proceed with a sense of reverential fear and dependence upon Him, then surely, God can be relied upon to preserve His servants. But Ezra is also conscious of the corollary. If Divine providence supports the righteous then that power must be against the unrighteous! Hence the reason for Ezra calling this fast. Honesty is required in the presence of God. A true assessment must be made of personal character. It would be disastrous for Ezra and those associated with him to embark on a venture in God’s name, presuming on His providence, if their character was other than that of a seeker! So also for us. Can we truly say that we are seekers of God? If not, are we forsakers?

But let us not think that fasting was a feature of the Old Testament only. Fasting preceded one of the most profound decisions taken in this present dispensation. “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away,” Acts 13.1-3.

It took this degree of humiliation in the presence of God, before the church at Antioch could discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit that only two of the five brethren mentioned should be separated unto a work of missionary evangelism. It took similar exercise to discern that three of the five brethren mentioned should not be so commissioned. And it also took exercise on the part of all of the five individuals to discern God’s particular purpose for each of them and to bow to it, irrespective of God’s will for their companions.

Before this period of fasting there were five brethren with, apparently, broadly equal spiritual credentials and application. There was no ungifted or lazy brother among them, which was evidently the minimum requirement for their consideration by the church at Antioch. And should we be satisfied with less today? No doubt the church at Antioch gave detailed consideration to motive and exercise, together with

all other matters of relevance. But this in itself was not enough. It was imperative that they obtain the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It was this that required time and fasting to discern.

Returning to Ezra we read “So we fasted and besought our God for this: and He was entreated of us,” Ezra 8.23. This was earnest prayer and a period of intense petitioning, which continued until they received an inward assurance that God would provide His protection.

It should, of course, be noted that simply by abstaining from food for a period will not provide spiritual blessing! But taking these two representative passages together, one in Ezra and the other in Acts, we learn the importance of special spiritual exercise in seeking to discern the mind of God at times of crisis.

Consciousness of the enormity of a task and our own inherent weakness may lead us to a level of self-discipline and exercise with which we are hitherto unfamiliar. Such will entail the decided refusal of self-interest. But, if honest, we must all acknowledge that we are guilty of giving insufficient time and importance to the necessity of waiting upon God. The tragedy could be that if we fail to wait upon God, He could weary of waiting for us! *—to be continued (DV)*

Christian Conduct in a Modern World

by Walter A. Boyd (South Africa)

Paper 22

No.6 — THE CONCLUDING SALUTATIONS (Continued)

(B) His Salutations to Rome (Romans 16.3-16).

It would be most unfortunate if these verses were glanced over and dismissed as having no more value than that of a list of names. All Scripture is profitable, 2Tim.3.16. If we ask some questions as we read the passage, we will unearth hidden truths in the names that appear to have no purpose beyond being Paul’s friends. What does each name mean? What comment does Paul make about those he has named? Why are they here? These are the questions that will provide help and understanding in the passage, and above all, a challenge to our hearts.

Irrespective of the details of each name, the fact that they are mentioned by Paul, and often with apparent affection, shows the bonds of love in Christ that existed between Paul and these believers. After almost thirty years of labour in the gospel, it is not surprising that he had made friends along the way. These were obviously not fair-weather friends, but genuine helpers whose fidelity had been tried and tested by the rigours of first-century Christian testimony. This list of names gives authenticity to the whole letter, in the same way as the mention of Phebe’s name in 16.1,2 (see previous paper). If the letter was not genuine, a list of greetings to such individuals would not be feasible. The number of feminine names in this list of twenty-six,

dismisses the unfounded notion that Paul was a male-chauvinist. It is clear that he appreciated the labours and fidelity of his sisters in Christ, and wanted to place that on record. Another interesting facet in the names is the wide diversity among those individuals who comprised the testimony in Rome: some names are Greek, some Jewish, and some Latin. That diversity is beautifully enhanced by the evident sense of unity among them (see v5, 10, etc.).

In this chapter expressive language is used to describe the helpful contributions to Paul's work for the Lord: succourer; fellow-workers; much labour; fellow-prisoners; beloved in the Lord; approved in Christ; labour in the Lord; laboured much in the Lord.

It is difficult to outline these verses in any way other than;

1. Particular Salutations v3-15.
2. General Salutations v16.

1. Particular Salutations v3-15. It will be helpful to note that Paul's salutation consists of two ingredients: (a) Greetings by name, and (b) Appreciative remarks.

V3-5(a) Priscilla and Aquila and the church in their house. If we follow the Revised reading in Acts 18.26, Priscilla (or Prisca) is mentioned before her husband (Aquila) on four out of the six times that they appear together in the New Testament. The reason for this is not clear. It may be that she appears first on those occasions where they are helping to advance the work of God, and Paul recognised them as his "fellow-helpers," Rom.16.3, because it was Priscilla who took the initiative. Four things of note are recorded about this fine couple;

1. Their Helpfulness — "*fellow-helpers.*"
2. Their Sacrificial Service — "*laid down their own necks.*"
3. Their Reputation — "*to whom all the churches of the Gentiles ... give thanks.*"
4. Their Hospitality — "*the church that is in their house.*"

The Apostle had a number of helpers and co-workers; but the expression, "*my helpers in Christ,*" seems to suggest that among all his helpers Priscilla and Aquila were **the** fellow-helpers of note. After their paths had crossed with the Apostle to the Gentiles, we read that he resided with them; he laboured with them; they travelled with him; they instructed Apollos — who later assisted Paul in the work of the Lord. But not only did they serve with Paul in the work; in doing so they exposed their lives to great danger. The phrase "*their own necks,*" makes it clear that each of them was exposed to equal danger. For Paul's sake, neither Priscilla nor Aquila shirked from placing their life on the line. We are not told where or when this was, but obviously the other saints knew of it, and were thankful to God for their courage. It was likely that they performed some act of bravery, which secured the service of Paul towards the Gentile assemblies, and ensured his continued service among them. This may have been in the tumult at Corinth, Acts 18, or later in Ephesus, Acts 19.

At the time of Paul's letter they had moved to Rome, where their service for God was as constant as ever. An assembly met in their house. This is a manifestation of the genuineness of their hospitality, and the unremitting nature of their help to other saints. Some self-seeking individuals would be happy to host a notable servant

of God, like the Apostle Paul; but Priscilla and Aquila had open hearts and an open home for all the saints, of whatever standing. They did not foster social class distinction or any other artificial division among the Lord's people.

V5(b) *Epaenetus who was well beloved and firstfruits to Christ.* The word "salute" is the same word as "greet," and should be translated so throughout. Epaenetus is described as "my well beloved" (AV), or dearly beloved. Three others are spoken of in the same terms: Amplias (v8), Stachys (v9), Persis (v12). Describing Epaenetus as the firstfruits of Achaia seems to conflict with 1Cor.16.15, where it is the house of Stephanas. A number of suggestions have been made to resolve this difficulty, such as Epaenetus belonged to the household of Stephanas, or salvation came to both at the same time. The most convincing of all the suggestions is the change from Achaia to Asia, by JND and RV. There is substantial manuscript evidence to support this. Whatever the case, it is clear that Paul remembered his converts with affection. When Epaenetus got saved, the apostle rejoiced. Undoubtedly, Paul presented him to God in prayer as the firstfruits of that area, confident that there would be a great harvest to follow. In Old Testament days the priest lifted up the wave sheaf before God, in an expression of thanks for gathering in that sheaf, and what would yet be done in gathering in many more, to guarantee a full harvest.

V6 — *Mary who bestowed much labour.* There are a number of Marys in the New Testament, and very likely this is yet another one: not to be confused with the others. JND and RV change the object of her abundant labour from "us" to "you." Whoever it was that benefited from her toil, she laboured tirelessly, or diligently. She was a hard worker. Obviously, Paul knew the details and extent of her labours, and wanted to express his appreciation. It may have been some notable type of service, or it may have been something more general. One thing is sure: heaven knows it all, and has recorded it in full for a future day of reward. Mary is like many a dear sister today - known only by her Christian name; but in a future day of reward she will stand as one of the choicest labourers in the full joy of heaven's acclaim.

V7 — *Andronicus and Junia who were kinsmen; fellow-helpers; of note among apostles and in Christ before Paul.* It is impossible to be dogmatic about whether or not this is a married couple, or two men. The difficulty arises in the second name. It can be either Junia (feminine), or Junias (masculine). Darby's New Translation, Revised Version, and Newberry's margin do not clarify the difficulty. In any case, what is said about them is of more importance to our present considerations than an exact identification.

"My kinsmen." In Rom.9.3, Paul uses this expression to describe his fellow countrymen. It is more in keeping here to have that meaning, than to think of them as family relatives.

"My fellow-prisoners." The apostle endured a number of imprisonments; and possibly more than recorded in the New Testament. At some stage, Andronicus and Junia were imprisoned with him, possibly also for their faith in Christ. They were especially dear to Paul in a three-fold way: in Christ, in the flesh, and in the hardship associated with the gospel.

“Of note among the apostles.” This is not suggesting they were notable apostles, but that they were held in high esteem among the apostles. For some reason, they were highly thought of by the apostolic band. It may be because they were among the earliest converts, or perhaps because of their imprisonment for Christ.

“In Christ before me.” There is something about Andronicus and Junia that is especially appealing to Paul. When he was ‘breathing out slaughter’ against the Jewish believers, Andronicus and Junia may have been among those he persecuted. But now, with them, he was “in Christ,” and sharing their experience of hardship and imprisonment. Paul was always ready to acknowledge precedence in people and in situations. As an older man, he had no desire to claim seniority over others. As in other places, he uses an expression that links conversion to the positional truth of being “in Christ.”

—to be continued (DV)

Jehovah's Passover

by W. W. Fereday

PAPER 10 — “THE STROKE”

Man’s threats are sometimes mere idle words or empty bombast: not so the predicted judgments of God. At no stage in the world’s history has the Creator threatened judgments which He had no intention of executing.

There have been occasions when His hand has been averted by the repentance of the people. The sparing of Nineveh in the time of Jonah is an example of this. It is part of the declared ways of God to withdraw sentence when men humble themselves before Him. Jer.18.7-8 shows this plainly. It is also true that He is “slow to anger,” leaving until the last an open door for repentance but even the long-suffering of God has its limits. This was solemnly proved by the defiant Egyptians in the days of Moses.

At the commencement of Moses’ mission Jehovah said to Pharaoh: “Israel is My son, even My firstborn; and I say unto thee, Let My son go that he may serve Me, and if those refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn,” Ex.4.22-23. The patience of God being now exhausted after various appeals and preliminary judgments, this dread sentence took effect on the night of Israel’s Passover. “It came to pass that at midnight Jehovah smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead,” Ex.12.29-30. There was thus no respect of persons. The royal palace, in every country shielded to the utmost from the calamities which befell the lowly, was no more immune that night than the prison cell or the stable. The king’s heart was torn with anguish as well as that of the meanest of his subjects. Truly, it is a terrible thing to defy the God of judgment!

Yet while desolation thus spread itself throughout the land of Egypt, the houses of the Israelites were absolutely unharmed. This was due solely to the fact that they obeyed Jehovah in faith and sprinkled the blood of the slain lamb outside their dwellings. Neither good conduct nor religious orthodoxy saved them that night, but the blood of the lamb alone. Under the shelter of this they could eat and drink in peace with girded loins and staff in hand prepared to march out of a scene which was in no sense their home.

We are ourselves living in a solemn moment in the world's history. The gospel is ending, with all its opportunities of eternal blessing. The hour for God's judgments to begin will shortly strike. Then the once-crucified Lord will arise from the throne on which He is seated and will come forth in His might as the divinely-appointed Judge of quick and dead. First He will deal with the quick (*i.e.* the living), destroying His enemies before Him like the driven snow; later, when His Millennial reign is ended, He will summon the dead from their tombs to stand before the great white throne. These are tremendous considerations, which it is folly and madness for any to ignore. Happy is the man who, as a confessedly guilty sinner, worthy only of eternal wrath, has fled to the Saviour for refuge, trusting wholly and solely in His precious atoning blood. Such an one is eternally secure — as secure as a righteous God can make him. *—to be concluded (D.V.)*

THE GARMENTS OF THE SAVIOUR

by J. Flanigan (Northern Ireland)

2 — GARMENTS OF HUMANITY

The Humanity of the Lord Jesus is as real and as true as is His Deity. But what wondrous grace is this, and what mighty incomprehensible condescension, that He who is God should for us become a Man.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail, Incarnate Deity!

From that scene of light, robed in honour and majesty, the Son of the Father came forth to be wrapped in swaddling bands as the firstborn Son of a Jewish maiden. The miracle of His conception is not to be pried into. We are neither asked to understand it or explain it, but to believe it. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," Isa.7.14; Mt.1.23. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman," Gal.4.4.

Bethlehem is a divine blending of sovereignty, simplicity, and mystery. In the plan and purpose of God it was the decree of a Caesar in Rome which brought Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It was a long and hazardous journey, especially for a maiden carrying her Child, as Mary was. But the prophet had predicted Bethlehem in the land of Juda as the birthplace of the promised Messiah, and so it must be, Micah 5.2; Mt.2.6. Sovereignty therefore arranged it so and when the Child was born all was in accord with the prophetic word.

What simplicity there was! A Baby, a manger bed, and swaddling clothes. No palace, no royal welcome from earth's great ones, and no regal splendour. "A Child is born," Isa.9.6. Mary brought Him forth; Joseph stood by; shepherds came to see the Babe, and in these, the most humble of circumstances, there began on earth the story of a Life that was to bring inestimable pleasure to the heart of God.

The mystery of the Incarnation is the wonder of God manifested in flesh. We bow in worship as we acknowledge with the apostle, "Without controversy, great is the mystery," 1Tim.3.16. He was "seen of angels." How they must have looked upon Him whom they had known only in the unveiled splendour of Deity, now become so approachable in a body of flesh and blood. It was indeed the beginning of a life of incomparable moral glory, to be lived in Galilee, Judea, and Samaria.

The uniqueness of the Saviour's birth was in perfect keeping with the uniqueness of the holy Manhood which it introduced. For thirty wondrous years He would live in the defilement of Nazareth, but remain undefiled. For three years and more He would minister among men who would oppose His every word and deed, and criticise His every movement, and still He would be constant, perfect in all His ways. He did not sin, not because He would not sin, but because He could not sin. His was an impeccable Manhood. Impeccable means "no ability to sin."

This inability to sin is proven by several considerations. How could He sin who was "Altogether lovely?" SofS.5.16. There was nothing in His loveliness which would respond to sin or to sinful suggestions. He alone among men could say to His critics, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Jn.8.46. How could He sin who, although truly Man, was, nevertheless, God? In one holy and indivisible personality Godhood and Manhood were His indivisibly. In becoming Man He never ceased to be God and it is always true that God cannot be tempted with evil, Jms.1.13. It matters not if this be God enthroned in the high heavens or God dwelling in Nazareth, for the character of Divine Persons can never change. How could this Man sin therefore, who is God incarnate?

Sometimes however, it is argued that if He were really and truly Man then surely He could have been tempted and He could have sinned. Those who advance this argument have not thought it through, for the question must then be asked, "Is He not still a real Man?" By their reasoning does this mean that the Man in the glory is still vulnerable and liable to sin because He is a Man? Every adoring heart will recoil from such a thought.

Yet still the argument will be pressed that Heb.4.14 does clearly say that He was in all points tempted like as we are. The word "tempted" must be understood in a two-fold way. Sometimes it implies an attempt at seduction to sin, an appeal to the sinful tendencies of our fallen nature. Men in the flesh are all too aware that this is so often the case with them. If the believer is so tempted, but resists the temptation, refusing to yield to sin, then this is to his credit. But he has been tempted nevertheless. Not so our Lord Jesus. As we have already seen, there was nothing in Him to respond to the evil suggestions which so often reach the hearts of other men.

"Tempted", therefore has another meaning. When God tempted Abraham (Gen.22.1) it was certainly not with any evil intent. It was to test and prove the

patriarch. The Saviour was so tested and tried. He suffered hunger and thirst, loneliness and disappointment, grief and pain. He was misrepresented and misunderstood, He was falsely accused and unjustly condemned. It is likely too, that in early life He suffered bereavement, in the death of Joseph. So the writer to the Hebrews qualifies his words and says, "apart from sin." He was in all points, apart from sin, tempted like as we are.

Then it must be remembered, as has already been emphasised, that our Lord's Manhood was unique. He had something that we do not have and we have something that He did not have. We have fallen natures, inherited from Adam. He did not. He was God. We are not. As has often been said, and so aptly, "He was as much a man as I am, but He was not such a man as I am."

So the little One wrapped in swaddling clothes was indeed wearing the garments of humanity, beginning life on earth apparently as many another Jewish infant. It is touching to remember the purpose of the swaddling bands. They were firmly wrapped around the tiny body of the new-born to give to it a feeling of security, a sense that it was being safely held. What mystery is this! The Omnipotent One wrapped in swaddling bands! The Almighty lying in a manger! He who was sustaining the mighty globe, who was maintaining the heavenly bodies in their ordained orbits, now in a body of flesh and blood and being held securely in the arms of a gentle maid from Nazareth. We say like the psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it," Ps.139.6.

No less almighty at His birth
Than on the throne supreme;
His shoulders held up heaven and earth
While Mary held up Him.

We bow in wonder. A Divine Person has been in our world. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Ps.8.4. It was a visitation which took Him from Bethlehem to Golgotha, from the manger to the cross.

—*to be continued (D.V.)*

WITHOUT

For us

righteousness without works, Rom.4.6
love ... without dissimulation, Rom.12.9
speaking the word without fear, Phil.1.14
lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting, 1 Tim.2.8
prayer ... without ceasing, Acts 12.5
wisdom ... without partiality, and without hypocrisy, Jas.3.17
hospitality ... without grudging, Pet.4.9

For Him

hated ... without a cause, Jn.15.25
tempted ... without sin, Heb.4.15
offered ... without spot, Heb.9.14

by H. A. Barnes (England)

Reception to God's Assembly

by D. Richards (Canada)

PAPER 2

In seeking to elucidate this subject we have been answering the following four questions:

- 1) To what should we receive?
- 2) Who do we receive?
- 3) How do we receive?
- 4) What is the responsibility of those who are received?

In the former paper we dealt with the first two and now we shall deal with the remainder.

3) How do we receive? Read Acts.18.27; Rom.16.1,2; Acts 9.26-28; 2 Cor.3.1,2.

Some difference must be made between receiving a believer from the locality into the assembly as a member of that assembly, such as in Acts 2.41, and those who are visiting in the area, such as Phebe in Rom.16.1,2. First of all we will consider those who are seeking full, permanent fellowship in the assembly. As in the case of Acts 2.41 those who are to be received must have a very clear testimony of salvation. Secondly, they must either already be baptized as believers or must obey the Lord in baptism. Thirdly, they must personally request to be received into assembly fellowship as was the case with Saul in Acts 9.26. Other than these requirements there must be no moral reason for not receiving such into the assembly.

As far as visitors are concerned there are a number of ways such may be received. In Acts 18.27 we read, "And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace." Apollos was introduced to the assembly at Corinth by **a letter from the assembly** at Ephesus. The word here translated "receive" (apodechomai) means "to take fully," "to welcome," "to receive without reservation." As a result of being received in this fashion he "helped them much which believed through grace."

In Rom.16.1,2 we read, "I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you." Phebe was introduced to the assembly at Rome by **a letter penned by Paul**, a brother whom they knew. The word here translated "receive" (prosdechomai) means "to receive to oneself." This is the same word as was used in relation to Epaphroditus being received by the Philippian saints. He had laboured hard for them in order to deliver their gift to Paul, and had been "sick nigh unto death" as a result. They were to receive him tenderly to their hearts. Phebe was to be received in the same manner. Paul added, "... and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you."

This is the manner in which we are exhorted to receive visiting saints. In this text we see that it is perfectly in order for a believer to be received on the strength of a letter written by an individual brother **who is known by the receiving assembly**, especially if the person seeking fellowship is from an assembly that is not known by the receiving assembly.

In Acts 9.26-28 we read, “And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he [Saul] was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.” Saul of Tarsus was introduced to the assembly at Jerusalem by **personal commendation** from Barnabas. No letter was involved. Saul had had to leave Damascus in a hurry, and it was not possible for him to obtain a letter. Thus, where a letter of commendation is unobtainable, due to circumstances, a personal commendation by a brother known to the receiving assembly is quite in order. But some may ask, “What if there is no brother present who knows the visitor who comes without a letter?” If the brother or sister is able to supply the phone number of one of the elders of his home assembly a quick phone call can clear up the matter. If this is not possible, the elders should interview the visitor to ascertain where he or she is in fellowship. If the assembly from which he comes is not known locally then it is necessary to question the individual on what he or she believes. The brother or sister should not automatically be rejected because he or she has come without a letter. It would be helpful if the visitor arrived early at the assembly meeting in order to be able to answer any questions that may be asked, or, better still, if the visitor could make contact with one of the elders at least a day in advance.

In 2 Cor. 3.1,2 we read, “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men;” Paul indicated that he himself required no letter of commendation. Since the assembly at Corinth was planted by Paul they were his letter of commendation. Inferred in these verses is the fact that saints who are well known by the receiving assembly for being faithful need not continuously bring letters of commendation. To insist on a letter by known Christians every time they come is to make the letter of commendation a mere formality.

4) What is the responsibility of those being received?

Read Acts 9.26-28; 18.27.

Saul sought “to join himself to the disciples.” The word here translated “to join” literally means “to glue.” When you are glued to something everywhere that something goes you go, consequently we read of Paul, “He was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.” Fellowship in an assembly involves a total commitment. Fellowship not only brings privileges, but also responsibilities. Even when on holidays we are never on holidays from the Lord! I know that circumstances have to be taken into account, but apart from exceptional situations we should always make sure that we holiday in the vicinity of an assembly, and that

we attend the normal functions of that assembly when we are there. If we consider that this is a hardship then there is something very wrong! It should be a pleasure to us to be with the saints around the Lord and the Word of God.

In Acts 18:27, when Apollos was received by the saints at Corinth, we read that he “helped them much which had believed through grace.” Apollos used the gift that God had given him for the edification of the saints. Visiting another assembly is not an opportunity to sit back and relax. On the other hand it is not an opportunity to exercise a gift that God has not given us either. We should know our limitations, and seek to function within them.

When we have been received by an assembly, even if only for the duration of a visit to the area, we come under the authority of the elders of that assembly. We are not free to do as we wish because this is not our home assembly. Assembly fellowship is a very precious thing, but it brings with it certain responsibilities. May God help us to seek to be of the utmost benefit, not only in our home assembly, but also in any assembly we may be visiting.

Why is it so necessary to be careful about who we receive?

The simple answer to this question is because the Bible teaches this. We really shouldn't need any other reason! But let us look at a warning Paul gave to the elders of the assembly at Ephesus in Acts 20:28-30. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” The reason the New Testament insists on such carefulness in receiving believers is for the protection of the flock. Some assemblies have been so careless about reception that they have received unbelievers. Some have actually received people who are living sinful lives. It is readily admitted that this can happen even where the utmost care is taken, but it is far more likely to happen where there is carelessness.

Finally, I would like to make clear three matters:-

- 1) The brother or sister who brings someone who is not in assembly fellowship to the Lord's supper is responsible to make clear to that person in advance the fact that he or she will not be able to partake of the Lord's supper. It is neither fair to the visitor nor to the elders of the assembly for it to be left till the last minute for the visitor to find out that he or she will not be received.
- 2) The fact that a believer, not in assembly fellowship, is not received at the Lord's supper is not suggesting that that person is an inferior Christian. It is a matter of doing things according to Scriptural order.
- 3) The principles taught in this article are not shared or practised by all. Although there are those who, in all sincerity, receive, to the Lord's supper, all believers who are not known to be living sinful lives, it is submitted that this is contrary to the teaching of Scripture. However, the author does not intend to be harsh or judgmental, and accepts that such is done in ignorance rather than open defiance of the truth.

—concluded

Devices and Wiles of Satan

by C. Jones (Wales)

PAPER 1 — INTRODUCTION

Satan, or the Devil, is a created being of amazing power and knowledge and must not be underestimated. He is the arch-enemy and adversary of God and man. He slanders and accuses God to man, Gen.3.5, and man to God, Job 1.9. He is “the prince of the devils,” Matt.12.24; “a murderer and a liar,” Jn.8.44. He is the “prince of this world,” Jn.12.31, 14.30, 16.11; “the god of this world,” 2Cor.4.4; “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,” Eph.2.2, and “the accuser of our brethren,” Rev.12.10.

Satan will attack and tempt believers and he is indeed a formidable foe, but we are to remember that he is not omnipotent, omniscient nor omnipresent, and “greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world,” 1Jn.4.4.

If we study the Scriptures prayerfully, we can avoid being “ignorant of his devices,” 2Cor.2.11, and can learn something of his wiles, Eph.6.11. Such knowledge will help us, in the power of the Spirit, to resist the Devil so that he will flee from us, Jas.4.7. Satan will adapt his subtle approach depending on circumstances and the person he attacks. Sometimes he approaches “as a roaring lion,” 1Pet.5.8, and at other times as “an angel of light,” 2Cor.11.14.

Hath God said?

Let us consider the ways in which Satan led our first parents into sin. In Gen.3 we learn of the fall of man, and here we hear Satan slandering God to man. All the sin, sorrow, sadness and suffering that people have experienced have been a consequence of this fall. Physical death and spiritual death, in the sense of eternal separation from God, are a direct result of sin, Rom.5.12.

In his malignant cunning Satan did not approach Adam directly to induce him to sin, but first spoke to Eve. Satan was aware of Adam's great love for Eve and believed that if Eve sinned she would be able to persuade Adam to sin also. Satan knows our weakest points and will direct his attacks accordingly.

In his approach to Eve through the serpent, Satan sought to sow doubts in her mind regarding the truth of what God had said and as to the goodness of God's motives in withholding something which Adam and Eve would enjoy and from which they would benefit. When Satan asked Eve “hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”, Gen.3.1, she replied by misquoting what God had said regarding not eating “of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” Gen.2.17, by adding “neither shall ye touch it,” Gen.3.3. God, in His sovereignty, had limited man's freedom by prohibiting the eating of the fruit of one tree only. He had said nothing about touching it. Satan was seeking to cause Eve to deviate from God's Word and to doubt that His prohibition was for her benefit and that of her husband Adam.

So we learn of some of the devices of the Devil. He causes men and women to doubt the truth of God's Word and to doubt the love of God. Satan seeks to undermine the authority of God's Word and confidence in His Word. He will try to persuade people that if they cannot fully understand the reasons for God's commands and prohibitions then they need not obey them. Satan will add to, or subtract from, the Scriptures and attempt to persuade people to disobey God. He strives to cause men and women to try to get rid of God's restrictions so that they are free "to do their own thing," to do that which is right in their own eyes, Jud.21.25. as a consequence of Satan's success in causing the majority of people to doubt the truth of God's Word and His wisdom and love, we have the chaos existing in the world today.

Satan next flatly contradicted the truth of God's Word and also denied the severity of God by saying "Ye shall not surely die," Gen.3.4. He persuaded Eve that, rather than dying, if Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit then they would acquire knowledge and information, and be like God and know good and evil, Gen.3.5. Satan persuaded Eve that God's Word was not true and that He withheld from them things that were good. Today, Satan still seeks to prevent people believing that "the wages of sin is death," Rom.6.23, not just physical death, but eternal separation from God. He strives to prevent people believing in the existence of heaven and hell and in the existence of God Himself. Satan also endeavours to convince people that he, Satan, does not exist. If people treat Satan lightly and as the subject of foolish jokes they will not suspect the power of the evil forces seeking their eternal loss. Eve was unaware of God's holy hatred of sin. She could not foresee the awful consequences of sin. She did not believe what God had said regarding judgment any more than people believed Noah's preaching before the Flood came or Lot's warnings before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, 2Pet.2.5-8. The Lord said concerning Satan "he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it," Jn.8.44. Eve's experience and that of countless multitudes since has proved the truth of these words.

Eve was tempted and fell. She did not consult Adam, who was her head, 1Cor.11.3, but looked at the tree and saw that it was good for food, pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, Gen.3.6. This corresponds with God's warnings given regarding love of the world. We read in 1Jn.2.16 concerning those things that are in the world, the lust of the flesh (good for food), the lust of the eyes (pleasant to the eyes) and the pride of life (to be desired to make one wise).

Eve ate and gave to Adam who, in eating, disobeyed the prohibition he had received from God, Gen.2.17. Eve was deceived by Satan and sinned, then Adam knowingly, deliberately and rebelliously sinned, 1Tim.2.14. It all started with doubting God's Word and with Eve believing that she, and not God, knew what was best for human beings.

—to be continued (D.V.)

In coming down, He brought God to man,

In going up, He took man to God.

—J. Douglas

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (83)

by Sid Mountstevens (England)

When considering the work of the Lord in my life I feel I must go back to 29th. January 1929, the day of my birth in the little village of Westonzoyland in Somerset. My arrival was unexpectedly early, almost 3 months premature I weighed in at 2.5 pounds (about 1 Kilo.) Wrapped in cotton wool and placed in a shoebox I was sent home to die.

My parents were poor indeed and it was not a happy marriage and therefore it was not a happy home for my brothers and myself. We were always waiting fearfully for something to happen, usually destructive. My Father was a farm labourer, about the lowest paid section of the community at that time. Educated in the little village school I did not take my schooling very seriously and awaited with much impatience my 14th birthday when I could leave school. One of my greatest achievements was to grab the head teacher's cane and sort him out before he did so to me.

My father insisted that I should learn a trade and I served an apprenticeship as a bricklayer, much against my will as I always had a desire to be either a bus or lorry driver, a desire that remains with me to this day, albeit too late. Parents were to be obeyed in those days, in my case very reluctantly.

One of my brothers and myself attended a little Church of England Sunday school for a while but cannot recall anything remotely to do with faith being taught. Also I became a campanologist, I also pumped the old church organ for a while. The "church" was conveniently sited beside the local inn, the haunt for the bellringers during the church services.

I took my first drink in that inn and remember it was an innocuous mixture of beer and lemonade. My mother remonstrated with me warning me of the dangers of drink, but of course I thought I was in complete control. A mistake indeed as I would like others to know. Very soon I was hooked on drink and became a drunkard. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" Prov.20.1.

The nearby town of Bridgwater provided the largest one evening carnival in the country. The folly of drink was evidenced one such night as some friends and I cycled the 4 miles to town determined to take a drink in every pub. It is doubtful that we managed it, as there were 99 public houses in the town in those days. It was a shameful night as I beat an elderly lady to the ground as I objected to a song she was singing. Hurried off by my associates I remember awakening in the centre of a main road 3 miles out of town, my bicycle lying on top of me as I gazed up into the headlights of a car stopped in front of me. Oh, the foolishness of the drunkard. My own dear mother was unceremoniously shoved away when she questioned the wisdom of my drinking habits. Despite the unsettled atmosphere in the home my mother abhorred alcohol and my father was just a moderate partaker of it.

For 16 months I was called up for national service, this did not allow for heavy drinking as the pay was unrealistic. I received the occasional 10 shilling note (50p) from my mother to help me with food, needless to say I spent it on drink.

On my discharge I resumed life in the local community and in my early twenties one or two individuals became concerned about my welfare. One was the vice - captain of the local cricket team of which I was the captain. He lived opposite the pub. He and his wife were concerned as they watched from their bedroom window as I crawled home on hands and knees. (This, I cannot recall). The local grocer, a believer in the assembly at Bridgwater told me the same after he had baptised me as a believer. He was afraid that I would hit him if he came out to speak to me. I was introduced to the relatives of my friend the vice-captain of the cricket team. Although he was unsaved at the time he was anxious that I should meet relatives on his wife's side. (He did get saved subsequently). They were believers, and fine people too if only I had acknowledged it. I was dumbfounded when they gave thanks for food, my only desire was to escape and get back to the local pub.

However, I could not keep away from these dear saints even though I wanted to do so. I was drawn to them as I saw a love toward me that was not in the hearts of others I knew. I had to cycle 12 miles to see them and this I did regularly week after week and going to a gospel meeting and being tortured within. Not assembly believers but believers indeed. The preaching was powerful and I was sure the only person in the speaker's sight was myself, I felt I was the only one being preached at. Always I returned to the pub to drown my sorrows, but such sorrows will not stay drowned. The Scriptures preached tortured me, especially an oft repeated verse "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks". Acts 26.14.

This, kicking against the pricks, fighting against God continued for 6 years or so. Night-time was agony, no sleep came upon me as I tossed and turned in my bed realising that one-day I would have to meet God. Lying in bed I would count up the years that might be left for me. There was no guarantee and I was not prepared; I was going to Hell and it frightened me. Alcohol could never help me I knew that much, yet I stuck to it. It gave me a few happy hours until the time came for bed.

I had become very friendly with a dear man I will never forget, Alex Trafford. A lovely man, in assembly fellowship, the father in law of my friend the vice-captain of the cricket team. He was deformed and suffering much from polio at birth, but his lovely face, and inner joy made me long to be like him. I did not want his infirmities or disfigurement but my, how I longed for his peace and joy. I also longed for His Saviour.

At that time it was a regular feature of my Sundays to cycle 15 or so miles over the Polden Hills and push start his little Morgan three wheeler car, jump in beside him and go to hear him preach. I could hardly sit in the seats as he sang often "It is well, it is well, with my soul". I knew it wasn't right with mine but I knew he really meant it, and lived it too.

My new-found friends had long since given me a Bible which I ungraciously took and placed on my bedside table, ignoring it while my agony of soul remained.

One evening in 1957 I struggled home from the pub and lay on my bed in uncontrollable discomfort of heart, fearing death. My hand stretched forth and fell on this little Bible. The page opened at 2 Tim.2.11. "If we believe not, He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself". I knew that God would save me but for about six months I consciously ran away from God and tried to drink my way out of trouble. There was no escape; I could only turn. On the eve of Whit-Monday 1958 I crawled home drunk, lay in my bed agonising as usual.

At 2 am. that morning in desperation I rolled out of my bed and prayed earnestly, "Lord, I've made a mess of my life, You take it".

My chains fell off, and my heart was free. I was saved and my drink problem disappeared, He is a mighty Deliverer. There was no problem with separation from the world as far as my former friends in the local pubs were concerned; they did not want anything to do with a man with "religious mania" as they saw it. Over the years that hasn't been a bad complaint, praise the Lord.

My parents cared little about my faith and suggested I left home, they preferred a drunk man about the place, not ashamed to shove his mother around. Yet, my mother was saved at the age of sixty years, and my father at the age of seventy years, I had the joy of baptising them both and shall see them again in Heaven. I well remember my mother saying this after her conversion; "I never had any love for your father until the Lord saved me. My two brothers are not yet saved despite ill health. They witnessed a mighty change in our parents when they were saved and also, one trusts, in my conversion. Prayer will be valued for them, and their families. He IS the answer to every need.

For 10 years after conversion I remained in the building trade and during that time the Lord gave me a life partner for which I rejoiced greatly and still rejoice.

The desire in my heart was to serve the Lord in a full time capacity. For 3 years or so I remained unattached to any "church" and gathered with the believers who gave me such help before I was saved, they were evangelical believers who gathered in a little congregational chapel. A few Methodist friends crossed my path but even in those days they disliked my fundamentalism and mocked at some of the things I already held dear.

Very soon I sought out a company of believers that believed the whole of the Bible and my search ended in a Gospel Hall in Bridgwater, Somerset where I was baptised and welcomed into fellowship by a godly brother, Cecil Ingleby. In 1968 I joined a non-denominational association and engaged in Colportage work for 10 years until, deeply convicted of my association with what I could see as error I left this and sought the Lord earnestly for guidance. During those 10 years I was engaged in beach work at Margate for 5 weeks each summer. This gave me a strong desire to work among children.

Lessons were learned indeed as many of my brethren endeavoured to dissuade me from leaving the "umbrella" of an association but I knew it was better to obey God than man, and this has proved so true through the many years since.

It was not an easy matter to engage in the work of the Lord in a full time capacity, not a thing to be grasped at. If the matter of conversion brings deep

conviction so also does the ascertaining of the mind of God regarding His call. Jeremiah, Moses, and others hardly jumped at the opportunity but rather shrunk from it. Yet the Lord's purpose is in it all, Jer.1.5, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee" Was not the hand of my God upon me long before I knew Him?

In 1978 the assembly in Margate, Kent commended me to the work of the Lord, supported by several other gatherings in the locality. Sadly some are no longer in existence.

It has been one's joy to serve the Lord by His grace over the years, mainly among children, and one can praise Him that He has gloriously saved some and we give Him the glory, it is His work. I am not prepared to say that I have led souls to the Lord but through the foolishness of preaching the Holy Spirit has done the leading and salvation has been wrought by the grace of God.

Through His provision ALL needs have been met and never has an appeal been made — that would certainly spoil the blessing and my wife and I give Him all the glory.

"And when life's journey is over, and I the dear Saviour shall see,
I'll praise Him for ever and ever, for saving a sinner like me."

THE HOUR IS COME

(John 17.1)

*Before the entrance of the ages,
Before the measuring factor — time,
(How this baffles all the sages
This blessed concept so sublime).
Before there ever was Creation,
Before the fashioning of this world,
The Lamb was there in highest station
His banner yet to be unfurled.
Before the Cross, in purpose stained,
Before His passion, crimson dyed,
Verily thus was foreordained,
The Lamb, unblemished, crucified.
Before Barabbas knew survival,
Or Lamb before the shearer dumb,
Anticipating His arrival,
Could prophesy 'Behold I come.'
Come to glorify His Father,
The battle to be fought, and won,
'The hour is come,' the spoil to gather,
And Father glorify the Son.*

— John Glenville

Good Tidings from Heaven

VIRTUAL REALITY

Such have been the advances in computerised technology that almost any experience in life can be simulated with terrifying authenticity and alarming realism. By using flight simulators pilots can be trained to fly different types of planes and land at any major airport, without having to leave the building in which the simulator is housed. The film industry has harnessed this technology to produce special effects which a few years ago would either have been too costly, too dangerous or downright impossible to create.

It is now easy to dismantle the barrier between fact and fantasy, between reality and unreality and step from the 'real' world into the realm of make-believe. All this may be calculated to dilute reality and deceive people into thinking that they can, with ease, escape reality and take refuge in a world of dreams and deception.

Be warned, my friend, there are realities from which you cannot run away and the mere thought of even attempting to escape from them is greatest folly.

SIN is a reality. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" Romans 5.12. Its power, its presence, its consequences, its chaos, its evidence on every hand make it a fact undeniable and irrefutable. Your sins are being chronicled, every day you live, and if not pardoned, must be punished eternally. Many try to make excuses, while accusing others, but it is your responsibility and yours alone, to ensure that your sins are forgiven before you leave this world. Do not try to dodge the issue, no exceptions will be made and none will be exempt from the eternal consequences of unforgiven sins. There is a remedy — "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1John 1.7

LIFE itself is a reality; we are not mere actors, nor are we rehearsing, but on a one-way journey from birth to death and from time to eternity. Did not Queen Elizabeth I grasp something of life's precious reality in her dying moments when she cried out to her assembled physicians, "A million of money for a moment of time"? Have you discovered, dear friend, the preciousness of these passing moments with their passing opportunities, and made preparation for the world to come?

SALVATION is a great reality. It will mean all the difference between Heaven and hell, between eternal gladness and eternal gloom. Do you possess it, for "How shall we escape if we neglect (reject, make little of) so great salvation...?" Hebrews 2.3. It can only be obtained by faith in Christ, the Son of God, who died on Calvary's Cross to provide salvation for those, who, neither by riches, reformation nor religion, could provide it for themselves. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." Acts 16.31

DEATH is a great reality. Many have tried to minimise its seriousness and finality, humanists attempt to paint a rosy picture to obscure the reality of this solemn event and philosophers, agnostics and atheists hope, against hope, to persuade themselves that death is the end, the cessation of existence, with no hereafter to be enjoyed or endured. The Bible says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:" Hebrews 9.27. Coupled with death is the reality of **ETERNITY**, with its endless duration and inescapable destinies — Heaven and hell, in one of which you will be forever. Time ends and then eternity.

Do remember that while the truth may hurt, it will never harm and in due course "will make you free." Deception, on the other hand, is dangerous, detrimental and damning and is characteristic of the devil himself, according to Revelation 20.10, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire..." Do not listen to his lies, do not share his fate and eternal abode but trust Christ and know the blessed reality of sins forgiven and peace with God.



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY



Contents

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY BIBLE CLASS

by J. Riddle

TESTIMONY IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

by I. McKee

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN A MODERN WORLD

by W. A. Boyd

JEHOVAH'S PASSOVER

by W. W. Fereday

THE GARMENTS OF THE SAVIOUR

by Jim Flanigan

DEVICES AND WILES OF SATAN

by C. Jones

ISAIAH 54

by J. Gibson

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by C. Raggett

GOOD TIDINGS FROM HEAVEN

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

This is a bi-monthly magazine for the propagation of the Word of God and thus the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (028) 9062 1343.
E-mail: AT@bcurrie.free-online.co.uk

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (028) 4062 4238.
E-mail: AT@wmneill.free-online.co.uk

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

—∞0∞—

This magazine is supported solely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. No member of the committee, author of articles or any other person connected with the magazine receives payment, remuneration or gratuity of any kind. This magazine is not to be sold.

Friends wishing to support the work of this magazine may kindly forward their practical fellowship to:

William Neill, at the above address.

Please make all monetary contributions payable to "Assembly Testimony Magazine." Money orders and Bank Drafts please make payable in U.K. currency.

Please address correspondence for new orders, back numbers, changes of address and cancellations to William Neill.

You can help us by stating the NUMBER of copies required, with NAME and ADDRESS, including POSTAL CODE, IN BLOCK LETTERS, please.

© This magazine is copyrighted. For permission to reproduce any article or part thereof please contact the Editor.

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

DEUTERONOMY

5) “THE DAY THAT THOU STOODEST BEFORE THE LORD THY GOD”

Read Chapter 4

As we have noticed, ch.1-11 are retrospective. In ch.1-3 Moses relates historical *facts*, and in 4-11, he emphasises the *lessons* of their history. In ch.4-7, He reviews events at the *beginning* of the journey: In ch.8-10, he reviews events *during* the journey: In ch.11, he describes the land at the *end* of the journey. In this section of the book, Moses lays the foundation for the “statutes and judgments which follow. See 12.1. Ch.4-5 emphasise the implications of the covenant made with Israel at Sinai. See particularly 4.1-40 and 5.1-33. We now begin to meet the oft-repeated expression, “the statutes and ... the judgments.” See, for example v1, 5, 14. The character of the book is reflected in the words “possess” (v1, 5, 14, 22, 26) and “inheritance, (v20, 21, 38). The central message of the chapter lies in v9-10.

The chapter can be analysed as follows: (1) The lessons of Sinai, v1-40; (2) The cities of refuge, v41-43; (3) The introduction to the commandments, v44-49.

1) THE LESSONS OF SINAI, v1-40

A) THEY POSSESSED THE WORD OF GOD, v1-8

This section falls into two parts: (i) obedience by Israel, v1-4; (ii) observation by others, v5-8. Both emphasise teaching. In the first case, it is present teaching: “Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments which I *teach you*,” v1. In the second, it is past teaching: “Behold, I have *taught you* statutes and judgments,” v5.

i) *Obedience by Israel, v1-4.* “Now therefore *hearken*, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to *do them*, that ye may live (like the men that did not follow Baal-peor, v4), and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you.” Obedience was the key to *continuance* (“that ye may live”) and *possession* of the inheritance (“go in and possess the land”). Obedience is essential to our spiritual life, and to the enjoyment of our inheritance. See 1Pet.1.14.

Notice the warning: “Thou shalt not *add* unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye *diminish* ought from it.” The New Testament is equally insistent. See 2Tim.2.2 (“the *same* commit thou to faithful men”), and Jude 3: “the faith *once* (once for all) delivered unto the saints.” Remember the solemn warning in Rev.22.18. The warning here is enforced by an illustration. “Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal-peor.” This refers to Num.25: “And Israel abode in Shittim, and people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab ...

and Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor.” As usual, immorality and idolatry went together, (See 1Cor.10.7). Hence the severe warning against idolatry that follows in v15-31. Past lessons must not be ignored. The clarity of those lessons is stressed by the words, “*Your eyes have seen,*” v3. See also v9 and v34.

ii) Observation by others, v5-8. “Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them.” Notice the faithfulness of the teacher, and the intimacy of his relationship with God: “even as the Lord *my God* commanded me.” Compare Phil.4.19 etc. The result of obedience to the word of God would be a strong testimony to the surrounding nations: “For this is *your wisdom and your understanding* in the *sight of the nations*, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this *great* nation is a wise and understanding people,” v6. The greatness of Israel was solely due to their relationship with God. This is emphasised by Moses in two ways: (a) they had *the presence of God*, v7: “For what nation is there so *great, who hath God so nigh unto them*, as the Lord God is in all things that we call upon Him for?” (b) They had *the Word of God*, v8: “And what nation is there so *great, that hath statutes and judgments* so righteous as this law, which I set before you this day?” Compare Ps.147.20.

Unqualified obedience to the Word of God, v1-4, will secure a unique testimony for the people of God, v5-8. Each assembly should covet the testimony that “God is in you of a truth,” 1Cor.14.25. Sadly, Paul was obliged to write of Israel, “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written,” Rom.2.24. The following injunctions are relevant in this connection: 1Tim.5.14, 1Tim.6.1, Titus 2.8.

B) THEY EXPERIENCED THE PRESENCE OF GOD, v9-14

“And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven (JND, ‘unto the heart of heaven’),” v11. God's heart has now been revealed in love! Their great privileges, v6-8, brought solemn responsibilities. “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget (see 8.2, 8.18, 9.7, etc.) the things which *thine eyes have seen*, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy son's sons.” They were to apply the teaching of God's Word, first to themselves, and then to their successors. Compare 6.4-7. Children should not only be taught the Word of God, they should see it exhibited in the lives of their teachers! “Take heed unto *thyself*, and unto the doctrine,” 1Tim.4.16.

While they were not to forget what they had seen at Horeb, they were not to forget what they did *not* see at Horeb: “And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, *but ye saw no similitude*, only ye heard a voice.” This is now emphasised in connection with a solemn warning against idolatry:

C) THEY LEARNED ABOUT THE JEALOUSY OF GOD, v15-31

See v23-24, “Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you (see v13), and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee. *For the Lord thy*

God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.” See also 5.8, 6.15. These words are cited in Heb.12.29. They are a warning to us. The Scriptures describe the jealousy of God in three ways. (a) He is jealous of His own glory: see Exod.39.25, Isa.48.11; (b) he is jealous for His people: see Joel 2.18, Zech.1.14, etc; (c) He is jealous of the affections of His people, as here. See also Exod.34.14, Deut.32.16, etc. he demanded the wholehearted love and devotion of His people, and therefore:

i) Idolatry was prohibited. v15-20

The worship of *terrestrial* things was prohibited, v16-18. Compare Rom.1.23. The worship of *celestial* things was prohibited, v19. The folly of idolatry is emphasised by the words that follow: “But **the Lord** hath taken **you**, and brought **you** forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.” Israel owed nothing to idolatry: they owed everything to God, and belonged to Him. Compare 1Jn.19-21.

ii) Judgment was pronounced. v21-28

a) **Judgment on Moses**, v21-22. “Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your sakes (see also 3.26), and swore that I should not go over Jordan. It has been said that Moses was refused entrance to Canaan because ‘he broke a type!’ This seems a little speculative, to put it mildly! Ps.106.32-33 explains why it “went ill with Moses.”

b) **Judgment on Israel**, v23-28. If Moses was unable to enjoy the land because he “believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel,” Num.20.12, 27.12, then Israel could not expect immunity from judgment either. Notice that **disobedience**, v25, would be followed by **dispossession and destruction**, v26, and by **dispersion**, v27-28.

iii) Restoration promised. v29-31

“But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, **thou shalt find Him**, if thou seek Him **with all thy heart and with all thy soul**. Nehemiah alluded to this passage. See 1.8-9. Notice reference to “the latter days,” and the fact that “He will not ... forget the covenant of thy fathers which He swore unto them,” v30-31. This refers, not to the covenant made at Sinai, but to the unconditional promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in connection with the land.

D) THEY ENJOYED THE FAVOUR OF GOD. v32-40

These verses stress the great privileges of God's people, together with their responsibilities. Compare v7-8. They can be summarised as follows:

i) The uniqueness of their privileges. v32-34

“For ask now of the days that are past, which were set before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?” (a) “Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, **as thou hast heard**, and live?” b) “Or hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation ... according to all that the Lord your God **did for you** in Egypt before your eyes?” Compare v3 and 9.

This reminds us of the uniqueness of our privileges. We too have the Word of God. Not now “speaking out of the midst of the fire,” but in the complete canon of Scripture. God has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” Eph. 1.3 Those “spiritual blessings” follow: “chosen ... in Him,” v4, “predestinated,” v5, “redemption,” v7, “forgiveness,” v7. Staggering, isn't it!

ii) The reason for their privileges. v35-38

Three reasons are given. (a) “Unto thee it was shewed, *that* thou mayest know that the Lord He is God; there is none else besides Him.” Compare Isa.45.6, 18, 22. See also v39. (b) “Out of heaven He made thee to hear His voice, *that* He might instruct thee; and upon earth He shewed thee His great fire, and thou heardest His words out of the midst of the fire.” (c) “And *because* He loved thy fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in His sight with His mighty power out of Egypt; to drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.”

We must not forget that our great privileges are intended to deepen and enrich our knowledge of God, Jn.17.3, to bring us into increasing conformity to His Word, Col.2.6-7, and to remind us constantly of His love. God blessed Israel, because He loved the “fathers”: He has blessed us “for Christ's sake,” Eph.4.32.

iii) The implications of their privileges. v39-40

“Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God in heaven above, and upon earth beneath: there is none else (see v35). Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes, and His commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well *with thee*, and with *thy children* after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever.” The lesson is clear: enjoyment of God's blessings demands obedience to His Word.

2) THE CITIES OF REFUGE. v41-43

Current space does not allow us to consider this absorbing subject. For further details, see Num.35, Deut.19, Josh.20. Study will be most rewarding!

3) THE INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMANDMENTS. v44-49

These verses speak for themselves. Details of the covenant made at Sinai follow in ch.5, to be followed by “the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments.”

—to be continued (D.V.)

THE CHRISTIAN FILLED WITH

- ... all knowledge, Rom.15.14.
- ... comfort, 2Cor.7.4.
- ... all the fulness of God, Eph.3.19.
- ... the Spirit, Eph.5.18.
- ... the fruits of righteousness, Phil.1.11.
- ... the knowledge of His will, Col.1.9.
- ... joy, 2Tim.1.4.

by H. A. Barnes (England)

Testimony in Troublous Times

by Ian McKee (Northern Ireland)

Paper 15 — RETAINING WORTH AND WEIGHT IN TESTIMONY (Ezra Chapter 8.24-36)

The two priests mentioned in Ezra 8.2 evidently brought with them a considerable number of kinsmen as Ezra separates twelve of the chief of the priests in addition to twelve Levites already mentioned in Ezra 8.18,19. These were selected to be guardians for precious things, “silver and the gold, and the vessels, even the offering of the house of our God,” Ezra 8.25.

These officially designated guardians were sufficient in number to know that the energy and exercise of each would provide encouragement and protection for them all. Indeed the task that lay before them resembled the tasks allocated to the sons of Kohath, Gershon and Merari in Num.5. There was no self-selection for specific tasks; all was allocated by another. But each must now, as then, become familiar with worth and weight. And this was immense. Ezra weighed into their hands 22 tonnes of silver and over 3 tonnes of silver vessels. He also weighed over 3 tonnes of gold, 8.5 kilograms of golden vessels plus 2 brazen vessels of golden brilliancy that were as desirable as gold. Yet the combined value could not be calculated in pure economic terms. The value of exercise in giving by saints enhanced the monetary value. So did the goodwill expressed by the civil powers. The true value could only be calculated by the assessment of heaven.

While the 24 men tasked with this onerous responsibility were all of the lineage of Levi, an additional criterion applied. Holiness. They were set apart for a distinct purpose. The vessels are holy also and the silver and the gold. So persons and possessions are both holy. The men selected, therefore, must answer in personal character to the public task they must perform. God will not entrust special tasks to men of dubious worth.

A severe charge is then laid upon them. “Watch ye, and keep them, until ye weigh them before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the Lord,” Ezra 8.29. Not only had they witnessed a day of weighing, but also they would be present on a coming day of reweighing under a severe and discriminating scrutiny! Care must therefore be given to ensure that nothing is lost, mislaid or stolen. Full account must be given of stewardship. It is incumbent that those entrusted with the holy vessels should ensure that sufficient of their number are awake and on duty at any time. They must not be naïve or gullible in discharging their responsibility. And they must have sufficient witness to each transaction.

That the faithfulness of these men will be assessed by the weight delivered “in the chambers of the house of the Lord” is reminiscent of the lesson of the wagons in Num.7. The princes of Israel offered six covered wagons for the service of the tabernacle. Natural reasoning may have suggested an equitable division among the Levites. But instead two wagons were given unto the sons of Gershon, four wagons were given unto the sons of Merari and “unto the sons of Kohath he gave none:

because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders,” Num.7.9. Kohathites were to feel the full weight of the testimony and show all due care for “they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die,” Num.4.15. Too many believers assess the worth of testimony by wrong criteria: by counting numbers, by physical dimensions or in financial terms. But we serve the God who measures by weight at the commencement and, again, at the close of our service. Sadly, the service of many is in large volume, low value and combustible material. Fewer specialise in high value, low volume and durable material, 1Cor.3.11-15.

Accepting their onerous responsibility, the priests and Levites depart “from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lie in wait by the way,” Ezra 8.31. In spite of prevalent danger and the potential for attack, God preserved His servants along some 900 miles of the caravan route until they “came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days,” Ezra 8.32. Thus they had three days of rest at the start of their journey (8.15) and now at its end. There would be relief, rest, rejoicing and reunion. And this was followed by review on the fourth day with “the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him was Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them was Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites,” Ezra 8.33.

Ezra was not to be the judge of his own service. Another priestly man is responsible to assess his faithfulness. So he weighs in the house of God the value of Ezra’s faithful service. This suggests a foretaste of the judgment seat of Christ where value and weight of service will count, rather than apparent success. This should sober us all, and particularly those who preach to sinners and teach the saints.

So the vessels were both weighed and counted and an accredited inventory prepared of all that was delivered, Ezra 8.34. While this may have been required by Artaxerxes it was nevertheless good practice even without a legal imperative. In this there is a practical lesson for those today that discharge financial matters in co-operation with other faithful men. “Let all things be done decently and in order,” 1Cor.14.40, is a comprehensive principle. Also relevant is the parallel with Paul’s writings to the Corinthian assembly relative to both the collection for the poor and regarding the messengers: “Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men,” 2Cor.8.21. It is vital to ensure that good practice is both done and is seen to be done!

Those who returned with Ezra were not forgetful to give God His portion by offering unto the God of Israel, Ezra 8.35. This implemented the command of Artaxerxes, Ezra 7.17. But it is commendable that they who sought God’s face for protection at the start of their journey remembered to return to give God glory at its end. Their expression of gratitude embraces the whole of Israel both in burnt and sin offerings. And only after spiritual matters were attended to did they address the secular. “And they delivered the king’s commissions unto the king’s lieutenants, and to the governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God,” Ezra 8.36. Their loyalty to the civil and military powers was evident. But it was demonstrably subordinate to their reverence for God. This provides another vital lesson for us today.

—to be continued (DV)

Christian Conduct in a Modern World

by Walter A. Boyd (South Africa)

Paper 23

No.6 — THE CONCLUDING SALUTATIONS (Continued)

(B) His Salutations to Rome (Romans 16.8-16).

In this paper we will discuss the remaining particular salutations in v8-15, and the general salutation in v16. There would appear to have been a number of assemblies in the city of Rome, as indicated by the expressions “the church that is in their house,” v5; “them which are of Aristobulus’ household,” v10; “the household of Narcissus,” v11; “and the brethren which are with them,” v14; “and all the saints which are with them,” v16. It is interesting and instructive that, with at least six assemblies in the city, Paul did not write to a representative such as a “Bishop,” or to a representative body of men as an area-oversight. He wrote in such a way that his letter would reach each assembly, and encourage the strengthening of bonds between all those assemblies. Among the various companies of saints it would not be unreasonable to assume that there were different degrees of loyalty to the truth of Scripture; yet he did not differentiate between them or segregate them. The teaching for any one assembly was profitable and useful for all of them.

Among these various assemblies there were particular individuals to whom Paul wanted to make personal reference, and he gives his reason for mentioning each name. It is a record of the many true friends he had in Rome, and as we peruse their names we can learn valuable principles in the character of his commendation of them.

1. *The Sensitiveness of his mention.* With each name Paul uses a beautifully delicate touch with his pen; but there is no hint of fleshly flattery or favouritism. He outlines the facts of their fellowship with him: “beloved, well-beloved, helper, kinsman, work-fellow, and host.” Paul does not specify the exact nature of what these helpers had done, simply that it was in fellowship with his service for the Lord.
2. *The Warmth of his fellowship.* As he travelled and preached the gospel, these saints had provided help and friendship for Paul. Their help meant a lot to him, and he had carefully noted their valuable contributions to the work of God. Now, when the opportunity has arisen, he pays them respect and recognition in a warm-hearted way. This is not a mere list of deeds or duties, but the appreciation by an eminent servant of God of what they had done to help him. It comes right from his heart, and with all the sincerity that a man can apply by Divine inspiration.
3. *The Intensity of his love.* The expression, “beloved,” in its various forms is used a number of times by the apostle. While there is no doubt that Paul loved

all the saints, there were some whose memory evoked in his heart a feeling of deep, sincere love. So this is not fawning, nor an insincere greeting. In one case (Persis, v12), he tells us what she did: she “laboured much in the Lord.” In another case, he just tells us that Amplias is “beloved in the Lord.” Perhaps it was not appropriate for Paul to give specific reasons for his deep love for Amplias (v8); but we cannot mistake the intensity of his love in the Lord for this particular saint.

4. **The Variety of his perspectives.** As Paul writes about these Christians, he views their relationship with him from different standpoints. He writes of some as being “in Christ;” of others as being “in the Lord;” and of some as “unto Christ,” which lets us see that Paul does not generalise in his appreciation of his friends — he has a specific commendation for each:

The Family of Saints — mother (v13), brethren (v14), sister (v15).

The Field of Service — much labour (v6), helpers (v3,9), labour (v12).

The Fight of Soldiers — fellow-prisoners (v7).

The Fruits of Salvation — firstfruits of Achaia (v5).

The Fidelity of Saints — my beloved (v8,9).

Rather than a perusal of doubtful historical speculations about the various names listed, a careful consideration of these various designations and spheres of relationship will yield a much richer harvest of meditation and blessing.

V8 — “Amplias my beloved in the Lord.” Amplias was a brother with a Latin name, who, along with two other brethren and one sister, was beloved in the Lord. Among slaves, Amplias was quite a common name; yet in the cemetery of Domatilla, one of the earliest catacombs, there is a highly decorated tomb that bears the single inscription of this name. This would suggest that he was a Roman slave who had considerable standing among the Christians. The name means ‘enlarged,’ or ‘made great.’ What a testimony of grace, that a lowly slave should be so highly thought of by the saints, and well-beloved by the apostle.

V9 — “Urbane, our helper in Christ and Stachys my beloved.” Urbane (Urbanus R.V.) is afforded the same classification as Priscilla and Aquila (v3): ‘fellow-worker.’ We are not told anything of the nature or extent of his work; but from the phrase, “in Christ,” we get an indication that he had been specially called to help in the furtherance of Paul’s great teaching of “the mystery” of the church. This would include the spread of the gospel among unbelievers, and the strengthening of believers: bringing in those who are outside, and building up those who are inside, was constantly a burden upon Paul’s heart.

“Stachys my beloved.” Like Amplias (v8), Stachys is described simply as “my beloved.” A cynic might say that, since most are mentioned for what they did, he is only mentioned in this bland way lest he should feel excluded or belittled. Not so! But it is true that some are mentioned for what they did, and Stachys solely on the basis of what he was. Paul does not tell us why; but for some reason he was loved — likely because of the type of character he was. Some Christians are such an example of the grace of God, with the fruit of the Spirit evident in their lives, that it is almost impossible not to love them. We should try to live so that the grace of

God and the fruit of the Spirit are manifested in such a way that, Stachys-like, we are loved for what we are.

V10 — “Apelles approved in Christ ... them which are of Aristobulus’ household.” The greeting to Apelles tells us that he had been tested and approved in relation to his testimony or claims as a Christian — hence the mention of “in Christ.” His approval was not so much personal, as positional. Whatever the test was, he had shown beyond all doubt that he was worthy of the claim to be ‘in Christ.’ He had been tested and tried, and had emerged triumphantly. In secular history the household of Aristobulus appears as one of the great noble families in Rome, being close to Caesar. What a triumph for the gospel of Christ, that salvation reached the servants in a household so close to the seat of power in Imperial Rome. When Paul writes to Philippi, he sends greetings from “they that are of Caesar’s household” Phil.4.22. Writing from the city of Rome, he includes greetings from Christians who are household-servants to Caesar. It is unclear whether this is the immediate household of Caesar or the Praetorian Guard, but that is not important. In our passage in Romans it is worth noting that the words “household of” are absent — suggesting a closer relationship with Aristobulus and Narcissus than servants. It is possible that Paul is writing about the immediate families of these two great men.

V11— “Herodian my kinsman ... them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord.” Continuing the theme of the previous verse, if the gospel reached into families of such note in Rome, we have an insight into the great advances of the gospel to the Gentile world. This adds importance to the repeated plea in ch.14,15 for unity among the saints at Rome. In the fellowship of Christians there were high and low, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, master and slave, male and female. As he sends his greetings to such a diverse group of people, Paul singles out some from each class for special mention and affection. His own actions corroborate his teaching on unity: his behaviour does not contradict what he teaches.

V12 — “Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. The beloved Persis which laboured much in the Lord.” Paul is careful to make note of any contribution to the work of God, irrespective of its substance or source. Most agree that these were three sisters. His hearty commendation of their assistance in the furtherance of the work of God is a helpful answer to the suggestion in some quarters, that Paul downgraded women. As shown also in Phil.4.3, Paul did appreciate the toil of sisters in the Lord. In the commendation of Persis, the quantity of her labour is identified by the word “much.” Down through the centuries the progress of the gospel owes much to many diligent sisters who actively promoted the cause of Christ. They have had a powerful and pervasive influence in spiritual work, and it is fitting that they should be mentioned as praiseworthy. To be of influence in this work does not mean that they should depart from their God-given sphere, as clearly taught in the New Testament, 1Cor.14.34; 1Tim.2.11-15; Tit.2.4,5. Where they have departed from spiritual service in a God-given sphere, the results have demonstrated that their actions should not be copied, 1Tim.2.14,15.

V13 — “Rufus, chosen in the Lord and his mother and mine.” Traditionally, Rufus is identified as the son of Simon of Cyrene, Mk.15.21. That may be so; but among slaves Rufus was a common name. The word ‘chosen’ is usually understood

as 'elected,' but it can also have the meaning of 'favourite,' or 'special.' The context always determines how it should be understood. In a list where all those mentioned are 'elect,' in the sense of Rom.8.33, it may well bear the other meaning of someone who was a favourite, or specially favoured, by the apostle. When you bear in mind that Paul regarded Rufus' mother as his own, that may explain his special regard for her son. She had shown motherly love and labour to the apostle, and this would have brought Paul into close contact with their home, and given Rufus a special place of brotherly favour with Paul.

V14 — "*Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes and the brethren which are with them.*" **V15** — "*Philologus and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them.*" In these two verses, the apostle identifies a number of individuals, both men and women; and those who "are with them." It is most likely that these verses refer to different assemblies of believers in the city. As we come to the end of this list of select individuals, there is a searching question worth asking: if Paul were writing a letter to the assemblies in my area, how would he describe me? Indeed, would he mention me at all? We should endeavour to live and labour in such a way as to ensure inclusion in a list of commendations, like v3-16. At all costs we should avoid identification with the division-makers of v17 and 18!

2. General Instruction and Salutation v16. While the general salutation is nowhere nearly so extensive as the specific ones we have examined, both in this paper and the previous one, it is nonetheless genuine and meaningful.

V16 - "*Salute one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*" The practice of greeting with a kiss is seen in Lk.7.45; 1Cor.16.20; 2Cor.13.12; 1Thess.5.26 and 1Pet.5.14. It is variously called 'a kiss,' 'a holy kiss,' and 'a kiss of love.' A kiss signifies that it is not a *dead* greeting — there is no aloofness about it. A holy kiss signifies that it is not a *dubious* greeting — there is nothing sensual or indecent about it. A kiss of love signifies that it is not a *deceitful* greeting — there is nothing insincere or false about it. In our society, where people are becoming more self sufficient and proud, we should ensure that our greetings are warm and genuine. Where innuendo and loose living are rampant, we should ensure that our greetings are holy and pure. With the prevalence of dishonesty and falsehood around us in the world, we should ensure that when we greet one another we mean what we say.

It is only here that Paul uses the term, "churches of Christ." It embraces all the assemblies, and identifies them as belonging to Christ in a unique and intimate way. For whatever reason he uses this universal type of expression, Paul wants to assure the saints in Rome that they are within the interest of all the churches of Christ. Because Paul had not yet visited Rome, perhaps they felt estranged from other assemblies who had enjoyed his presence and labour; so he wants to assure them of the affection of other saints, and that they are not disadvantaged by geographical location. In our contact and communication with one another, we should emulate Paul's embrave love for every saint, and do everything we can to encourage love between assemblies; rather than speak or act in a way that cultivates division amongst those who are "in Christ," and "in the Lord." —*to be continued (D.V.)*

Jehovah's Passover

by W. W. Fereday

PAPER 11 — “FOR A MEMORIAL”

That night in Egypt was to be kept in perpetual remembrance by the people of Israel. That it might never be forgotten the Passover was to be observed annually as a feast to Jehovah throughout their generations. “Ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever,” Ex.12.14. There is a dangerous tendency in the human heart to forget, particularly in matters relating to God. How often in Deuteronomy — that book which gives us Moses’ final addresses to the people — we come across such admonitions as “Beware lest thou forget,” and “Take heed that ye remember.” Peter’s last epistle was written in order that his readers might, after his departure, have his teaching, “always in remembrance.” One of the marks of a backslider, according to this apostle, is his having “forgotten that he was purged from his old sins,” 2Pet.1.9.

The Lord’s Supper comes to mind here. The Saviour was on the eve of death when He instituted it. His wonderful course on earth was ending, and He was about to undergo the supreme anguish of Calvary. Only by His death could atonement be effected and salvation be made possible for sinful men. Yet even One so divinely unique as he, and a sacrifice so stupendous as the sacrifice of Himself, would be in danger of being forgotten by His own. Accordingly He gave to His disciples first the bread, and then the cup, saying, “This do in remembrance of Me,” Lk.22.19-20. Years after His return to heaven’s glory, the Holy Spirit reiterated His words in 1Cor.11.23-25, adding, “as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord’s death till He come.” Thus during the whole period of His absence on high the Lord’s Supper remains with the Church as the memorial of her once-slain Lord and Saviour. The absurdity of encouraging any to partake thereof who have no saving knowledge of Christ should be apparent; for how can I recall to remembrance a person I have never known?

Year by year the Passover feast was to be observed in Israel. In this way the goodness of God was to be kept alive in the minds of the people and the mighty fact that He redeemed them from the bondage of Egypt, taking them unto relationship with Himself on the ground of the blood of the lamb. Connected with the Passover there were to be seven days of unleavened bread. Leaven is everywhere in Scripture the type of evil. Thus in God’s picture book as elsewhere in the plainest language. He insists upon purity of life and doctrine in all whom grace has sheltered beneath the Saviour’s blood.

The children of the Israelites came into the divine thought also. They were to be carefully instructed as to the meaning of the Paschal feast. The case is supposed in Ex.12.26-27 of the children inquiring at a later date, “What mean ye by this

service?" The parents were to reply, "It is the sacrifice of Jehovah's Passover who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." Let us in this day see to it that we are not only ourselves under the shelter of the blood of the Lamb, but that our children also are in the same position of divine security. The wrath of God against all ungodliness is a tremendous reality, from which nothing can screen either ourselves or our children but the Saviour's blood.

—concluded

THE GARMENTS OF THE SAVIOUR

by J. Flanigan (Northern Ireland)

3 — THE GARMENT OF MYSTERY

The robe for which men gambled at Calvary was "seamless". The soldiers recognised the value and the beauty of this seamless garment and said, "Let us not rend it," Jn.19.24. There was a unity which must not be spoiled, and in symbol we may see that inexplicable, indivisible unity of the human and the divine in the Person of our Lord Jesus. It has often been pointed out that this truth is, in a special way, the theme of the writings of the Apostle John, who so intimately and so personally knew and loved the Saviour. John has bequeathed to us, by inspiration, his Gospel, his three Epistles, and his Revelation. In his Gospel he demonstrates that the Man of Galilee was God. In his letters he shows us that it was indeed God who became Man. In his Revelation he proves the ultimate triumph of Him who is both God and Man.

Of this wondrous blending of Godhood and Manhood in one glorious Person we must say, "Let us not rend it." We dare not coldly analyse or segregate these two aspects of our Lord's Person. Such irreverent academic prying into such holiness would be akin to lifting the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, a deed which brought severe judgment on the men of Bethshemesh so long ago, 1Sam.6.19. Our Saviour is God. Our Saviour is Man. It is a holy mystery, incomprehensible. Like the men with the seamless robe we say again, "Let us not rend it."

How carefully then do the Gospels preserve this unity. It seems that wherever we are given a glimpse of our Lord's humanity there is invariably, and at once, a reminder of His Deity. This is, as has already been suggested, particularly so in the Gospel according to John. This blessed Man never ceased to be God.

How human was our Lord Jesus in accepting an invitation to the wedding in Cana. With His mother and His disciples He graciously deigned to be there as a guest. But it was in these lowly circumstances that He chose to manifest His glory in that first miracle of making the water wine. His last recorded miracle in John's Gospel had similar connotations. The sisters at Bethany were in sorrow. Their brother Lazarus had died. The Saviour, in the reality of His manhood, saw them weeping and He wept with them. It has been said, "The tears of God in the eyes of

a Man!" What an evidence that His holy manhood was real. Jesus wept! But this weeping Man is God, and in just a little while He calls forth the dead from the grave, and death must obey Him. Humanity and Deity! Blessed truth, let us not rend it!

Again, is not this a picture of true Manhood, to see Him wearied with His journey and resting on the well at Sychar. He was hungry too, and thirsty, asking for a drink and waiting for His disciples to bring food from the town. How real was this humanity, when He was recognised by the woman of Samaria only as "A Jew!" But as the conversation continues she realises that this Stranger is no ordinary Jew. With divine insight and all-knowledge He reveals her heart. He knows her past and her present. He knows all about her. This hungry, thirsty, tired Man is God. He can meet her need fully. He is the Christ, and the Saviour of the world. He is God and Man. It is a glorious truth. Let us not rend it!

It was some time later that the Jews said of Him, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?", Jn.6.42. And again, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?", Jn.7.15. What glimpses are these, of Him who had lived simply among them for thirty years in Nazareth. He was, to them, but the son of the carpenter. He was not a man of learning like their scribes and lawyers but He was truly Man. Yet, they had to marvel at His ability to teach the things of God, and He who was to them the son of Joseph fed five thousand of them with five loaves and two small fishes. Some said, "He is a good Man," Jn.7.12. He was, of course, but why did they not recognise that He was God? We who acknowledge both His Manhood and His Godhood have learned a great truth indeed. Let us not rend it!

After a lengthy discourse concerning His relationship with the Father, they said to Him, "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil." How they despised His Manhood. In great grace He replied simply, "I have not a devil," Jn.8.48-49. Why did He not answer the Samaritan charge? Were there Samaritans within hearing whom He would not offend? He then proceeded to tell them of His greatness, saying, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day ... Before Abraham was, I am." They argued with the Man but failed to recognise that this Man was God. The Man of Galilee was, in fact, the God of Abraham! What a truth! A mystery perhaps, but let us not rend it.

It was a man who had been blind from birth, but whose sight had been miraculously restored, who spoke of the Saviour as "A Man that is called Jesus," Jn.9.11. It was all that he knew at the time. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Jesus asked him later. In simplicity and sincerity he replied, "Who is He Lord, that I might believe." Jesus made Himself known and the poor man acknowledged, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped Him. The Man called Jesus was the Son of God. Truly, the Man from Nazareth was God. Precious truth, let us not rend it!

Was that not an instance of His real Manhood, that He could enjoy the hospitality of the home in Bethany. They made Him welcome and He appreciated that. He sat at their table and shared a meal with them and Mary poured her spikenard upon Him in true acknowledgement of all that He was. The chief priests consulted together how they might put both Him and Lazarus to death. Next day He rode on a donkey into Jerusalem. Why did they not recognise that this was an unbroken colt on which

never a man had sat before, and yet it carried Him calmly into the City? The dumb ass knew more than they! The Lord of creation sat upon it. Why could they not see that this was the fulfilment of an ancient prophecy, Zech.9.9. The Man on the donkey was the God for whom they had waited, but they failed to see. How could a Man be God? His people believe it, even when they cannot understand.

“Behold the Man,” said Pilate. “Behold your God,” said the prophet, Isa.40.9. Yet both the Roman Governor and the prophet of Israel were calling attention to the same Person. Let us not rend it, this divine mystery, but let us sing —

In Thee, most perfectly expressed,
The Father’s glories shine,
Of the full Deity possessed,
Eternally divine.

True image of the Infinite,
Whose essence is concealed;
Brightness of uncreated light,
The heart of God revealed

But the high mysteries of His Name
An angel’s grasp transcend;
The Father only (glorious claim!)
The Son can comprehend.

—to be continued (D.V.)

Devices and Wiles of Satan

by C. Jones (Wales)

PAPER 2 — DOTH JOB FEAR FOR NOUGHT?

In the book of Job we can read of a conversion between God and Satan in which Satan slandered man to God. God described His servant Job as a “perfect man, an upright man,” Job 1.8. Satan replied by slandering Job to God and said “Doth Job fear God for nought?”, Job 1.9. He claimed that Job only served God because of the material benefits God showered upon Job and the protection from harm that God bestowed upon him, Job 1.10. Satan argued that if these benefits and protection were withdrawn then Job would curse God, Job 1.11. God gave Satan permission to harm all that Job had but did not allow him to harm Job, Job 1.12.

Here we see the absolute sovereignty of God, in that Satan, a created being of immense power, can only go as far as God permits. Another example of this is the occasion when Satan desired to have power over the disciples so that he might sift them as wheat, Lk.22.31. God controls all events and circumstances for the eternal benefit of the believer, Rom.8.28. God is sovereign and if He is “for us, who can be against us?”, Rom.8.31.

Job lost his possessions and his children, and was greatly distressed, but “sinned not, nor charged God foolishly,” Job 1.22. He was not sinless, for “all have sinned,”

Rom.3.23, but he was “upright” in the sense that men could not find fault with him. Job feared God and avoided evil, Job 1.8. Satan continued to slander Job to God and God gave him permission to hurt Job's body but not to take his life, Job 2.6. Satan then afflicted Job severely with boils. Both Job's wife and his friends discussed his situation with him and offered him advice, much of which only served to make clear that human reasoning is not always capable of understanding the reasons behind events or of providing correct solutions to the dilemmas and calamities people are faced with in life. As a result of his sufferings, we have on record those wonderful statements Job made, such as “the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,” Job 1.21; “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” Job 13.15, and “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God,” Job 19.25,26. Job's friends were not correct in suggesting that Job's sufferings were because of his sins. This is not always so, because God disciplines and chastises His children and “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby,” Heb.12.11. God will not allow us to be tempted and tried beyond what we can endure, 1Cor.10.13. Job's confidence was in God. He was humble before God and said “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,” Job 42.6.

Job raised a fundamental question which can only be answered by one who knows something of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the value of His shed blood. Job asked “how should man be just with God?” Job 9.2. Believers can answer “being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him,” Rom.5.9. Then again Job regretted the fact that there was no one to stand between him and God, Job 9.32-33. Believers enjoy the great blessing of knowing that “there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,” 1Tim.2.5-6.

Despite the wiles of the Devil, Job came out of all his suffering glorifying God and more aware than he ever had been of his complete dependence on God. He proved Satan to be a liar in his slandering of Job to God, and after all the troubles and testings “the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning,” Job 42.12.

—to be continued (D.V.)

IMPORTANT ‘THEREFORES’ IN ROMANS

Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, 2.1.

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, 3.28.

Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, 4.16.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, 5.1

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, 6.12.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, 8.1.

I beseech you therefore ... that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, 12.1.

Render therefore to all their dues, 13.7.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more, 14.13.

by H. A. Barnes (England)

Isaiah 54 — Israel's Restoration

by J. Gibson (Scotland)

PAPER 1

• Introduction

This prophecy of Isa.54, follows on from the record of Israel's repentance and their acknowledgement of collective guilt in relation to the Messiah and His suffering in ch.53. This must always be the order, repentance followed by restoration. The details of this chapter are not to be interpreted allegorically, or at a purely spiritual level; though there are a number of spiritual lessons to be learnt. When Israel as a nation repents, then these prophecies will be literally fulfilled. Three main subjects are dealt with:

1. Israel's Suffering
2. Israel's Sovereign
3. Israel's Salvation

ISRAEL'S SUFFERING

a. Barrenness — v1

Keil and Delitzsch apply this verse specifically to Jerusalem, and describe it as an 'allusion to her depopulation as a city.' The same Hebrew word is used in Gen.11.30; 25.21; 29.31, where it means the physical inability to bear children. There will be a reduced birth rate amongst Jewish women during the tribulation period. Though this is an act of judgment upon Israel, yet in another sense it is an evidence of the mercy of God, in that He will spare them from some of the sufferings they might otherwise experience, Matt.24.19. Often God's judgments upon His people are turned into blessings. The nation will also be unfruitful spiritually, with little in them to bring pleasure to God. Are we spiritually fruitful for the Lord?

b. Universality — v3

In this verse we read of cities which will have been made desolate. This implies universal destruction and a rise in the international death toll. Thus Israel will not be alone in her suffering. It brings to mind the Nazi holocaust of World War II with mass graves and hundreds of bodies being thrown in on top of each other. That will seem as nothing during the tribulation when whole cities will be devastated and left without inhabitant, Rev. 6.4,8.

c. Shortness — v7 — 'a small moment'

This will be a period of unparalleled suffering, yet in comparison to the coming glory it will be very brief, in fact just seven years. In Isa.61.2, it is but a 'day of vengeance' as opposed to an 'acceptable year.' Such will be the onslaught of judgment and loss of human life that if the time were lengthened there would be no one left alive on the earth, Matt.24.22. The judgment of God in these circumstances is graciously swift.

d. Abandonment — v7 — ‘have I forsaken thee’

What an awful experience to be abandoned by God! In Ex.25.8 the Lord commanded Moses to build a tabernacle so He could dwell in the midst of Israel, but they will not enjoy this privilege in the time of their trouble. Instead of God's face shining on them, it will be hidden, Num.6.25.

c. Wrath — v8

Zeph.1.15 describes this dark period in the history of the world in terms of brevity, it being but a day, and that a day of wrath. The suffering of Israel will be as a result of God's anger with them because of their continual sin and rebellion against Him.

f. Completion — v9

After the flood God promised never again to destroy every living thing as He had done, Gen.8.21. In much the same way the tribulation is never to be repeated for Israel. Once it is over, it is over forever. In v9 we have Scriptural authority for viewing Noah and his family passing through the waters of judgment as an anticipation of Israel passing through the great tribulation. In Gen.5.24 Enoch is a type of the church being removed before the day of wrath.

g. Instability — v11

We have pictured here a wild and stormy sea. The ‘tempest’ expresses the fury of Gentile powers in their satanically inspired determination to crush Israel out of existence. And the Jews will be tossed in that tempest with no sure foundation for their feet to rest upon. New Testament believers can also experience instability in their lives through doubt, Jms.1.6, and exposure to false doctrine, Eph.4.14.

h. Comfortlessness — v11

The same root word for ‘comfort’ in this verse is also used to describe David sending messengers to console Hanun following the recent death of his father, 2Sam.10.3. The Jewish nation will not experience such a blessing during that time. Israel will not only suffer from others, but on the whole they will be neglected and ignored in their suffering. That is to say the great majority of the world's population will not want to have anything to do with them. They will be comfortless, Matt.25.41-43. This is a general statement, because there will be a few who will actively succour Israel in their distress, but not many. They are described as sheep in the judgment of the nations in Matt.25.

i. Fearfulness — v14

During the Millennial period of bliss, there will be no fear, however, by implication, there will be much fear for Israel during the day of her trouble. This was one of the threatened punishments on disobedience found in the Law of Moses, Lev.26.36-37. If they obeyed, they would have courage and boldness beyond belief, and their enemies would flee before them. If on the other hand they disowned the regulations contained in the law, they would tremble before their oppressors.

j. Attack — v17

They will be attacked from all sides. This will be physical (‘weapon’), verbal (‘tongue’), and headed up in the person of the anti-Christ (‘the waster’) who, along with all other world powers, will have been raised up by the Lord, Rom.13.1.

Summary:

The tribulation is an outpouring of the wrath of God against sin. Because we have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour we will never have to experience these judgments. We have been saved not only from the Great White Throne judgment and subsequent torments in the lake of fire, but also from this intense period of suffering which will be experienced by all the inhabitants of the world, 1Thess.1.10. The bright and living hope which should burn in every Christian's heart is the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ to take us to be forever with Himself. Despite this we must be acutely aware that sin in our lives does grieve the heart of God and we must make every effort to avoid it. *—to be continued (D.V.)*

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (84)

by Colin Raggett (Botswana)

I was born in Manchester, England into a Christian home, the second of five children. My parents were, and still are, in assembly fellowship. I had the privilege of being taken to meetings — including Sunday School — from an early age and I learnt my need of salvation whilst still very young. I distinctly remember the night when only six years of age I asked my dad what I needed to do to get salvation. That night I received the Lord Jesus as my Saviour.

At 13 I realised the necessity of obedience to the Lord in baptism and thereafter was received into assembly fellowship at the Cheetham Gospel Hall in Manchester which was to be my spiritual home for the next 18 years. There I learned the importance of getting involved in all the activities of the local assembly including the Sunday School, open-air work and door-to-door visitation. I well remember the first gospel meeting I was asked to share. My brother David and I, together with another young man, shared the meeting. Looking back to that occasion I remember being very nervous but a start has to be made somewhere and I would encourage young men to give themselves to the gospel early on in their Christian lives.

My parents were always hospitable and we regularly had the privilege of having many of the Lord's servants staying in our home. Many of them encouraged my brothers and me to study the Scriptures for ourselves and to get involved in gospel outreach.

In my late teens I benefited tremendously from weekly Bible Studies led by Norman Mellish who was at that time in the Wythenshawe assembly in South Manchester. In these studies we, as young men, were positively encouraged to contribute and gradually convictions about Divine truth, in particular the truth of the local assembly, were formed. We look back with deep gratitude to brethren like Norman who were prepared to give of their time to help us in spiritual things. He was also, at that time, having tent meetings each summer in the Manchester area and he encouraged us to get involved in that work.

One of the preachers who came to the Cheetham assembly for meetings was Phil Harding, who has had, and continues to have a major spiritual impact on my life. That was how I first met his eldest daughter Christine who, in the goodness of the Lord, was to become my wife. Christine and I began to attend the Bible Readings at the Bicester assembly in Oxfordshire, England. It was there that many brethren had an influence on our lives but notably our beloved brother, the late Robert McPheat to whom we owe a great debt, and whom we miss greatly. Even though he was very busy with the Bible Readings and the Gospel Meetings he took an interest in the young people and was willing to answer questions and to give advice on matters of importance to us at that time. Some of us even sought him out early in the morning and he was always available. The wise counsel he gave was used of God to help us to continue on in the Christian pathway. It was during those years that we also began to help evangelists in Scotland during some of our holidays from work, especially John Campbell and Jack Hay and in later years Robert Revie. These brethren taught us, by example, how to reach precious souls and how to teach children the Word of God. The things we learnt then we are still using daily in the Lord's work here in Botswana.

Christine and I were married in 1977 and the Lord blessed us with three children, Andrew, Beth and Philip. In the goodness of the Lord each got saved as the years went by and all three are now in assembly fellowship. They have been, and still are, a tremendous help in our work for the Lord here in Botswana (though Andrew and Beth are currently in England for university studies).

In the early 80's the Lord began to speak to us about missionary work and we began to invite missionaries into our home, arranging meetings for them in the locality and writing to a number of them personally. One day we received a letter from a brother whose interest in missionary work is second to none. He had been in our home a few days earlier and in our conversation together we had mentioned that we felt we were at a crossroads in our lives. He wrote wondering if maybe the Lord was calling us to serve Him overseas. From that day on that thought never left my mind although it was years before we actually stepped forth in faith.

During this period I was working as a surveyor and I began to be increasingly aware of the need to devote more of my time to gospel work. I therefore asked my boss to allow me to work four days a week for a 20% reduction in salary. He refused because we were too busy. Within a week, while attending a professional conference, I met a Christian architect who was a partner in a Manchester firm (where the partners were all believers) and who was looking for someone to join their surveying department. Just that very morning one of their surveyors had handed in his notice. I mentioned to him about the possibility of a four-day week and on hearing the reason why I wanted this, he immediately arranged an interview and I was offered the job. This was really of the Lord and the job proved to be very flexible. The firm was very kind and I learnt a great deal there. The extra day each week enabled us to commence children's meetings in our home and gave extra time for visitation work in which I was joined by Andrew Renshaw of the Wythenshawe assembly who later married my sister Alison (now serving the Lord in Brazil). We also had the joy of holding series of children's meetings in the assembly.

In 1986 the Lord led us to move to South Manchester and we were warmly received into fellowship in the local assembly at Wythenshawe. The Lord began to show us that He wanted us to serve Him in a full-time capacity and made that clear in a variety of ways. One of the unforgettable experiences at that time was the day we attended the annual conference at the assembly at Blackpool, England. The Lord exercised one of the preachers to speak about Barnabas and the call to full-time service. Both Christine and I left that conference without any doubt that the Lord wanted us to serve Him in a full-time capacity. I felt convinced that He wanted us to serve Him overseas but we knew that it was important for us both to be sure of this before taking such an important step. Christine was not sure about overseas service at that time, so we continued to wait upon the Lord and we proved that waiting time is not wasted time as things were learnt during that period that have been invaluable.

The Lord used numerous Scriptures to speak to us and to guide us and once we were both clear that He wanted us to serve Him overseas we then asked Him to bring the country of His choice before us. Over a period of months during 1990/91 the Lord continually brought the land of Botswana before us — a country we knew little about at that time. We began to find out as much as we could about the country. It became unmistakably clear that Botswana was the place of the Lord's choice for us. The next step was speaking to our elders whose prayer support and wise counsel have always been greatly appreciated. They gave us the right hand of fellowship and made our exercise known to the assembly. At the same time we wrote to the Lord's servants in Botswana telling them of our exercise.

At that time Andrew, Beth and Philip were 12, 10 and 7 respectively and we were concerned about their schooling in Botswana. A visit there in 1991 helped to convince us that home-schooling was what the Lord wanted us to do. We knew that this would be a major commitment on Christine's part but through it we have been able to keep them with us and they have opened doors in the service of the Lord which have been very encouraging. The elders of Wythenshawe invited the brethren at Cheetham (now Prestwich) to join with our commendation which they were happy to do. We were commended to the grace of God for the work of the Lord in October 1991 on the same day as my sister and brother-in-law Alison and Andrew Renshaw. We left for Botswana in January 1992. We began language study with Jim Legge who very kindly also arranged for Andrew, Beth and Philip to have lessons and we are very grateful for the time he spent with us and his patience too! We continued working in Serowe until October 1999 when we moved to begin a new work in the village of Palapye where we now live.

The prayers of the Lord's people for our blessing and preservation would be valued greatly.

WAITING FOR

- ... the consolation of Israel, Lk.2.25.
- ... the adoption, Rom.8.23.
- ... the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1Cor.1.7.
- ... Christ, 2Thess.3.5

by H. A. Barnes (England)

“... the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me,”

Gal.2.20

*Bearing His cross, He goes
Thronged by His many foes
To dark Golgotha, for so is God's will.
Thorns wreath His precious head,
The Lamb to slaughter led,
Saviour of sinners, ascending yon hill.*

*Nailed are His hands and feet
And in the burning heat,
Behold Him suffering, God's only Son.
Sinners upon Him stare
Tis love beyond compare,
There to remain till the work is all done.*

*Darkness descending,
Holiness unbending,
Full is the cup that my Saviour must drink.
Silent, the angels' praise
As in His sore amaze,
He in the depths of the mire doth sink.*

*Sin's fearful magnitude,
Sorrow and solitude,
Jesus alone bears my curse on the tree.
He, as my Substitute
Forsaken and destitute,
Suffers for sins that were committed by me.*

*Judgments increasing,
Relentless, unceasing,
Bruised by Jehovah, instead of me.
Vengeance is falling,
Deep unto deep calling,
Sinless, He bears all my sins on the tree.*

*Vict'ry at last complete,
Final His foes' defeat,
“Finished” with conquering voice He doth cry.
Sin's fearful debt is paid,
Bowed now His holy head,
Almighty in weakness, behold Him die.*

*Him in the tomb they lay
Till the appointed day
When God, His Son from the dead brings again.
Now filling Heaven's throne
His worth we gladly own,
Ever and ever this Jesus shall reign.*

R. Reynolds (Bleary)

Good Tidings from Heaven

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

In this materialistic age of keeping up with the Joneses, many are satisfied with the mere semblance of wealth. It matters not how deeply they may be in debt to secure a certain image, just as long as they appear to be wealthy. They may not actually 'own' what they proudly display, but this is offset with the sheer delight they experience when others seem to envy their lifestyle and comment on their car or house. Semblance for them is more important than substance and appearance than the actual. Such people are really living a lie and very often the cost of keeping up appearances takes its toll. The 'tyranny of things' can become a millstone around the neck and cause much sorrow. The clear warning of Scripture is, "They that will be (desire to be) rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1Timothy 6.10.

We must never delude ourselves into thinking that if I look like a Christian, or dress like a Christian, or try to act like a Christian or be in the company of Christians that I will eventually become one and maybe God Himself will fail to notice the difference and allow me into Heaven. "Be not deceived" — the soul-searching, penetrating gaze of the Omniscient will find you out and nothing but reality will count. In Matthew 22 we read of a man who appeared at a wedding feast without the requisite dress. He appears to have managed to slip through without anyone detecting his falsehood but there was one he could not deceive and in verse 11 it states: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:" Those all-seeing eyes immediately noticed the glaring lack. Hebrews 4.13 reminds us that "... all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Why accept a replica when you can have the genuine article? Why endure the misery of pretence when you can have God's great salvation and become one of the blessed beneficiaries of the work accomplished by Christ on the Cross? Obtain today the greatest blessing that anyone can possess and rejoice to know that you have eternal life and will forever be in Heaven. Not all the wealth of all the world could purchase this salvation but you can accept it as a free gift from a bountiful God who delights to bless and desires the salvation of all men. To this end the Lord Jesus "gave Himself a ransom for all" 1Timothy 2.6. Gratefully and gladly do we often sing, "None need perish, *all* may live for Christ has died."

Rid yourself of all sham and acknowledge to God what you know yourself to be, a guilty, helpless sinner in need of mercy and forgiveness. Confess your sins to Him who is willing to pardon and by trusting the Lord Jesus Christ and accepting that what He did at Calvary has met all the righteous demands of God and therefore has met all your need, enter into the blessedness of peace with God.

Then you will *be* a Christian, for "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life:" John 3.36 You will then be assured that you have something that God Himself cannot find fault with for He it was who gave His only begotten Son and He it was who designed the great redemption plan that involved the death of His only Son that you might live eternally. Do not allow anyone to convince you that there is an alternative, but confidently trust Him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: *no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.*" Christ "was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." 2Corinthians 8.9.



ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

Contents

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY BIBLE CLASS

by J. Riddle

TESTIMONY IN TROUBLOUS TIMES

by I. McKee

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT IN A MODERN WORLD

by W. A. Boyd

THE GARMENTS OF THE SAVIOUR

by Jim Flanigan

DEVICES AND WILES OF SATAN

by C. Jones

ISAIAH 54

by J. Gibson

SOVEREIGN GRACE

by W. W. Fereday

MY CONVERSION AND CALL

by L. Wells

GOOD TIDINGS FROM HEAVEN

ASSEMBLY TESTIMONY

This is a bi-monthly magazine for the propagation of the Word of God and thus the encouragement and edification of the people of God.

Editor: B. Currie

Correspondence relative to Editorial matters should be addressed to:

The Editor, 49 Glenburn Road, Dunmurry, N. Ireland, BT17 9AN.
Telephone (028) 9062 1343.
E-mail: AT@bcurrie.free-online.co.uk

Secretary/Treasurer : William Neill, 109 Lurgan Road,
Banbridge, Northern Ireland, BT32 4NG.
Telephone (028) 4062 4238.
E-mail: AT@wmneill.free-online.co.uk

Committee : Tom Armstrong, Thomas Beggs, Ronnie Johnston,
James McKeown, James Moore, Roy Reynolds.

————∞0∞————

This magazine is supported solely by the freewill offerings of the Lord's people. No member of the committee, author of articles or any other person connected with the magazine receives payment, remuneration or gratuity of any kind. This magazine is not to be sold.

Friends wishing to support the work of this magazine may kindly forward their practical fellowship to:

William Neill, at the above address.

Please make all monetary contributions payable to "Assembly Testimony Magazine." Money orders and Bank Drafts please make payable in U.K. currency.

Please address correspondence for new orders, back numbers, changes of address and cancellations to William Neill.

You can help us by stating the NUMBER of copies required, with NAME and ADDRESS, including POSTAL CODE, IN BLOCK LETTERS, please.

© This magazine is copyrighted. For permission to reproduce any article or part thereof please contact the Editor.

Assembly Testimony Bible Class

by J. Riddle (Cheshunt)

DEUTERONOMY

6) **“THE LORD OUR GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH US”**

Read Chapter 5

Following his historical review in ch.1-3, Moses highlights lessons from Israel's history in ch.4-11, and in ch.4-5, he deals with the implications of the covenant made with Israel at Sinai. Ch.4 stresses the great privileges of Israel, and warns against throwing them away by idolatrous practices. Ch.5 spells out the actual details of the covenant, which involves the ‘Ten Commandments.’ It also emphasises the role of Moses in the giving of the law. See v5, 22, 27, 31. The chapter can be analysed as follows:

- (1) The terms of the covenant, v1-22;
- (2) The terror of Israel, v23-27;
- (3) The teaching of Moses, v28-33.

1) THE TERMS OF THE COVENANT, v1-22

“And the Lord called all Israel, and said unto them, **Hear**, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may **learn them**, and **keep**, and **do them**.” The Lord Jesus emphasised the necessity to “hear” and “do” in Matt.7.24-27, and James urges us to be “doers of the Word, and not hearers only,” 1.22. Do notice how James continues here. If we are “hearers only,” we deceive ourselves. Familiarity with the Word of God, and exposure to sound Bible teaching in the assembly, is important, but we must put it into practice. Sadly, some assemblies have enjoyed the best possible ministry, and still crashed on the rocks of internal strife and dissension. Notice:

A) The parties to the covenant, v2-3

“The **Lord our God** made a covenant with **us** in Horeb. The **Lord** made not this covenant with our fathers (the patriarchs), but with **us**, even **us**, who are all of **us** here alive this day.” Compare 29.10-15. For “alive this day,” see 4.1,4. The covenant made with the patriarchs was on the basis of grace. It provided unconditional promises. But the covenant made at Horeb was on the basis of law, and promised conditional blessings. See Ex.19.5-6. The connection between the two covenants is spelt out in Gal.3. However, the words, “not ... with our fathers, but with **us**,” stress their responsibility. Privilege determines responsibility. Just read 4.7-8 and 32-38 again. We have even greater privileges, and participate in the **new** covenant, Heb.10.15-18. Do remember that “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required,” Lk.12.48.

B) The mediator of the covenant, v4-5

“The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, (*I stood between the Lord and you at that time*, to shew you the Word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount), saying, I am the Lord thy God.” Moses acted as mediator, and Paul refers to this in the New Testament. The law “was ordained by angels in the hand of a *mediator*,” Gal. 3.19. The Lord Jesus is ‘the Mediator of the new covenant,’ Heb.9.15 JND. See also Heb.8.6, 12.24, 1Tim.2.5. A mediator stands between two, and communicates with both. Moses is described as “the man Moses,” Num.12.3, but the Lord is “the man Christ Jesus,” indicating that He is both God and man. The words, “The Lord talked with you face to face,” v4, are explained in v5. He spoke to them through Moses their representative. Moses himself enjoyed intimate fellowship with God. See Ex.33.11, Num.12.8.

C) The reason for the covenant, v6

“I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” As their Redeemer-God, to Whom they owed everything, He had the right to their obedience and unswerving loyalty. We too have been “bought with a price,” 1Cor.6.19-20. Our obligations are clearly set out in 2Cor.5.15.

D) The requirements of the covenant, v7-22

The ‘Ten Commandments’ follow, When the Lord Jesus was asked, “Master, which is the greatest commandment in the law?”, He replied, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets,” Matt.22.35-40. The Lord Jesus was citing Deut.6.4-5, and Lev.19.18 respectively. We can divide the ‘Ten Commandments’ with reference to the Lord’s teaching here:

a) “The first and great commandment”

The first five commandments flow out of the overall command, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.”

i) “Thou shalt have none other gods before me.” Believers take note. It still holds good. See 1Jn.5.21.

ii) “Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth (see 4.16-19): “Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God (see 4.24, 6.15).” The second commandment does not repeat the first. ‘People might worship mythical beings, or the sun or moon, without the use of idols.’ (*Believer’s Bible Commentary*). Idolatrous children will suffer the same judgment as their fathers. Notice that idolatry is nothing short of hatred for God.

iii) “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.” The solemnity of this commandment is emphasised in Lev.24.10-16. The man who ‘blasphemed the Name, and cursed,’ JND, was stoned to death.

iv) “Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee ... and remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence ... therefore the Lord thy God commandeth thee to keep the Sabbath day.” The Sabbath was therefore to be a day of rest and remembrance. It is connected here with *redemption*. To pollute the Sabbath, Isa.56.6, was therefore to treat their deliverance and redemption lightly. In Ex.20.9-11, the Sabbath is connected with *creation*. In Ex.31.13-17 it is connected with *sanctification*. It was the day on which God's people were to remember their unique relationship with Him. To ignore the Sabbath was insulting to God, and so is *our* forgetfulness and disregard. We must not allow anything to invade our appreciation of His claims upon us as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The Sabbath was to be “a delight,” Isa.58.13-14, and devotion to the Lord should be “a delight” for us as well.

v) “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee (see 4.40), and the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” In marriage, a man leaves “his father and his mother,” Gen.2.24, but he does not cease to honour them. Sadly, the Jews had an ‘opt-out’ clause when it came to supporting parents. See Mk.7.9-13. The Lord Jesus honoured His mother by making provision for her, Jn.19.26-27.

b) “The second is like unto it”

The five remaining commandments flow out of the overall command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” This is confirmed in Rom.13.9-10.

vi) “Thou shalt not kill.” The Lord Jesus did not come to “destroy the law, or the prophets ... but to fulfil,” Matt.5.17. The word “fulfil” here does not mean ‘to obey,’ but ‘to give the fullness’ of the law. See JND margin. He disclosed the inner meaning of the law. Hence, “Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.’ Similarly with the next commandment:

vii) “Neither shalt thou commit adultery.” “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” This was the first stage in David's adultery. See 2Sam.11.2-4. We must beware of the ‘second look,’ and of the ‘second thought.’

viii) “Neither shalt thou steal.” Notice that grace goes further than law: “let him that stole, steal no more: but rather let him labour ... that he may have *to give* to him that needeth,’ Eph. 4.28.

ix) “Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.” We can “bear false witness” in a variety of ways. A ‘half-truth’ is as bad as a downright lie. Abraham was guilty in this way. Compare Gen.12.11-13 and 20.2, with 20.11-13. Creating a wrong impression is as bad as a downright lie. Remember Ananias and Sapphira.

x) “Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, of his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.” There are certain things that we *are* to covet! See 1Cor.12.31, 14.39. The New Testament applies this commandment in a variety of ways. See, for example, Acts 20.33, Col.3.5, 1Thess.2.5, 1Tim.6.10, Heb.13.5.

The comment, “and he added no more,” probably means that ‘these commandments were such a complete summary of the requirements of the covenant, that no other law needed to be added. All other law was a mere interpretation and expansion of these basic principles.’ (Quoted in the *Believer's Bible Commentary*). The material on which the commandments were written, stone, is deeply significant. See also 2Cor.3.7. Wood and metal are pliable, but not stone! Just like the law! We are not “under law,” whether for justification or for sanctification, but we *are* to display the “righteousness of the law.” This is produced by the indwelling Spirit of God. See Rom.8.4.

2) THE TERROR OF ISRAEL, v23-27

“And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness (for the mountain did burn with fire), that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; and ye said, Behold, the Lord our God *hath shewed us His glory and His greatness*, and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire: *we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.*” When the dispensation of law began, the glory of God was accompanied by fire. But when the dispensation of grace was inaugurated, divine glory was displayed in an entirely different way. See Jn.1.14.

When the law was given, the voice of God was terrifying. “Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us: if we *hear the voice of the Lord our God any more*, then we shall die.” See Ex.20.8-19 and Heb.18-19. But when the Lord Jesus came, “all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth,” Lk.4.22. “The common people heard him gladly,” Mk.12.37.

3) THE TEACHING OF MOSES, v28-33

God was well aware that His people were unreliable. They had said “speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it.” But He knew their hearts: *O that there were such an heart in them*, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” His instructions to Moses remain unchanged for us: “Stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.” Moses was God's appointed leader, which reminds us that all who lead God's people must spend time in the Lord's presence, listen to His voice, receive instructions, and communicate them to others. The Lord Jesus “ordained twelve, that they should be *with Him*, and that He might *send them* forth to preach,” Mk.3.13-14. But we mustn't limit this to preachers! We *all* need to be “with Him,” and we must *all* obey His word. “Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you ... Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God commanded you, and that it may be well with you.”
—to be continued (D.V.)

Our highest honour from God may be our deepest reproach from men.

J. Douglas

Testimony in Troublous Times

by Ian McKee (Northern Ireland)

Paper 16 — THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS WHAT THEY SEEM TO BE (Ezra Chapter 9:1-3)

The events recorded at the close of Ezra ch.8 brought successfully to an end another phase of Ezra's life and service. There was much cause for gratitude to God and, no doubt, Ezra and his companions were greatly relieved to have delivered to Jerusalem the entire deposit they had received in Babylon. All seemed to be well. But it wasn't. There was sin among the Jewish colony in Judah. Over one hundred civil and religious leaders were guilty of breaking the law of the Lord.

Between the events recorded at the end of Ezra ch.8 and those in ch.9 and 10 is an interval of approximately 4 months, see Ezra 7.9b and 10.9. At the end of that period the princes came to Ezra saying "The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations ... For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass," Ezra 9.1,2.

It is significant that the princes confess this sin. There is evidently a guilty conscience where, before, there had been complacency. But why did they confess the sin to Ezra? Surely it is because he was the same person in Jerusalem as he had been in Babylon: "for Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments," Ezra 7.10. The new dynamic was the presence of an active, teaching priest with moral authority.

Until this moment Ezra was not personally aware of this sin. This is clear from his extreme reaction: "And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished," Ezra 9.3. Yet the consistent, consecutive, applicatory teaching of the servant of God had probed deep into lives and practices that were at variance with Scripture. Sufficient place must be given to the public reading of God's Word, to the expounding of the doctrines of Scripture and to their practical application. Blessed by God, Ezra's accurate exposition revealed unholiness.

Had Ezra been teaching from Leviticus? If he had, he could not with good conscience pass over, "Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron ... they shall not take a wife that is ... profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy unto his God ... and he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured ... he shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife," Lev.21.1-14. If Ezra was teaching from Deuteronomy he could not ignore the admonition in relation to the peoples of the land, "Thou shalt make no covenant with them ... neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor

his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly,” Deut.7.2-4. Similar teaching is given in Ex.23.31-33 and 34.11-17. This truth was also reiterated in Joshua’s last counsels, Josh.23.12,13. And if there be any lingering doubt on the part of any as to Divine displeasure in this regard, the record about Solomon makes sobering reading, IKg.11.1-11.

It should, of course, be noted that marriage to foreigners was not absolutely forbidden in the Old Testament as, for instance, Boaz had a foreign wife. However, it was expressly forbidden in the context where, actually or potentially, it compromised faith or practice. There is no doubt here as to this action being illicit, “for they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands”, Ezra 9.2. It should, however, be noted that the text at this point does not accord the “daughters” the title “wife”, but uses the word employed in Ezra 5.15 for taking vessels to the Temple. Similarly Ezra does not employ the usual word for “marry”, which has already been used in Ezra 2.61, but a word that signifies “giving a dwelling to.” These, therefore, were women taken up, as vessels, for an unlawful, and hence unholy, purpose.

It has, of course, to be acknowledged that had Joshua, in his day, driven out these heathen nations from the land, Ezra’s generation would not have been so imperilled. But it is not sufficient simply to blame earlier generations for present conditions, even though in this case they are blameworthy for contributing to 1,000 years of risk! And the risk is significant. For when the people of God sin, very often they sink deeper than the ungodly.

It has also to be recognised that Ezra’s generation was desensitised to the seriousness of what had taken place. After all, they are close relatives who are involved! It therefore required the uncompromising ministry of an “outsider” to be brought to bear. It was well that Ezra did not adopt the prevailing, complacent mindset. Rather he was prepared to teach in Israel statutes and judgments. His ministry was both timeless and timely. While all ministry has value, that which meets present or, better still, anticipates need is more precious in its rarity and beneficial effect.

It is quite possible that there may have been a scarcity of single women in the Jewish community. An insufficient number of females may have come from Babylon and there may have been no exercise to redress the balance. But that neither sanctions nor excuses sin! We note the sad commentary, “yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass,” Ezra 9.2. It was the people from whom most was expected who set aside the Divine standard. It was they who first succumbed to Satan’s ancient objective to mingle the holy and profane and compromise a separate people.

Position and possessions, if not held in trust for the Lord, can often lead to pride, pitfalls and perversion. It would be a tragedy to have influence with the people of God and then to lead them on a wrong course. And, later, to be specifically named by God for so doing!

—to be continued (DV)

Christian Conduct in a Modern World

by Walter A. Boyd (South Africa)

Paper 24

No.6 — THE CONCLUDING SALUTATIONS (Continued)

(C) Admonition and Encouragement (Romans 16.17-20)

As the epistle draws to a close there are two lists of names: those in Rome, to whom greetings are sent, v1-15; and those in Corinth, who join Paul in sending greetings, v21-23. Sandwiched between these lists is a little section that is full of instruction, v16-20, in which Paul endeavours to preserve the unity and usefulness of the saints in Rome. The admonition and encouragement of this section is divided as follows:

1. Avoidance of division-makers (v17,18);
2. Appreciation of the Apostle (v19);
3. Assurance of Ultimate Triumph (v20).

1. Avoidance of division-makers, v17,18. The apostle sees how easily the adversary (Satan) could cause havoc among the saints. United testimony is always a target for Satan — saints who are united in the work of God will quickly draw the attention of his and his agents' destructive energy. Paul alerts the Christians by showing them the Conduct, v17, and Character, v18, of Satan's emissaries, describing them in such clear terms that any right thinking Christian would want to avoid them at all costs. It is interesting to notice how Paul writes to saints who are not the fruit of his own labours in the gospel. He does not assert his apostolic authority; but urges them in the same way as in 12.1 and 15.30, "I beseech you, brethren." The expression "mark them" has a dual meaning — they should observe them closely, to mark them out from others. Those who are to be avoided can be identified by scrutiny of their character and conduct.

A) They can be recognised by their Conduct, v17. Their conduct reveals their character, and is revealed by what they leave behind.

i) Dissensions, or differences of mind. The word for 'divisions' is used here by Paul, and also in 1 Corinthians and Galatians. In each case it is closely associated with the works of the flesh. In spite of their good words and fair speeches, these men are energised by the flesh. In the assembly, nothing good ever comes from the exercise of the flesh; and any denial of the truth of God will result in division among His people.

ii) Difficulties, or stumbling blocks, in life. It is solemn to think that, in almost every case, wrong teaching leads to wrong living. After the false teachers sow their evil doctrines, there is very often a sad harvest. Some who are duped by false teaching are shipwrecked, and find it very difficult to recover to any level of usefulness for God. The divisions and offences are "contrary to the doctrine

which ye have learned.” It is surprising to notice that in this epistle, which is so full of doctrinal truth, the only occurrences of the word ‘doctrine’ are here and in 6.17.

B) *They can be recognised by their Character, v18.* Their actions have revealed their character which, when examined, confirms they are not true servants of the Lord. They slavishly serve their own selfish desires. Anyone who causes division contrary to the doctrine of Scripture is pursuing his own fleshly desires. The character of these men is such that they are prepared to deceive the simple in order to fulfil their own wishes. They are characterised by “good words” and “fair speeches.” ‘Good words’ here has the idea of polished speech. In 2Cor.9.5 this same word is translated as “bounty,” and as “blessing” in Rom.15.29. Their pleasant and plausible addresses promised blessing and bounty to any who were prepared to listen and imbibe them. Paul shows how different the reality is!

C) *They are to be avoided, v17.* When men like this appear, the only safeguard is to give them a wide berth. Those whose actions cause a faction or a fall among the saints are to be noted and avoided. There may be a tendency to turn a blind eye, or ignore their activities. This may give temporary relief from their divisive actions, but it leaves room for them to spread their evil among those saints who are unaware of their malicious intentions. Watchful elders should be able to identify men like this, and take sufficient action to safeguard the flock by refusing them a platform. This sanction is not because of some trifling matter, but effected after careful consideration before God, and executed in light of the Judgment seat of Christ. It is sad that there are such issues, the mention of which is enough to stir up trouble and cause factions among the Lord’s people. Any man, knowingly pursuing the propagation of doctrines that do this, should be considered as falling within the remit of these verses.

2. *Appreciation of the Apostle, v19.* In this verse the Apostle shows that he deeply appreciates the genuineness and transparency of their faith and obedience.

A) *Their Obedience has been Displayed.* He states that all men have noticed their spiritual character. That is, there is a general acknowledgment by all who know them of their sterling quality. Whilst this fills Paul with joy, it causes him to raise a warning: if misplaced, their implicit obedience could be their downfall. If false teachers were to gain their ear, their strong point (their obedience) would become their weak point! It is sad when evil men with ulterior motives mislead genuine and sincere saints. False teachers can usually discern among the saints those who are liable to be misled, and they will focus their attention on such.

B) *The Obedience that is Desired.* Paul desires that they would be skilled enough to show expertise in good things; that is, in anything that is good in nature. To be “simple” concerning evil has the idea of being innocent, or not having experience or knowledge of anything that is contrary to Divine or human laws. “Simple” occurs only three times in the New Testament; and we note with interest that Matt.10.16 brings the themes together in the expression “wise as serpents and harmless (simple) as doves.” We need to understand that, for the Christian, the greatest preservative in godliness is to maintain an ignorance of the world and its evil ways. There is no benefit in being informed in evil. Had Eve maintained a

resolve to be wise unto what is good and ignorant of what is evil, she would have found it easier to resist the temptation of Satan.

3. *The Assurance of Ultimate Triumph, v20.* The Apostle draws this section to a close by directing our hearts towards the ultimate triumph of the saints. Satan is active now, through the activities of these disrupters whom Paul has mentioned; but the God of Peace will eventually gain the victory. The activities of the evil one will soon be brought to an end, and the saints are encouraged to maintain a stand in separation from evil until that moment of victory. V20 has in mind the direct and complete fulfilment of Gen.3.15. At Calvary the head of the serpent was dealt a death-blow by Christ; and that bruising in its full extent will be manifested to the universe in the day of His Millennial Coronation. That Millennial scene will be preceded by the coming of the Lord for His own. “Shortly” carries all the implications of the great doctrine of imminency, associated with the Rapture. There are no prophecies that await fulfilment before it can take place, and when it does take place it will happen quickly. When the God of Peace commences His programme of action against the Adversary, He will move swiftly. Here, “God of Peace” stands in stark contrast to those who create unrest and division among the saints. In that day of the dominion of Christ, the saints will have a place of glorious exaltation, with Satan underfoot — which is where a serpent ought to be! Until that day of victory, grace will be needed to continue steadfastly. The Apostle appends a little closing salutation to this section, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” Fresh grace will meet the needs of each new day and experience, as we await the day of redemption that will herald the end for Satan and all his helpers.

—to be continued (D.V.)

THE GARMENTS OF THE SAVIOUR

by J. Flanigan (Northern Ireland)

4 — GARMENTS OF MERCY

She only touched the hem of His garment,
As to His side she stole,
Amid the crowd that gathered around Him,
And straightway she was whole.

Oh, touch the hem of His garment!
And thou too shalt be free;
His saving power, this very hour
Shall give new life to thee!

So His people delight to sing as they make known the Gospel of His grace. Garments of mercy indeed, when the touch of a poor woman in distress brought immediate relief to her. It has ever been, to evangelists, a most apt picture of the simplicity of salvation through faith in Christ.

For twelve long years this woman had suffered. Like the prodigal of the parable, she had “spent all,” Lk.8.43; 15.14. He, however, had spent all in pursuit of pleasure while she had spent all in search of healing. Twelve years of vain searching had left her helpless, hopeless, and penniless. Men had failed her. Physicians could not help, and although Luke the Doctor does not say so, others tell us that after many visits to many physicians, and spending all that she had, she “was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,” Mk.5.26.

That must have been a happy day in the home of Jairus, the ruler of the local synagogue, when his wife was safely delivered of her child. It was a daughter, a little girl whose name we do not know. How Jairus and his wife must have watched the child grow. They would see her development year by year as time sped past. But it was just when Jairus’ daughter was born that this poor woman began to be ill, and as that little girl lived in the joy of young life and grew towards womanhood, the woman was slowly dying. Her very life-blood was haemorrhaging away. Mark calls it her plague, Mk.5.29. Life was difficult and death was certain, and men could not help. She had begun to die just when Jairus’ daughter began to live. What weariness must have been hers. What constant sorrow. It is easy to envisage many tears.

What a sad but true picture she is of the sinner. Incurably helpless! Life slowly but surely ebbing away with none to help. Facing death daily without hope, and no true enjoyment of life even while it lasts. It is a miserable condition, and more so when there is no human aid available or possible. Perhaps a realisation of this hopelessness is the sinner’s first step on the way to the Saviour.

Then one day there came a glimmer of hope into her misery. She heard of Jesus, Mk.5.27. What did she hear? Did they tell her that He had healed Peter’s wife’s mother of a fever? That he had cleansed lepers? That He had made a palsied man walk again? That He had delivered men from demons and cured many others of different diseases? Did they tell her that He had miraculously calmed a storm on the Sea of Galilee with just a word? And did she now begin to hope that if Jesus could do all this, then perhaps He could calm the storm in her little life? How she must have longed for the day when He would come to her district. She would go to Him for the healing that earthly physicians could not give her.

That glad day came, and, no doubt filled with hope she made her way out to see Him. But the crowds were thronging Him. He was there, somewhere in the midst, He who was her only hope. The crowds must not keep her from Him. People must not rob her of the possibility of help. With determination she made her way through the crowd, pressing nearer and nearer to Him. “If I may touch but His clothes,” she said, “I shall be whole.” It was the simple childlike faith of an anxious heart, convinced that what He had done for others, He could do for her.

At last, within reach now, she stretched out her hand, touched the hem of His garment, and her confidence was rewarded with immediate healing. Her plague was gone. Her issue of blood was stanchd at once. It was a touch of faith and the Saviour turned to face her. “Who touched Me” He asked. It was a strange question, the disciples thought, for the multitudes were thronging around Him in the street, all pressing upon Him. Many were touching Him. “And sayest Thou, Who touched Me?” they asked. But someone had touched Him with a touch that was different! Of

course He knew it all, but He was encouraging the woman to come and tell. She did. She came with fear and trembling and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth. She must have told the whole story of her plague, her long fruitless search for healing. She boldly “declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately,” Lk.8.47. How this woman would have appreciated those words

Oh, leave it all with Jesus, drooping soul!
Tell not half thy story, but the whole:
Worlds on worlds are hanging on His hand,
Life and death are waiting His command;
Yet His tender bosom makes thee room:
Oh, come home!

In kind and tender tones Jesus comforted her. He assured her that her faith had made her whole and He bade her to go in peace. What a story she had to tell now! How the neighbours would listen! Twelve long years of debilitating illness. Disappointment after disappointment from so many doctors. And now! Just a touch of faith, and she was healed.

This border of His garment, was it adorned with the ribband of blue in accordance with Num.15.38? That had been commanded for the children of Israel “throughout their generations”. All Jews wore them and it is therefore reasonable to assume that the hem of the Saviour’s garment was indeed laced with that ribband of blue. It was a distinguishing feature of Jewish dress. Is this indeed how that woman of Samaria recognised that He was a Jew?

The purpose of the ribband of blue was that the children of Israel might look upon this deep blue in the fringes of their garments and be reminded of the heavenly origin of the commandments of the Lord, Num.15.39. This woman touched the hem of the garment of Him whose whole life was a fulfilment of the law. But is this not grace indeed, that the very garment which bore the symbol of the law became to the touch of faith a garment of mercy? So have we reached out to Him in faith, and though “cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,” mercy has received us in Jesus, and we have peace.

To Him we say, “All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia,” but how particularly fragrant they were to the woman who touched.

—to be continued (D.V.)

WHAT IS THE LORD TO ME

<i>In my sin,</i>	<i>The LORD is my salvation.</i>	<i>Ps.27.1.</i>
<i>In my weakness,</i>	<i>The LORD is my strength.</i>	<i>Ps.18.2.</i>
<i>In my hunger,</i>	<i>The LORD is my shepherd.</i>	<i>Ps.23.1.</i>
<i>In my dangers,</i>	<i>The LORD is my shield.</i>	<i>Ps.28.7.</i>
<i>In my victories.</i>	<i>The LORD is my song.</i>	<i>Ps.118.14.</i>

by H. A. Barnes (England)

Devices and Wiles of Satan

by C. Jones (Wales)

PAPER 3 — THE DEVIL SAID UNTO HIM

At the Lord's baptism by John, God had spoken saying "Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased," Lk.3.22. Immediately after this, the Lord "being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness," Lk.4.1. He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Satan often takes this approach and attacks a believer immediately after that believer has experienced a particular blessing or moment of joy in the Lord.

It was impossible for the Lord to sin. He "knew no sin," 2Cor.5.21; "did no sin," 1Pet.2.22, and "in Him is no sin," 1Jn.3.5. The temptations served to prove that the Lord would not and could not sin. There was nothing in Him to respond to Satan's temptations and he could say "the prince of this world ... hath nothing in me," Jn.14.30. The very suggestions of Satan hurt and offended the Lord's sensitive Holy Being and "in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb.2.18. As a result of His experiences and His exposure to the wiles and devices of the Devil, "we have not an high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," Heb.4.15.

Adam and Eve were tempted in a garden, in a scene of plenty and beauty. The Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam, was tempted in a wilderness. Luke recounts the temptations in the order in which they affected the Lord, the perfect Man, in His body, soul and spirit. He had fasted for forty days and was hungry, and Satan suggested to Him that He should use His power, as the Son of God, to turn stones into bread, Lk.4.3. The Lord answered Satan by saying "It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God," Lk.4.4. He quoted from Deut.8.3. This temptation can be compared with that of Eve when she saw that the tree was good for food, Gen.3.6, an appeal to the "lust of the flesh," 1Jn.2.16.

After this, Satan tried to persuade the Lord that he would grant Him rule over the kingdoms of the world, with their power and glory, if the Lord would worship him. Satan now tried to appeal to the "lust of the eyes," 1Jn.2.16, as he did when Eve saw that the tree was "pleasant to the eyes," Gen.3.6. We read in Rev.11.15 that in God's perfect timing, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." In Ps.2.8 we read that the Father said to the Son "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." The Lord would, at the time ordained, receive world dominion from His Father. In the meantime He would humble Himself, serve and suffer. The Lord would not do anything contrary to the will of His Father and would certainly not worship Satan.

In response to this temptation the Lord quoted from Deut.6.13 and commanded Satan, with divine authority, saying, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," Lk.4.8. The Lord uttered the same words, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," when Peter was used by Satan to try to persuade Him not to go to the cross, Matt.16.23. In this temptation Satan offered the Lord power and glory as he had offered Eve when he said "ye shall be as gods," Gen.3.5. It was the Father's will that the suffering should precede the glory and nothing could prevent the Lord from going to the cross and thereby paying the penalty for the sin of the whole world.

Using methods which are outside the revealed will of God to attempt to achieve ends which are in accordance with the will of God constitutes disobedience and sin. The end cannot justify the means in such circumstances.

In his third attempt, Satan tried to persuade the Lord to do something spectacular, to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. Satan can use Scripture, for on this occasion he misquoted Ps.91.11,12, claiming that God would use angels to prevent the Lord coming to any harm, thereby proving that He was the Messiah. Satan went as far in quoting as "He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee," Lk.4.10, but omitted the words "in all thy ways," Ps.91.11.

God's promises cannot be applied to acts which are not in accordance with His will. The Lord quoted Scripture, Deut.6.16, in reply to this temptation, addressing Satan once again with divine authority, saying "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," Lk.4.12. Satan was suggesting to the Lord that He could achieve fame and glory by doing something spectacular and ostentatious. Once again Satan failed completely to cause the Lord to take any action which was outside the will of God His Father. This temptation corresponds with that of Eve when she saw that the tree was "a tree to be desired to make one wise," Gen.3.6. It was an appeal to "the pride of life," 1Jn.2.16.

In His victory over Satan in the wilderness, the Lord proved His complete dependence on God and His absolute dedication and perfect submission to the will of God. The temptations proved the Lord's perfect fitness to be the Saviour of the world and He "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," Lk.4.14.

We have to fight against temptations and we are enjoined to "take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Eph.6.17. The Lord used the written Word of God to defeat Satan and therefore we must study it, fill our minds and memories with it and use it, in the power of the Spirit, in times of temptation.

It is essential for the believer to study the Scriptures to learn the will of God and the wiles and devices of Satan, who will subtly try to lead us into sin through making suggestions to which the old sinful nature will respond. Those of us who have been saved by grace have the Holy Spirit dwelling within, but we also have the old sinful nature which will be with us as long as we are alive on this earth.

Satan uses his wiles and devices to appeal to the old nature, making sinful suggestions for the gratification of physical desires (the lust of the flesh); the

acquisition of material possessions and power (the lust of the eyes), and for achieving success and fame (the pride of life).

God's commands, the things He tells us to do and the things He tells us not to do, are given in love. They are all for His glory and our eternal blessing. We are told to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," Col.3.16, and we must do this, resting and rejoicing in believing that "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?", Rom.8.32.

—concluded

Isaiah 54 — Israel's Restoration

by J. Gibson (Scotland)

PAPER 2

ISRAEL'S SOVEREIGN — v5

a. Creation — 'Thy maker'

Although God has created everything. He made and formed Israel in an individual way, Isa.44.2. This can be seen in the birth of Jacob through the Lord's intervention, Gen.25.21, and the emancipation of Israel from Egyptian bondage leading to their formation as a nation.

b. Affection — 'Thine husband'

God loves Israel and has a special place in His affections for them, much in the same way a man would love his own wife. We see here also God's grace in transcending the narrow limitations of the law; for under law, Israel could never again be reunited to God in a marriage relationship, Deut.24.1-4, Isa.50.1.

c. Authority — 'The Lord of hosts'

All the angelic hosts of heaven await God's bidding. Swiftly and wholeheartedly do they obey His every command, Matt.26.53.

d. Condescension — 'Thy Redeemer'

The word for redeemer is *goel*, which means a kinsman redeemer. Included in this term is the idea that God would become man, in order that He could be related to us, to become our Kinsman, for only then would He be able to redeem us and buy us back, Heb.2.14. This principle is illustrated in the story of Ruth and Boaz.

e. Holiness — 'The Holy One of Israel'

Because of God's holiness, He is to be feared and glorified by all who approach Him, Rev.15.4. This attribute of deity is manifest in all His words, Ps.145.17.

f. Dominion — 'the God of the whole earth'

The first time a similar title is used in the Scriptures is when Israel first entered their land, Josh.3.11. Therefore it is very appropriate for it to be used again here when Israel will be restored to her divinely given possession. Then the rule of the Lord Jesus will be universal, Ps.72.8.

g. Sufficiency — Jehovah

This name of God is used more frequently in the Old Testament than any other, appearing 6,823 times. It comes from the Hebrew word *havah*, meaning 'to be,' and therefore refers to One who is eternal in His existence, and entirely self-sufficient.

h. Plurality — 'the God'

This is a plural word, so even in the Old Testament we have very clear allusions to the Trinity.

Summary:

It is important for us to know what our God is like. We do live in a country and time when there is ignorance both in society at large and also among the Lord's people as to the character of God. When the Lord Jesus Christ prayed to His Father He described eternal life as a knowledge of 'the only true God,' Jn.17.3. We cannot turn to the universities of the world to give us such instruction. In a sinful world there is only one source of such knowledge, and that is the inspired Word of God being made to our understanding through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

—to be continued (D.V.)

Sovereign Grace

by W. W. Fereday

Grace in God is sovereign, or it is not grace at all. Once admit the thought that blessing for any of us was purposed because God saw in advance that some men would believe in His Son, while others would not, and the great fundamental principle of the Gospel is endangered. Merit is thus introduced, for what could be more meritorious in God's sight than to believe in His beloved Son in the face of a hostile world? The truth is that the all-seeing God knew in advance that the whole history of man in the earth would be calamitous, and it gave His great heart of love infinite pleasure to plan counsels of grace for blessing. These councils were framed "before the foundation of the world, Eph.1.4, and thus before any of the vessels of His grace had done either "good or evil," Rom.9.11.

It should be as easy, yea, more easy, for men to believe God in whatever He may say to them than to believe one another in the matters of every day. But, alas, where God is concerned, there is an unhappy bias, and men "pull away the shoulder and stop up the ear," Zech.7.11. Thus the Lord said to those around Him, "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life," Jn.5.40. And because of this rebelliousness of the human will, He said on another occasion, "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him ... Every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me," Jn.6.44-45. Obviously, if men *will* not come, they cannot come. The stubborn will must thus be divinely broken ere any can be saved. We have striking examples of this in Nebuchadnezzar and Saul of Tarsus; and in a lesser degree surely both the present writer and our readers are examples of this also.

Our Lord illustrated His teaching very simply in the familiar parable of the Great Supper in Lk.14. At the moment He was guest in the house of a Pharisee. This man's table was well filled, some who were invited even competing for the most honourable seats. When the Lord remarked upon the difference between God's feasts and man's, someone present (charmed with the gracious thought of the really needy being entertained), exclaimed, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." This drew forth the parable, wherein our Lord exposes the sorrowful fact that when God invites, surely to the enjoyment of infinitely more wonderful things than man can provide, no one is willing to come at all! The house must thus remain empty, and divine bounties never be enjoyed, unless some loving compulsion is employed. The servant of the parable (not to be confounded with the servants of Lk.19.13) can be none other than the Holy Spirit, who is now present on earth graciously disposing sinners in every quarter to be "wise," Ps.2.10, and listen to "reason", Isa.1.18, and be blessed. Surely we have all experienced His gracious influence. Undoubtedly all who believe the Gospel exercise faith, but even the faith they exercise is "the gift of God," Eph.2.8,9.* The Epistle to the Ephesians, here quoted, emphasises the divine side of things more particularly.

Is God's great "whosoever" weakened by His counsels of electing grace? In no wise. The God whom we know, so blessedly revealed to us in Christ, would not mock His creatures, however evil they may be. All who will may come. No longing soul has yet been refused, nor will be while the Gospel day continues. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out, Jn.6.3. So spake the Lord Jesus when surrounded by multitudes who cared more for the perishable than for the imperishable. To any possible objector to God's ways of grace, but one reply is possible, "Friend, I do thee no wrong ... Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" Matt.20.13,15.

God has chosen multitudes of souls for eternal blessing. This is so plainly taught in Holy Scripture that it cannot be disputed. The truth may be too profound for us to fully understand, but this need not surprise us in the light of the apostle's exclamation in Rom.11.33: "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Election is individual and personal, notwithstanding the printers blunder in 1Pet.5.13. (Peter's wife is meant in this passage, not the Church). Certainly God did not cast eyes on the choicest specimens of humanity. 1Cor.1.26-29 is explicit as to this. "Look at your calling, brethren," says the inspired writer. The foolish, weak, base, and despised deliberately chosen by God in the sovereignty of His grace! The Corinthian former thieves, adulterers, drunkards, and idolaters, 1Cor.6.11. Amongst believers in Crete were found some who could only be described naturally as "liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons," Tit.1.12. Speaking of Jews and Gentiles in general who were now God's saints, the apostle says, "we were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," Tit.3.3. What an unlovely picture! What unpromising material! Yet in all these the perfections of God will shine out eternally, for all these "He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-

born among many brethren,” Rom.8.29. No flesh can possibly glory in His presence; “he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,” 1Cor.1.31.

We are indeed “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” 1Pet.1.2, but it is not His foreknowledge of *what we would do* (i.e., some day believe in His Son), but of *what He would do* in the riches of His grace. Dealing with another subject, the Lord once said to His disciples, “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,” Jn.15.16.

Yet it would be false to affirm that because some were divinely chosen for blessing, others were sent into the world marked out beforehand for wrath. This would be a slander upon the blessed God. In Rom.11, the great chapter which deals at length with the theme of divine sovereignty, we read of “vessels of wrath” whom God has “endured with much long suffering,” and we read they are “fitted to destruction;” while of the “vessels of mercy” we are told that God has “prepared them unto glory.” The wicked, by their love of evil and persistent rejection of grace, are fitting themselves for destruction, while others, believers through grace, are divinely prepared for glory. Certainly none could prepare themselves for such a destiny.

Those who will find themselves outside at the last will have themselves to blame for their ruin, for they “loved darkness rather than light;” while those who will throng “God’s bright halls of song” will ascribe all the glory of their salvation to the Father who purposed the blessing, and to the Son who by the great sacrifice of Himself made it righteously possible.

N.B. - Since writing the foregoing, the following from the pen of my old friend, W. Kelly, has come before me: “It is important to observe that the apostle does not speak of a passive or naked foreknowledge, Rom.8.29, as if God only saw before what some would be, and do, or believe. His foreknowledge is of persons, not of their state of conduct; it is not *what*, but “whom” He foreknew.” Let every reader weigh these words carefully.

* Many who accept the Sovereignty of God in Salvation, believe the gift in Eph.2 is the totality of being “saved through faith.” - Ed.

YE ARE

- ... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, 1Cor.6.11.
- ... the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal.3.26.
- ... sons, Gal.4.6.
- ... complete in Him, Col.2.10.
- ... God’s husbandry ... God’s building, 1Cor.3.9.
- ... the temple of God, 1Cor.3.16.
- ... the temple of the living God, 2Cor.6.16.
- ... no more strangers and foreigners, Eph.4.30.
- ... sealed unto the day of redemption, Eph.4.30.

by H. A. Barnes (England)

MY CONVERSION AND CALL (85)

by Leslie Wells (Canada)

I began life in San Felipe, Venezuela, where my parents, Mr. and Mrs. W. John Wells, had gone as missionaries eight years before my birth. From early life my brother, Stanley, and I were taught the Scriptures and learned that we needed to be “born again” to be ready for heaven. I remember clearly Mr. William Williams preaching from his two-ways chart. He pointed to hell, vividly painted on the chart, and left on my heart a certain fear of that place of woe.

However I have no memories of ever being troubled about my soul until I was 14 years of age. By this time we were living in Northern Ireland as my mother’s health had broken down in Venezuela. It happened this way. We were taken now and again to Gospel meetings in Annesboro, Co. Down where the late Mr. Robert Curran was preaching alone. The first night we attended he preached on Rev.6, the pouring out of judgments on earth after the Lord had raptured the Church to heaven. He spoke with such conviction and power that for the first time I was troubled and fearful that the Lord would come and I was not ready. My trouble faded as we were not able to attend more than once a week through lack of transport.

From then onwards, I was troubled often about my soul in various Gospel meetings. However, I developed a spirit of procrastination and I thus arrived, still in my sins, to 20 years of age. I had become a heavy burden to my parents.

In the second year at University in Belfast, I had just started staying near the University with some assembly Christians. They were in the fellowship of the Kingsbridge assembly. Almost simultaneously, two brethren arrived there to hold Gospel meetings. They were the late Mr. Tom Campbell, then a man in his eighties, and Mr. Harold Paisley. Pressed by my parents, I started attending and felt the weight of their solemn preaching. I was a little troubled from the first night. Later on, my brother started coming to the meetings as he was now staying elsewhere in Belfast where he was working. We attended right to the last night of that series when many souls had professed faith in Christ. The very last night, a Sunday evening, my brother came out and told my mother that he had been saved during the preaching. That came to me as such a shock that I hardly knew where I was! I had considered that he was more taken by the attractions of the world than I was and that he was therefore further from salvation.

The next morning I heard the news that a young man, slightly older than I, had been suddenly killed in a motorcycle accident. He lived in the village of Dundrum, (near Newcastle, Co. Down) outside of which we had lived since coming from Venezuela. I knew him somewhat and indeed I had seen him the morning of his death. This news really turned my world upside down, coming right after my younger brother’s salvation. I knew then that God was speaking to ME. The awful thought pressed itself on my consciousness that this was the last time the Lord would call. It was now or never! The university term was over but I had continued

studying. So I suspended all my studies. I refused to read anything that would distract me from what now filled my thoughts, "How could I be saved and know it?"

Our brethren Mr. Campbell and Mr. Paisley announced three nights of ministry at Kingsbridge hall for those who had just professed faith in Christ. I drove my mother to those meetings. The third evening Mr. Paisley preached the Gospel. I had been going through a dark experience before that but what I heard increased my trouble. Going home in the car, there raged in my soul an awful battle. The question that haunted me was, "What will I do now? I would need to settle this matter." Half way home I came to the decision that I was going to put salvation first and go to Gospel meetings until I was saved even at the expense of losing my scholarship at the University though absence. At last my soul became more important than everything else. On reaching home, I told my mother about my desire for salvation and for the first time in my life I broke down. She tried to help me with many Scriptures, but I was in the dark. I remained in my room until the weekend reading the Bible, tracts and the hymn book without any ray of light to illumine the path to Christ. It was then that I realised more clearly my state and danger and desired to turn from the old life.

We attended another Gospel meeting at Kingsbridge the following Lord's Day with the same two preachers. After the meeting I ventured to stay behind to speak to them. They spoke tenderly to me and presented many Scriptures. I was still in the dark. After some time though I saw the way of salvation. However the next morning I took the Bible and closed the door of my room. I kneeled down at my bed and opened it at Jn.1. I started reading slowly from verse one. When I reached verse 10 or 11, I stopped, realising I had not understood very much. I glanced over at the right hand column of the Bible and my eyes fell on verse 29, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." That verse had never meant much to me in the past. I had, however, heard it applied in the Gospel. In an instant I understood the meaning of the work of Christ on the cross. I realised it was for sin. It was for me! It was so simple and clear that I did not remember having seen the work of Christ like that ever before. I grasped for the first time — He is my Saviour and I received Him at that moment. I bowed in prayer; moved with thankfulness that provision had been made for me even before I was born. I felt my heart go out in worship for the first time in my life. That was the 10th June 1957.

My parents impressed us early with one thought. The only thing that counted, now that we were saved, was to live for the Lord who had died for us. Early I had the desire to serve the Lord in some way. After graduating from the University in 1958 I visited France, as one of my main subjects of study had been French. I stayed in the Paris area with an aged missionary couple, Mr. and Mrs. William Taylor and helped in the distribution of tracts. Three years later I had to stay in France for two months in connection with my employment as a teacher. I was back in 1963 to assist in tract distribution. They expressed their interest in seeing me come to France to labour in the Gospel. I had a certain response in my heart to that thought, but I would have liked to know the Lord's will. I am of a hesitant nature and feared taking a step without being sure that it came from God.

I had a developing interest in speaking in public since 1958. I held a series of

Gospel meetings in a tent in 1964 with my brother. The next year a brother working for the Lord in Brazil asked me to consider coming to Brazil. I felt the Lord was calling me but now I was unsure as to where — France or Brazil. Looking back on it, I realise that I ought to have been before the Lord in deep exercise for guidance. However my work dominated too much of my time and I was still undecided. After some time I sensed that I had missed responding to the Lord's call. I felt so discouraged and disappointed.

By 1970 we had been ten years in the assembly at Derriaghy. I had visited France several times with various brethren including my father. We distributed tracts and I still maintained an interest but not as ardent as before. The elders at Derriaghy asked me to join them in responsibility and discharge the work of the correspondent. I wondered now if that was what the Lord wanted me to do. But in 1974 my father decided he wanted to move to the Dromore, Co. Down area and as I lived with my parents, I had no choice but to leave Derriaghy. We settled in the little assembly at the Lough Road, near Dromore. I gave myself to all the assembly meetings, engaged frequently in Gospel preaching on Sunday evenings and took an interest in spiritual activity.

Desires began surfacing again such as I had had in the sixties. I was before the Lord, at times with a deep burden. I told no one of these thoughts. But in 1978 I visited the south of France where Mr. Dennis O'Hare laboured in the Gospel. I had been there before and I had known him since 1967. One day I accompanied some visitors from Wales and brother O'Hare to visit another Welsh brother who was working in the Rhone valley among Moslems. The latter started asking me if I had any interest in giving myself to the Lord. I admitted that I did have in the past, but did not divulge my more recent thoughts. He started to speak to me very directly and pointed out the need to be exercised definitely before the Lord. He really stirred me up and on returning home I came more often before the Lord as to what He would have me do. I told no one, as I did not want either to be pushed or to be hindered by a human hand.

My exercise was increasing and I came in 1980 to bear a greater burden than I ever had experienced. I was asking the Lord to show me whether He really wanted me to go full-time into His work. On a previous visit to France brother Dennis O'Hare had asked me if I had never considered coming to France. I did not tell him that I had often had longings to go to that land. I gave him no answer, as I desired guidance that I was convinced came from God.

In October 1980 a brother working in another land came from Canada with encouragement to seek someone who might be interested in the Maritime provinces. One day my father and I were invited to a brother's home to be with this missionary brother for the evening meal. The latter started to describe the need in the Maritimes. He looked over at me and said pointedly, "I think, brother, you should think about this need." I knew no one present had the slightest inkling as to my exercise. This set me thinking whether this was not the Lord speaking to me. I had longed to work in France but could find no clear confirmation.

The missionary later that evening told me of New Brunswick, where work was starting among the Acadian French. He encouraged me to think seriously about it.

And I did. I did not want to repeat what happened before, though I had not considered Canada as I felt I could not stand the cold. The next morning my reading was in 2Cor.3. In ch.2 the question was asked, "Who is sufficient for these things?" That morning I read in 3.5, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves ... but our sufficiency is of God." That Word from God spoke loudly to me. I should leave the question of how we would cope with the climate in the Lord's hands. Thus I was enabled to contact the brethren in Canada and express my interest. I then spoke to the brethren in the assembly at the Lough Road. They agreed with the exercise, though disappointed that I would not be staying and helping them locally. Thus I gathered assuredly the Lord was calling me to a field I would never have chosen myself. Delays in receiving a visa put me much to the test and it was even suggested that I should go into the Lord's work in Northern Ireland. However my exercise was to put what knowledge of French I had to use in the Lord's service. Finally in 1985 the door opened for me to come to New Brunswick to work among the Acadian French. Three other assemblies locally joined the Lough Road assembly in the commendation. Our first meetings were in Tracadie where I now live.

The prayers of the Lord's people for the progress and preservation of the work will be much appreciated.

Proverbs 6.16-19

By John Glenville (England)

*Discord among brethren God hates,
False witness abominates;
Proud look, lying tongue,
Hands, heart, feet, that go wrong,
Discord among brethren God hates.*

*An ornament quiet and meek,
The spirit adorned does God seek;
Of great price in His sight,
It illuminates by its light,
An ornament quiet and meek.*

*Deportment demeanour and dress,
On these the believer lays stress;
In the eyes of the world
Raise your banner unfurled,
Deportment, demeanour and dress.*

*Dear saints be ye humble in heart,
Humility plays a grand part;
Noble honesty, too,
So be loyal and true,
Dear saints be ye humble in heart.*

Good Tidings from Heaven

SPIN DOCTORS

Recently, new terms have been creeping into the English language and soon become familiar with their frequent usage. The title of this article is an example. Spin doctors are usually civil servants or other non-government officials whose task, by fair means or foul, is to produce image and gain political advantage for a certain party. They inform, or more often misinform, to gain their objectives and by massaging the truth and manipulating statistics, attempt to persuade a supposedly naïve electorate to support the party or cause they represent. We are constantly bombarded with information and propaganda and more often than not, truth is the casualty.

Not so with God. He does not employ questionable tactics to persuade. He clearly and unambiguously states the truth, desirous that men would seriously consider the facts and make a wise choice. In every situation men are freewill agents and none will be compelled to accept a place in Heaven against his or her will.

The greatest of all spin doctors must be the devil and his deadly work is supported by agencies, both infernal and human, whose sole objective is to fool the masses, resulting in the damnation of myriads who could and should have been in Heaven.

It has been so from the very dawn of creation when, in the Garden of Eden, our fore-parents were persuaded to disobey God, having been falsely told by Satan that God did not really mean what He said, when He uttered those unmistakeably plain words, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2.16,17. Satan sowed doubt in their minds, distorted the truth and eventually, defiantly denied the veracity of God's Word. His initial success, with such disastrous consequences, has emboldened him to try these methods again and again, with increasing success. Sadly, the blessings promised by the devil, never materialised and instead the truth of God's warning became instantaneously clear when Adam and Eve realised what they had done and tried unsuccessfully to hide from the presence of God. They were driven out of that fair paradise, to know pain, sickness, toil and tears for the rest of their lives. Ultimately they would succumb to the power of death and this sad legacy would be bequeathed to succeeding generations. Thus the humbling truth concerning us all is, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not." Job 14.1.

The lies of the devil and his relentless efforts to confuse and delude humanity have resulted in those pitiable classes of people known as atheists, agnostics, humanists, sceptics, scoffers and others who have found a 'refuge of lies' and have made it their business to dispense with the truth of God. In spite of all that, the truth of God stands firm and impregnable against all the puny assaults of men and demons. God desires your blessing, presently and eternally for He is "God our Saviour; Who will have (desires) all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of **the truth.**" 1Timothy 2.3,4.

What has the devil done for you? When did he ever display love, care, kindness or sympathy? Of the devil, the Lord Jesus said, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it." John 8.44. Are you going to listen to his deceit or will you at last be wise enough to heed the voice of God who proved His love for you, unquestionably, by sending His Son to Calvary to bear the punishment you deserved eternally. The infallible promise of God is, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." John 3.36.