

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JANUARY 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

NEW YEAR ADDRESS

To the readers of the *Gospel Standard*

The good hand of God has mercifully brought us once more to another change of the year. So in His goodness and mercy we pass safely into a new year. We leave the old year that is now passed away behind us for ever. We cannot return to it! While it may be said at times, "History repeats itself," with regard to events here below, and that on account of the behaviour of the sons of men, yet truly it is Almighty God unfolding and fulfilling His own eternal counsel and purposes. It can be truly said of our Saviour, Immanuel, in His exaltation at the right hand of God,

"His providence unfolds the book,
And makes His counsels shine;
Each opening leaf, and every stroke,
Fulfil some deep design." (H. 4)

It is a great truth that all that befalls a believer or unfolds in his life, whether pleasant or troublesome, is by the good hand of God. Therefore it must be said,

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower." (H. 320)

It is a healthy and profitable exercise to consider and ponder over many things as we pass from the old year and into the new.

If we have eternal life in its sweet exercise, we shall surely have to say, countless have been the many blessings and helps in the year now passed away. We shall also have to confess our many, and unto us, innumerable sins and failings in the past year. Can we count the many answers to prayer that we have so kindly received from the good hand of God? No, we cannot, for they have been so many. Have we not received and experienced so many deliverances, and seen so many wonderful workings from the hand of God? We have, and are bound to say that the Lord has been so very, very good to us, and that in spite of all our many

sins and provocations. If we are truly living by faith, we shall willingly say that the Lord has been so mindful of us. “Who remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endureth for ever” (Psa. 136. 23). The psalmist said, “The LORD hath been mindful of us” (Psa. 115. 12). He added, in view of the covenant with the seed of Israel, “He will bless us.” He also expressed by faith, “He will ever be mindful of His covenant” (Psa. 111. 5). What a favour indeed, if we can express the same as the psalmist without presumption: “He will bless us,” for, “He will ever be mindful of His covenant.”

As we are favoured to pass safely into the new year, it is good to reflect and consider where we are in the life of our soul. Are we pressing “toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”? (Phil. 3. 14). Are we earnestly seeking to be ready to die and to meet God?

“Pause, my soul! and ask the question,
 Art thou ready to meet God?
 Am I made a real Christian,
 Washed in the Redeemer’s blood?
 Have I union
 To the church’s living Head?” (H. 698)

The Lord’s dear servant, whom a number of our friends remember with respect and affection, Frank L. Gosden, once said that when the great change came over him in his soul, it was often with him,

“When Thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come
 To take Thy ransomed people home,
 Shall I among them stand?”

Eternity is indeed a tremendous matter, as Anne Steele penned:

“Eternity, tremendous sound!
 To guilty souls a dreadful wound;
 But O, if Christ and heaven be mine,
 How sweet the accents, how divine!” (H. 1085)

We sometimes try to speak of eternity in this way. If we take our Bible to the equator, put a pin prick representing one million years on the left hand edge of the page and then continue side by side in a line across both pages, and then place pin pricks around the circumference of the equator which is around 24,901 miles, what ever would the measurement of the years be! The thought is mind-boggling. Yet that enormous number, beyond our natural estimation, is simply not eternity! We are each heading to either an eternity of torment, or of unutterable bliss. We do well to pray to the Holy Ghost,

“Impress upon my wandering heart
 The love that Christ for sinners bore;
 And give a new, a contrite heart,
 A heart the Saviour to adore.” (H. 1008)

With such solemn thoughts in mind, as we naturally think on the year passed and now the new year and all that it will bring to us, may we be exercised in the same thoughts and desire of Moses in Exodus chapter 33.

1. “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” (verse 15). God’s dear people know that they must have God’s presence as they journey on. Knowing their own weakness, they perceive their great danger as they traverse the wilderness here below. Sin and Satan are too strong for them. They know full well that without “the angel of His presence” (Isa. 63. 9) saving them, they will not endure. The dear saints realise their great need of His support in the trials and griefs that they meet with. It is His presence that alone can cheer them and encourage them to continue in the way of His appointment for them. The Lord’s presence is known by the operation of the Holy Ghost in them, in making them wise in many temptations and troubles to abide in Him, and to besiege the throne of grace. “The angel of His presence” saves them from their sins, and also lifts them up in their times of trouble. The promise of the Lord God to be with His people is a sure promise. Even when the Lord withdraws His felt presence at times in the trying of their faith, He is still with them, although they perceive it not. The bride’s Beloved is some- times behind a wall, unseen and not sweetly felt, yet so near, just the other side. “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry” (Psa. 34. 15). Yes, His promise is sure, “For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13. 5). And again, “And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28. 20). The Lord’s presence has a sweet and sanctifying effect upon the saints, and brings them to live conformably to the will of God, and also consoles them in all their troubles. Therefore as we look back upon 2018, we can only marvel at the Lord’s gracious and longsuffering presence with us, and also over the many rolling years that have gone. Moses’ prayer is truly pertinent for us, as we journey into 2019: “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”

“In Thy presence I am happy;
 In Thy presence I’m secure;
 In Thy presence all afflictions
 I can easily endure.

“In Thy presence I can conquer,
 I can suffer, I can die;

Far from Thee, I faint and languish;
O Thou Saviour, keep me nigh.” (H. 1101)

2. The Lord also promised Moses that “I will make all My goodness pass before thee” (verse 19). Both Moses and the Israelites proved the faithfulness and goodness of God to them in fulfilling that promise, and that, in spite of all their sin and rebellion. The goodness of God, in all His faithful workings with divine skill, is past finding out. The dear saints experience it continually, and pass safely through their lives. As we look back, we can only marvel at the Lord’s goodness, His great goodness in His call to us by His grace, and visiting us, and leading us out on pilgrimage. How good to bestow upon us eternal life to believe in Him with good hope through grace. How good to lay a word of promise in our needy souls. How good the Holy Ghost is to us in making Christ precious to us, and delivering us from the “horrible pit,” and “out of the miry clay,” and setting our “feet upon a rock” and establishing our goings (Psa. 40. 2). There are many restorings of soul and renewings within as the Lord revives His work in our souls. The Lord’s goodness extends into all the details of our lives here below in all matters of our providential and souls’ safety. As we humbly view with thanksgiving His great goodness in the past, may we remember that “He is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10. 23), and therefore plead that His goodness will still go before us in all the unknown way in which He leads.

“His goodness runs an endless round;
All glory to the Lord!
His mercy never knows a bound;
And be His name adored.” (H. 498)

In His great goodness, He sometimes gives to His people “a feast of fat things” (Isa. 25. 6) in those sacred and sweet visits of His love and thoughts toward them. He gives them a little of His flesh to eat and His blood to drink as He draws near and communes with them. He so mercifully whispers a “fear not” or another word of comfort in their soul, as they journey through the troubles of this lower world. May we be graciously emboldened continually to plead for His goodness still to go before us. William Gadsby expresses:

“Goodness, immortal and divine,
The bliss of endless day,
The Lord our God will make to pass
Before us in the way.
“To keep our eyes on Jesus fixed,
And there our hope to stay,
The Lord will make His goodness pass
Before us in the way.”

“To make His saints His glory view,
And sing their cares away,
The Lord will make His goodness pass
Before them in the way.” (H. 554)

3. “I will give thee rest” (verse 14). The apostle wrote, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” (Heb. 4. 9). This rest spoken of is the everlasting rest which every true believing, seeking soul will enter into at last. After all the toils and troubles in their wilderness journey, the dear saints are under covenant promise to enter into their rest. The earthly promised land is but a type and shadow of the heavenly country above. “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14. 13). The dear pilgrims are sometimes sweetly favoured with a little glimpse within the veil of the heavenly country or holy city, and these are surely just little foretastes “of the glory that shall be revealed” (1 Pet. 5. 1) and the joy to come. Yes, the believers know the meaning of the apostle’s statement, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 15. 13). Hosea prophesied, “Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.” And again, “And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, that thou shalt call Me Ishi [my Husband]; and shalt call me no more Baali [my Lord]” (Hos. 2. 14, 16). Isaiah also cries out to Zion, “Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah [My delight is in her], and thy land Beulah [Married]: for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married” (Isa. 62. 4). So the Lord gives His dear family some sacred intimations of His love toward them while travelling here below. These bring some sweet relief and rest for their souls for a season, and lie as a promise of the glorious prospect before them, when they shall sit down at “the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19. 9). “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest” (Heb. 4. 11). The Lord then will perform His promise to the pilgrims in our day, as He promised to Moses and the Israelites in their day. “I will make all My goodness pass before thee,” and again, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

When we consider, by faith, all the way in which the Lord has led us, and also as we consider prayerfully the covenant promises, do they not concur with what ungodly Balaam was forced by Almighty God to pronounce when he owned that he had “received commandment to bless,” and declared, “and I cannot reverse it”? “God is not a man, that

He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. 23. 19, 20). The covenant promises in the gospel of the grace of God are firm and sure, because Jesus lives for ever. Therefore none can pluck the people of God out of Christ's hand or His Father's hand (see John 10. 28, 29). May such a divine statement be a firm strength and everlasting consolation to us as we survey, with some natural dismay, the present state of Zion, in such weakness, and the world about us in all its convulsion and confusion.

The present state of affairs in the visible church of God is close at home to the hearts of true lovers of Zion. The continual closing of places of worship where the gospel was once preached; easy believers with one foot in religion and the other foot in the world; the many cries made with shades of opinion and false doctrine with a "Lo, here is Christ, or there" (Matt. 24. 23); and also the strifes, divisions and self-promotion; these are all distressing to the exercised people of God. Such things are not really new to Zion in the earth. The very strict, proud and severe Pharisees, together with the light and worldly Sadducees with their false doctrines, all rose up against Christ. The Scripture states, "But the election hath obtained it" (Rom. 11. 7). Therefore may those who are truly "grieved for the affliction of Joseph" (Amos 6. 6) be of good cheer, as they seek for the Lord's work to appear, for they shall see Christ shortly and enter into the joy of their Lord. The truly exercised and sanctified pilgrims long to know more of the Lord's work in their own breast, and to see the Lord's work in their loved ones and among the churches of God. May we be encouraged to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5. 17). Do we not long for the return of the Holy Ghost in the ministry of the gospel, that the name of Jesus may be "as ointment poured forth" (Song 1. 3), and many hearts be touched? We truly long to see these things. Such exercised pilgrims have a glorious prospect before them.

In this modern, global age of communication and instant information, the dwellers in Zion constantly see and hear of all the works of darkness around them. As antichrist advances, it will give no quarter to the followers of the Lamb. May we pray earnestly for our families and young folks, that they may truly be saved, and given that grace to endure the "great fight of afflictions" that Paul wrote of to the Hebrews (chapter 10. 32). When the Holy Ghost witnessed to Paul of the persecution that was coming to him, he wrote, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy" (Acts 20. 24). He also wrote in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians of the afflictions of the faith of the gospel, "That no man should be

moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto” (chapter 3. 3). What grace will be needed to endure these things when they arise from within our own shores, for they are rife and abound in other lands where many believers are truly put to it in holding fast the profession of their faith.

We are thankful for the unanimous judgment of the five High Court judges in the United Kingdom Supreme Court on October 14th on behalf of Ashers bakery in Northern Ireland. It truly was a persecution for the faith of the McArthur family by the Northern Ireland Equality Commission, because they felt they could not support something that was contrary to plain Scripture teaching. However, we are disturbed by a report in the British Church Newspaper that the B.B.C. is determined to slant news reporting, to combat our Scriptural heteronormative culture. This taxpayer-supported news institution is propagating the overturning of the divine creation order of male and female. It is a great mercy that the Lord upholds all things by the Word of His power, and the advancing evil cannot go beyond the limits that He has ordained in His eternal counsels.

Another perplexing matter in our land, at the time of writing, is that the government is in confusion and chaos over negotiations in leaving the European Union. They seem to be in such disarray and have lost their way. The Prime Minister promoted evil policies when she came into power, but is now being held in contempt from within her own party, and has become the laughing stock of many in Europe. We appear to be destroying ourselves. This imperial nation at one time went out to conquer, and acquired a large empire. But now we are in weakness, and no more the head, but the tail. It is not because we have been invaded by another nation, but because we have left the Word of God, and are rapidly becoming an anti-Christian nation. We are reaping what we have sown. No doubt, some compromise will be struck, but we are in a weak position. May the Lord overrule all for the good of His own dear people.

The year 2018 has seen the centenary of the end of World War I, and the signing of the Armistice on November 11th, 1918. In spite of the lying propaganda on all sides, to promote a war which was claimed to be in the cause of freedom and peace, it was both an evil and a senseless slaughter of humanity by the rulers, the military and the industrial barons, and all for material advancement. Each nation sought to be the head among the nations, and was determined to put down any rivalry. J.H. Gosden once said that it was very moving to hear the hymn, “Abide with me,” being sung in the trenches in the evening. He also said that it was very solemn to him, that so many of those that sang were mown down the next morning as they went over the top of the trench. We have

read how evening hymns could be heard coming from both German and British sides as the sound floated across war-devastated terrain. No doubt, many in those days on both sides prayed and sang for protection, and also on both sides there were those who prayed for the blessing of salvation. No, it was not a war for the benefit of the people, but rather a war for the rulers. The injustice of the Treaty of Versailles was a major catalyst for the rise of the Nazi fanatics later. In September 1939, J.H. Gosden made a comment from the pulpit at Maidstone, "That at least we can say in this war, that we are fighting for a just cause, which could not be said of the 1914-1918 war."

Although we may be perplexed and grieved at all the evils and injustice going on around us, we must lay to heart the words of our great Redeemer to Pilate, the Roman governor: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18. 36). We also need to lay to heart what Jesus said unto godly Martha: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful" (Luke 10. 41, 42). Such a truth applies to all our affairs here below, whether international, national, church, family or personal. May we choose by faith that "good part" that Mary was commended by the Lord for choosing. The Lord said, that "good part" would not be taken away from Mary, which is true of every humble and believing seeker.

The most vital and important matter in our lives, is that we should be made ready to meet the Lord Jesus. May it become an increasing exercise with us each as we are favoured and spared to enter into another year. The Lord "teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psa. 90. 12). Our days upon earth are very few in the light of an immense and never-ending eternity before us.

"Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day,
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me."

Jesus said, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples" (John 15. 7, 8). The Lord give us much grace truly to abide in Him, that He may give us His abiding presence, that we may bring forth more fruit in the coming year. "But He giveth more grace" (Jas. 4. 6).

A number of dear, godly friends have passed away into their everlasting rest during 2018. Their conflict is now over, and they are "with Christ; which is far better" (Phil. 1. 23). We certainly miss their influence in the church militant, but cannot wish them back, for they "rest from their labours" (Rev. 14. 13). May the Lord mercifully support

the bereaved and favour them with the consolation that only He can give. We think of many dear friends who walk paths of great sorrow in the trial of their faith. May the Lord bring them safely through and enable them to keep their hearts and minds stayed upon the Lord their God. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isa. 26. 3). We would especially remember three dear pastors who lie on beds of languishing, and are in need of care and attention. Our dear friends Mr. Clifford Woodhouse of Bethel, South Chard, and Mr. Philip Pont of Zoar, Norwich, are being nursed at home. May the Lord strengthen their dear wives as they lovingly care for them. We also remember our dear friend Mr. Jay Stehouwer of Zion, Grand Rapids, U.S.A., in a nursing home. The Lord be very gracious to them each, and grant to them that abundant entrance into the kingdom prepared for them. The Lord will, we believe, bring all His afflicted and poor people safely through death and home to God, where "Christ is All, and in all" (Col. 3. 11).

Although old sheep are taken away and into glory, yet the Lord still has purposes of love and grace to His church. We are thankful to hear of those gracious additions to the fold of Christ. May the Lord constrain each of His dear, exercised people to follow Him in the gospel ordinances which He has ordained for His people living in this world. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16. 16), and, "This do in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22. 19).

We feel prayerfully concerned for the young and rising generation. Their lot is cast in such an evil day. May anxious and exercised parents bring them continually to the Lord in prayer, and, as helped, bring before them the Word of God, reminding them of such truths as in Ecclesiastes 12. 1: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them," and also in Isaiah 55: "Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly (margin, multiply) pardon" (verses 6 and 7).

Through the Lord's goodness, our dear, retired Editor is favoured with a measure of health and strength to continue to preach to the Lord's beloved flock at Bethel, Luton. Mrs. Ramsbottom is spared also. They both feel the increasing infirmities of age, but we understand that Mr. Ramsbottom's natural force in the pulpit is still very good. The Lord be very gracious to them.

May each of the Lord's dear servants be much encouraged to continue to "preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season"

(2 Tim. 4. 2), “whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear” (Ezek. 2. 5). May each lay to heart that truth that the Lord declared in Isaiah 55 of His own Word: “It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” May the Lord bless those churches where there is the commencing of a pastorate, and also the commencement of a prospective pastorate. “And I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3. 15).

We must acknowledge the Lord’s kind, longsuffering mercies, and for help afforded to continue. May the Lord Jesus ever be exalted in the pages of the *Gospel Standard*. We also acknowledge the kind expressions of spiritual benefit from various readers. We must give the glory to the Lord for His goodness. May the Lord be honoured in all things.

We send our sincere greetings and prayerful best wishes to all our readers, both at home and in other lands.

“Brethren, pray for us.”

Yours affectionately in gospel bonds,
Timothy J. Rosier, Editor

Maidstone

NOTHING IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD

*Sermon preached by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
on Lord’s day morning, December 15th, 1996*

Text: “For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1. 37).

None of you can really imagine the labour that a pastor has as the Sabbath once more draws near, to find the Lord’s word to bring before the people. Because God will only bless His own word. And often as the Friday and the Saturday comes, it seems as if we are toiling all night and catching nothing. But last evening, this word, with a measure of authority, rested on my spirit: “With God nothing shall be impossible.” Then immediately it took me back to a time in my life about forty years ago when I was in black despair and could see no way out, no way of deliverance. There was only one text in the Bible, and it was this, and I hung on it like a drowning man with a straw, and proved the blessed truth and reality of it: “With God nothing shall be impossible.” We have some things we have had burnt into our hearts that Satan can never rob us of.

Of course, where this word stands in Scripture is in immediate relationship with the virgin birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It was an impossibility, yet that impossibility took place. To Mary it was an impossibility; she said that it was an impossibility. But the answer was, it *is* an impossibility, but with God impossibilities do not exist. Remember, the Lord Jesus Himself said to Peter, “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19. 26). And so the angel kindly told Mary that though this was an impossibility, this impossibility would take place. Whenever we speak of the virgin birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we need to take our shoes from off our feet, for the place whereon we stand is holy ground (see Exod. 3. 5).

Often we talk about the wonderful *birth* of the Saviour. Strictly, we should speak of the wonderful *conception* of the Saviour, because the actual birth of the Lord Jesus was as natural a birth as any that ever took place. It was His mysterious conception that was a miracle. But you see the impossibility of it. It was the everlasting purpose of God that His beloved Son should come into this world, that God might become man. Now the impossibility of it all! The old Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have always been counted the greatest minds the world has ever known – of course, they believed in all manner of gods – and they spoke of the utter impossibility of any of the gods ever really becoming man. They could see with the intellect they had that this was the only way of salvation. But they said, “The thing is impossible. Gods cannot really become men.” How can God become man? How can the Son of God be born a man? The impossibility of it! How can He be born? How can He become a man, a real man, without partaking of sin, without partaking of original sin? That is the impossibility, but the impossibility took place.

He was to have no earthly father. He was to be conceived by the overshadowing work of the Holy Spirit. We can get no further than that. Mary said, “How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” (Luke 1. 34). It is an impossibility. It is beautiful language, isn’t it, and we do not venture any closer than this: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1. 35). In other words, the impossibility will take place. “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3. 16). And some of us have to say, “I love the Incarnate Mystery, and there I fix my trust.”

For salvation’s work the Saviour must be divine. He must be truly God. But He must also be man. He must be a real man. So the Son of God took our nature without sin into lasting union with His divine

Person. The sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus never existed apart from His divine Person. Now there is an indissoluble union there. It is in the same nature now glorified for ever that He appears in heaven this morning. We believe “the God shines gracious through the Man,” even in heaven this morning. But Joseph Irons puts it well: “Man to suffer, God to save.” “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” Blessed be God that the impossibility took place, otherwise you and I would have been lost and ruined to all eternity.

“With God nothing shall be impossible.” Of course, also this word does touch the birth of John the Baptist as well, because the angel had just said, “Behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren” (Luke 1. 36). So it also touches the birth of John the Baptist to an aged mother. It is interesting that a similar word to this is also bound up with a remarkable birth. I mean God’s word to Abraham and Sarah: “Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (Gen. 18. 14). That was the promise of a birth, an impossible birth, the birth of Isaac, the heir of promise, when Sarah was ninety years old. You see the impossibility of it! Now here we have it: “With God nothing shall be impossible”; and there in the book of Genesis: “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” The birth of Isaac, the birth of John the Baptist, aged Sarah, aged Elisabeth, the impossibility. But, “With God nothing shall be impossible.” And one thing stands out very clearly: that nothing can ever stop an heir of glory being born. If there is a child of God bound up in the covenant of grace, written in the book of life, then no power on earth or hell, no impossibility, can stop that vessel of mercy being born.

There have been many remarkable occasions of this over the years and in the history of the church of God. Let me just briefly mention the most remarkable and the strangest of all. One of the most honoured ministers the church of God has ever known was Ralph Erskine. But Ralph Erskine’s mother was not only dead, but buried, well before Ralph Erskine was born. So it seemed. She died and the burial had taken place. It was in a vault, so her body was laid there open, and the avaricious sexton noticed she was wearing a valuable ring, and decided to take it. He went there at the dead of night. It is a gruesome story. He could not get the ring off, so he took a knife. When the corpse let out a scream, the sexton fled, and after some time the woman, who was not dead but in a trance, came round and was able to stagger home, and banging on the door, wakened her husband, who was amazed. It was after that that Ralph Erskine was born. If there is a vessel of mercy to be born, there is no power in earth or hell can stop it.

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.” So this remarkable word is bound up with the birth of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,

and then with the birth of John the Baptist. But it makes us think of the new birth. O the impossibility, you would say, of this one and that one ever being born again of the Spirit of God, ever being called by grace. But, "With God nothing shall be impossible." If the Lord has a purpose of mercy to this one sunk in the ruins of the Fall, "as far from God as sheep can run," however impossible the case is, when the appointed time comes in covenant purpose, that one is born of the Spirit and called by grace. "For with God nothing shall be impossible." Think of Manasseh, the chief of sinners. Read that dreadful account of the most wicked of all the kings in the Old Testament, his vileness, his wickedness, his cruelty. He made the streets of Jerusalem to run with blood. That is the way the Holy Ghost described it: he made the streets of Jerusalem to run with blood. There you have an impossible case. But, "With God nothing shall be impossible." The time came when, under the afflicting hand of God, he was brought to bitter repentance and he enjoyed forgiveness.

"That sacred flood, from Jesus' veins,
Was free to take away
A Mary's or Manasseh's stains,
Or sins more vile than they." (H. 914)

"For with God nothing shall be impossible." Look at the dying thief. There is an impossible case. He has lived his life in sin and has come right to the end of his life. We talk about the eleventh hour. Well, it is the midnight hour, and it is very clear from comparing the gospels that when he was crucified he was still as hard and dead and impenitent as he ever was in his life, because both of the thieves reviled the Lord and Saviour. Now, "With God nothing shall be impossible." The appointed hour, the appointed moment has come, "not to propose but call by grace." Now can it really be true, to hear him rebuking his fellow thief? "We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23. 41). Who taught him his sin? Who taught him the innocence of the Saviour? And then that prayer: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom" (Luke 23. 42). Who taught him that this dear, dying Man was the Lord? Who taught him He had a kingdom? Who taught him He could give it? Who taught him that this wonderful Man could hear and answer prayer? "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23. 43). O what wonders free grace has done!

"For with God nothing shall be impossible." I hope you do not misunderstand me here, but sometimes I think there is almost a greater impossibility than such a case as Manasseh and the dying thief. What do I mean? Well, I mean this boy, this girl, you perhaps look at them and

you cannot see a visible flaw in them. They have always been kind and gentle and good. They have never caused their parents any distress. Yet the impossibility of it that such an one as this should be sighing with deep repentance, mourning over the vileness of their hearts, confessing their sin, crying for mercy! I sometimes think that is a greater impossibility that such an one as these should be brought to feel their sin. But look back in your life, the time when you were born again, and don't you see the impossibility of it? But, "With God nothing shall be impossible."

There is another impossibility, and blessed be God it takes place: not just that sinners should be born again and called by grace, but these sinners who *are* born again, who are called by grace, should be brought safely through to heaven at last. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10. 22), and only he that endureth to the end. You think of it. Look at this one, so weak, so helpless, and the pilgrimage to walk out, and indwelling sin so strong, and temptation so strong, and Satan so strong. The impossibility of this one ever coming safely through at last, but he does. That is the wonder of wonders. But then see not just this one: see the whole church of God in all ages from Adam's day to the end of time, the impossibility of them enduring, coming through every trial, every temptation. But you look at the whole, blood-bought church of God in all ages and you see the whole lot of them, one by one, being brought safely through to heaven. It is a miracle that one ever gets to heaven, but the miracle of miracles is this: that they all get to heaven, that Satan has never snatched one down to hell, not the most feeble believer.

"He'll lead them on fair Zion's road,
 Though weary, weak, and faint;
 For O! they ne'er shall lose their God,
 Or God e'er lose a saint." (H. 772)

The wonderful truth of the everlasting safety, the eternal security of the people of God! The impossible takes place.

"For with God nothing shall be impossible." But then in the lives of God's people, there are continually these impossible things. You will have them. I believe that the Lord brings His people into places where things with them are not just hard, but impossible. But He brings them there, not that they might sink or perish or be destroyed, but that they might prove that "with God nothing shall be impossible." O to have this burnt in our hearts! When you have your hard things, your impossible things, the Lord is not going to destroy you, but He brings you there that you might learn this lesson, not just because it is in the Bible, but by blessed experience: that God is the God of impossibilities. For,

“Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,
And trusts in God alone;
Laughs at impossibilities
And says, ‘It shall be done.’”

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.” Now the Word of God is full of impossibilities taking place. Just think of Israel being brought to the Red Sea, and think of the impossibility of it all. These slaves who have just fled from Egypt and mighty Pharaoh and his army pursuing them, and they are hedged in on both sides by the mountains and in front of them the impassable waters of the Red Sea. The utter impossibility of the case, the utter impossibility of any escape, the utter impossibility of any deliverance! “Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Exod. 14. 13, 14). And the utter impossibility takes place. There was nothing Israel could do. They were so helpless. There was nothing Israel *had* to do; God did it all. But there will be times when you come to the Red Sea place in your life – “when thou canst no deliverance see” – in spiritual things and in providential things. Then God is going to make Himself known as the almighty God, the powerful God, the omnipotent God, nothing too hard for Him, nothing impossible with Him. Sometimes we have to say, “It is time for Thee, LORD, to work” (Psa. 119. 126). Sometimes we have to say, “The work exceeds all nature’s power.” But to “stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.”

Just think of Gideon. He felt so weak and helpless. He said, “My family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house” (Judg. 6. 15). Yet he is able to go forth and deliver the Israelites from the hand of the Midianites. Poor Gideon shrank from it. He trembled at the impossibility of the case. There had been mightier warriors than Gideon and they could not do it. Here he is. He is not a soldier. He is a farmer’s son. “Go in this thy might ... have not I sent thee?” (Judg. 6. 14). “With God nothing shall be impossible.” God delights to perform the impossible for His people, and He delights to use the smallest, the most insignificant of means. Gideon did his best, but we have to be brought to nothing. “The people that are with thee are too many” (Judg. 7. 2). They have to be brought down until there are only three hundred. The impossibility of it, three hundred against this mighty army. “The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon” (Judg. 7. 18). We do not read that Gideon had a sword, but he had the sword of the Lord, and God was on his side and God was almighty. Israel had nothing to do but to pursue and conquer.

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.” And then think of David, little David going out against Goliath. That was an impossibility, an impossible case. You and I know the end of the story; we have always known the end of the story. David did not. This great giant, and a real giant, not an imaginary one, well armed, and a boy with five stones from the brook. “With God nothing shall be impossible.” O but wasn’t David’s religion a good one! He knew something of this already. He said, “The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam. 17. 37). Now that is good ground. “The Lord that delivered me ... He will deliver me.” I suppose David was thinking it had been impossible for him to deliver the lamb from the lion and the bear. You could not, unarmed, do such a thing. But God did the impossible then and He can do the impossible now, do it again. “The Lord that delivered me ... He will deliver me.” In other words, dear child of God, “He who hath helped *you* hitherto, will help *you* all *your* journey through.” And still there are these impossible things for you.

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.” Then think of the three Hebrew children in the burning, fiery furnace. Look at their grace, look at their religion. “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter.... Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.... But if not ... we will not ... worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan. 3. 16-18). O to have a religion like that! There is an impossibility. There is not a greater impossibility in all Scripture. That burning fire, that furnace, the heat of it was so great that even the king’s servants who came near were burnt to death. You think of Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego thrown into the fire. Now the impossibility of it! Their garments were not even singed. It seems the only thing that was burnt were the bonds which bound them. “Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?... Lo, I see four men loose,... and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Dan. 3. 24, 25). I know the divines have disputed exactly what the king meant by that. That does not matter. He saw a glorious Person. What he meant does not really matter. It was the Son of God.

“’Tis expressed in words like these:

‘I am with thee,
Israel, passing through the fire.’” (H. 758)

“With God nothing shall be impossible.” When the Lord brings you into a fiery trial, you see the impossibility of ever coming out of it. You feel sure you are going to be burnt up and destroyed in it. But, “With God nothing shall be impossible.” Unbelief looks at the fire; faith looks to God. Unbelief sees our own weakness, helplessness and sinfulness;

faith views the greatness, the sovereignty, the almighty power of God. May we be kept from looking at the things that are seen. May we look at the things which are not seen. We cannot help seeing the things that are seen, but may we look beyond them to the things which are not seen (see 2 Cor. 4. 18). “Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me” (Psa. 50. 15).

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.” And then Daniel. Again, you and I know the end of the story; we have always known the end of the story. The deliverance of Daniel. Also, do not forget these were real lions, not imitation ones. Now the impossibility of the case, that Daniel should be flung into the lion’s den and that he should come forth completely untouched, completely unharmed. “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” He who divided the waters of the Red Sea can shut the lions’ mouths. “All creatures obey His commands” – angels, devils, circumstances, ravens, lions – “all creatures obey His commands.” The hearts of all men are in His hand. “For with God nothing shall be impossible.” “Daniel, ... is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” (Dan. 6. 20). Daniel knew the answer, and I trust through mercy you and I know the answer: that God is an almighty Deliverer. With Paul we can say, “Who delivered ... and doth deliver ... He will yet deliver.” “Who delivered us from so great a death.” Well you look back, and He did, didn’t He? “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust” – it is not trust ill-founded – “in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us” (2 Cor. 1. 10). “Is thy God ... able to deliver thee?”

“Then let our humble faith address
His mercy and His power;
We shall obtain delivering grace,
We shall obtain delivering grace,
In the distressing hour.” (H. 120)

“Is thy God ... able to deliver thee?”

“His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.” (H. 232)

“For with God nothing shall be impossible.” Now this is a scripture, for some reason or other, that is so often misquoted. Usually, I do not know why, people say, “With God nothing shall be *called* impossible.” The Bible does not say that. It does not say, “Nothing shall be *called* impossible.” It says, “Nothing shall **be** impossible.” There are many

things which are *called* impossible; we call them impossible; unbelief calls them impossible; Satan calls them impossible. But, “With God nothing shall **be** impossible.”

Now the wonderful thing is this: that God is just as almighty, just as omnipotent this morning as He was in the days of Moses and Gideon and David and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and Daniel and Manasseh and the dying thief, and here, the time of the birth of the Lord Jesus and John the Baptist. “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3. 6) – unchanging, immutable in His mercy and faithfulness and everlasting love and free grace, eternally the same in His divine, almighty power. What a wonderful mercy, instead of saying, “With God nothing shall be impossible,” if through grace we are enabled to say, *our God*, our God in Christ, our God in immutable bonds that can never be broken! “This God is our God for ever and ever.” The psalmist speaks about God doing various things (Psalm 48), wonderful things. “This God is our God” – and not only our God – “our God for ever and ever” (verse 14). Well, beloved friends, may we know it and may we prove it, not just to say, “With God,” but before we go home to say this morning, “With *our* God. With *our* God nothing shall be impossible.”

CASTING OURSELVES UPON THE LORD

Extract from Lachlan Mackenzie of Lochcarron (1754-1819)

We stayed from Him so long that we now have nothing to plead by way of merit, but we plead His own righteousness.

The language of our hearts sometimes is that if we had come sooner He would receive us. This thought, however, arises from a desire to be justified by our self-righteousness. There is one way of justification for all, namely, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. If we have been great sinners, this must be our plea – at any rate, we must make mention of His righteousness, of His only. Salvation is of grace. And whatever false opinions several people may have when they examine their sins – not by the law of God, but by their own self-love and the maxims of the world around them – we must acknowledge ourselves to be sinners and to stand in need of a Saviour. We cannot pretend to extenuate our sins – conscience and the Word of God give a different account of them. Are we sinners? He is the Saviour! Are we foul? He is the Fountain! Are we in debt? He is the Surety! We cannot pay our debt, or answer for one of a thousand of our transgressions, but He is the

Propitiation, and we plead this great sacrifice. And though Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, and the beasts upon a thousand hills are not sufficient for a burnt-offering, “the Lamb of God ... taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1. 29). We might formerly believe that our own endeavours, our prayers, our alms, and our duties might recommend us to God. But now, with the poor publican, we cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” We disclaim everything but what the Lord Jesus Christ has done and suffered, and that we build our hope upon Him as the Rock of Ages – that we beg of Himself to bring us from every false foundation, to trust in Himself alone as the Author of salvation to our souls – that we desire to be found in Him, not having our “own righteousness, which is of the law, but ... the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3. 9).

He will get more glory by saving us than by destroying us.

God will be glorified in the condemnation or salvation of all men. He delights in mercy. The salvation of one soul brings more glory to Him than the condemnation of thousands. Salvation is the work of God; misery and destruction is what men bring upon themselves by sin. People can destroy, but cannot save themselves. Misery is the work of men; grace and salvation the work of God. We may tell the Saviour that our everlasting happiness will procure glory to His name, for all the ransomed of the Lord are jewels in His crown, and will reflect honour upon Him for ever – that the hosannas and hallelujahs of His people will be a greater pleasure to Him than the groans and miseries of His enemies who smart under the hand of His justice.

If He will, He can save, and we may throw ourselves at His feet to do with us what He pleases.

We are sinners and, as such, we stand in need of a Saviour. The great work of grace is to humble the soul and bring the sinner, weary and heavy laden, to Christ. We are to receive comfort in the lowest posture of humility and resignation. We deserve nothing, and God is not obliged to give us any good thing unless He chooses of His own good pleasure – anything He does is of free grace. Though He would condemn us, we cannot complain. And therefore let us tell the Saviour that we throw ourselves upon the mercy of God through His merits, and entirely resign ourselves to His will – that though He would destroy us, we adore His justice, and receive the stroke with resignation – we are sinners, and His justice would be clear – that we throw ourselves upon His mercy, for He is a gracious God – that we have murdered our souls, but that we lay hold upon the horns of the altar – that though Solomon put Joab to death at the altar, He is greater than Solomon, and a King of greater mercy – that though the crimes of Joab were too great for Solomon to pardon, our sins are not so great but His blood can wash away their filth and their guilt –

that though we tremble at His justice, we have some humble hope in His mercy – and if He would pardon our sins, gratitude would make us to devote our souls and bodies to His service.

Instead of a soft heart, we feel our hearts hard – instead of love to God, we feel enmity – instead of genuine gratitude, we feel selfishness. But He is God, and can cure us – He is our Physician, and we can tell Him our diseases.

Sin is an awful disease, and such as feel it will acknowledge that it is so of a truth. A proud, self-righteous person would be affronted to suspect his own heart was hard, that he had enmity to what was good, and that he could be capable of ingratitude to the best of beings. But what is the good of concealing our disease? Till we feel our disease, how can we apply for a cure? If a patient cannot bear to be told that his case is so bad that a physician is necessary, or, after applying to the physician, if he conceal from him his most secret and most dangerous wounds, can it be expected that he will cure him? The Saviour would cure us if we would apply to Him – but either pride on the one hand, or unbelief on the other, hinder us from looking to our hearts and lives.

Many of us are like a man who had a deep and dangerous wound in the side, and a small cut in the finger. He shows his finger to the doctor, but conceals the wound that affected his life. When asked the reason of such foolish conduct, he replies that such-and-such a man applied a plaster to it. Besides, he was afraid the doctor would ask a high fee and oblige him to observe a strict and regular diet. But when the wound begins to pain him and threatens his life, he must show it to the physician.

Such is our case. We ask pardon for what we think small sins – we say nothing to Him about our hearts and the great sin of our nature. We are afraid of mortification and self-denial, but when we feel our pain and see our misery, we must go to the Saviour – we must tell Him our disease, be it never so deep or so desperate, for there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there. Do we complain that we are dead in sin, without spiritual feeling? He is “the resurrection, and the life.” He can raise the dead sinner out of the grave, and give him life and light and joy. Let us tell Him our case and pour our souls into His bosom – let us tell Him that His healing hand can cure us – that we are afraid to look at the wound because unbelief says it is incurable – that we beg of our Physician to look at it Himself, to see if ever the like of it came under His hand before, and though this should be the case, that He is not like other physicians – that we hope He will undertake our cure – that we believe it would not defy His skill or His power to heal our disease – that we pray Him to handle our wounds, for His healing medicines can cure

every disease – that we will not believe a bad report of Him – that He can blot out our iniquities for His own sake, and that His blood can cleanse us from all sin.

As He took our nature upon Him, we may speak to Him as our elder Brother – that we appeal to His tender heart, and feelings – that we are determined to thank and bless Him whatever He does with us – that we shall wait upon Him in the use of means, till He comes with His salvation to our souls.

NEW YEAR DIARY JOTTINGS

By David A. Doudney of Bedminster

Thursday night, January 1st, 1885: The first evening of a new and untrodden year! Shall I see its close? The Lord alone knows.

“My times are in Thy hands.
My God, I wish them there.”

I would not have the ordering of my own way, oh, no; not for ten thousand worlds! “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10. 23). We had a most attentive and numerous gathering at the church, at our midnight service. I felt it indeed good to be there. I was considerably helped of the Lord, whilst speaking in His blessed and ever-adorable name! I spoke from the word, “ALL,” making a running comment upon some of the passages in which it most conspicuously appears, and showing its bearing in its varied positions, as a word of *caution, counsel* and *comfort*. I could not have desired more profound interest and attention, than was shown by that vast congregation, at that midnight hour. May the Lord crown the service with His special smile and blessing. I am under deep exercise at the present time, through the severe illness of my friend, W. Saunders. His life has for some days past been in the balance. May the Lord, in great mercy, appear on his behalf. This is my earnest and ardent cry, day and night.

Sunday morning, January 4th, 1885: The first Sabbath morning of the year! Shall I see the last Sabbath in the year? The Lord alone knows! I desire to fall into His hands. “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6. 68). Thou knowest, Lord, in spite of all I am, and all I feel, Thou art “all my salvation, and all my desire” (2 Sam. 23. 5). All short of Thee is vain, perishing, unsatisfactory to the last degree. In Thee, “I have all, and abound” (Phil. 4. 18). Yea, Thou knowest, Lord, that I can in all sincerity, testify:

“Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psa. 73. 25, 26). Oh, give a blessing, Lord, today, a new year’s gift – a special Sabbath love-token from Thine own most gracious hand, Lord. Thou didst crown the past year with Thy goodness (see Psa. 65. 11). Lord, be pleased to open the Sabbaths of this year with Thy sweet, gracious, lovely and all-refreshing smile. Amen, amen.

THE PILGRIMS’ CALLING TO BE OF “GOOD CHEER”

Extract from George Swinnock (1627-1673)

It is the most comfortable and delightful calling. Satan would represent Christians under ugly vizards [visors], and Christianity frightful, to make men loathe both the one and the other. As he transforms himself, the prince of darkness, and his ways, which are darkness, into an angel of light, and seeming light, so he endeavours to transform Christians, who are children of light, and their holy ways, which are paths of light, into children of darkness and paths of darkness. He endeavours to make men think the power of godliness antipodes [opposite] to all cheerfulness; but holiness is far from such a crabbed face and austere countenance as he would have us fancy. No trade hath so much happiness with it and in it; joy is one essential part of this calling: “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14. 17). The servants of God do not only rejoice in the forethoughts of their reward, to think of the time when their indentures shall expire, and they shall enjoy the glorious liberty of the sons of God – “We ... rejoice in hope of the glory” (Rom. 5. 2), but also in their work. They are joyful in the house of prayer; they sing at their work, “Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage” (Psa. 119. 54); nay at the hardest and most tiresome of their work: “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience” (Rom. 5. 3). “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” (James 1. 2). Joy is the beam which is darted from the sun, the stream which floweth from the fountain of godliness. It is observable that the beginning, the least degree of grace, causeth joy, great joy; what, then, will its growth and perfection do? When Christ did but call to Zaccheus, he came down hastily, and “received Him joyfully” (Luke 19. 6). When the eunuch was converted, he went home rejoicing (see Acts 8. 39).

When the Samaritans had received Christ into their hearts at Philip's preaching, "there was great joy in that city" (Acts 8. 8). The jailer, after his *heartquake*, "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Acts 16. 34). The joy of the saints, as it is invisible, so it is unutterable: "In whom ... believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1. 8). For the measure of it, it is compared to the joy of harvest, to the joy of the bridegroom and bride on their wedding day (see Isa. 9. 3; Hos. 2. 19).

Hence it is that grace and godliness are compared to, and set forth by, those things which are pleasant and delightful, and bring joy with them: as music, the joy and delight of the ears; a feast, the joy and delight of the taste; to light, the joy and delight of the eyes; life, wine, which rejoiceth the heart; perfumes, which delight the scent; good, the joy of the will; truth, the joy of the understanding. Godliness hath joy proper and suitable for every sense, whether outward or inward. As the higher the sun is, the greater its light is, so the more godly the Christian, the greater his joy is. The more clear the fire burns, the more comfortable it is; smoke fetcheth tears from our eyes. When grace burns clear, it is refreshing indeed; it is the smoke of sin that turns our houses into *bochims*, places of weeping (see Judg. 2. 5, margin). When good men step awry, not pondering their goings, then they wrench their feet, or put their bones out of joint, and so put themselves to much pain.

Indeed, wicked men who are ignorant of the mystery of godliness, because they see no sunshine in the faces of godly men, judge it to be foul weather in their hearts. As the Roman soldiers, when they entered into the *sanctum sanctorum* [holiest place in the temple] and saw no images, presently reported the Jews to worship the clouds; but a Christian's joy is as far out of wicked men's sight to discern it, as out of their power to remove it. "A stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy" (Prov. 14. 10). "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16. 22). A wicked man's joy is most in his face. Seneca* compares him to a commander in a desperate battle, who, lest his soldiers should run away, sets a good face on it, when he is inwardly terrified and full of fear. He is like one in a high, desperate fever, having a good colour, when his heart is heavy, and he is at the gate of death. The godly man's joy is most in his heart: he is like that fish which hath a rough outside but a pearl within. When there are storms without, there is music within – peace of conscience, "which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4. 7). A wicked man is as a book of tragedies, bound extraordinarily, with guilt on the outside, but full of doleful, dreadful stories within; his face may be white and smiling, but his conscience is

* A Roman philosopher.

red and fiery. But the godly man's inside is his best side; though his full sacks of joy and delight are not opened till he comes to his Father's house, yet the blessed Jesus gives him, as Joseph gave the patriarchs, sufficient provision for the way. The law gave the first fruits of the earth to God; the gospel gives the first fruits of heaven to men, which are both an earnest and a taste of their glorious and everlasting harvest.

SOUL CONFLICT

A letter by Charles James, a minister of the gospel

Sevenhampton,
Gloucestershire
October 27th, 1938

Dear Friend,

Your kind letter to hand, for which we give you our best thanks. I have been laid aside five weeks; was took [sic] to the hospital on the ambulance at once for acute appendicitis. Through God's mercy it was dispersed, but had to keep my bed for two weeks, but was able to be at the house of God last Sunday, but am still very weak.

But though greatly tried, the Lord has been very merciful to me a great sinner; have felt judgment and mercy – hell within – and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. We tremble at judgment, but rejoice at felt mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our only hope. We are learning still it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom. We are told about the house – our own strength, righteousness, and self-confidence and pride, and all the hellish crew; but when a stronger than Satan comes and binds the strong man and spoils all his goods (see Luke 11. 22), and casts the devil out, never to enter again, how he – Satan – worries our poor souls night and day. 'Tis here we understand a little of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Tis here a great sinner and a great Saviour meet together. Oh, what a meeting! I felt lately very tried, but the face of the new man is still looking for help and salvation to the Son of God. Darkness endures for the night, and it is sometimes long, and the evil beasts of my own heart creep out – unbelief, legal pride, fears and doubts, malice, anger, hatred to all that is good; but what a change when the Lord appears. How all these evils fly to their dens! What a great promise – His name was to be called “JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1. 21).

We often think and speak of you, although we are very poor things. We think much of what you told of your father, the sinner, but now the

preacher. The prayer of the destitute fits me when the Lord brings me there. I hope you will be able to cast the mantle of love over this. The Lord be with you, and cause His face to shine upon you, and give you and us peace, is the desire of a poor, trembling sinner.

My wife joins with love in the truth.

Charles James

P.S. Our united love to your dear wife.

FOLLOW AFTER MEEKNESS

Extract from J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

“But thou, O man of God ... follow after ... meekness” (1 Tim. 6. 11).

The last grace the apostle desires this “man of God” to follow after is “*meekness*.” And O, what a blessed grace is this! What an exhortation do we find the Holy Ghost giving by the Apostle Peter to the women that profess godliness! “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold” (such as gold necklaces, and watches by the side), “or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, **even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit**, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3. 3, 4). O what wise instruction does the apostle give to those wives and daughters that profess godliness! And how he warns them against attiring themselves like the daughters of Belial, and following the women of Canaan in their love of gay [showy] and fashionable apparel, while they slight the inward adornings of the Spirit, such as kindness, gentleness, meekness and humility! But how far better are these inward ornaments which the Spirit of God puts into the heart! And how much more comely do they look thus spiritually attired than if loaded with all the finery that the daughters of Belial array themselves in!

(To be continued)

Many a Christian has been made worse by the good things of this world, but where is the Christian that has been bettered by them?

Thomas Brooks

He that shoots at the sun, though he be far short, will shoot higher than he who aims at a shrub.

Thomas Brooks

BOOK REVIEWS

The Life and Ministry of Clement Wood; hardback; 346 pages; price £16 plus £2.95 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom and agents.

Clement Arthur Wood (remembered as Mr. C.A. Wood) was one of “the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5. 13), and has left behind a sweet testimony of godliness. He was held in high esteem by so many who knew him and heard him preach. Mr. Wood was maintained as pastor at Tamworth Road Chapel, Croydon for forty-five years, and preached among the churches for over fifty years. Many of our readers will remember him with much respect and affection.

The main body of this memoir consists of twenty gospel sermons and five addresses. A very profitable part of the book is the account of his life. Much of this account is from his own writings. There is also an excellent funeral address by his friend Mr. Gerald D. Buss, in which some further detail of his pilgrimage is unfolded. Our late friend was clearly led of the Spirit of God in all his exercises. He was humbled and searched out as to the reality of his religion, and favoured with a gracious assurance of his interest in Christ. A particularly sacred part of the account of his life is when he received a great blessing while in hospital in October 1991 having to undergo a triple bypass heart operation. This is recorded from pages 32 to 37.

Our late dear friend had a spiritual skill given to him, whereby he sometimes brought so much out of just one word in a verse. We well remember how he brought out so much from “Ho” in Isaiah 55. 1 at Bounds Cross Chapel, Biddenden. Four of the sermons in this book are from either one or just two words.

There are also addresses to the young in this publication. Mr. Wood had a particular gift whereby he could engage the attention of the dear younger folks while preaching the gospel.

Nine of Mr. Wood’s letters are published in the book, seven of which are annual letters to his congregation. There is an interesting account of Mr. Wood’s first visit to the U.S.A. and Canada, in his annual letter of 1988. There is also a gracious account of the life of his dear wife, Mrs. Phyllis Wood, who was a true help meet to him.

Having heard some profitable sermons, we remember our friend with much spiritual affection. A particular and signal blessing was granted us in 1989 while Mr. Wood was engaged in prayer and quoting from Scripture at the funeral of Mr. Ben Field of Carshalton, at the graveside in Bandon Hill Cemetery, Croydon.

We warmly recommend this excellent book to our readers.

The Rock Of Our Salvation, by Lachlan Mackenzie of Lochcarron, edited by Dr. Robert J. Dickie; softback; 125 pages; price £6.90; published by Reformation Press, and obtainable from Christian bookshops, or online from the publisher (www.lulu.com); kindle e-versions are available from Amazon kindle store.

The content of this book was originally published in 1849 and consists of four sermons preached by Lachlan Mackenzie (also known as Mr. Lachlan), a godly minister at Lochcarron in the Scottish Highlands. It also contains a short memoir of his life that was written by his sister, Ann Mackenzie.

Mr. Lachlan (1754-1819) evidently lived a most godly life. It is recorded that he was brought under the power of the truth at the early age of eight years, and thereafter he lived a life of faith and prayer. The preface to the 1849 edition states that "Lachlan Mackenzie ... was no ordinary man. He has stamped his impress on a large portion of his countrymen. The remarkable contrast between the Highlanders of 1746 and 1845 is in no small degree owing to him." It would seem that many took him for a prophet, which no doubt is partly reflective of his life of secret communion with the Lord.

It would appear that these sermons were written down by Lachlan Mackenzie after he had preached them, which was a practice that he developed in the latter stages of his ministry. His memoir records that there is no evidence during the first part of his ministry that he "wrote out any of his sermons. But towards the decline of life, perhaps feeling more straitened, he began to write...." Of his ministry his sister writes, "Mr. Lachlan did not give to his people that which cost him nothing; he was always careful and conscientious in his preparation for the pulpit. But during the first part of his ministry, and at the time he enjoyed the greatest enlargement and liberty ... he was constantly engaged in public duties ... his chief preparation was meditation and secret prayer."

These sermons were not intended for the public eye and were not published until some years after the death of Mr. Mackenzie. Although they are not the transcript of what he delivered in the pulpit, yet being written by himself afterwards, they "contain chiefly, perhaps, the leading ideas on what he preached." They are practical expositions of the Word of truth containing much heavenly matter. The spiritual reader will discern the authority of God in these writings.

Being found amongst those who adhered wholly to the Westminster Confession, Mr. Lachlan's sermons have in them much of the "free offer." These are great matters and we would not wish to debate them carnally, for if the gospel of salvation was not freely proclaimed, we would be lost for ever. Yet we must acknowledge the weakness of the term "offer," as it clearly lends itself to that most unscriptural and wretched notion that it is in the power of fallen man to choose to be saved.

Likewise, there is mention made of man's duty to believe the Word of God. This again is a great matter: for who cannot say without inwardly weeping, that our unbelief is a great sin? Yet we must be clear (and Lachlan Mackenzie was clear on this) that faith is God's gift; there is no redeeming merit in faith itself, and there is no power in fallen nature to believe savingly. However, we cannot say that it is not man's duty to believe and love to obey what *God* hath commanded (yea, this is the condemnation that he does not love God (see John 3. 19)); but we can say that so lost is man's condition that he does not, cannot, and will not believe, but by the special, gracious operations of the Holy Ghost; and all merit, righteousness, spiritual life and peace that fallen man may ever possess are found in, come from, and are by Jesus Christ alone.

Despite these differences of expression, we feel we can recommend this book as containing much blessed and spiritual instruction. The joyful sound of the gospel trumpet (being the most blessed sound that a miserable sinner can ever hear) is proclaimed clearly from its pages.

Stephen P. Rosier, Maidstone

Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, by John Bunyan; 178 pages; hardback; £10; published by The Banner of Truth Trust and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

When the Lord Jesus began His ministry (Luke 4), His first subject was the sovereignty of God in the lives of Elijah and Naaman, and for this He was hated. When the multitudes at Capernaum (John 6) asked what they should do, He turned the subject around to what God must do and emphasised this in conclusion: “Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father.” When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night the emphasis was the same – there needed to be a new birth, a complete change of the will, the affections, the desires, which only God can accomplish. Alas, this kind of preaching, in which God’s sovereignty and the absolute necessity for Him to work is foremost, is foreign to so many pulpits in our land, and the emphasis is not on what “God must” do, but what “you must” do, and a “do-it-yourself” religion is substituted for the work of the Holy Ghost.

When God raised up John Bunyan, He chose a most unlikely person – one who went round the country mending pots and pans. God was sovereign in the way He began to work in Bunyan as he overheard the godly conversation of a few women in a street at Bedford. And the first effect was to pull down, to convince Bunyan how little he knew. God’s work was carried on, often by opposites, to lead Bunyan into the truth, not by learning it at a theological college, but by having it burnt into his heart under bitter temptations and sorrows. And there was a divine purpose in all these seemingly contradictory leadings – to raise up a man eminent both in grace and gifts to be a special blessing in his own generation, and by his printed works to many even now.

Grace Abounding is Bunyan’s own record of God’s dealings with him, of his early life and providential escapes from death, the change from being a dissolute youth to a self-opinionated Pharisee. Then God’s time came to work, and Bunyan describes the encouragement from the Word of God, the cunning temptations of Satan, his own felt ignorance and shame, and yet the gracious drawing to the Lord Jesus till he found every spiritual desire met in the Saviour of sinners. Then he learned more under temptation, both of his own weakness and the immutability of the love of God. He describes his own exercises in first going to preach, and then at the end is an account of his imprisonment at Bedford for preaching the Word as God had taught him.

We would say especially to younger friends, “If you have never read, *Grace Abounding*, buy this book and read it.” It may search your own religion, and yet we trust many will find an echo in their own hearts. May the Lord’s blessing be known in reading it, as many have testified in former generations.

John A. Kingham, Luton

No sin can be little, because it is committed against the great God of heaven and earth. To commit little sins, the sinner must find out a little God.

John Bunyan

OBITUARY

William Charles Chewter, a member at Rehoboth Chapel, Jarvis Brook, for 76 years, gently fell asleep in Jesus on September 30th, 2018, aged 94.

In "A brief account of my life and the Lord's dealings with my soul," he writes:

"I was born at Inchreed Cottages, Inchreed Farm, Jarvis Brook. It was in the evening of September 7th, 1924 during a very heavy thunderstorm. My mother had toxæmia and was very ill, and the doctor visited her every day for some days as she was so ill. By the Lord's mercy she completely recovered.

"When I was two years old, my father took another situation as cowman at Waghorns Farm, Hadlow Down. This is where I spent most of my childhood with my older brother and my sister. We had fun playing in the fields and woods around the farm. No doubt we were taught the Scriptures from early childhood and were taken to Hadlow Down Chapel on a Sunday. Sunday evenings in the winter months mother read stories to us from the Religious Tract Society. One was called *Little William the Woodcutter's son*, also *Home Sweet Home*, and *The Basket of Flowers*, which made an impression on my mind.

"I was rather nervous in the dark; also feared someone was hiding behind the curtain in the corner of the bedroom where I and my brother slept. At that period I used to have fearful dreams. Once I dreamed that I saw red glows of fire on the horizon and thought that the end of the world had come as the fire came nearer, and cried out, 'Lord, save me,' and then awoke; it was just a dream.

When I was nine years old I scalded myself. This is how it happened: we had a large chimney corner with a small kitchen range and there was an armchair beside it with a low arm on which I sat, as it was nice and warm there. But at this time the chair had been changed for another which was higher on the arm, and I pitched over and knocked the saucepan handle that was on the stove and tipped the scalding water over myself, and ran across the room. My mother was at the door, as the butcher had called. She turned and was shocked, and I said, 'Don't cry, mummy,' but I was faced with death and expected to stand before God as my Judge."

About the year 1930, his mother having been blessed in hearing Edgar Mercer, the family would walk the four miles to Jarvis Brook chapel where he was pastor, although occasionally still attending Hadlow Down chapel.

"When I was in my teens, I came under conviction of sin under the preaching of Mr. A.S. Offer at Hadlow Down chapel, and for a few years

was under a cloud, and I went about to try to do what was right, but I was not able to satisfy God's law. One night I was in such a state, I told my mother I would be in hell by the morning. One day when I was working at a house called Fourways at the cross-roads in the village, when about sixteen years of age, as I was going through a gate by the side of the house these words came forcefully to my mind: 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched' (Mark. 9. 44). I seemed to look into hell and I expected soon to be there because of the condition I felt to be in. I could not get any relief for my soul. This anxiety went on until I was seventeen. At another place of employment, I was splitting wood at the edge of a woodland, when these words dropped into my mind: 'David's God is yours,' and I clung to them, trusting the Lord was my God. What joy I felt then, believing the Lord was *my* God.

"If I remember aright, the next morning I opened my Bible on Isaiah 28 and read the chapter right through, and how wonderful it was to me where it said, 'And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand' (verse 18). O how many precious verses there are in that chapter showing how God deals with His people; how I saw everything with new eyes and could rejoice in God.

After this experience I felt I wanted to be baptized, and was encouraged by a sermon preached by Mr. Offer when he quoted these words: 'My son, give Me thine heart' (Prov. 23. 26), and I felt I wanted to do that. It was through his ministry that conviction was deepened and now it was encouraging me."

Mr. Offer was at that time pastor at Providence chapel, Burgess Hill, but also had the oversight at Jarvis Brook.

"In the autumn of that year, 1942, I wrote to Mr. Offer and asked if he would baptize me, as I had been exercised about baptism for some months. I was baptized on the first Sunday in December and received into the church. I remember hymn 134 being sung, which was a blessing to me at that time."

"Hail, sovereign love, that first began
The scheme to rescue ruined man!
Hail, matchless, free, eternal grace,
That gave my soul a hiding-place!" (H. 134)

* * *

My father was eighteen at the time and had just received his "call-up" papers, and began training at HMS Collinwood at Fareham. Previously he had served with the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) and the Home Guard, but now in the Navy was involved in preparations for the massive allied-force military invasion – the D-Day landings.

Discharged from the war effort in 1945, he sought to serve the Lord in newness of spirit. For many years he was the Sunday School

superintendent, and for over forty years the only deacon; in addition, the caretaker, treasurer and chapel correspondent. He was not naturally cut out for such positions of responsibility, and feeling the weight of these commitments, wondered how he could continue. But one day while at work, the Lord brought these words powerfully to his mind: “As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place” (Prov. 27. 8), the Lord thereby enabling him to go on for many more years until weakness of body and mind prevented.

In 2017 he was diagnosed with lymphoma, and little by little his strength declined. Before being admitted to a care home in Uckfield in March 2018, the Lord drew near to refresh his soul through the Scriptures, and the singing of “Rock of Ages” and “Abide with me.” One evening, after Romans chapter 8 was read, he broke down as one of his favourite hymns was sung: “Mercy is welcome news indeed, to those that guilty stand.” In prayer afterwards he spoke of himself as a great sinner, but Jesus as a great Saviour, and quoted the lines, “Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling.”

Another evening he asked for Psalm 23 to be read, and followed in prayer, citing the words of the Apostle Paul, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15. 55), and gave thanks that he would soon be singing the praises of the Lord in glory. It was a very special time both to him and those that were with him; truly an anointing for his burial.

His end was peace. Contrary to expectation, he was to live another six months, during which time he lay in bed almost completely helpless and able to see very little, yet, with much contentment, was quietly resting in the Lord “until his change came.” He had been no stranger to the troubled waters of Christian experience, being sometimes severely assailed by the enemy of souls, but now, approaching the heavenly harbour, there was a great calm. On one occasion it was remarked, “You seem very peaceful.” “I am,” he replied. “There’s peace only in Christ.” Another time, after singing with him “Rock of Ages,” he exclaimed, “What a Rock!” Not long before he died, Luke 23. 43 was read to him. “To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise,” followed by the comment, “You can’t be far from heaven.” With heartfelt confidence he responded, “I can’t be far.” He gently breathed his last on Sunday, September 30th, passing from an earthly Sabbath to that place

“Where congregations ne’er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”

As a family we have lost a loving father, who day by day prayed for his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and the diminished church and congregation at Jarvis Brook, a loyal member.

Graham Chewter

ETERNITY

Eternity! Eternity!
 How long art thou, Eternity!
 Yet onward still to thee we speed,
 As to the fight th' impatient steed,
 As ship to port, or shaft from bow,
 Or swift as couriers homeward go ;
 Mark well, O man, Eternity!

Eternity! Eternity!
 How long art thou, Eternity!
 As in a ball's concentric round,
 No starting-point nor end is found,
 So thou, Eternity, so vast,
 No entrance and no exit hast;
 Mark well, O man, eternity!

Eternity! Eternity!
 How long art thou, Eternity!
 A ring whose orbit still extends,
 And, ne'er beginning, never ends;
 "Always" thy centre, ring immense,
 And "Never" thy circumference;
 Mark well, O man, Eternity!

Eternity! Eternity!
 How long art thou, Eternity!
 Came there a bird each thousandth year,
 One sand-grain from the hills to bear,
 When all had vanished, grain by grain,
 Eternity would still remain;
 Mark well, O man, Eternity.

Eternity! Eternity!
 How long art thou, eternity!
 As long as God shall God remain,
 So long shall last hell's torturing pain,
 So long the joys of heaven shall be;
 O long delight! long misery!
 Mark well, O man, Eternity!

Eternity! Eternity!
 How long art thou, Eternity!
 O man, let oft thy musings dwell
 Upon the dreadful woes of hell,
 Upon the saint's all-glorious lot,
 For both shall last when time is not;
 Mark well, O man, Eternity!

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

FEBRUARY 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

SOLOMON'S PLAGUE

“What prayer ... by all Thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart” (1 Kings 8. 38).

Solomon prayed this prayer by faith at the dedication of the temple. This prayer is also recorded in 2 Chronicles, chapter 6. It is a solemn thing to notice that although he was very wise and godly, a dreadful plague was to break out from his heart in later years, namely idolatry. He was led astray by his many strange wives (see 1 Kings 11. 8) and outlandish [from other lands and other customs] women (see Neh. 13. 26). Nevertheless the sin was his, for it came out of his own heart. Who would have thought that a great man like Solomon should set up idols! It was indeed from the plague within. Fallen human nature is completely corrupt and is enmity toward God.

“Every man.” This means every true Israelite. Those that knew the plague within were glad and thankful for the offerings and priesthood of the ceremonial law. “O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts” (Nah. 1. 15). Every real and humble, seeking believer feels the plague within. In our day “every man” includes all the families of the Gentiles, who feel and know the plague within, and who have to cry unto, and draw near to God, calling upon the great name of the Lord Jesus. Job was taught the plague within and had to cry out, “Behold, I am vile” (Job 40. 4). David also was suddenly taken by this plague of indwelling sin. Peter’s self confidence evaporated in a moment and down he went into a denial of knowing the blessed and precious Lord Jesus, yet in his heart he had been blessed with a love and sweet knowledge toward Him. Paul groaned on account of this plague and cried out, “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom. 7. 24). This plague manifests itself in all the infidel sins of fallen human nature, our stinking pride which robs God of all honour due to Him, and the cardinal sin of unbelief which limits the exceeding rich free grace and power of God in Christ Jesus. The apostle wrote of “the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Heb. 12. 1). How the dear saints feel so troubled and defiled by these things, and so often have to cry out with the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18. 13).

Solomon prayed that when the troubled Israelites in their various woes prayed toward the temple, supplicated for help, stretched out their hands and confessed their sins toward this place, that the Lord would hear in heaven His dwelling place and when He heard forgive, and grant

the blessings and helps that they so much needed. The Lord gave answer by sending down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice and filled His house with glory. We read in 2 Chronicles 7. 3, that the people “worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever.” Is not this a beautiful type of the gospel way? There were the people confessing and pleading the offerings and the covenant promises; then the answer of peace from heaven above. It certainly was a sacred type of the gospel of Jesus Christ. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9. 27, 28).

We have to keep coming as we are in all our felt impotence, blindness, guilt and corruption. We have to own our just desert of the lowest hell, and yet plead for His precious name’s sake that He will remember His promise, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8. 12). Poor Jonah in his self-procured predicament cried out in the fish’s belly, “I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple.” How he proved, “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jonah 2. 4, 9).

“Daily I’d repent of sin, Daily wash in Calvary’s blood, Daily feel Thy peace within, Daily I’d commune with God.	“Daily I’d Thy name adore, Prize Thy Word, and love to pray; All Thy kindness well explore, Still press on to perfect day.” (H. 990)
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May the Lord help us to press toward Him more and more, that we may taste and see more of His tender mercy in going before us, and prove in His faithfulness the promise of His love and forgiveness to poor and needy sinners.

“Amidst the sorrows of the way,
Lord Jesus, teach my soul to pray;
And let me taste Thy special grace,
And run to Christ, my Hiding-Place.” (H. 711)

A PASTOR’S 40TH ANNIVERSARY SERVICE

Account of the 40th Anniversary Service for Pastor Jay K. Stehouwer, at Zion Chapel, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A., on Friday evening, August 5th, 2016, taken by Pastor Gary L. TenBroeke, of Hope Chapel, Sheboygan, U.S.A.

Mr. TenBroeke opened the service by saying:

As we commence this service, and what a remarkable service it is, my mind has been burdened that the rising generation may know something

of what the Lord has done for the cause here. Our younger friends may not know the exercises that took place and the sacrifices that so many made. We go back to the first members and founders who began this chapel. They were constrained to mortgage their homes and businesses in order to purchase the building and the grounds. That was a venture of faith.

I find so often today, that when I speak about faith, very few understand what it really means. People talk about faith, but they do not know the actions of living faith, the workings of faith, the venturing of faith; and such was the faith of those first members. Seven years later, they purchased the parsonage next door, another tremendous step for a small congregation, and during that time, they invited a minister from England to be their pastor; a tremendous venture of faith! That brings us to the fall [autumn] of 1975, when the former pastor announced his leadings to return back to England. Many wondered what would happen. How would they carry on? What an exercise it brought on for a number of the members and some of the congregation. Of course, that led up to the sending forth into the ministry of our present friend and pastor. Some of us remember that time very well. It was a wonderful season! We marvelled at the Lord's goodness. Now we come to this time when we would remember the forty years he has served as pastor, and surely it should be a reminder to us that all things are coming to an end. In the light of that, I have chosen hymn 864 to open our service.

Hymn 864, "Holy Ghost, inspire our praises," was then sung, followed by the reading of 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and prayer.

Mr. TenBroeke: Before we announce our text, I have another thing to add and a few messages as well. First of all to Pastor Stehouwer. After I was sent into the ministry, the first time I went to England to preach, Mr. C.A. Wood gave me a copy of a poem which he had framed for me. I wanted to read the verses tonight. Many times I have looked at these words and felt that I have come so short:

"Servant of Christ: the hatred, scorn and shame,
Are precious tokens of His love for thee.
Think not for nothing thou must bear His name,
Or that He holds thee from His suffering free.
The greatest honour – to be made so vile;
The sweetest recompense – His gracious smile.

"Choose thou the path that leads to death and pain,
Familiar daily with contempt and loss,
Leave Him to choose what shall be fruit and pain,
His own Interpreter of every cross;
Remember none can preach the Christ that died,
But he who with his Lord is crucified.

“Think of His patient love that set thee free
 And bound thee to Himself in richest grace;
 Count it all joy His willing slave to be,
 Who lowly took a servant’s form and place.
 Be much alone in speech with Him, and then
 Thou wilt not need the praise and smiles of men.

“Be silent to the Lord, be much in prayer,
 Contact with Jesus is the servant’s strength.
 Let Him decide what stripes are thine to bear,
 And what reward of peace shall grow at length.
 Preach all the Word to sinner and to saint,
 And labour most when self is weak and faint.

“Think not of rest while sinners love their sin,
 And from the gospel table wander wide.
 Thine be the joy to lead the wanderers in,
 To hear Him who for their ransom died;
 Soon thou wilt hear the coming Master’s voice,
 And dwell with Him, forever to rejoice.”

I received a message from Mr. Gerald Buss to read at this occasion:

“I am sure I speak on behalf of all the Lord’s servants and those friends who have enjoyed your ministry and fellowship in England, in recording our gratitude to our covenant God for sustaining you for the long period of forty years as His servant at Zion. May the precious truths you have been enabled to declare so faithfully be your support in these evening time days of your journey. May the Lord God of Elijah raise up an Elisha to support and give you gracious encouragement to believe that when your course has run, His work will continue in the cause you love so much and have devoted so much of your life to. In bonds of the gospel and in warmest Christian affections. Gerald Buss.”

And a word to the pastor and also to the church and congregation from Mr. Timothy Rosier:

“To the beloved pastor and the dear brethren at Zion, Grand Rapids:
 “Almighty God in His abundant grace and mercy has brought you all safely through to this day of thanksgiving. The Lord has maintained you together for forty long years. No doubt, there have been many ups and downs in your church fellowship together, as there always are in pastorates. But the Lord has been with you, He has been mindful of you, He has kept you together in godly fear, and in the love and hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ these many years. Some of you, together with your dear pastor, have been remarkably kept to fourscore years and ten and beyond. On account of your great age, you cannot expect to sojourn here below very much longer. May the Lord graciously prepare you one by one for that glorious entrance into the joy of the Lord.

“I send to you, dear brother Jay, warm and sincere greetings in the love of the gospel, rejoicing with you in the wonderful faithfulness of God to you for over forty years. God has been mindful of you, dear brother. By the grace of God, you have been enabled to hold fast and endure. May the Lord favour you with His sweet, abiding presence to the end, and give you an abundant entrance into His everlasting kingdom at last. I can truly write to you as we read in Philippians 1. 3 and 5, ‘I thank my God upon every remembrance of you ... for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.’

“I write to the dear brethren in church and congregation ties, that when your beloved pastor is taken from you to be with Christ, may you earnestly pray to be kept together in unity of spirit and the bond of peace. May you each be helped ever to follow that which is good, to seek one another’s welfare, and in honour prefer one another. Above all, seek the glory of Christ in all your church matters. Show your dear pastor much love and affection, now and in his remaining days, while he still prays for you and preaches to you. And when the time comes for his home call to glory, may you truly be kept faithful and hold fast to those things that you have received from the Lord.

“Remember to watch and also to pray without ceasing. Also, plead the gracious promise in Jeremiah 3. 15: ‘And I will give you pastors according to Mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.’ The Lord knows what He will do. God only knows whether there is to be a fulfilling of the sixth chapter of John among you, for as we read, Jesus ‘Himself knew what He would do’ (verse 6). The dear brethren this side of the Atlantic who know and love your dear pastor for the truth’s sake, will no doubt join me in sending you sincere greetings, and also join in thanksgiving for the Lord’s goodness to pastor and people for over forty years.

“I must conclude by quoting again from Philippians 1, but now addressing both pastor and people, verses 3 through 6: ‘I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.’ I write these things in the precious bonds of the everlasting gospel, and in sincere love for Christ’s sake. Timothy Rosier.”

As I was reading over the hymn in the past day, I could not help but think of those of you who from time to time give out a hymn at the prayer meeting. I wonder, dear friends, have you ever given out this hymn? It would have been a good thing to do, and is yet a good thing to do. A pastor cannot give out this hymn for himself, but the members should at times.

Hymn 373, “With heavenly power, O Lord, defend,” was then sung, followed by the sermon.

SERMON PREACHED BY MR. G.L. TENBROEKE

Text: “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13. 7, 8).

We come to the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews and it is rather striking how the Apostle Paul now comes to a variety of things touching on so many subjects. How different from the opening chapters and the continuing chapters throughout! We think of how in chapter 1, he labours to set forth how Christ was exalted above the angels. Then in chapter 2, he sets forth Christ as made lower than the angels for the suffering of death. In chapter 3, he sets forth Christ as more worthy than Moses, the most esteemed One, for all that He had experienced, for the blessings that He had been made. In chapters 4 through 9, he especially labours to set forth the whole high priestly nature of the Lord Jesus, perhaps more than any other portion of God’s Word – how he brings forth the fulness of it, the wonder of it, the greatness of it – and how Christ is now that great High Priest over the house of God, that High Priest who has shed His blood – oh, the sweetness of those chapters! One cannot help but think of how the apostle must have felt as he was writing, how his soul was warmed and enlarged to declare that glorious truth of the Son of God.

But, dear friend, what about you and me? Do we love to read those very chapters? To read of Christ being exalted above the angels, made “a little lower than the angels,” more worthy than Moses, and then to see Him as He is made that High Priest; and what a mercy if you could say tonight, *your* High Priest. *Yours*. “For such an High Priest became us,” says the apostle in Hebrews 7. 26. What a wonderful thing and what an infinite blessing!

Then, in chapters 10 through 12, the apostle labours to set forth the mighty acts of faith. That, too, is the mighty work of God. The faith of the giants of old, the faith of the Old Testament saints, the faith of the mighty in the Scriptures was nothing more than the work of God upon them and in them. But, oh, to be given something of that “like precious faith” as Peter writes in his Epistle. You see, dear friends, that is what we do need in our day, something of the mighty acts of faith. You will need to continue in the faith. God-given faith has that principal in it. Faith lives, it works, it leads, it moves, it stirs, it draws. O to be a partaker of that faith!

Then we come to chapter 13, where the apostle sets forth what we might call the very practicable part of real religion, and it is that part that so

often is despised, so often misunderstood. We so often fail to examine ourselves by it. He writes in verse 1, "Let brotherly love continue," and he begins, shall we say, at that most important part in the behaviour of the people of God, of the followers of Christ. Brotherly love must be at the beginning and there is so much that comes against it. Your old nature will come against it; the enemy will fight against it; he will turn one against the other. How masterful he is to turn the people of God against each other, to devour one another.

What did Paul write in another place? "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5. 15). Solemn that is, you know. That is not a devouring by sword – at least, not a literal sword. There is a sword involved – it is the sword of the tongue – and, oh, how that harms the unity of the brethren.

Then, he addresses the need not to be forgetful to entertain strangers. Through the years, we have marked how some like to talk about religion, and meet with certain of God's people while neglecting others, and they do not entertain the strangers. Now, that is wrong and sinful. We can come with our excuses, we may think we have justifiable excuses, but God's Word will stand against them. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some" – it does not say that they always will – but "some have entertained angels unawares" (verse 2).

Then he comes a little further, and he reminds them that they must "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (verse 3). Now, dear friends, how much of that spirit is in us? Sometimes we talk about those who are in persecuted countries, those who are put in prison, and those who perhaps are suffering, even unto blood. But we soon forget them. The apostle did not forget them; there were so many in that day. Many of these Hebrews were in such a state.

He then touches upon that most honourable relationship of marriage; how marriage is honourable, though at times it is so much despised and attacked. Young friends, those of you who are unmarried, I would warn you to remember this, that fornication is a most evil sin. It is not spoken of much today; in our schools it is promoted; in our country today, it is something that is considered a normal way of life. Young friends, there is nothing more devastating. The Lord help you to remain pure to the marriage bed. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (verse 4). It is not only the young people that need the reminder, but we live in a day of solemn adultery.

He also warns against a spirit of covetousness. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content..." (verse 5). You know, dear friend, godly contentment is said to be great gain (see 1 Tim.

6. 6), and what a wonderful thing to find your contentment there, to have that sweet contentment in what God gives and with what God denies. That brings us down to the words of our text which we have before us this evening.

Now before we enter into the text, I just want to touch upon what we would remember this evening: that it has been forty years this past May that the pastor has been preaching in this place. Forty years in Scripture is a very significant time. We find that it was a time of *judgment* in the day of the Flood; the rain fell forty days and forty nights; a time of judgment. Solemn that will be, when there is such a season of judgment of God upon any people. You see what destruction it brought and still brings. Then too, there is a time of *trial*. We read of the Lord Jesus that He was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit after His baptism to be tempted forty days and forty nights of the devil, a time of sore temptation. Again, we find forty days of *teaching* such as Moses experienced in the mount when he was taught of God all the things that applied to the tabernacle, to the ceremonial offerings, and to the behaviour of the Levites and the priests. Forty days and nights of teaching. Then it is set forth as a time of *dependence*: Elijah was awakened by the angel, and told to arise and eat, and he went in the strength of it for forty days and forty nights (see 1 Kings 19. 8).

But then especially, we think of the forty-year periods in the life of Moses. The first forty years were years of emptying, and be sure, dear friend, that is what it took. It was an emptying time. How do you think that Moses was able to choose to suffer affliction with the people of God apart from being emptied? Surely the dear man was emptied. We do not think much of that aspect of it, but surely the days in Pharaoh's house were a time of emptying. I wonder if there are those here tonight, who in your soul's experience have been in Pharaoh's house for forty years being emptied? Pharaoh's house represents the world.

But then there were the forty years of humiliation, spent in the back side of the desert. O what humiliation was learnt there! This is the Lord's way of preparing His people for the work He calls them to. Then there were the forty years of deliverance; many deliverances that were manifested and shown, marvellous deliverances through the forty years. No wonder when Moses wrote in his closing remarks to the children of Israel in the Book of Deuteronomy, as recorded in chapter 8 verse 2: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no."

"Remember them which have the rule over you." We come then to this word, and what a striking word we have here – *to remember* – and

this is a time of remembering. Oh, that the Lord may help us, the pastor, the members and those in the congregation to remember, and may God give us to remember many things tonight. For who can record, and who can recount, who can rehearse the multitude of things that have come and gone in the forty years!

We have here tonight this command, this direction, "Remember them which have the rule over you." You see, dear friends, we are not to remember their failings and their sins – yes, they have that too – but remember *them*. They need to be remembered, and how are they to be remembered? Remembered, first, in prayer. Oh, is there a remembering them at the throne of grace? When you go there for yourself, when you go there for God's help and blessing, do you remember the pastor at that time? I think so often people may think of their pastor on a Sunday morning perhaps, or Sunday afternoon, or when they enter into the chapel doors and sit down and try to bow their head in prayer, they may remember their pastor then. Have you remembered him on Saturday? No one knows the labours and the struggles that take place at that time but the pastor, but, oh, to remember him then. You can be sure that oftentimes there is a conflict, warfare, and struggle that is going on, and perhaps while he is endeavouring to seek the Lord for direction or for a word, perhaps he comes to this – "Lord, what word must I bring?" A minister said to me one time, "There are thousands of texts in the Bible, but I don't know which one I should bring." Oftentimes, it seems as if there are none. Oh, the struggles that a servant of the Lord has in seeking for texts; but then not just the text, but for the opening of the text and light upon it, that he might be able to bring forth a word that will be right and in season.

Remember them at the throne of grace. Oh, they do need that help. What did we read in the Epistle to the Thessalonians this evening where Paul exhorted the brethren there to remember us, "Brethren, pray for us"; pray for us. In another Epistle, he exhorted the church to pray that there may be a door opened unto them (see Col. 4. 3). How your pastor needs that prayer! You see, dear friend, if there is something of such an exercise in your heart personally, that the pastor might be directed and helped, then you may find a crumb yourself, you may find a little help, there may be some token for good, even for you. Oh, to remember him at the throne of grace.

We read the Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians this evening because we have a very similar word there in verse 12: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you." Now that is a striking word – to *know* them. What does he mean? You might say, Well, we know the pastor; we know who he is. No, dear friend, to *know* them as such in their struggles and their infirmities. To know them in this way: that perhaps at times they might be helped to speak a word in

season. You know, so often, we come to the house of God and we want to hear a word of encouragement; if only there might be some encouragement. Perhaps the pastor sometimes says a word to encourage you, but have you done anything to encourage him? That ye might know them.

“We beseech you, brethren...” What an argument is that, that word beseech. Paul uses it so many times in his Epistles; he beseeches the people of God, he beseeches the church. You remember that most important beseeching that he speaks of in Romans 12. 1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.” That beseeching is a most earnest plea that he makes with them.

“We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you.” You see, it is that word *labour*. The Lord’s servants who are led by the Spirit of God and taught by the Spirit of God, it is not that they preach – they labour. It is a labouring work. They labour in the pulpit; they labour out of the pulpit. They at times labour much upon their bed; they labour in tossings and turnings; oh, the labourings. “To know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.” I will come more to that word “admonishment” in due course if the Lord keeps it upon my mind.

But the apostle goes on to speak here, “And to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake.” Dear friend, they have a high calling. Paul writes again in 2 Corinthians 2. 16, “And who is sufficient for these things?” You know, the great apostle did not feel he was sufficient, and the Lord’s true-sent servants feel so insufficient for that high calling, for that great work which they are called to do, for the burden that is laid upon them. Paul again speaks to the Corinthians, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” (2 Cor. 4. 7). What is the earthen vessel compared to the eternal glory? Nothing, and yet in that earthen vessel are treasures put, and they are put there to this end: “That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” So that when there is any blessing that is received through the ministry of the gospel, it must be by the power of God.

“To esteem them very highly in love.” Now let us come to that point for a moment: “**In love.**” “In love,” first, for Jesus’ sake; to esteem them highly. You see, dear friend, what Satan would do is to set before you your pastor in all his weakness, his faults, and your pastor – as any servant of God would – will say that he has all kinds of faults. He can tell you of them better than anybody. But Satan will cause you to see them through his magnifying glass. What for? To deaden that love that you should have. “Esteem them very highly in love,” and then for this point: “for their work’s sake.” Remember, that work is the work which God will do.

Then says the apostle: "And be at peace among yourselves." You can be sure of this: when there is discord and disunity, when there is disruption of the unity between the brethren, they are not esteeming the pastor. Now the Word of God is very clear on that; those are not my words; they are God's Word. May the Lord help you to examine that. Oh, truly to know them; to follow this gracious, godly exhortation that the apostle was commanded to write by God the Holy Spirit. Oh, to remember them, and to know them in their labours.

Those of you who have Bibles with margins will notice in the word of our text this evening, "those that have the **rule** over you"; it says those that "are the **guides**." Now are they not raised up of God for that purpose, to guide? You may say, Well, isn't the Holy Spirit the Guide? For the Lord did say that He would send the Holy Spirit and that "He will guide you into all truth" (John 16. 13). Yes, but what did we sing in the opening hymn? Jesus sends the Spirit, and the Spirit sends the man. There is a guiding. When the Lord's servants go forth to preach the Word, in that way they will guide poor sinners to the feet of Jesus. Oh, that will be a great wonder; their greatest privilege, if they may guide some poor sinner to the feet of Jesus. What better place! Today so many are guided to every other place but that! It is alarming and frightful. Oh, friend, beware of any minister who does not guide you to the feet of Jesus; if he guides you to any other place, if he guides you to any other man; it does not matter who the man is, he has deceived you. So many will say, "The forefathers said this; the forefathers believed that," but dear friend, we must come to this: "Jesus only." O to be guided there. Oh, if there is something in your heart's desire for that, that is what you will want in a true servant of God; that he will guide you to Jesus.

Oh, but there is a guiding in the exercise of their soul. So often, those that are taught of God, in those beginning years, have many questions. They are so uncertain, they are so unsure – they do not want to be deceived; they want to be right. So they come at times and ask questions, and these are not questions about genealogies or certain doctrines; no, they are questions regarding the work of God in the soul and the truth of God revealed to the heart. What good questions they are. And truly, any real servant of God loves souls that come like that, but he will be so burdened then because he does not want to deceive or mislead them. How he must keep praying for wisdom and for every word that he speaks to them. Oh, to "remember them which have the rule over you," who guide you.

Then, dear friend, there are those times when you need guiding in a time of trouble. Some of you may have known those times when you came in such troubles: troubles in circumstance, troubles in soul, troubles in your family; multitudes of troubles. You have come to the pastor,

perhaps, for some guidance. “Remember them which have the rule over you,” who are guides. That ruling over does not mean that the servants of Christ rule with an iron rod, rule out of fear, rule like a Diotrephes who loved to have the preeminence (see 3 John 9). No. They endeavour to rule in the Spirit of Christ; they are so conscious of needing the Spirit’s help.

Then I just want to speak a word here because I feel it is needed in our time and in our churches. I am afraid that in many churches today, they think it is like our government, that there are equal branches that are to rule equally. That is not so in the church of God. There are many places today where the deacons think that they are at the same level as the pastor – that is erroneous and wrong. They are not called to guide; it is the pastor who is called to guide. Let us remember that, and those who are deacons need to remember it, and the members need to remember that as well. The Word of God is very clear who is to rule in the church, and let us not depart from that.

We find now also that the apostle goes on to say, “Who have spoken unto you the Word of God.” Now, dear friends, that indeed is the great thing; that is the great burden: “Spoken unto you the Word of God.” What a wonderful thing it is when God does speak through His servant, to any soul. You see, it has been said that ministers are remembered by their texts, by a certain text, perhaps. Some years ago, after Pastor had visited England, and we followed him a few years later, in a number of the places they said that they would never forget Pastor’s text when he spoke on that word, “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious” (1 Pet. 2. 7). And, oh, it was so sweet to them, and Pastor, you must be thankful for those times. I think of our dear friends, Mr. Pearce and Mrs. Pearce telling me one time after you had been to Bethel Chapel, Luton and you had spoken from a text out of Psalm 116 of the love of God. They said they would never forget that. So you have been remembered.

Sometimes we remember the text because of the trouble that we come into the house of God with, and I can speak personally here. One time I was greatly troubled over a matter. I came on that Sunday morning and the pastor gave out the text, “Be not afraid, only believe” (Mark 5. 36). I tell you, dear friends, those words were like “apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25. 11). They took me right up from my trouble and all my fears were gone. The Word came with power; I will not forget that time. Another time I shall never forget was the first Thanksgiving day* service after you became pastor. Your text was Psalm 136. 23: “Who remembered us in our low estate: for His mercy endureth for ever.”

* Thanksgiving day is an important holiday in the U.S.A. It is celebrated annually on the fourth Thursday in November. Ed.

Another text I shall never forget Pastor speaking from was that question, "Who is this?" (Song 8. 5). Oh, how he was helped to open up the Scriptures, "**Who is this?**" I cannot help but think of our dear friend, Mr. Dick Berg. Shortly before he passed away, he told me of the words that had been so blessed to him out of Song of Solomon 1: "Let Him kiss me ... draw me ... tell me." He said he left the chapel crying out to God, "Lord, I've had a feast today; I've had a feast today!" You see, dear friends, that is what it is to have the Word, to remember them for that Word. Now, I wonder, have some of you tonight had such words like that, some text that you will remember your pastor with? He was "the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message" (Hag. 1. 13) on that occasion and there is no greater honour for any servant of God to have than that mark that he is "the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message." What an honour it is and a privilege.

Dear friends, I must hasten on as I see the time has gone.

He has spoken to you the Word of life, the Word of God. Sometimes the word that he speaks may be a word of admonishment; you remember that. But do you rise up in anger against it? When the Lord sends His word through His messenger which admonishes you, bow under it. Oh, to be humbled then, and to tremble before the Word of God. I am very struck by this; we acknowledge that we are backward, wayward, diffident, so many times going astray, and yet we think we do not need any admonishments. "Remember them that have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God." I must leave that point.

"Whose faith follow." Oh, to follow. Mark this; it does not say to follow *them*, but "whose faith follow." Paul in another place speaks, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11. 1). Oh, to bring everything to that touchstone, and so to follow. But follow them in this way: "Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." Now, what of their conversation? What a wonderful thing when their conversation is that which testifies of Christ. The word *conversation*, does not mean only the words of their mouths or the language that they speak, but their whole behaviour, their whole deportment, the spirit that they display – everything about them. Oh, is there something of their behaviour, something of their conversation that speaks of Jesus? "Whose faith follow."

But we must come to that verse (I had hoped to spend more time on it) – "the end of their conversation" – what is it? "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Now, when I come to this, I think of the beginning of our dear pastor's pastorate. What was the beginning: Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And what it was in the beginning, it is now, and we trust it will be to the end. He has not changed. Pastor, as

you look back, there have been many changes; there have been some sad changes, sorrowing changes; but He has not changed. What He has been, He always will be. "He abideth faithful" (2 Tim. 2. 13). Oh, blessed be God for this. Whatever changes we may see and may yet experience, this still is the foundation: "Jesus Christ the same," the same. Man changes. Men sometimes show kindness and sometimes are cold, but He changes not. We read in the Word of God, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee" (Isa. 54. 10). Oh, dear friend, that lovingkindness of the Lord, that does not change. Precious truth we have here! The gospel does not change; the gospel the apostle preached is the same gospel your pastor endeavours to preach. It is that gospel of ruin in Adam and salvation in Christ – but much more than that! Oh, it is the gospel of the living God; it is the gospel of the precious Jesus; it is the gospel of the divine Mediator; it is the gospel of the great High Priest; it is the gospel of the great Saviour. Oh, what could we say about that gospel! But, oh, He does not change. Men today think that the gospel must change to fit society, but then the foundations will be destroyed. Blessed be God that the foundation cannot be destroyed: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

We read of those green pastures that He makes His sheep to lie down in; dear friend, they will not change! The same green pastures that David wrote of in Psalm 23 are the green pastures that a poor child of God today can lie down in and is made to lie down in those heavenly green pastures! Then we think of the living water that we read of in the Old and New Testament, that water of which the Lord said to the woman at the well, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4. 14). Oh, dear friend, the everlasting well of water! That will not change. We think, too, of those storehouses of Christ; they are still full. They do not change. What a provision is in them for the poor and the needy.

Oh, the precious truth, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday." Now, let us come just a little closer to this point, *yesterday*. Think of what Jesus was in that great day, from all eternity past (we can only speak in the fallen language of men). He was taken by the Father and set up as His first elect in the everlasting covenant. When in that covenant, He loved His people "with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31. 3) before "the worlds were framed" (Heb. 11. 3): "Jesus Christ the same yesterday." That love that He had to them as He received them as the gift of His Father. How He loved them, how He received them thankfully, gladly, in spite of what they were.

"He knew how wicked men had been,
And knew that God must punish sin,

So, for His people, Jesus said,
He'd bear the punishment instead."

Blessed truth, this:

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew." (H. 438)

He loved them with "an everlasting love." Moses writes of it in Deuteronomy 33. 3: "Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand." Oh, there is that love of yesterday.

But let us come a little further, and come to the place of Calvary. What love was there. He Himself declared in the fifteenth of John, prior to going to the cross: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (verses 13, 14). What love was there; He loved the people; He loved His people to the end. Wonderful truth that was yesterday: yesterday in eternity past, yesterday at Calvary's cross; He loved the people. He loved poor sinners, He loved ruined souls; yes, what love!

"On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free;
Say, while lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?" (H. 766)

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Then, oh, that love, "**to day.**" "To day." You, poor soul, in all your struggling; you, in all your fearing; you, in your times of unbelief; you, who would fear God; you, who desire to draw near unto Him; you, who long to come near – oh, the love! Love fills His heart still. You who feel your wandering state – we think of that beautiful hymn speaking of Jesus' love for His people, His wandering people too:

"He loves through every changing scene,
Nor aught can Him from Zion wean;
Not all the wanderings of her heart
Can make His love from her depart." (H. 633)

"Jesus Christ yesterday, and to day," and then, "**for ever.**" Oh, think of that, soul, when you change time for eternity; you, who would fear God; you, who would long to be with Him; oh, then, that love! How love will fill up everything! We cannot really speak of what it is to experience that love there. "Loved with an everlasting love." But could we not say the same, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" in this aspect: His grace. I cannot go into that right now, but may the Lord lead you into it – His grace of yesterday, His grace for to

day and His grace for ever. Truly, much more could be said of all these things. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

As we conclude tonight, may the Lord direct our hearts into something of this grand, wonderful truth, and the more we understand of the end of the conversation of the Lord’s servants, His pastors, the more we should understand something of this Jesus who changes not. Oh, that love He has, love to sinners fills His heart, and it still is so. Oh, He does love. He is love.

Lastly, we think of the abiding nature of it, the abiding nature of this Jesus, for He speaks unto His people, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28. 20), and, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13. 5). We think back upon the visit with our friend (Mrs. Bernie Rinzema, a long-standing member of the church, loved and esteemed by all) in the rest home yesterday. It seemed that she could not get away from that as over and over and over she repeated to us, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” That was the foundation upon which she rested. Oh, this is the foundation: “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

Hymn 667, “Immortal honours rest on Jesus’ head,” was then sung, and the service was concluded with the benediction.

POWER IN THE WORD

Redhill
October 5th, 1880

My dear Friend,

Power is the main thing; words are simply nothing but empty sounds. The real power of the gospel is God talking to the soul. The sound of words is the voice of man, or words may be seen by the eye in reading God’s Word, but when they talk to us, that is God’s power and voice. It is the peculiar nature of the gospel that it does not talk about Jesus when it comes in power, but Jesus Himself talks to the soul. So it is written: “When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee” (Prov. 6. 22). This is the grand secret. Men may read about Jesus, and form an opinion of Him, but for Him to talk to the soul forms an acquaintance with Him. You know the difference between reading the Bible and the Bible talking to you. So it is also in hearing the Word. Sometimes Jesus is talked about, and at other times He talks to the soul, and wins the heart and affections to Himself.

Yours in the truth,

Joseph Hatton

SOWING AND REAPING

Sutton Coldfield
May 14th, 1846

My dear Friend,

I have been very glad to receive your two letters and the mournful account you give of yourself. You are well aware how I have been compassed about with difficulties of all sorts for many years, and that my earthly soul has burned at the presence of the Lord, feeling I was not able to stand before His indignation, for His fury seemed poured out like fire from all quarters, and there was no foothold left. My prayers seemed like black despair; no shadow of a hope entered my heart for a long time, and I felt as if it never would. And why was all this? It was surely to humble me, for the Lord looked on and saw the need for it. It has left a great fear upon my spirit, for I know not how soon my sin may procure the same again. I once thought the people of God did not get into such places, and that the Lord would preserve them from such paths. We forget all the sorrow and shame and fear that Jeremiah, Hezekiah, David, and many more fell into, and are apt to think the accounts they give only refer to their own times. Alas! I have found the Lord will not be mocked; but when all my foolishness in my profession, which I had been sowing, was ready to reap, the Lord made me to reap it with a witness, until I was sick of myself and sick of my ways. Then, then, the Lord turned my captivity, and taught me to abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. Then the Lord said, "Now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder" (Nahum 1. 13). O what good tidings these were! for I never expected to see the sun, moon or stars, any more; I thought I was clean gone for ever.

This is the way the Lord makes our profiting to appear. "He will not always chide," but He will humble to the dust, and then is the due time for exalting. The Lord will not have us always talking of an abiding temptation, as if He had made no provision for us. What better provision can there be than, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? (Matt. 11. 28). We have not because we ask not. We let things slip on, and bear the burdens which the Lord continually invites us to cast upon Him. How often have I felt this these last ten days! Often have I prayed with very little prospect of success, and have risen from prayer and found no relief; yet in a few minutes, mourning at my want of access, I have perceived such a calm and sweet change as at first I dared not take, but it was accompanied with such gratitude to the Lord and such rest, that I could not but acknowledge, "This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psa. 118. 23).

Thus the Lord has dealt with me, or I think I must have given all up. There is one thing Satan cannot do: he cannot work a real, humbling love to Jesus Christ; it is such a downfall to his kingdom. He will only deceive hypocrites with a spurious love, full of feigned humility and bitter hatred to the true people of God.

May the Lord comfort you in all your various afflictions, so that the profiting may appear to the glory of God and the good of His church.

Your affectionate friend,

James Bourne

FOLLOWING AFTER LOVE

From Thomas Cole (1627-1697)

“Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4. 7). That which is intended here is,

First, Love to the saints as such. Unfeigned love of the brethren is a sign of a pure heart, and that we are indeed born again.

Secondly, Love to all men; it is due to all: “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another” (Rom. 13. 8). That we owe to all; every man may challenge it; every man is our neighbour in that sense, to be the object of our love; we must extend it to our very enemies; it is the fulfilling of the law; the duty of man to man, prescribed in the second table,* cannot be performed without it. Love is above all illumination and knowledge; a more sure mark of *regeneration*: “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4. 16). Love is one of the communicable attributes of God, “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 5. 5). We are followers of God, when we walk in love.

Common professors have some love one to another, but if you trace it up to its original, you will find it a selfish, mercenary love, in which they rather respect themselves than Christ; it is not for His sake, but for some outward respects of relation, neighbourhood or usefulness, in the common concerns of this life; it may be for their agreement in opinion about some lower matters of religion. This is but the friendship of the world, and may be consistent with real enmity against God and good men as such: but perfect love, i.e. real, sincere, Christian love, is for God’s sake, because He has so loved us, and given us a new command, to love one another (see John 13. 34).

There is no true love among men till we are born again. He exhorts those who have put off the old man, and are renewed in spirit, to put away all bitterness, wrath, etc. Before *regeneration*, we are “foolish, disobedient ... living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another”

* First table – duty to God, commandments 1-4; second table – duty to man, commandments 5-10. Ed.

(Tit. 3. 3); biting, devouring and consuming one another (see Gal. 5. 15). It looks rather like a description of wild beasts than men, so savage and fierce are we by nature: nothing but a spirit of *regeneration* will sweeten and mollify the hearts of men. That which unites us to Christ, unites us one to another. We are all one in Christ, but we shall never be all one among ourselves, till we are united to Christ; then the peace of God rules in our hearts, “to the which also ye are called in one body” (Col. 3. 15).

There is no true, good nature among men but what flows from grace. Sin hath so poisoned and soured man’s nature, that till that serpentine venom be purged out, and a better spirit be put into us, there will be little harmony or concord among men. Having put on the new man, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved” (Col. 3. 12). Were this mark of regeneration more visible in our days, it would be a token of good, of a more effectual work of the gospel among us, than for aught I see does yet appear. Hatred, variance, etc., are reckoned up among the works of the flesh, as directly opposite to the fruits of the Spirit. This loving disposition arises out of *regeneration*: that the fundamental ground of it is our conformity to Christ, which necessarily follows upon our *regeneration*. Christ is the express image of His Father. The saints are, in their finite capacities, the express image of Christ, in whom they see the Father, who, as God, is one with the Son. Whilst they behold the Son as God-Man, they see their human nature hypostatically* united to the divine; they see their human persons joined to the Lord in one Spirit (see 1 Cor. 6. 17).

COME, AND LET US REASON TOGETHER

*Fragment of a sermon preached by William Gadsby (1773-1844)
at Manchester*

Text: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD” (Isa. 1. 18).

Here is a special people addressed, “a small remnant.” They tremble and fear under a feeling sense of their guilt and utter unworthiness; but God mercifully calls unto them, saying, “Come now, and let us reason together.”

Some people think they are as good as any of their neighbours, and a deal better than most, and they try thus to comfort themselves. But unless God brings them to repentance and teaches them to place entire dependence upon Christ, they will sink into black despair. The Lord does not say, “Come pious, come virtuous,” but, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

* Hypostatical: two distinct natures in one person without confusion of natures; Son of God, Son of Man in one Person, which is Jesus Christ. Ed.

The Pharisees have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God (see Rom. 10. 3); and thus they delude their own souls. But the characters alluded to in our text feel themselves to be double-dyed sinners – outcasts from society and from God; justice seems to cast them off; law and mercy, all seem against them, to cast them off as sinners. Do *you* really feel it? Do you confess it before God? If so, you are precious in His sight.

“A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost has made him so.” (H. 89)

God will appear and save such as feel their need of Him. He came to seek and to save such, even them that were lost. The seeds of iniquity are sown in your heart. Saul of Tarsus walked according to the law, blameless; but when God opened his heart, sin revived, and he died; and sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in him all manner of concupiscence (see Rom. 7. 8, 9). He felt more deeply lost; his heart was circumcised, and he lay, before a heart-searching and rein-trying God, vile, polluted and miserable.

Listen to the nature of the call: “Come unto Me.” How endearing is this word, “Come.” What soul language! To think that the great Eternal Three-in-One should thus affectionately invite poor sinners to come and reason with Him! We should think it an act of condescension if the queen were to reason with her plebeian [low class, coarse] subjects, or if a dignified person were to say to a poor, sick and famishing creature, “Come to me, and I will be your friend. I will relieve your distress, and comfort you.” The poor thing's heart would gladly listen and leap for joy. But here you see Infinite Purity standing at the door of mercy, and saying to such as feel their desolate state, “Come unto Me.” Then think not to place any hope in what you have done, or what you can do; but come, poor sinner, just as you are, with your burden of sin and guilt; for Jesus says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11. 28). You stand between love and mercy on the one hand, and law and justice on the other. Of old, the leper had to be taken to the priest before he could be pronounced clean. You have the leprosy in your heart, and the blessed Spirit must lead you to Christ, who is our High Priest, to be cleansed. Some might ask, “How are we to be led?” You must be blessed with that faith which is of the operation of God the Spirit. Faith in Him will lead you to holiness and purity. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22. 17).

John, who heard, and all Christ's ministers say, "Come." To whom do they speak? Are you a sensibly-lost sinner? Have you been led to believe that Christ is a Saviour for the lost? Are you thirsting, panting and groaning for mercy? You are the characters addressed. Are you willing to be saved in God's own way – by grace, and that God shall be glorified in your salvation? The Lord never says, "Come" to any before He has made them feel their need of Him; and He makes them not only willing but glad to come. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power" (Psa. 110. 3).

So that there is a lawful coming. It is to come as a beggar, poor and helpless, maimed, halt, blind; feeling that you have no legs to stand upon, all your earthly props being gone. You then come breathing after mercy, sighing like the prisoner for liberty to believe. "But," say some, "I cannot believe." Why, you cannot disbelieve; for if someone attacked you and attempted to make you believe there is no God, he could not. What *is* believing? First, to believe that God is, that He is a rein-trying God, who will by no means clear the guilty, and not such a careless Judge as some imagine. Next, that Christ is a mighty Saviour – one who can save the guilty. And, next, that *you* are guilty and need such a Saviour. In these things you have the full assurance of faith; and by and by you shall have faith to believe that that Saviour is yours. The Lord draw you.

Ask yourselves, can you seek refuge anywhere else? Then cry mightily to God for pardon; for Christ, the God of your salvation, will hear you. Why, poor, dear soul, if it were possible for such a one as you to be sent to hell, they would not know what to do with you there. What! A poor sinner, groaning on account of his sins and panting after Christ as his Saviour, be sent to hell? Impossible! The very thought gives the lie to the gospel of God's grace.

"Come now, and let us reason together." What are we to reason about? About your unbelief. As though Christ had said, "Did I not come to save the lost? And yet, because you feel you are lost, you think I did not come to save you. You believe I came to deliver the captives and to set the prisoners free. *You* are bound, you are in prison, yet you think I will not set *you* free. Well, this is your carnal unbelief; but by My Spirit you shall be made free. You say your sins are so great and so many. Did I not save a David, a Manasseh, a Magdalene, a Saul of Tarsus, a Peter, though he swore he never knew Me, even after it had been revealed to him by My Spirit that I am the Christ? Is anything too hard for Me? I came to save sinners, not the righteous. And has it not been revealed to thee that I am just such a Saviour as thou needest? Come, now, and let us reason about these matters."

This reason is not of a carnal nature. We cannot rightly go before God in our own strength, but in His strength; namely, in Christ, who is

our strength and our shield. If we truly confess our wretchedness, vileness and total inability, God will enable us to reason, as expressed in Hosea 14. 2: “Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.” Jacob wrestled with God and prevailed; but not in his own strength, but in the strength of Christ he had power with God and prevailed. Moses pleaded with God for the children of Israel; and what were his arguments? He prayed, “For the glory of Thy great name, save this people” (see Deut. 9. 25-29). As though he had said, “The glory of Thy great name is at stake.” And where is God’s great name? It is in Christ. But some in our day say, “Christ has done all He can to save sinners; and it only remains for sinners to do their part, and then they will be saved”; and yet they are so foolish as to pray to God to help them. Thus does human reason contradict itself. But this is not the reason God intends. A poor sinner will be like Job, confessing his vileness, and saying, “What shall I answer Thee?” (Job 40. 4). God will answer thee, “I am thy salvation” (Psa. 35. 3). You will say, “I am unworthy,” but God will say, “In Me thou shalt have peace” (see John 16. 33). Thus He will glorify His name in the hearts of the people.

RENDERING GOOD FOR EVIL

An extract from The Homilies of the Church of England, first published in 1547

Mine enemy, say they, is not worthy to have gentle words or deeds, being so full of malice or frowardness. The less he is worthy, the more art thou therefore allowed of God, and the more art thou commended of Christ, for whose sake thou shouldest render good for evil, because He hath commanded thee, and also deserved that thou shouldest so do. Thy neighbour hath peradventure with a word offended thee: call thou to thy remembrance with how many words and deeds, how grievously thou hast offended thy Lord God. What was man, when Christ died for him? Was he not His enemy, and unworthy to have His favour and mercy? Even so, with what gentleness and patience doth He forbear, and tolerate, and suffer thee, although He is daily offended by thee? Forgive, therefore, a light trespass to thy neighbour, that Christ may forgive thee many thousands of trespasses, which art every day an offender. For if thou forgive thy brother, being to thee a trespasser, then hast thou a hope in the promise of God that He will forgive thee, to whom all men be debtors or trespassers.

How wouldest thou have God merciful to thee, if thou wilt be cruel unto thy brother? Canst thou not find in thy heart to do that towards another, that is thy fellow, which God hath done to thee, that art but His

servant? Ought not one sinner to forgive another, seeing that Christ, which was no sinner, did pray His Father for them, that without mercy and despitefully put Him to death? Who, when He was reviled, did not use reviling words again; and when He suffered wrongfully, He did not threaten, but gave all vengeance to the judgment of His Father, which judgeth rightfully. And what crackest [speakest] thou of thy Head, if thou labour not to be in the body? Thou canst be no member of Christ, if thou follow not the steps of Christ, who, as the prophet saith was led to death like a lamb, not opening His mouth to reviling, but opening His mouth to praying for them that crucified Him, saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23. 34). The which example, anon [soon] after Christ, Stephen did follow, and after him Paul. We be evil spoken of, saith he, and we speak well. We suffer persecution, and take it patiently. Men curse us, and we gently entreat (see 1 Pet. 3. 9). Thus Paul taught that he did, and he did that he taught. Bless you, saith he, them that persecute you; bless you, and curse not (see Rom. 12. 14). Is it a great thing to speak well to thine adversary, to whom Christ doth command thee to do well? David, when Shimei did call him all to naught, did not chide again, but said patiently, "Suffer him to speak evil, if perchance the Lord will have mercy on me" (See 2 Sam. 16. 11, 12).

THE DEAD HEARING THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD

An extract from John Calvin (1509-1564)

Now when our Lord Jesus Christ says that His voice has power to raise the dead, He is speaking in the form of a similitude. For whatever life we suppose ourselves to have, yet, despite that, if we are separated from God we are in spiritual death, however much the unbelievers imagine themselves to be more than alive in their own wisdom and virtue. And they harden themselves in it, and make their boast of it to the uttermost.

But let us see where the fountain of life is. It is in God, and they are alienated from Him. Also, let us see what is the true life of man. It is not that he should be shrewd and quick-witted, and be able to conduct his business well in this world by his own skill and wits, or to purchase great renown for himself, or to be knowledgeable and well advised, able to give counsel to all other men; it is not that he should excel in all human sciences and in all arts; neither is it that he should be esteemed and renowned as a man of noble courage or as one that has the other virtues commendable among men. But it is a higher thing that we must begin at, namely, to know that God is our Father, that we are defended and preserved by the light of His Word, and enlightened by faith to know the

way of salvation, and to assure ourselves that our whole welfare lies in Him, so that we seek it there with all lowliness. It also lies in our knowledge of the means whereby we attain to it, that is to say, by having our Lord Jesus Christ in whom the whole fulness of grace is presented to us.

Thus you see what the spiritual life of man is and where it lies, namely, in the light of God's Word, and in the working of the Holy Spirit, so that we are fashioned anew according to the image that was lost and utterly defaced in us by Adam's sin. And is that to be found among worldly men? Even among those who are most honoured? Certainly not! It is not without reason, then, that our Lord Jesus Christ uses this similitude, saying that we are raised from death by means of the gospel. For no matter how much we may flourish, no matter how splendid we may appear before men, and no matter how much we possess to invite the esteem of men, yet we are only wretched, putrefying flesh. There is nothing but rottenness and infection in us. God loathes us; we are damned and lost before Him; the angels abhor us; all creatures curse and detest us, and all things demand vengeance on us, because we defile them. For there is such corruption in men that heaven and earth must be infected with it, until God has brought about a change.

Our Lord Jesus Christ's saying means, then, that until we are renewed by the gospel and by the faith that proceeds from it, we are but as dead men. There is not one drop of life in us that deserves the name of life. And, to be brief, we are as if buried in the grave, and it is necessary for us to be drawn out of it again, by which we are given to understand that we are cut off from God's kingdom, and consequently that there is nothing but filth in us. And yet, in spite of all this, God vouchsafes to be linked and united with such as put their trust in Him and His goodness. That (I say) is, as it were, our rising again.

FEARING TO PRESUME

A letter written by Ruth Payne of Brighton, who died in 1994

22 Brigden Street,
Brighton,
Sussex.

March 15th, 1951

My dearest Kitty,

Now if I may be helped by the Lord, I will try to give you a few details of the way I hope He has been leading me during the past few weeks, for I know that's what you are wanting to read; but don't expect big things or you will be disappointed; not that anything the Lord teaches us should be called small.

“But what call we small things – sin’s whole cancelled sum?
 ’Tis greater than all things, except those to come.” (H. 778)

I believe the Lord spoke those words to me once when I was telling myself that I had not enough to go before the church [at Galeed, Brighton] with, for when those words came, all fear of the people was taken from me. But to my shame – I confess it – I did not go then, because my heart was set on joining at Crowborough, which was not the Lord’s will, and because of my rebellion the Lord withdrew His teaching from me for a long time. That was twelve years ago and I have had to walk in darkness and desertion more or less ever since. I did not realise at first that the Lord had withdrawn from me, but after some long time it suddenly dawned on me. It came to me something like this: “Do you realise what a long time it is since you had anything from the Lord?” And I felt alarmed, and I began to try and search my ways, but the Lord was still silent. Thus I went on for some years, sometimes despair took hold of me, and held me for a long time. I think I must have gone on in this way for about ten years, with perhaps a gleam of hope now and then.

I begged the Lord to show me why He was contending with me, and among many things which I felt He was displeased with me about, was the early Sunday morning prayer meetings. I commenced going to these about three years ago, but still the Lord seemed silent, but after some time, the neglected ordinances came to my mind, and I wondered if that was the cause, and sometimes felt perhaps it was, but I felt the Lord would not allow me to walk that way again, and knowing that many people who have turned away from the ordinances have walked in darkness for the rest of their lives, or if not actual darkness, in a very dejected state.

But about two years ago, the ministry began again to be very helpful, and sometimes a word would give me much encouragement, although in between these helps I would sink again into my dismal state. It was about two years ago also, that the ordinances again began to trouble me, and I longed to be able to walk in them, if only the Lord would allow me to, and if He would shine into my heart. But I feared He would never do that, seeing I had twice neglected them. By these long years of desertion, the Lord, I hope and believe, had made me willing to give up Crowborough, and to walk the way the Lord would have me go, and willing to be wherever He would have me be, and I believe also He gave me an affection for the people of Galeed, so that I was not only willing to stay at Brighton if it was His will, but willing and sometimes desirous of being one with His people at Galeed.

For about two years now I have wished the ministers would not keep mentioning the ordinances, for they troubled me, and I could see no prospects of ever being allowed to walk in His ways. Sometimes I would

scan the text quickly, as the minister was giving it out, to see if there was anything in it to make the minister mention the ordinances. Once I remember saying to myself, "He can't get anything about the ordinances out of that," but before the sermon was finished, he did. Or another time when the minister started to mention them, I said to myself, "O do leave off about the ordinances."

Early this year, about the middle of January, Eunice came to me one evening and told me she had written to Mr. S.F. Paul [the deacon] about joining the church, and asked me if I would go with her. I replied, "No, I can't." Then Dad asked me if I was going with her, Mary also asked, and a week later Eunice again mentioned it, but each time I responded, "No, I can't come."

Nothing more was said, but a week later Mr. John H. Gosden was preaching on the Sunday, and in the morning commenced reading at John 8. 12: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." That afternoon, and for three days following, those words gave me no rest, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." I was so troubled, I knew not what to do. The words seemed to put another light on things, for I was waiting for the light before I followed. "If only I could be brought out of this darkness," I had been saying to myself for months, "I would try to obey Him." But these words seemed to imply that I had got to follow first, then I should have the light of life. I wondered if I had got to follow Him. At times I felt so distracted, I knew not what to do; what if I did follow, and still walked in darkness! But still I could get no rest; the words kept on coming, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." And sometimes the other clause would come, "But shall have the light of life."

On Tuesday morning, after being awake practically the whole night, I looked on the calendar and read, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee" (Isa. 43. 2). I stared at the words for a minute and then thought, "Those are my words! Does He mean He will be with me in the waters of baptism as well as in the waters of affliction?" (For I hope He spoke those words to me years ago when in trouble.) And I felt He did mean it. But still all that day I was still in trouble about it, for I still felt I could not write to Mr. Paul; I did not know what to do. I several times thought I would think no more about it. Then it would come, "God knows. He will know you have turned back again." And this word came: "If any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10. 38).

After dinner on Tuesday, Mary asked me if I was not feeling well, as I had eaten scarcely any dinner. I replied I was quite alright, but she persisted asking what was the matter, so I told her I was wondering whether I ought to write to Mr. Paul or not. That evening I walked about

my bedroom so distracted, I felt I should lose my reason. Still I could not bring myself to write to Mr. Paul. If only I could get something from the Lord to decide, but all that came was, "He that followeth," etc. Sometimes I felt I would venture, but the thought of eating and drinking at the Lord's table unworthily seemed so solemn.

I went on like this until Wednesday evening, and as soon as I decided to do so, I felt calm and all fear of the people was taken away. I begged the Lord to give me some token for good, that I might know that I had not done wrong in deciding to speak to Mr. Paul, and that evening I believe He did give me a token in the first part of Mr. John Raven's sermon. I believe a little love did flow out to the Lord, and made me long for the service to end so that I could speak to Mr. Paul.

On the following Friday, after the prayer meeting, I saw the deacons, and felt very much helped while speaking to them. On the Sunday evening, after seeing the deacons on the Friday, as I was walking to chapel, I was thinking of, and wondering at the Lord's mercy to me, in allowing me to be exercised for the third time, and making a way for me to honour Him in this way, when so many people are never led that way again after they have drawn back the first time, and I was wondering at His mercy, and why it was, when these words dropped into my mind, "Eternal thoughts of love to thee" (H. 732). And I feel that is the only reason.

That evening it was Mr. Frank L. Gosden preaching again, and he preached from those words, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt" (Hos. 2. 14, 15). I felt as if the whole of that sermon was for me. It was as if he knew everything I had told the deacons on the previous Friday evening. I took this as another token for good. In fact, one token after another seemed to come, right up until the church meeting, which was on Thursday evening, February 8th, when Eunice and I were both very much helped again.

It really amazed me at the way one thing after another came to my mind, and I had had such a fear that through nervousness my lips would refuse to move. While I was sitting alone in the vestry, and Eunice was speaking before the church, I had to try and beg the Lord to calm me, as I felt all confusion, and could not think of anything much to tell them, and soon a calmness did come gradually over me, and I was able to stand before the people quite calm, although I could not bring myself to look at their faces. We were both given a very warm welcome.

On the following Wednesday evening, February 14th, we were baptized by Mr. Frank Gosden. He was so kind and nice. I am enclosing

a slip [sadly missing] with hymns, etc., for that service, and what I can remember of the service of the Sunday evening, March 4th, when Mr. Frank Gosden again preached and received us in at the ordinance.

Now I must close. With much love from your ever sincere friend,
Ruth

FOLLOW AFTER MEEKNESS

By J.C. Philpot (1802-1869)

(Concluded from page 25)

But how are we to follow after this grace of meekness? By learning the contrary. I have had at times a contentious spirit, and (more especially formerly) have, no doubt, carried this spirit into the ministry, whilst endeavouring sincerely and honestly to contend for the truth of God. But “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1. 20); and thus, as the Lord the Spirit leads us on, we shall flee from our own spirit, and cease from strife and contention. Not that we shall be a whit less faithful, God forbid! Nay, the more we feel the power of truth, shall we with greater faithfulness contend for it, but we shall contend more in the spirit of meekness. How often have we mistaken false fire for the light and fire of God’s Spirit! and have contended more for our own views, in our own spirit, with many rash and unbecoming words, rather than for the glory of God. But after a time we are led to see that strife and contention, in our own spirit, are contrary to the spirit and temper of the gospel, and are brought to see what a blessed grace the spirit of meekness is. Nay, the very want of it, the risings up of an excited temper; the anger, strife, envy and jealousy that often work in our bosoms, convince us how little we know of “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10. 1). We thus feel what a blessing it is to be made humble and submissive; and how impossible it is to enter into communion with a broken-hearted Jesus, till the soul is in some measure weakened by His Spirit. But it is by having a succession of things to try and provoke us, that we learn whether we have meekness or not. The husband can be very meek, while his wife and children are doing everything to please him; but where is his meekness when they thwart and provoke him? The master may be very meek, while the servant is obedient, obliging and attentive; but how is he when things are different? Thus the knowledge of the disease makes us desire the remedy, and by the wretched sensations caused by wrath and evil temper, we are brought to desire an experience of those sweet feelings which gospel meekness produces in our consciences.

THE MEMORY OF THE JUST
An account of Esther Cousins of Liverpool

Esther Cousins, widow of Thomas Cousins, passed away on December 3rd, 1923, aged 77 years. She was for forty-three years a member of the church at Shaw Street, Liverpool, being transferred to us, it is understood, from the church at Earith, Hunts, while the church at Shaw Street was under the pastoral care of Mr. J.K. Popham.

She was a most consistent member, exemplary in her attendance, often at the cost of much physical suffering. She was much concerned for the prosperity of the church. She was brought to know much of the depth of the Fall in her own nature, and this knowledge left her without hope in herself. "Can ever God dwell here?" (H. 310) has been her language concerning herself. She was brought to know in no uncertain way that "salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2. 9). She loved to hear the name of Jesus exalted in the preaching of the Word as the only hope of helpless sinners. He was to her indeed the Rock of her salvation (see Psa. 89. 26).

In her early days at Liverpool she had many anxieties in providence in the bringing up of a young family, and many are the deliverances she could speak of in those things. The preached Word was good to her in those days. I recall shortly after I came to know her, over twenty years ago, that she had a serious illness. While in the midst of this, she had great darkness of mind, such as could be felt, but light was restored, and she was delivered from the power of such darkness. That was indeed a "waymark" to her, an "Ebenezer." Another time of blessing she recounts in the following letter:

Liverpool,
 March 17th, 1915

My dear Friend and Sister, in hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,

You have been much in my thoughts this week. I believe you love to hear of the work of God in the hearts of His people. Well, the last two years I have not been favoured with such special blessings, but have been refreshed and comforted. Some sweet meditation at times, but of late have felt barren, and at a distance from Him whom my soul loves.

On Monday night before retiring to rest, a horror of darkness came over me. I was afraid to bend my knees, feeling God to be so very great and holy, myself so vile, not fit to take His name upon my lips. When I got into bed, I sighed and groaned aloud. I said, "O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me. Thou hidest Thy face; I am troubled. Why

art Thou so far from helping me? Where are Thy former lovingkindnesses? are they clean gone for ever? How long, O Lord, how long? Make haste to help me, and bring my soul out of this prison house.”

I was very tired, and fell asleep a short time. When I awoke, I felt the blessed Spirit’s drawing; my heart was getting warm. I said, “Dear Jesus, come tonight, and give me another token of Thy love; apply Thy precious blood to my conscience; clothe me in Thy righteousness.” Jesus seemed so near and so precious; the blessed promises were so sweet. I said, all I wanted was to fall at His dear feet in humility and love, and wash them with my tears. What sweet communion we had together! It is impossible to describe it, language is too mean. I felt I could part with home, children, friends, and all below, but never, never, Lord, with Thee. I said, “I cannot let Thee go until Thou bless me.” He spoke these words so sweetly: “I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (John 16. 22). Oh, when my Beloved had gone, I mourned and wept. I said, “Am I still to grapple with sin and Satan?” Then you came into my mind; such love I felt, and sweet assurance that you too will join in that everlasting song. O my dear friend, what a prospect we have! Not unto us, but to His name be all the glory (see Psa. 115. 1).

“O glorious hour! O blest abode!
I shall be near, and like my God!
And flesh and sin no more control
The sacred pleasures of my soul.” (H. 473)

I hope you are well and enjoying the best things. You will think I am talking of none but myself. Well, I trust my desire is, that it may redound to the honour of a precious Jesus.

E. Cousins

Nearly twelve months ago she was certified to be suffering from a most painful disease. About this time she had several very marked and blessed revelations of her dear Redeemer, and she felt from that time that she had finished with time things, that she could now part with her dear ones. What a reality one felt that there was in her experience, while listening to her relating it.

As the end of her journey drew nigh, she suffered much physical distress. She was for the most part comfortably upheld in her soul about this time; some blessed exercises she spoke of in the midst of her suffering. While musing, as it were, with her soul on one occasion, she murmured, “My sins, my sins.” A dear one in attendance in the room said, “Yes, but your sins have been forgiven.” “Yes,” she replied, “what ever would I do now, if they had not?” A few days before she passed

away, her dear ones at her request passed before her, and like one of old, she blessed them in the name of the Lord.

Six days before her death, the enemy was allowed to distress her very much, and caused her to cry and shout for mercy, wrestling hard to know once more her safety in the Lord. How she looked for her loved Saviour, fearing He had departed for good, and at such a critical time; but after half an hour's combat, the Lord blessed her again, gave her another sip of His love, and she said, "I'm satisfied; He is my Saviour; I can wait now." She was not conscious when she died, but we are all satisfied she is now in glory. Her life testimony has been enough for us her children. Her end was the crowning work in the *saving by grace* of a poor and ruined sinner. It was felt to be one more blessed confirmation to tried and powerless sinners, of the almighty power of God in fulfilling His word, that where He begins a good work of grace, so He will graciously carry it on and complete it.

J.R.

THE ROD OF GOD

(*Ezek. 20. 37*)

How trying the process by which we are brought,
 To bow to the will of our God!
 What care He bestows, and what wisdom and love,
 Are seen in His dealings, while making us prove
 That 'tis well to pass under the rod!

He knows that when all things go smoothly along,
 We recline on this wilderness sod;
 And therefore He chooses by crosses and woes,
 Bereavements, temptations, afflictions, and foes,
 To make us pass under the rod.

O! discipline painful, yet needful that we,
 May constantly wait upon God;
 If necessity drive not, we seldom should go,
 And less of His Spirit and presence should know;
 If we did not pass under the rod.

How often we look on the worldlings around,
 Each making some bauble his god!
 And in moments of darkness the flesh seems to say,
 As we watch them carousing, 'tis well to be they;
 For they never pass under the rod!

But the blessed One smiles, and the murmur is hushed,
 And we weep at the throne of our God;

And we breathe as we're bending, "If Thou wilt be near,
 In all Thy chastisings, to strengthen and cheer,
 I would rather pass under the rod."

Ah, then we've no wish for a trial withheld,
 Or less thorny the path to be trod;
 The saints through all ages, in this pathway did rove,
 And, if we rest with them on the bosom of love,
 We must surely pass under the rod.

Great Head of the household, since Thou hast ordained,
 That the heirs of the kingdom of God
 Should obtain it through great tribulation below;
 O! teach us much kindness and succour to show,
 When our kindred pass under the rod.

And let us take courage, since all our concerns,
 Are safe in the hands of our God;
 For we soon shall have done with the sigh and the tear,
 No more have life's conflicts to face or to fear;
 And no more to pass under the rod.

Author unknown

NOTICES OF DEATH

James Wallace Brooks, a faithful deacon for forty years, and a consistent church member for fifty-six years, at Zion Chapel, Brabourne Lees, passed away to his eternal rest on Thursday, December 20th, 2018, aged 91 years. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come" (Isa. 57. 1).

David Crowter, a faithful deacon for thirty-seven years, and a consistent church member for forty years, at Jireh Chapel, Attleborough, Nuneaton, passed away to his eternal rest on Friday, January 11th, 2019, aged 84 years. "Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psa. 12. 1).

EDITOR'S NOTE

Readers may have noticed that, starting with the January number, the hymn numbers are shown when the hymn is taken from Gadsby's hymnbook. This is to make it easier for readers to refer to the hymn if they wish. We will not be able to do this for hymns from other hymn books.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MARCH 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

GOING TO THE LORD JESUS SEVEN TIMES

“And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times” (1 Kings 18. 42, 43).

Why seven times? Seven is the number that God has purposed to show forth His divine perfections. It also has the sense of completion. The number seven appears throughout the Scriptures beginning with the seventh day at creation, which was the day of rest (see Gen. 2. 2), right through to “the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues” (Rev. 21. 9). For a seeking, believing sinner to go seven times to Jesus on the throne of grace, is according to the express words of holy Immanuel Himself, when He taught us here below, “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18. 1). To go praying seven times means to go continually again, and again, and again.

The Lord, in His goodness to the seven thousand in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal, had just answered the prayer of Elijah in consuming the sacrifice on the altar which Elijah had built. The prophets of Baal were also slain by Elijah, and the people turned to the Lord. The much-needed rain to break the famine was promised. Elijah prays and sends his servant to the top of Carmel. There was no sign of rain. Elijah tells him to go seven times, and upon the seventh a small cloud appears, which was followed by a goodly rain. Everlasting blessings are promised to those poor, ruined sinners who repent and turn for salvation to the Lord Jesus. The gospel instruction is that we should continually go to the Lord Jesus. May the good hand of God bring us to the feet of Jesus in the vital and great matter of the salvation of our never-dying souls! May we go again seven times to the Lord’s feet every step of the journey to Immanuel’s land, and prayerfully commit *all* into His hand.

How we need the quickening breath of the Holy Ghost to go again seven times. May the Holy Ghost make the Lord Jesus very precious to believers. “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious” (1 Pet. 2. 7). The Apostle Paul wrote, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8. 26). So often the dear, tried saints know not how to order their words before Almighty God, yet the Spirit encourages and

aids them in breathing desires to address the Lord Jesus. The polished orator may be able to put together a string of eloquent sentences, but tried believers can only make a few broken petitions. In their distresses they may pray some back-to-front sentences, not being able to find suitable words, yet the Lord reads their heart and knows their sorrows and longings as they try to pray. In His own perfect time and way, the Lord sends down answers of peace and deliverance.

How sweet it is when the Holy Ghost grants us access to the Lord Jesus on the throne. After Jesus cursed the fig tree, and Peter the next day marvelled that it was withered away, Jesus said, "Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11. 22-24). Again Jesus said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11. 13). Jude instructs "them that are sanctified by God" (verse 1), "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost" (verse 20).

Not all the dear saints may be favoured with such access, yet the Lord has promised, "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Psa. 102. 17). God has said also, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them" (Isa. 41. 17). Whatever the felt state of the soul, the Lord's word stands: "And therefore will the LORD wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: ... He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee" (Isa. 30. 18, 19). The Almighty God declares of Himself in Micah, "Because He delighteth in mercy" (chapter 7. 18). It is the same stupendous love that brings a sinner to destitution, and that favours such with access at the throne of grace. May we be encouraged still to "go again seven times."

God has given "a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2. 9). That name is the precious name of Jesus.

"This is the name the Father loves
To hear His children plead;
And all such pleading He approves,
And blesses them indeed." (H. 383)

Jesus said, "If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it" (John 14. 14). The "any thing" cannot mean mere fleshly wishes, or for

unprofitable things that we may consume upon our lusts (see Jas. 4. 3). This gracious and large word “any thing” means all those things that a pilgrim so much needs for his enduring unto the end: all the spiritual graces and all the help that he must have to get to heaven. It also includes helps, strength, deliverances that are promised in Christ. It also includes the spiritual exercises for loved ones, for the prosperity of Zion, for healings, for necessities and for the Lord to prepare us for our dying day and take us to Himself. May we bring our “any thing” and our need of the Lord to do “every thing” (Job 42. 2), “seven times” to the feet of Jesus.

“Touched with a sympathy within,
He knows our feeble frame;
He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same.

“Then let our humble faith address
His mercy and His power;
We shall obtain delivering grace,
In the distressing hour.” (H. 120)

The Apostle John writes, “And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him” (1 John 5. 14, 15). May we be helped to bring our “any thing,” “according to His will,” and ask, as Jesus said, “in **My name**” “seven times.” To ask “seven times” is to persist at the feet of Jesus, upon “the throne of grace.”

“How sweet and precious is the name
Of Jesus Christ, the Lord, the Lamb,
To sinners in distress!
A name just suited to their case;
Pregnant with mercy, truth, and grace,
With strength and righteousness.

“His name, as Jesus, suits them well;
He saves from sin, wrath, law, and hell,
From guilt and slavish fears.
His name is Wonderful indeed;
An able Counsellor, to plead,
Just suits a case like theirs.

“Immanuel! thrice-blessèd name!
The God we trust is still the same!
An endless Father, He;
A most illustrious Prince of Peace;
A Tower, a precious Hiding-place,
Is Jesus Christ to me.” (H. 557)

THE BRIDE'S EXERCISE

Sermon preached by Mr. Jabez R. Rutt at Lamberhurst Strict Baptist Chapel, on Lord's day afternoon, November 15th, 2009

Text: "By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me" (Song 3. 1-4).

This beautiful sacred book of Holy Scripture is Hebrew poetry. The preceding books are the poetical books of the Holy Scriptures of truth. The Scriptures are broken up into various sections and this is the poetical section. The Psalms are Hebrew poetry. Before these poetical books, we have what are called the historical books of the Holy Scriptures. As we come through the Holy Scriptures of truth, we have the Pentateuch which are the five books of Moses written by Moses, giving the history of the creation of the world which was revealed unto him by the God of heaven, and then we have the history before the flood and subsequent to the flood, and then the calling of Abraham.

And then the historical books of Holy Scripture follow the history of the children of Israel. And we also have the history that is given to us in the book of Esther which comes before these poetical books (they are there because they are historical books). Esther, Nehemiah and Ezra were written during the time of the captivity of the children of Israel in Babylon, but they are historical books; that is why they are in that part of Holy Scripture.

And then the poetical books, Ecclesiastes and Solomon's Song etc, sacred holy poetry, men inspired of God. And probably the most sacred is the Song of Solomon. I think it was Dr. John Gill who said concerning Solomon's Song, that it is "the holy of holies of the Scriptures," because the subject matter of the poetry is so sacred and so holy, it concerns the sacred spiritual intimate union between Christ and the church, and it was written by King Solomon, hence it is called Solomon's Song.

After these books, of course, we have the prophets. I am only just going through these really for instruction to show the order in Holy Scripture. We have the major prophets and the minor prophets. The major prophets are called that purely and simply because of the size of their prophecy, and so we have the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah* and Ezekiel in that order. Isaiah and Jeremiah were the major prophets that prophesied before the Babylonian captivity, Ezekiel the major prophet

* Jeremiah also prophesied at the time of the captivity, but not in Babylon. Ed.

during the Babylonian captivity, hence they are in that order. And then after that we have the book of Daniel and then the minor prophets, Daniel is sometimes counted among the minor prophets, really that is because of the size of the book. And then we have the order there of the prophets that are before the Babylonian captivity, and then the latter prophets are after the Babylonian captivity. So we have an order that the Scriptures are written in and set before us.

Now Solomon's Song portrays an intimate, sacred, spiritual union between Christ and the church. And the language that is used is that of a husband and wife, or the bride and the Bridegroom. The Bridegroom is none other than Christ, and He is usually termed the Beloved, and the spouse is none other than the bride of Christ, the church of God; and here she terms Him as, "Thou whom my soul loveth." And so the bride loves the Bridegroom. The Lord Jesus speaks of His bride as "My sister, My spouse." So we have the most intimate terms that are used here, and we explained this morning how that the Spirit of God comes down to our level to set before us deeply mystical spiritual truth, and He does here in Solomon's Song. There is no closer earthly union that we can know than that between a husband and wife; it is a union that is of love; there is that loving union and communion one with another. We can understand, naturally speaking, that intimate love and union one to another. And so the Spirit of God uses this sacred poetry in this way, coming down to our level to understand this intimate, close, sacred union that there is between Christ and the church. Indeed, we have the prayers of Solomon's Song, that is, the prayers of the bride, the spouse of Christ, and it starts with them right at the beginning, "Let Him kiss me," the desire for union and communion. If you really love somebody you want to be with them, and so it is with the spouse concerning Christ: "Let Him kiss me" (Song 1. 2).

In my early spiritual days after Christ was first revealed to me, I could really read this with enlightened eyes. I remember reading the Song of Solomon and it was the very longing desire of my heart: "Let Him kiss me," let me have union, let me have communion. When the Beloved speaks to your heart, that is a divine kiss, that is a divine intimation that is given to you that He loves you. When some sweet promise warms your heart, when some word is made precious to your soul, when you come up to the sanctuary, and perhaps under the ministry of the Word your heart is really warmed and drawn to Christ, that is a divine kiss. And this is what the spouse desires: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth," not anybody else's, His. It is in intimate love. "Draw me," another prayer of the spouse, "we will run after Thee" (chapter 1. 4). O there is that longing desire to be drawn into spiritual things. "Tell me." This is another prayer of the spouse as she prays to her Beloved, "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou

feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of Thy companions?” (chapter 1. 7). “Tell me,” speak, Lord, speak to me. “Let me see Thy countenance, let me hear Thy voice” (chapter 2. 14). These prayers in Solomon’s Song are the true believer’s. “Let me see Thy countenance, let me hear Thy voice.” There is a desire for intimate union and communion and to hear the voice of the Beloved. My sheep know My voice and they follow Me, “and a stranger will they not follow.” They know the voice of the Beloved and they will not follow a stranger. They listen for His voice and they follow that voice, they know Him (see John 10. 4, 5). Is there that longing desire in your heart for the Lord to speak? Have you come up to the house of God today and deep in your soul there is that desire, “Lord, speak to me”; “Lord, O I do need Thee”?

Now let us look here at chapter 3, because we have an experience in these verses and it is an experience of the living family of God: “By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth.” The night seasons. There are two things here: there is the night season and there is the bed, resting on the bed. This bed – again, poetry uses metaphors; it speaks elsewhere here of Christ and His spouse resting in a bed, and that union and communion that they have there in that bed. There are various ways of looking at this bed. There is a bed of sloth – we read of it in chapter 5, a bed of sloth, of ease, of sleepiness. But there is also a bed of affliction; there is a bed of sorrows; there is a bed of tribulation; there is a bed of temptation. It is a night season; it is dark; you cannot see by reason of darkness. “By night,” in this darkness.

Again, this metaphorical language, we just touched on it this morning, and unless you understand this, the way that Scripture speaks and this metaphorical way in which it speaks, you will not understand Holy Scripture. Just look for a moment at the Apostle Paul writing to the Thessalonians in his first epistle. He says in chapter 5, “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness” – you see, it is dark in the night season; he is speaking of their spiritual state – “that that day should overtake you as a thief” – that is, the day of judgment when Christ comes again. “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep.” You see, a bed is for resting and sleeping, isn’t it? He says, “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober” (verses 4-6).

You just think of the parable of the ten virgins, five wise and five foolish. The five wise virgins were the virgins that were truly called by divine grace, truly brought to living, vital, saving faith in Jesus Christ. The five foolish virgins thought they had been called by grace, thought they had divine grace, but they had not. They had a name that they lived and yet were dead. But listen to what it says. These ten virgins, the wise

and the foolish, "They all slumbered and slept" (Matt. 25. 5), all of them. They were in a sleepy condition. Spiritually, where are you at this time? Are you in a spiritually-sleepy condition? Slothful condition? Not lively in the things of God? Sometimes we need the Lord to stir us up. He sometimes uses some very deep and solemn things to stir us up unto a greater diligence in the things of God and the matters of our soul. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him" (1 Thess. 5. 6-10).

The Laodicean church was one of the seven churches of Asia, written to by the Lord Jesus through His servant John in the Book of the Revelation. Now the condition of that church was one of sleepiness: "Thou art neither cold nor hot," slothful, half-hearted. The Lord did not like it. Therefore He said, "I will spue thee out of My mouth." They were lukewarm; they were neither one thing nor the other (see Rev. 3. 14-17). I say, how are you personally, spiritually? Is it the night season? Is it a dark season? But the wonderful thing here with the spouse is, though it is dark, she is seeking, seeking Christ, seeking her Beloved, seeking to hear His voice, seeking to see His countenance, seeking to know Him.

"By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth." She loves Him. That is why she wants to see Him, she wants to hear Him; she loves Him. "By night on my bed I sought Him." That night of temptation, it is so dark. But then she says, "I found Him not." Where? On that bed, she could not find Him. So this stirring up – the Lord sometimes brings us into these conditions of temptation, tribulation and trial to stir us up to a greater diligence, to seek Him, to search after Him. That is an earnest cry that the psalmist cries in Psalm 42, isn't it. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." We can be so half-hearted and so cool in our approaches unto the Lord, unto the Beloved. We get into this condition of half-heartedness, of lukewarmness, until we come into great trouble. Then we really need Him. Until the Lord brings something in our pathway and we really need Him, and we cry to Him, then we pray to Him that He will reveal Himself.

But she says, "But I found Him not. I will rise now" – she will get off that bed – "and go about the city." The spouse lives in a great city. And the great city that she lives in is Mount Zion, the city of the living God. She lives in a spiritual city. "Behold, I lay in Zion for a

foundation” (Isa. 28. 16). What is that foundation? Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That is the foundation of Mount Zion. “I will rise now, and go about the city.” It means going to the house of God. Perhaps there may have been times when you have come up to the house of God with such earnest desires and longings for Christ to be revealed, but when you get into this sleepy condition, you have slipped into a very slovenly and slothful place, so that you come like the door upon its hinges. You still come to the house of God, you still sit under the ministry of the Word, but there are not those longings and desires that there were at one time.

“I will rise now.” Now she is in great need; now she comes to the house of God; now she goes about the city. Just as any city, it has streets and broad ways. “I will seek Him.” The Beloved, He speaks words of great encouragement to these seeking souls. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Luke 11. 9). He hears the prayer of the destitute; He will not despise their prayer (see Psa. 102. 17). These words are spoken to these poor, destitute sinners that come up to Mount Zion. Have you come destitute? Have you come empty? Have you come ruined? Have you come undone? Have you come mourning and grieving over your sin? Have you come hounded by the devil, tempted of the wicked one?

“I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets.” That is, attending the means of grace. You will not be an occasional attender at the house of God, no. It will not do for you to have one service a week, or just the Lord’s day, if you are really hungering for spiritual things. You will be at the house of God when the doors are open; you will be at the prayer meeting; you will be at the week evening service; you will be here on a Sunday, because your soul will be longing for something, looking for something, waiting for something. “I will rise now.” Why? Because she had a need.

I look back when the Lord began with myself, and there was a time as a young man that I only ever went to the house of God on the Lord’s day; I did not go in the week. I say that to my shame, but that was the case. Generally I went on a Lord’s day. I did have a period sadly in my youth when I only used to go Lord’s day morning. But there came a time when the Lord deepened the work of grace in my heart. It was not so initially – I had been for some time under the law – but there came a time when the Lord deepened that work in my heart, and friends, nothing could keep me from the house of God. I had such a need, whenever the door was open I was there, prayer meeting, week evening service. I used to go to the services of nearly all the chapels in Bedfordshire, virtually every night of the week I was at chapel, because I had such a need and such a longing, such a hungering and thirsting.

"I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found him not." She keeps seeking, but she does not find Him; she keeps looking, she keeps waiting, but she does not find Him.

"The watchmen that go about the city." Who are the watchmen? The ministers of the sanctuary. We read of these watchmen in Ezekiel. The divine commission that was given to the Lord's servant Ezekiel was, "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel" (Ezek. 33. 7). He was divinely ordained of the God of heaven as a watchman, as a prophet, as a preacher of righteousness. In the twenty-first chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah we read this: "The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come." "Watchman, ... Watchman, what of the night?" So the Lord's servants, they preach the Word; they preach Christ crucified; they set forth the glory of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. They preach the Word of truth, the law and the gospel. As the Lord may enable them, they try to preach the whole counsel of God and set the truth before the people. That is the office of the gospel minister or the watchman.

But of course, the illustration here, a watchman on the city walls, it is of a city, a defenced city with walls and towers around it, and on that city, in the night and during the day, but particularly during the night, there are watchmen; they watch for the enemy coming. Martin Luther makes some comments on the Lord's servants as watchmen, as they defend the city, as they warn of what is coming, etc. And he makes this point, and it is very relevant to our day. He speaks of a city being attacked from a certain quarter, and the enemy building ramparts against the city. He said, "There may be many watchmen in that city, but if I run to the part of the wall that is not being attacked, then I am not being faithful. The faithful watchman must go to the place that is being attacked." This was made so real to me in the controversy that has been among our churches concerning the Person of Christ and the soul of Christ. The Lord has led me by His Spirit to preach many times on it. And I was actually told at one chapel, "You should not preach on that; you are just being controversial," and it came so vividly to my mind of what Luther said, that I can go to any part of the wall of the city to defend it, but if I run away from the part that is being attacked and do not defend the part that is being attacked, I am not being faithful. So the very doctrines that are under attack, they are the very things that the watchmen must deal with. "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear" (Ezek. 2. 5) he must defend at the point at which it is being attacked. "Watchman, ... Watchman, what of the night?"

Now, the watchman, he preaches the Word; he warns sinners of the wrath which is to come; he warns them that if they live and die in their sins they will be lost for ever; he warns them that they have got to die and stand at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. He warns them that the only way of salvation is in and through the Person and work of Jesus Christ, and that they must have the Holy Ghost to quicken their souls and to bring them from death into life and from darkness into light, and it is only the Spirit of God that can bring a poor sinner to Christ. He warns them that “ye must be born again” (John 3. 7).

And then another part of the office of the watchman, of the true gospel minister, is to encourage seeking souls to seek Christ, and to speak to them of His wonderful grace and love and mercy, that He loves to hear poor, coming souls, and that if they seek they will find, if they ask they will receive, and if they knock the door of mercy will be opened. That is part of the office of the watchman. And another part of the office of the watchman is to expound the Word and to open the doctrines of grace, and this will feed the souls of the Lord’s living family so that they grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. All these things are what the watchman does.

Now the spouse here, she says, “The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?” She enquired, “Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth?” She asked these faithful watchmen concerning the matters of her soul and concerning her Beloved, and no doubt they pointed her to the place where grace abounds and they exhorted her to pray and to cry unto God and to seek His mercy and grace in Christ Jesus. But here in this experience of the spouse, she says, “It was but a little that I passed from them.” That is the watchmen. You know, friends, the reason that she did not receive until she passed the watchmen, was so that she did not build her hopes on the watchmen. It is right that we should love and honour the Lord’s servants. That is a very right thing. We are told and exhorted and instructed in the Word of God to count them worthy of double honour (see 1 Tim. 5. 17), those of the Lord’s servants that expound the Word.

So there is a right honouring of a minister, but we are not to lean on the minister; we are not to build our hopes on the minister; we are not merely to follow men. And this is what is meant here: though she spoke to the watchmen, she could not find her Beloved; they could not give Him to her. That is really what is being said. They could preach and preach and preach, but they could not preach Christ into her heart, no. They could not reach into her soul. I heard a minister say, and it grated with me when he said it – he was speaking of a person that was favoured under his ministry, and he said, “I preached Christ right into her heart.” I sat in the pew and I thought, “You never did”; it is only the Spirit of

God that can do that. It is the Spirit of God sealing the Word, not the minister, no. The minister can do nothing. He has got no power within himself. He preaches the Word. He longs for the Spirit of God to anoint him that he might preach the Word with power, but he is absolutely dependent on the Spirit of the living God. Whether he is warning, whether he is exhorting, or whether he is setting forth the glories of Christ, it is only by the Spirit of the living God that anything can be made effectual in the hearts of the hearers.

“It was but a little that I passed from them.” The spouse, she was taught not to depend on the ministers, and so she was not favoured initially under their ministry. She wanted to be; she spoke to them; but they could not give her what she needed. They no doubt preached faithfully, but they could not give her what she needed. Now it says here, “It was but a little that I passed from them.” Now when you get past men in your seeking, then you will find the Beloved. That is the meaning, when you get past men. Good men, godly men, you have got to get past them.

“It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth.” She found her Beloved, after diligent search. “Those that seek Me early shall find Me” (Prov. 8. 17). They shall find Me; they make a diligent search. It is like that woman that we read of in the gospel searching for that piece of silver. She turned the house upside down, she cleaned it inside out, until she had found that valuable piece. Are we diligent? Are we seeking the Lord with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our soul? Do we come up to the house of God with our soul in our hand, longing, yearning, begging, pleading, that the Lord would bless us, teach us, favour us, have mercy upon us?

“It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him.” My beloved friends, when you hold Christ in the arms of faith, how precious, so sweet, when you embrace Him, when you touch the hem of His garment. “I held Him, and would not let Him go.” O my beloved, something that you have so longed for, so sought for, so earnestly prayed for, and now you receive it, and O how precious when the Beloved comes and when you embrace Him, and you can say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His” (Song 2. 16). “My Jesus has done all things well” (H. 410). When you have a little glimpse of the glory of His Person and feel the preciousness of His grace, and realise that He has suffered and bled and died for you, that He offered Himself as that glorious God-man, God with us; that He offered His holy, sacred humanity, a body and soul, as a sin-atonement sacrifice for your sin; that He shed every drop of His precious blood to deliver you from the condemning sentence of the law; that He was wounded for your

transgressions and bruised for your iniquities, then, “I held Him, and would not let Him go.”

Think of what Christ has done for you. He left the bosom of His holy Father. He came into this wicked, sin-cursed world. He was made of a woman and made under the law (see Gal. 4. 4). He was made a curse for us (see Gal. 3. 13). He was a “Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53. 3). He passed through untold depths of agonies to deliver your soul from eternal death and damnation. He offered that holy, sinless, spotless humanity as a sin-atonement sacrifice unto the Father, and you are received into grace and favour with the God of heaven, through that glorious sacrifice, through that precious blood that was shed at Calvary, through that dear, suffering Saviour. Hence we are commanded to keep the Lord’s supper to remind us of the tremendous cost. “This do in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22. 19).

“I held Him, and would not let Him go.” O my Beloved, “I would not let Him go.” Precious, you know, when we are so tenacious, holding on to the Beloved. You just think of Jacob at Peniel, when Jacob was left alone and there appeared an angel that wrestled with him. That angel is Christ; the angel of the everlasting covenant, that is who is wrestling with Jacob (see Genesis 32. 24-32). And what did Jacob say? “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.” “I will not let Thee go.”

We are exhorted by the Lord Jesus to be importunate in prayer. He gives us an illustration of the unjust judge and the poor widow. She had a great adversary, and she came again and again and again to the unjust judge. He was a hard-hearted man that would not listen to the woman. But she came again and again; she kept speaking to the judge of her adversary that afflicted her day by day. And eventually he relieved the widow of her adversary, he gave judgment in her case, and she was delivered from her adversary. And the Lord Jesus said, “Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?” That is an encouragement to pray. In this parable He says, “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (see Luke 11. 5-13 and 18. 1-8). “I will not let Him go” – no.

“It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until” – now here we have this experience which continues – “until I had brought Him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.” “My mother’s house” is the church of God. “The chamber of her that conceived me,” we read in Psalm 87 that, “this and that man was born in her,” born again of the Spirit, brought forth in Zion in the church of God, a living child, a living, spiritual child in the house of God. You see, “I

... would not let Him go, until I had brought Him.” And so after that sweet revelation of Christ to your soul, and His love shed abroad in your heart, what a longing there is to be at the house of God. You cannot wait to get there – that is the meaning here.

“I would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into.” This is the point I want to make – “into.”

‘No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home.’ (H. 139)

Not in the outer court, but in the inner court. Not in the congregation, but in the church. “Into” – that is the meaning, to come into, among your brethren and sisters in Christ, because that is what they are. They have sought Him just like you have; they have found Him just like you have; they have been brought into union just like you have; they have a heavenly Father just like you have; they have had fellowship with Him just like you have. And they are your brethren and sisters in Christ. Now it is to come into that family, outwardly in the profession of faith, and that is what we have here in the text. Now in that outward profession of faith and coming in, “I ... would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me,” you have brought Him in.

Now we know what we believe to be the divine order, the New Testament order of coming into the church and among the people of God in outward profession of His holy name. We know that the path is through the waters of baptism. “I will bring Him into my mother’s house,” and to pass through those waters of baptism, to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, upon the profession of your faith in your Beloved. That is what it is. It is an open profession of your love to Jesus Christ and what He has done for you. Think of the Jewish dispensation of the Old Testament and the great lengths that they had to go in their open profession. They had to take a sacrifice up to the altar, they had to slay the sacrifice, they had to sprinkle the blood on the altar, and constantly and continually they had various rites and washings and sacrifices that they had to perform. Now Isaac Watts in his hymn, he says,

“But we have no such lengths to go,
Nor wander far abroad;
Where’er Thy saints assemble now,
There is a house for God.” (H. 366)

Now in the New Testament church, there is no great burden, no onerous duties that the Lord lays upon His loving children, no. It is to walk through the waters of baptism. That is one of the commandments of the God of heaven. “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14. 15). It is to follow Christ. In our last hymn we shall sing that beautiful verse,

“View the rite with understanding;
 Jesus’ grave before you lies;
 Be interred at His commanding;
 After His example rise.” (H. 428)

That is what is set before us in the baptistry; it is the grave of Jesus Christ. And the believers, as they are taken down by the minister into the baptistry, are testifying before all men, professing before all men, that they humbly trust that Christ was baptized in those terrible sufferings for them, and that He sunk into death for them. And when they are dipped, baptized under the water, it is professing that all their hope is in a crucified Jesus; when they come up from the water, they are professing that they humbly hope that Jesus rose again for their justification. In other words, all their hope is placed on Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and all their hope of life is in that risen Saviour who has put away sin by the offering of Himself. That is the profession of a true believer before the whole world, in the sacred ordinance of believer’s baptism. And what the believers profess as they come up out of the water is, that they rise in newness of life, and follow their Lord and Master, and “present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is their reasonable service” (see Rom. 12. 1).

“I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.” What motivates this soul? Love. Love to Christ, love to the church, love to His people; that is the very motivating principle of the living child of God. Now of course, the other aspect of the sacred ordinances of the Lord in the New Testament – there are only two – one is believer’s baptism and the other is the Lord’s table. And we have exactly the same doctrine of truth in the Lord’s table as we have in the baptistry, and that is, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We remember, when we break the bread, “This is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me.” We remember when we partake of the wine, “This cup is the new testament in My blood” (see 1 Cor. 11. 23-30), the blood of Jesus Christ. You see, it is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It speaks only of that glorious Person; it speaks only of His wonderful grace. And souls that have been brought into union with Christ, that is all they want to speak of, that is all they want to know – the Lord Jesus Christ.

“It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.” I have not touched it, but I certainly meant to – we read together Psalm 130, because there it is so expressive of a soul in the night season, and a soul crying out in hope: “Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice: let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of

my supplications. If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee." "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13. 38). "But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

"By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and would not let Him go, until I had brought Him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me."

May the Lord add His blessing.

THE ASSURANCE OF FAITH

London,
March 31st, 1776

My valued Friend,

The deep things which relate to personal experience of the Holy Spirit's dealings with the soul ought to be matters of prayer, not of disputation. I hope the dear people of ___ will never lose sight of this certain and important truth.

The question on which you condescend to ask my judgment is, "Whether it be necessary for a man to know that his sins are forgiven him before he can go to heaven? Or, Is every soul sensibly pardoned in time, who is pardoned in God's account before time?"

You have stated the enquiry in very strong terms. God enable me to return a clear and a just answer.

It has long been a settled point with me, that the Scriptures make a wide distinction between faith, the assurance of faith and the full assurance of faith.

1. Faith is the hand by which we embrace, or touch, or reach toward, the garment of Christ's righteousness, for our own justification. Such a soul is, undoubtedly, safe.

2. Assurance I consider as the ring which God puts upon faith's finger. Such a soul is not only safe, but also comfortable and happy.

Nevertheless, as a finger may exist without wearing a ring, so faith may be real, without the super-added gift of assurance. We must either admit this, or set down the late excellent Mr. Hervey (among a multitude of others) for an unbeliever. No man perhaps ever contended more earnestly for the doctrine of assurance than he; and yet I find him expressly declaring as follows: "What I wrote concerning a firm faith in God's most precious promises, and an humble trust that we are the objects of His tender love, is what I desire to feel, rather than what I actually experience." The truth is, as another good man expresses it, "A weak hand may tie the marriage knot, and a feeble faith may lay hold on a strong Christ."

Moreover, assurance, after it has been vouchsafed to the soul, may be lost. Peter, no doubt, lost his assurance, and sinned it away, when he denied Christ. He did not, however, lose the principle of faith; for Christ had beforehand prayed concerning him, that his faith itself might not fail, and Christ could not possibly pray in vain. A wife may lose her wedding ring, but that does not dissolve her marriage relation. She continues a lawful wife still, and yet she is not easy until she find her ring again.

3. Full assurance I consider as the brilliant, or cluster of brilliants, which adorns the ring and renders it incomparably more beautiful and valuable. Where the diamond of full assurance is thus set in the gold of faith, it diffuses its rays of love, joy, peace and holiness, with a lustre which leaves no room for doubt or darkness. While these high and unclouded consolations remain, the believer's felicity [intense happiness] is only inferior to that of angels, or of saints made perfect above.

4. After all, I apprehend that the very essence of assurance lies in communion with God. While we feel the sweetness of His inward presence, we cannot doubt of our interest in His tender mercies. So long as the Lord speaks comfortably to our hearts, our affections are on fire, our views are clear, and our faces shine. It is when we come down from the mount, and when we mix with the world again, that we are in danger of losing that precious sense of His love, which is the strength of saints militant and the joy of souls triumphant.

But let not trembling believers forget that faith, strictly so called, is neither more nor less than a receiving of Christ for ourselves in particular, as our only possible propitiation, righteousness and Saviour (see John 1. 12). Hast thou so received Christ? Thou art a believer, to all the purposes of safety. And it deserves special notice, that our Lord calls the centurion's faith, "great faith," though it rose no higher than to make him say, "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Matt. 8. 8, 10).

The case likewise of the Canaanitish woman is full to the present point. Her cry was, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David."

And, a little after, "Lord, help me." Jesus at first gave her a seeming repulse, but her importunity continued, and she requested only the privilege of a dog, viz. to eat of the crumbs which fell from the master's table. What was our Saviour's answer and our Saviour's remark? An answer and a remark which, sooner or later, will make every broken sinner take down his harp from the willows: "O woman, great is thy faith" (Matt. 15. 22-28).

5. The graces which the blessed Spirit implants in our hearts (and the grace of faith among the rest), resemble a sun-dial, which is of little service, except when the sun shines upon it. The Holy Ghost must shine upon the graces He has given, or they will leave us at a loss (in point of spiritual comfort), and be unable to tell us whereabouts we are. May He, day by day, rise upon our souls, with healing in His beams! Then shall we be filled "with all joy and peace in believing," and "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 15. 13).

6. Are there any in your society who come under the denomination of bruised reeds and smoking flax? Let them know that God will take care of them. The former will not be broken; the latter shall not be quenched. Bless God for any degree of faith, even though it be as the smallest of all seeds. Sooner or later it will surely expand into a large and fruitful tree. However, stop not here; but, as the apostle advises, "covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Cor. 12. 31), and the gift of assurance, yea, of fullest assurance, among the rest. The stronger you are in faith, the more glory will you give to God, both in lip and life. "Lord, Increase our faith" (Luke. 17. 5).

I am, dear sir, deeply yours,

Augustus Toplady

THE PATIENCE OF HOPE

From Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

If time continues, December 2019 will be the 150th anniversary of the death of J.C. Philpot. Therefore, God willing, we are inserting a piece by J.C. Philpot in each number this year.

"And patience of hope" (1 Thess. 1. 3).

The grace of hope is that third grace in living union with faith and love in the heart of God's people, as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Heb. 6. 19). But what does hope take its rise from?

Testimonies from God; evidences of interest in the love and blood of the Lamb; manifestations of mercy to the soul; promises applied with

power; the witness of the Spirit to our spirit that we are born of God; believing and feeling the work of grace has been begun, and is going on in the heart; the reviving of God's presence, the refreshing dew and unction of His grace, the meltings of the soul at His feet, and the breakings in of the Lord of life and glory upon the heart – these things lie at the foundation of a “good hope through grace” (2 Thess. 2. 16). Not because you are members of a gospel church; not because you worship at a certain chapel; not because you have received certain doctrines; not because your life is outwardly consistent with the Word of God; not because you pray, and read the Bible, and perform a number of duties – such never can be the foundations of “a hope that maketh not ashamed” (see Rom. 5. 5). The only solid foundation of a gospel hope is, testimonies from God, marks of His favour, the application of blood to the conscience, meltings of spirit under the sweet whisperings of divine love, and a well-grounded persuasion that the work of grace with power has been begun in the conscience.

But wherever this hope is, there will be “patience” attending it. Love has its labour, faith has its work, hope has its patience. But what is meant by the expression “patience”? It means *endurance*, as though hope had to endure, faith to work, and love to labour. Hope stays at home, patiently enduring. By this patience, hope in the sinner's soul is manifested. Just in the same way as faith has to work against unbelief, and love to labour against enmity, so hope has to endure everything that contradicts it, and that would, but for the grace of God, effectually crush it. Would unbelief, without the power of God, effectually crush faith? Would enmity, without the power of God, utterly extinguish love? So would despair strangle hope in its very cradle, unless sustained by the mighty power of God.

Each of these graces in the soul has then its separate antagonist. Unbelief fights hand to hand with faith; enmity foot to foot with love; and despair front to front with hope. And as the strength of faith is manifested by the power with which it fights against unbelief, and the strength of love is manifested by the power with which it labours against enmity, so the strength of hope is manifested by the power with which it endures the contest with despair.

But what causes despair or despondency in the sinner's soul? Is it not because he finds so much in himself that is utterly opposed to God and godliness? If there were no inward adulteries, no secret idolatries, no darkness of mind, no deadness of soul, no hardness of heart, no tempting devil, no alluring world, no body of sin and death – you would not feel despondency set in upon you as a flood. But this is it which causes despondency in a feeling soul – to find in himself so much of

everything that is opposite to the work of God upon the heart; so much of everything that is the very opposite to what a saint desires to be, and what he believes every saint should be. But as long as he can see his signs, as long as he can feel the power of God's testimonies, as long as he can believe he is treading in the footsteps of the flock, hope maintains its hold.

But no sooner does the Lord hide His face, testimonies sink out of sight, evidences give way, and the evils of his fallen nature manifest themselves, than despondency begins to work. It must be so. If I had no sinful heart, no unbelief, no infidelity, no inward adultery or idolatry, no pride, no hypocrisy, no covetousness, no powerful lusts, no boiling corruptions, no harassing enemy, no alluring world, no wicked heart, why need I despond? But it is because there is such opposition to vital godliness in the sinner's heart, because there is so much in him that he knows and feels to be contrary to grace and the work of grace, that makes him doubt.

But these very things call forth hope's peculiar work – to *endure*. It is the “patience of hope” that proves its reality and genuineness. Hope does not go forward fighting and cutting its way. Hope is like a quiet sufferer, patiently bearing what comes upon it. Hope is manifested in enduring, as faith is manifested in acting.

For instance: when the Lord hides His face, when testimonies sink out of sight, when signs are not seen, when Satan tempts, when the work of grace upon the soul seems to be all obscured, and in consequence a feeling despondency begins to set in, then the “patience of hope” is needed to endure all things – not to give way, but to maintain its hold. It acts in the same way, according to the beautiful figure of Paul, as the anchor holds the ship. What is the main value, the chief requisite in the cable that holds the anchor? Is it not *endurance*? The cable does nothing: it simply endures. It does not make a great ado in the water; its only good quality (the only quality wanted in it), is strength to endure, not to break. When the waves rise, the billows beat, the storm blows, and the tide runs strongly, then the work of the cable is not to part from the anchor, not to break, but firmly to maintain the hold it has once taken.

And thus with the anchor too. It does nothing, and is wanted to do nothing. To hold fast is all its work and all its excellence. Thus it is with a hope in a sinner's breast. Has the Lord ever shown Himself gracious unto him? Has the Lord ever made Himself precious to his soul? ever dropped a testimony into his conscience? ever spoken with power to his heart? Has his soul ever felt the Spirit inwardly testifying that he is one of God's people? Then his hope is manifested by enduring patiently everything that is brought against it to crush it, and, if God did not keep, utterly to destroy it.

BROTHERLY COMMUNION

A letter to George Whitefield

Everton,
Bedfordshire
May 22nd, 1769

Dear Sir,

Your kind note was received yesterday, which tells me where you have been, and what you were doing. You have got your wings again, I find; 'tis well: I wish I could send you a congratulation without envy, but I cannot. Whilst you are winging your way from county to county, and perching, like an eagle, on the cupola of every tabernacle, I am sitting at home solitary, like a sparrow on the housetop, or rather like an owl in the desert. Able I am, through God's mercy, *fruges consumere terræ*; [to eat the fruits of the earth] and scarce fit for anything else.

At present I have no prospect of going anywhere from home to preach, and but for these words, "Wait the Lord's leisure," and, "Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's," I should never expect to go out again. Everything is apt to hurry and disquiet me, and at times I am scarce able to bear company. Indeed, if I may tell you the truth, I do not look for a speedy end of my troubles, because my heart is not humbled under the affliction. I cannot kiss the rod; and while matters are at this pass, 'tis no marvel that the Master keeps my feet in the stocks. I wish and pray for a resigned will, but have it not; yea, wish more for resignation than for health. Dear Lord, bestow it on me.

Oh, how churlish is my heart at times, much harder than a nether millstone; then I sit and squat like some poor toad under a tile, and spit at everything that vexeth me. Anon [soon] my heart is broken down with sweet contrition, and then I get such charming sights of grace, such cheering gleams of love, as make me think I ne'er shall grumble more. But these visits oft are short, and when they end, I slide at once from heaven to earth and downward still to hell, the hell of my own bosom. Weary I am of myself, right weary and ashamed. Eleven years at a gospel school, and have not yet half learnt the first lesson of the lowest form, "Take up thy cross." What a booby [simpleton]! None but Jesus could bear such dunces in His school. 'Tis well for me that He is God as well as Man, else I should weary Him out, and His compassions would fail.

But enough on this subject. Perhaps I may disquiet you, if you are a little sunk into the scald [painful] miserable order. Well, you are returned with a cold and hoarseness. Proper physic [medicine] after a five weeks pentecostal feasting. We are like children, always wanting the treacle-pot; but a wise man says, "It is not good to eat much honey"

(Prov. 25. 27). And, therefore, thorns of the flesh usually follow close at the heels of heavenly manifestations and succours. These thorns often seem to us a mere dead weight, but prove an excellent ballast, and keep every ship from oversetting [capsizing]. When we get into port, we shall drop our ballast, this house of correction. Oh, for a safe passage and a happy landing. To be met and welcomed by Jesus, and embraced in the arms of this faithful and unchangeable Friend. Come, my brother, let us trudge on. Whilst I creep, do you run; and the Lord direct our feet, and quicken our pace, and prosper our work continually. Peace be with thee, and with all that love the Lord Jesus.

John Berridge

HAVING OBTAINED HELP OF GOD

Extract from a sermon by Mr. Gerald D. Buss

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day” (Acts 26. 22).

Now let us look at the language of our text, because we will find in it much to encourage weak believers. Firstly, you will notice that it is in the present tense, and there is something continuous about it: “Having” – as if the apostle were continually having to draw from the help of God. Yes, he is looking back to having obtained help in the past; but there is something continuing. It is a daily religion, an hourly religion. Have you a religion as dependent as that? But this is the wonder of it!

“When most we need His helping hand,
This Friend is always near.” (H. 132)

We have it in Psalm 46 (a wonderful word, isn’t it?): “God shall help her, and that right early” (verse 5). Yes, God is never too late; He is “right early.”

“Having obtained help of God.” Yes, the apostle continually had to draw help. Again and again he came to the end of everything, and then he had to go to this blessed fulness, this sacred fountain, back to the God of his help. And did the Lord weary of his coming? Did the Lord leave him to fend for himself? Did He say, “Look Paul, you must pull yourself together: you cannot keep coming back”? Our earthly friends may say that, but not the Friend of sinners. No, no! “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Luke 11. 9).

“Come just as thou art, with thy woe,
Fall down at the feet of the Lamb,

He will not, He cannot say, Go,
But surely will take out thy stain.” (H. 627)

He welcomes helpless sinners, and the more they come, the more welcome they are. Isn't that a mercy? He never tires of hearing our cry. He does not tire of that simple prayer, “Lord, help me!” (Matt. 15. 25).

You may be wearied in your prayers tonight. You may be wearied of your own voice in your prayers. You may have come to the conclusion that you may as well give up praying altogether. That is the voice of Satan!

“Does Satan tempt you to give up,
And call no more on Jesus' name?
Cast not away your little hope;
Come hither, and behold the Lamb.

“Power and love in Christ combine,
An able, willing Saviour too;
Is He a Sun? On thee He'll shine.
Is He thy God? He'll bring thee through.” (H. 1028)

For you see, friends, it is the obtaining of help of God, help from God, that is the proof of our sonship. As you look back on the words of this text, as you look back on your Ebenezers, on the “Lord, help me's,” it is a proof of your sonship. It is a proof of your blessed relationship, by grace, with God.

“Having obtained help of God.” You will notice in this word again, there is something very personal. You see, real religion, especially this obtaining of help, is personal. It is a personal communication between the God of grace and this poor, helpless, weak, worthless sinner. It is something between God and that sinner. It was so with Jacob when he wrestled with the angel on that memorable night. He obtained help of God; he prevailed with God and with man. It was something between God and Jacob (see Gen. 32. 24-29). Now there will ever be, between you and your God, this line of communication. *You* coming, as a poor sinner, to the throne of grace, your prayer ascending up to heaven for Jesus' sake, and God hearing that prayer, and, for Jesus' sake, sending down help, deliverance, answers. Then you know something of what we read in that beautiful word: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4. 16). You may say, “I feel so unworthy of it,” but so do I, and so am I. But why is it that helpless souls are welcome? See who sits on that throne. Who is it that sits on the right hand of the Father? It is His dearly-beloved Son, the Lord Jesus, who sits as a merciful and faithful High Priest, a sympathetic High Priest. As we read in verse 15:

“For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

“That human heart He still retains,
 Though throned in highest bliss;
 And feels each tempted member’s pains;
 For our affliction’s His.” (H. 23)

He knows their cases, He understands them, He feels for them, enters into them. He knows just what is needed. He sends help, blessed help down. And this is the proof that we, poor sinners as we are, have such an High Priest and can ever come, pleading that name that is above every name, to obtain help for Jesus’ sake. It is proof that we have such an High Priest.

I will never forget, it was in one of the weakest moments in my life, when I had to preach (not feeling at all well) one Lord’s day morning. I had no strength physically and spiritually. I felt as it were at the ends of the earth, as if it were utterly impossible to get out of the house, let alone stand up in the Lord’s name. But after a few moments in despair, suddenly that beautiful word dropped into my soul (I’ll never forget it! O it did me good!):

“This is the name the Father loves
 To hear His children plead;
 And all such pleading He approves,
 And blesses them indeed.” (H. 383)

Then that put strength in me. I saw that blessed name, the name of Jesus, the Friend of sinners; and then the Lord put strength in me to plead that name, and for Jesus’ sake help was given. Do you remember this path? “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”; and that is for sinners. “If any man sin, we have an Advocate” (1 John 2. 1) that guilty sinners, who feel at the ends of the earth, who feel so unworthy, so vile, may freely come to the God of all grace.

You see, sin is a weakening thing. Satan will tell you otherwise, but sin has made man unutterably weak; it enslaves him. So when the sinner’s eyes are opened to see what sin has done, then he feels to need the help of his God.

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day.” Notice again, what help was it the apostle needed? What help do you need tonight? If we asked the congregation what help they need, I expect there would be a tremendous variety of needs. There would be needs of our souls, that secret need that no one else knows about: “The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy” (Prov. 14. 10). There are the needs of our body, afflictions, pains; needs of our family, of our loved ones and our children. There may be

needs in the church, needs in the ministry, needs of deacons. There may be needs in your circumstances, needs in the nation. Sometimes we seem surrounded by needs, in every direction we look.

The apostle knew this path and the needs he had. He needed faith, for many times he was surrounded by darkness, and without faith he could not have continued, could he? He said, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5. 7). If he had walked by sight, he would have fled many, many times. But he had walked by faith, God-given faith. He knew where it came from; he said, "Faith ... is the gift of God" (Eph. 2. 8). But he needed faith; how many times he needed faith! You say, "Could not the Apostle Paul pray of his own volition? Could not this eminent man of God pray just when he wanted to, and how he wanted to, or where he wanted to?" No, this is the Apostle Paul's language: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8. 26).

THE PROMISE OF THE GOD OF BETHEL

An extract from Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline (1685-1752)

"I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" (Gen. 28. 15).

The believer may be assured that God will not leave him, till He hath done that which He hath spoken to him of, and that He will be all that He hath promised to him at Bethel.

1. Believers may be assured of it, upon the ground of the unchangeableness of God. There may be many vicissitudes and changes in thy case. It is only the communion day above that shall have no more night. Thou wilt certainly change, and change ere it be long; but darest thou say, God will change as oft as thou dost? Thinkest thou that He will change in His love, when thou changest in thy frame? No; "He will rest in His love" (Zeph. 3. 17). Whom He loves, He loves to the end. Thy security stands upon God's immutability: "I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. 3. 6).

2. Believers may be assured that God will not leave them, till He hath done what He hath spoken, and assured upon the ground of God's foreknowledge. What makes men many times alter their sentiments, is, because there are many things that fall out contrary to what they projected; but God foresaw what would be. He foresaw that even after a Bethel heart-burning interview with God, thou wouldst grow lukewarm and indifferent; yet, notwithstanding this, He met with thee in Bethel, and

spake with thee there; and therefore He will do what He hath spoken to thee. He foresaw what a prodigal, what a backslider you would be, yet He gave His word to you, and therefore He will not go back.

3. You may be assured He will not leave you, believer, till He hath done what He hath spoken, because "He is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10. 23); "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1 Thess. 5. 24). Though, when His children break His law, and keep not His commandments, then will He visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless His lovingkindness will He not utterly take from him, nor suffer His faithfulness to fail. Once hath He sworn by His holiness, that He will not lie unto David (see Psa. 89. 30-35). "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1. 9).

4. Believers may be assured of this upon the ground of the divine power; or, because God is almighty, and able to do what He hath spoken. The apostle says, The Jews "shall be grafted in" (Rom. 11. 23). Why? "For God is able to graff them in again," having once promised it, and said that He will do it. It is enough to support our faith, that He is able to do what He hath said. Abraham's faith leaned upon the power of God. He was "fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Rom. 4. 21). You may then be assured, believer, that He will never leave you, till He hath done what He hath spoken, unless you can suppose, that He hath out-promised His own power, and said more than He is able to do.

5. It is evident He will not leave you, till He hath done what He hath spoken, if you consider the experience of His people, and your own experience. The experience of God's people, from the beginning of the world, who have always found God to be as good as His word, and the same God that He manifested Himself to be at their Bethel-meeting with Him. They have still found Him to be the God of Bethel, whatever jealousies they entertained of His love. Yet, upon their return, after their dark days were over, they found that His word endureth for ever, and that He never came short of His promise; but notwithstanding all their temptations, they were continually with Him, He holding them by His right hand (see Psa. 73. 23). They still found Him welcoming the returning prodigal, saying, "This My son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15. 24). Now, is it consistent with their experience? And will He take a singular way with you? Yea, thou dardest not deny, believer, but thou hast found God to be still the God of Bethel, even though many times you were fearing that God would never smile upon you again; yet, upon your looking back to His holy temple, you have been made to say, "O He is the same, and His love is not altered nor changed," and that "He hath not forgotten His promise." Hence, how

many times have believers reason to set to their seal to David's exercise and experience, when he is crying, "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?" They fell a praying, "Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be Thou my Helper"; and then have been made to say, "Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness" (Psa. 30. 9-11). May not then experience assure you that He will not leave you, till He hath done that which He hath spoken.

6. The everlasting nature of the covenant of promise may assure you of this: "Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure" (2 Sam. 23. 5). The certainty was not left to your making a covenant with Him, but God Himself made it with you; and therefore you shall be kept by His power, through faith to salvation. Though thou shouldest change a hundred times, God will not change one word of the sweet promise He made to you; because,

7. It is His covenant made with Christ: "I have made a covenant with My chosen"; "and My covenant shall stand fast with Him" (Psa. 89. 3, 28). And hence, "If his children forsake My law ... then will I visit their transgression with the rod, ... nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him" (see verses. 30-33). And because I will not take it from him, I will not take it from them. Your assurance then of His not leaving you, till He hath done what He hath spoken, may stand upon the everlasting love that He hath to Christ, and the standing covenant between Christ and Him. He cannot fail you, because He cannot fail His Son Christ, who hath sealed the covenant with His blood, and in whom, therefore, "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1. 20). And so the glory of God in Christ, the glory of His mercy and truth in Christ, obliges Him by covenant oath to do as He hath spoken.

8. There is one ground of assurance more that I offer, as it lies in the bosom of the text, namely, the divine will and pleasure: "I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." I will not; it is My will and pleasure not to leave you till all be done. You have a word: "The LORD will not forsake His people for His great name's sake." Why? "Because it hath pleased the LORD to make you His people" (1 Sam. 12. 22). Thus it is said, "The Lord set His love upon Israel." Why? "Because He loved them" (see Deut. 7. 7, 8). He will, because He will. "For who hath resisted His will?" (Rom. 9. 19). His will is uncontrollable; and hath He manifested His will in this, that He will not leave you, till He hath done what He hath said? Then you may be assured of it, for He will do all His pleasure, and well may you say, "Thy will be done." The covenant of grace is made up of *I wills* (Ezek.

36. 23-30), including, “I **will** give you a new heart, a new spirit **will** I put within you; I **will** take away the heart of stone, I **will** give you a heart of flesh; I **will** put My Spirit within you” – ten or twelve *I wills*. And this part of the covenant, delivered by Jacob in the text, is like a crowning promise put upon the head of all: “I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.” And what better assurance would you have than this, that God says, “I will”? What He will do, must be.

THE TRUE LIGHT SHINING

A personal testimony by John Bunyan (1628-1688)

I was troubled to know whether the Lord Jesus was a Man as well as God and God as well as Man; and truly, in those days, let men say what they would, unless I had it with evidence from heaven, all was nothing to me. Well, I was much troubled about this point, but at last that in Revelation 5. 6 came into my mind: “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain.” In the midst of the throne, thought I, there is the Godhead; in the midst of the elders, there is the Manhood; but O, methought this did glitter! It was a goodly touch, and gave me sweet satisfaction. That other Scripture did also help me much in this: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9. 6).

THE MEMORY OF THE JUST

An account of Sarah Ann Raven, by John Raven (who was pastor at Smallfield and Hope Chapel, Redhill, and Chairman of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Societies and Bethesda Fund)

Sarah Ann Raven was born at Leicester on July 6th, 1854. The following account was found among her papers after her decease:

“When I was about four years old, I used to go into an outbuilding, and weep bitterly because of my naughtiness and dread of the judgment. I felt I could not bear anyone to know how wicked I was, what should I do when the Lord laid open my sins in that day? How this impression came I do not remember. My parents were very worldly people, and often took me to places of amusement. My dear father was very fond of

card-playing, and my dear mother of dancing. Whatever serious impressions I had were not from home influence. I used to attend a Sunday school, and may have been somewhat impressed there. Sometimes I got my father to read the Bible with me on Sunday evenings. This brought again the sense of sin. When I was six years of age my parents moved to Chesterfield, where I attended a Sunday school at a place where free-will doctrine was taught. I wished I could believe on the Son of God, and be saved, as they told us to do, but I was too bad to do it. I remember being asked if I believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. I replied, ‘Yes, but not as a child of God should do.’”

My mother’s account relates how like the morning dew those early impressions were, and how she grew exceedingly fond of worldly pleasures. In the year 1872, she left home, and returned to Leicester. Then she became acquainted with Miss Staples (first wife of the late Reuben Baker), who had previously been brought out of the errors of Unitarianism, and was a very earnest hearer under Mr. Grey Hazlerigg’s ministry. From her, Mother heard a great deal about Mr. Hazlerigg’s preaching; but it was not until two or three years after her marriage, that she went with my father to Zion Chapel. Her narrative continues:

“I feel I was convinced of sin under the preaching of Mr. Grey Hazlerigg. It was some time before I could believe that God had a people chosen before the foundation of the world, and I felt myself too bad to be a chosen one, but thought everyone ought to have a chance; then I might be saved. The pastor preached seven sermons on successive Thursday evenings on ‘Take us the foxes, the little foxes,’ etc. (Song 2. 15). (Probably Mother refers to five sermons on verses 14 and 15, which were afterwards published.) These sermons seemed to clear the way of salvation to me, and I could see that a mere chance was all on the side of the devil. I awoke one morning with such a feeling of love in my heart to the Lord Jesus, I felt I could leave all, husband, children, everything for Him. I was afterwards tempted about it, fearing it was but fancy. A little while after this, I told the Lord that if He would tell me plainly I was His, I would then ‘Tell to sinners round, what a dear Saviour I have found’ (H. 144).

“I had many fears and much doubting about my case. I thought, ‘How can the Lord save such a sinner as I feel myself to be?’ Blessed be His dear name, He did confirm me again and again in His love. One day, while on a sick bed, these words came to me so sweetly: ‘I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine’ (Isa. 43. 1).

“Then came the time to perform my vow. The remarkable way in which it was brought about I need not describe. I called to see our dear pastor, and was later interviewed by the deacons; then I appeared before

the church, and was received. This was in 1884, and I was baptized on the first Lord's day in 1885. I continued a member of that church* over forty years. I hoped I should grow better, but alas! I seem to grow worse, and the way is often difficult. There have been many trials, but the Lord has been faithful to His word. In the year 1909 (-1910) I was laid on a bed of sickness, and life was in doubt. I was in great darkness of mind when these words came in:

‘Thus, though a sinner, I am safe;
He pleads, before the throne,
His life and death in my behalf,
And calls my sins His own.’ (H. 119)

I then felt, come life, come death, all was well.”

My dear mother omitted to mention that some months or a year before the illness just mentioned, she was very rebellious on account of my being called to the ministry of the Word. One day the Lord greatly favoured her in reading Isaiah 54. The effect of it lasted for several days. She went about her work with tears trickling down her cheeks, and seemed to be rich in the enjoyment of the Lord's favour to her soul. The influence of it was felt by the rest of the household.

My dear parents came to live at Smallfield in Surrey, but the Lord soon took my father to Himself. This was naturally a great grief to Mother, who keenly felt the loneliness of widowhood. Her own narrative continues:

“When the Lord took my dear husband to Himself suddenly, it was a great trial to me; but the Lord seemed to be very near. He promised to be a Husband to the widow, and He has fulfilled His word; in all I have been called to pass through, He has been with me, and kept me. I transferred my membership to Smallfield, where I have been helped under the ministry. I still have times of darkness, and do not go long without some trial of faith, but the Lord has delivered, and will deliver.

“October 22nd, 1928. In reading a sermon by Mr. J.K. Popham, ‘Pray without ceasing,’ I felt it so good to my soul – the mighty power of God to poor sinners in humbling the poor, proud, backsliding ones, to bring them back to Himself in mercy, because He loved them before the foundation of the world. The most striking part to me was the last few lines, where he said, ‘Every case, however bad, if taken to Him, He will deal kindly with. There are no difficulties with Him, no impossibilities with Him. “With God all things are possible” – all things. And then see what He says: “Everything come to Me with.” “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto.”’ O the

* Zion, Leicester. Mr. Grey Hazlerigg was the pastor.

sweetness that flowed into my heart I can never describe! It gave me such a sweet hope that I am one for whom the dear Lord Jesus suffered and died, and that I was in Him when He was on the cross, and in Him when He rose from the dead, and entered into His glory. Then came the words, ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace ... that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!’ (Isa. 52. 7). My heart sang, and my eyes filled with tears. These lines followed,

‘A happy, pardoned child thou art,
And heaven is at thy door.’ (H. 101)

“November 18th, 1928. In the morning the text was in Ephesians. The pastor spoke of the salvation wrought out by Christ for His people. He also said how closely people could resemble the real people of God, and yet be destitute of the Holy Spirit’s work. He said how Judas walked with the disciples, and they detected no difference; but the Lord knew that he was a devil. O how it made me feel the need of a living faith, and fear lest I had not the Holy Spirit within me! It made me cry to God for a real work to be begun in my soul, if not already begun. I felt it would be dreadful to be deceived.

“November 19th. The text on the calendar is, ‘I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins’ (Isa. 43. 25).”

[End of Mrs. Raven’s own narrative.]

It caused us much anxiety and pain to see our dear one’s increasing weakness and infirmity during the last three years of her life. She often spoke of her end, and the solemnity of it. Early in April 1930, a severe attack of shingles laid her aside. Her younger daughter, Mrs. Baker, was sent for, and remained with her for nearly three weeks, by which time there appeared to be considerable improvement in her condition. Mrs. Baker returned to Croydon for a few days, her place being taken by a friend. On Monday night at 8.30 a sudden collapse of the heart occurred, from which Mother never recovered. I was sent for; my wife and I went to her bedside just before 11 p.m., and remained until the end. She was fully conscious, but prostrate. After a very affectionate greeting, she lay without speaking much, except to ask for what she required. At 4.50 on Tuesday morning she suddenly passed away. For us the dawn was sadness, but for her it was glory. My two sisters received messages through the police, but were unable to reach Smallfield before the end. On Saturday, May 3rd, Mr. Croft, of Croydon, whom Mother held in high esteem, committed her body to the grave in Smallfield chapel burial ground, where now the dust of both our dear parents rests until the resurrection morning.

BOOK REVIEW

The Power and Sympathy of Christ, by J.C. Ryle; 146 pages; paperback; £6; published by The Banner of Truth Trust and obtainable from all good Christian bookshops.

This book is an extract from Ryle's *Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of St. John*, first published in 1869, and contains his expositions and notes on John 11, the account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The chapter is divided into six sections, for each of which Ryle gives a short exposition and then more detailed notes on individual verses, some of which include comments on the original Greek, and often a summary of what other commentators have said on the passage, and how Ryle himself views the meaning where there are conflicting opinions. At the end is a selection of fourteen hymns, quite a few of which are by Horatius Bonar.

Ryle was a gifted writer, speaking reverently, clearly, faithfully, simply and in an orderly style. The subject of the raising of Lazarus can be described in Ryle's own words: "For grandeur and simplicity, for pathos and solemnity, nothing was ever written like it." It displays the majesty of the Son of God both in His pure and holy manhood, sympathetic to all the sorrows of His people, and in His glory as God the Son. To quote Ryle again, "There is a grand simplicity about this passage, which is almost spoilt by human exposition. To comment on it seems like gilding gold, or painting lilies." It is a mercy indeed if we are brought humbly to worship at the feet of the Lord Jesus, with a tried faith proved to be real, rather than being left to the solemn hardness and perverse reasoning of the Jewish leaders following the raising of Lazarus.

Yet with all that is pleasing in Ryle's writings, it is plain that he is writing as an armchair theologian. His writings come from his study, whence he has been poring over a multitude of commentators and comparing notes; he does not write like John Bunyan, for instance, who learned the truth in the school of bitter temptation and sorrow. And this leads to expressions which will "grate" with those who have had deeply to learn their own frailty and weakness in a time of trial. For example, "Let us pray for such stores of inward faith, that when our turn comes to suffer, we may suffer patiently and believe all is well" (page 84). Some of us thought once that we had such "stores of inward faith," only to prove like the poet William Cowper,

"But when my faith is sharply tried,
I find myself a learner yet,
Unskilful, weak, and apt to slide." (H. 323)

Those who have read Bunyan's *Grace abounding to the Chief of Sinners* will remember he had painfully to learn the same lesson. "Without Me ye can do nothing" is an unpalatable truth to our human nature; the graces of the Spirit of God are given as we need them, but cannot be stored up. It is a comfort indeed to find our "life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3. 3). This weakness in Ryle of an implication that spiritual blessings can be obtained and maintained through our own effort – though less in this book than in some others of his writings – will sometimes perplex and confuse. Yet there is much that is profitable and helpful in this book.

John A. Kingham, Luton

DESIRE FOR THE SPIRIT'S ASSISTANCE

Spirit divine assist my lays
 While I attempt to sing the praise
 Of Him who died upon the tree
 That He might set His people free.

How shall a feeble worm begin,
 With heart and lips defiled by sin,
 Whose thoughts, unless impressed by Thee,
 Like a deceitful bow will be?

No thanks to me, most holy Lord,
 That I still hang upon Thy Word;
 My heart, a sink of every ill,
 Would follow after evil still.

I'm kept by Thee, my gracious Guide,
 Though ills beset on every side;
 For 'tis by Thy restraining power
 None can my feeble soul devour.

O that my heart in love would glow,
 Mine eyes with tears would overflow,
 While I could sink before Thy feet,
 Thy love and mercy to repeat.

But ah! my heart's a barren waste,
 Where no good thing can e'er be raised,
 Where hope would die if 'twere not fed,
 By Thee who art the living Bread.

Then shall I silent keep my tongue
 Because but feeble is my song?
 No; though my love may feeble be,
 I'll praise Thy love so great to me.

I come in Thy prevailing name,
 Dear Lord, accept me as I am;
 Purged by Thy blood I shall appear
 Before Thy throne exceeding fair.

R.A.B.

Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wing. They pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers always freeze before they reach heaven.

Thomas Brooks

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

APRIL 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

MR. RAMSBOTTOM'S 90TH BIRTHDAY

Our esteemed retired editor, Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom, hopes to reach his 90th birthday anniversary on Thursday, April 18th, 2019, if the Lord will. We would like to lead our readers in sending our sincere greetings to him, and express our prayerful best wishes for him in his remaining days upon earth. May the Lord's rich blessing rest upon both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsbottom, that they may be favoured with the light of the Lord's countenance upon them to the end. William Gadsby sums up our thoughts for them in such suitable language:

“The Lord be with *them* to the end,
And land *them* safe above;
A long eternity to spend,
In singing, ‘God is love.’” (See H. 631)

THE LORD REIGNETH

“Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev. 19. 6).

What a blessed truth it is that the Lord reigns over all: but what an exceeding blessed truth it is, that He reigns from His throne with a holy delight toward “the apple of His eye,” for the church is His “Hephzibah,” that is, “My delight is in her” (Isa. 62. 4). With all the confusion and convulsions in the earth, the sorrows in Zion, and the personal griefs, together with an ever-approaching and looming death before us each, it is a great favour to have faith in its sweet exercise looking up in gospel hope to Jesus on His glorious throne of grace.

“Alleluia” means “Praise ye Jehovah.” The everlasting song of the redeemed is indeed a song of long alleluias. In the context it is the song of the redeemed in heaven as they sing His praise for Christ's victory over the great whore, of whom we read, “And her smoke rose up for ever and ever” (verse 3). We read something of the triumphant song in verse 7: “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.” This “alleluia” of praise is sung in the unwearied and full chorus of holy

delight in those blissful, eternal regions of Immanuel's land. In this world "of great tribulation" the dear saints are sweetly enabled at times to strike up the first notes of this song of praise, as by faith in those favoured moments, they wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb (see Rev. 7. 14). In the midst of their many sorrows, weepings, sins and heavy trials, they sing the first notes of "the song of the Lamb" in good hope through grace, that they will one day join those "happy songsters" with Christ.

"Though distresses now attend thee,
And thou tread'st the thorny road,
His right hand shall still defend thee;
Soon He'll bring thee home to God;
Therefore praise Him;
Praise the great Redeemer's name.

"O that I could now adore Him
Like the heavenly host above,
Who for ever bow before Him,
And unceasing sing His love!
Happy songsters!
When shall I your chorus join?" (H. 333)

It is Christ's reign over the pilgrims that will bring them safely home to Himself, otherwise they would quickly make shipwreck of faith and sink to rise no more (see 1 Tim. 1. 19). Therefore in the midst of their weepings, they strike up the first notes, although in low notes only because of their infirmities, for they cannot sing to their heart's satisfaction in the high notes until they get to glory. It is as William Cowper expresses it:

"Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.

"E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

"But when this lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then, in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save." (H. 160)

"Alleluia: ... the Lord God omnipotent." "The Lord God omnipotent" is the self-existent Jehovah who is eternal God from everlasting and to everlasting, and is of infinite power. That infinite power has been invested in the eternal Son of God, even Jesus. When

dear Immanuel, the Friend and Saviour of sinners, arose from the dead, He declared, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28. 18). David sang, "Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite" (Psa. 147. 5). This was sung as glorious truth, for David says in verses 2, 3 and 6, "The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. The LORD lifteth up the meek: He casteth the wicked down to the ground."

We think of the great power of His grace in saving unto the uttermost. David cries in Psalm 61. 2, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I." The Lord by Isaiah cries out, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (chapter 45. 22). The Lord also says, "I, even I, am the LORD; and beside Me there is no Saviour" (Isa. 43. 11). The dear saints are so often at "the ends of the earth." They feel the weight and shame of their sinnership, the grief of their backslidings, the impossible situations that they find themselves in, the fiery trials that go on and on, the furnace of affliction, the cruel adversary Satan, with all his fiery darts, and at times, a silent God. Jeremiah knew a silent God. "Also when I cry and shout, He shutteth out my prayer" (Lam. 3. 8).

So the dear pilgrims pass safely through much tribulation as they come into places of extremity. But the "Wonderful" God, has found an arm of salvation in the gift of His beloved Son, who is now "sitting on the right hand of power" (Mark 14. 62). The Apostle Paul delighted both to preach Him and to write of Him, and so he wrote to the Hebrews, "But this Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb. 7. 24, 25). In Psalm 2 we read, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: The LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (verses 6-8). A prophecy of Christ's kingdom that reaches sinners in uttermost places and conditions.

"Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." "Reigneth." The victorious and ascended Lord Jesus reigns over all things which are in heaven and in earth. Nothing in the whole of His created universe takes place without His knowledge, or is beyond His control. Jesus upholds "all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1. 3). The Lord Jesus reigns over the righteous and the wicked. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (chapter 4. 25).

We must remember that in spite of all the present confusion in our parliament, "the Lord reigneth." At the time of writing we do not know

the unfolding of matters, but the Lord reigns over the evil and the good. God will bring His own thoughts to pass, and we must watch and pray. An almost seemingly minor matter can alter the whole course of history. This is well illustrated in the Book of Esther. The Lord fought for His anxious people that night in a most strange and yet perfect way. The king could not sleep, so for relaxation the records of the kingdom were read to the king, and the part that was read was clearly God's hand. The record of Mordecai's faithfulness to the king was read. Haman comes early into the court with evil intent toward Mordecai. How quickly events unfolded, and in a night and a day, Haman was hanged, and Mordecai was promoted and the Jews gained the ascendancy over the sons of Agag. We must remember in that matter that the Jews had gone to prayer. May we ever pray for the peace and advancement of the kingdom of God in our land, and in the lands of our readers. As William Cowper wrote in his well-known hymn:

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.” (H. 320)

May we ever keep in mind what Isaac Watts expressed:

“Our lives through various scenes are drawn,
And vexed with trifling cares,
While Thy eternal thought moves on
Thy undisturbed affairs.” (H. 1)

We must now turn our thoughts to the beloved bride of Immanuel, “the apple of His eye” (Deut. 32. 10; Zech. 2. 8). He reigns over His dear people in the kingdom of His grace, with everlasting love and special delight. He reigns over them to save them from their sins. He makes them know something of the evil of their own hearts. Grace brings them in confession and repentance toward God. Jesus reigns to bless them with a sweet sense of His pardoning love toward them. The sinnership that troubles them will trouble them no more after death. He reigns to comfort them to know that though they are so bad, yet their sins are forgiven. In gracious love He comforts His bride in all her griefs over her sins.

“Grace reigns to pardon crimson sins,
To melt the hardest hearts;
And from the work it once begins
It never once departs.
“The world and Satan strive in vain
Against the chosen few;
Secured by grace's conquering reign,
They all shall conquer too.” (H. 202)

Jesus reigns over all events in His church, and governs His people both as individuals and collectively in wise and skilful love. He orders all their trials as the psalmist says: "For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves.... Their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses" (Psa. 107. 25-28).

The Lord reigns over all our troubles to sanctify them to us. We remember hearing Mr. Frank L. Gosden saying more than once, that when in a particular trial, all he could do was to cry out, "Lord, let it do me good; Lord, let it do me good!" When we are in trouble, it must be truly pleasing to God when we ask that our troubles may be sanctified to us, as well as also to ask that the Lord may in His good will deliver us. Flesh asks impatiently for deliverance; faith asks for sanctification as well as deliverance. The Lord reigns not only to sanctify His people, but to bless them in their souls and to command deliverances for them.

The Lord reigns to hear and answer the prayers of His dear people. "He delighteth in mercy" (Mic. 7. 18).

"The God of grace delights to hear
The plaintive cry, the humble prayer;
Nor shall the weakest saint complain
That he has sought the Lord in vain." (H. 943)

The dear people of God learn Christ at the throne of grace, and not by mere dint of study which informs the intellect, nor by persuasion and discussions at conferences. The Apostle Paul reminded the Ephesians how they learned Christ. "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus. And be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (chapter 4. 20, 21, 23). The Lord reigns to bless and teach and help His dear people. The path of prayer brings them into secret and sacred communion at the throne of grace. They pour out their hearts to the Lord, show Him all their troubles, spread all their matters before Him, confess their sins and plead Christ in all the glorious gospel promises found in the Word of God. As they unburden their hearts, they are favoured at times to take away blessings and answers of peace. They prove His lovingkindness and faithfulness.

The Lord reigns to bring His dear people safely through all things here below, and lead them in victory through death and home to God, where they will sing the everlasting song of the Lamb.

"Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale;
Soon all my mortal powers must fail;
O may my last expiring breath
His lovingkindness sing in death!

“Then let me mount and soar away
 To the bright world of endless day,
 And sing with rapture and surprise,
 His lovingkindness in the skies.” (H. 9)

The Lord will order the dying moments of His dear people. He knows their fears about this tremendous matter, so He says, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12. 32). Each dear saint will prove the saying written in the Word of God, “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15. 54-57).

May the Lord so reign over us to bring us unto the “desired haven.” “So He bringeth them unto their desired haven” (Psa. 107. 30).

ONE WITH CHRIST RISEN

*Sermon preached by James Kidwell Popham at Galeed Chapel,
 Brighton, on Friday, July 15th, 1921*

Text: “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3. 1).

If the Lord will help me, I shall first speak of the mysterious and most blessed doctrine of the union that subsists between Christ, the Head, and the members of His mystical body. It is implicit in the text. And the union, which is deeper than may appear at the first sight of this word, goes further back than the resurrection of Christ. It goes back not to the decree of God only – that is eternal; especially in this word it goes back to the death and the burial of Christ. For it was necessary, in order to the church rising with Him, that she should die with Him; and she did die with Him when He was actively offering Himself on the cross without spot to God. Even as the high priest never offered the sin offering, nor went into the holy of holies as a *private* person, but represented the whole nation, so Christ, our Priest, was not alone on the cross, nor when He entered heaven, but had with Him all His children, whom He represented. For them He offered Himself a sacrifice, putting away their sin, pleasing Jehovah, honouring the law, opening a new and living Way to God, whereby His people should approach God.

In the sixth of Romans the Spirit by Paul treats of this, and exhorts the Lord’s people to reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin by the

death of Christ. And they were baptized “in the likeness of His death” (Rom. 6. 5), they were as He in that death, they were with Him. Their sins were taken from them, and laid on Him, to atone for them, die for them. So, as Kent expresses it, they were one on the cross, one in the tomb, and one when He rose. Blessed be God, if we do really receive the testimony of the Scripture to this truth, that Christ was not alone on the cross, but had with Him His people, in a mysterious and mystical, blessed, efficacious union. I say it was an efficacious union; it effected their salvation. When He died, there was nothing for them to do; no death remaining for them to endure, no curse remaining for them to suffer, no demands remaining for them to obey, no law remaining on them to walk by, or live under God’s frown. But He effectually and perfectly and for ever atoned for them, and so brought in a people before His Father without sin.

The apostle says in the Romans, “In that He died, He died unto sin once” (Rom. 6. 10), and this great truth was declared by the prophet Isaiah, who says that the Lord God made to meet on Christ the iniquity of all His people; and then it was the Father bruised Him and wounded Him, chastised Him and laid stripes on Him. Christ did all this for His people so that when He died, they died. We are reckoned as having fulfilled the whole law, as leaving nothing behind of duty, or debt, or curse, or death, or banishment from the face of God in the future. If we receive this truth into our hearts, it will give us true liberty, we shall be freed from the curse and death, and all things to which sinful men under the law are liable.

“If ye then be risen with Christ.” His resurrection, then, was a representative as well as a personal resurrection. He must rise from the dead by the power of His Father, by His own power, and by the power of the eternal Spirit. As the Trinity was concerned in the baptism of Christ when He entered on His ministry, so the Trinity was concerned in His resurrection when He had done all. As the Father said of Him when He was coming up out of the water, “This is My beloved Son” (Matt. 3. 17), and as the Spirit descended upon Him in the shape of a Dove – a beautiful type, for Jesus became the Prince of Peace: so in His resurrection the Father brought Him from the grave, He came by His own power, and the Spirit raised Him. According to the Scripture, all the three Persons were concerned in His resurrection, and when He rose, He brought with Him all His people.

“One in the tomb; one when He rose;
One when He triumphed o’er His foes.” (H. 405)

What a great blessing it will be for us to be led experimentally into this truth! The resurrection of Christ is like the keystone to the arch; it is

everything, as the Spirit sets forth: “If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.” “Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not ... and ... we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15. 15-19). When Christ and His mystical body rose from the dead, then there appeared in the presence of the eternal Father a perfect church – a perfect body with a perfect Head, the many members all viewed as in Him. They were to come, one by one to the end of time, but they were in Christ when He rose, and were viewed as one in that blessed Redeemer, the now risen, glorious Lord Jesus Christ. This is that profound, mysterious, and glorious doctrine which every saint is led into more or less distinctly by the eternal Spirit; and it is set before us in the Scriptures as being the salvation of the election of grace. The oneness with Christ of the church is a fundamental article of faith, dear friends. Jesus was an effectual and a complete Saviour when on the cross. Jesus is a complete Head, made perfect through sufferings, having now nothing to do, but to expect, till all His enemies be made His footstool, and till all His dear, blood-bought ones, the whole election of grace, shall be with Him, and go out no more for ever.

And this great doctrine becomes a living experience in all who are born again. “The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8. 2) enters into every elect child of God; and when He so enters, there is the new birth. The new birth is the communication of eternal, spiritual life to the soul by the Spirit of Christ. “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1. 13). This is a very mysterious, a very blessed truth: that the eternal Spirit does come to each individual person bought by the blood of Christ and quicken him into eternal life. And then begins to be fulfilled in him that scripture, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10. 10). He came – came to the cross, came to the grave, came forth from the grave; then sends His good Spirit, who quickens each soul into life eternal. “I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep” (John 10. 14). The good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep; and when He rose and ascended, He began to live that wondrous, glorified life unto God in heaven of which we read: “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool” (Heb. 10. 12, 13). Also, “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7. 25).

It is this spiritual life of Christ in His people that raises true religion to a plane infinitely above the world. Christ said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18. 36). Also Isaiah, “The mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be

exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa. 2. 2). It is a word that expresses the truth that vital religion is high above the whole of nature. Nature's highest building and fabric can be nothing but a poor, low thing as compared with this blessed religion, this divine, spiritual kingdom which the Lord gives to His children. And also that word comes in: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12. 28).

It is a great thing to be born again, to have the Holy Ghost in the heart as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"; to have "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" making us free "from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8. 2). The word "law" used in those two places appears to be used to express dominion. So when "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" enters a sinner, he no longer is under the law of sin. He has it in him, but he is not under its dominion. It struggles, it plagues him, it wounds him, hurts him, ensnares him, entraps him, beguiles him, and outrages him again and again, but he is not under its dominion. And all this is owing to the communication of that life which Jesus Christ has, and of which He is the fulness. The abundance of it is in Him. And when people are thus raised from the dead, are thus risen with Christ, they have, as we see, a new life. It is called, taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh (see Ezek. 36. 26); it is called spirit: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3. 6).

And this new life manifests itself. As it moves by the power of its divine Giver and Author in the soul, it manifests itself. We manifest our natural life by our appetites, we manifest our minds by our pursuits, our hearts are viewed by our conduct. And so one may say that the spiritual life which every saint lives, manifests itself; manifests itself in its appetite, in its pursuit; and in doing this, the people of God are enabled to obey the Holy Spirit in this text. The flesh will be always flesh; that is, the corruption in us. For flesh is not to be taken for the body in such scriptures, but for the old man, "which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4. 22). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and will never be better; it will be the plague, the burden, the grief, the wounding of the soul from time to time. I speak what some of you know, and what I know myself; we can enter into Paul's lament and confession and trouble. He says, "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7. 19, 24). But now when born again, and to the end of this mortal life, the new life that is in us will manifest itself; and in doing so, it walks out this exhortation, "If ye then be risen with Christ" – if the doctrine of union has become your life, if

you do possess the Spirit of Christ, who comes, now that Christ is in heaven, to His people, then follow this – “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.”

My brethren, we are fools and wicked to be engaged as we are so much with trifles, taken up with vanities. The Word of God has not a superfluous word, a superfluous sentence in it. It does not speak this word for nothing, “Seek those things.” For the Lord knows the disposition that we have to seek the things after which the Gentiles seek, the hankering of the old man after the world. He knows the power of unbelief and the deceitfulness of sin that are in us, and we are made to know it. So we need to have, as Peter speaks, our pure minds stirred up by way of remembrance (see 2 Pet. 3. 1); and this is one of those stirring-up texts, a remembrancing text. Seek the things that are to last, the things that make you most blessed, really happy; the things which are above, and are reached by faith only, seek. Let us look a little as helped at the “things which are above.”

First of all, there is a precious and blessed *atonement* above. The intercessory work of Christ was commenced on the cross, when there as a Priest He offered Himself to God. That is what the priest under the old dispensation typified. He had the sacrifices brought to him; he stood between the people and God, and offered those things to God; and therein was intercession. The Antitype of that intercession was Christ on the cross, offering Himself without spot to God. The Propitiation for our sins He was; the opening of a new and living Way to the Father was His great work on the cross, the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself was His great offering, perfecting for ever them that are sanctified. He entered heaven with His own blood. “Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (Heb. 6. 20). He entered heaven with His infinite merit, as I have often spoken, entered there with the merit of His death, with all the infinite fervour of His love, with all the greatness, the infinitude of His compassion; with all this He entered heaven, and He stands at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven, interceding for His own; or, as the Spirit expresses it, “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7. 25) “that come unto God by Him.”

So, dear friends, there is, in heaven above, that blessed atonement. Jesus took it with Him, took His merit there. He is exalted “to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts. 5 31). And the sweet touches of love, the gracious intimations of mercy, the beams of life and grace that emanate from God, and reach our souls, come from the Lord of life, come through His great work.

Yes, He is there, and what have we to seek? but **“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding”** (Phil. 4. 7). And to encourage poor

seekers to seek this thing, this first thing: the Spirit by Paul again says, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living Way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near" (Heb. 10. 19-22). That is, let us "seek those things which are above." The only solid peace you can ever have is through the blood of the everlasting covenant, by the sweet persuasion of the Spirit of God in your conscience that that blood was shed for you, that that atonement was made for you, that that intercessory work is carried on in heaven for you.

Then, as the Spirit of Christ brings in this wondrous atonement, this wondrous gospel, the sinner finds peace in his soul. Seek that, my friends, it is good to have peace. This peace was first proclaimed in Eden; fallen, defiled man heard it: "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" (see Gen. 3. 15). And when the dear, eternal Son of God came from His Father's bosom, where He had eternally been, and took on Him our nature in the womb of the virgin, then, neglected though He was by man, a mighty multitude of the heavenly host came and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2. 14). That is how this great thing came down from heaven; that is how peace comes to us. Christ is the Prince of Peace; the heavenly Dove came down upon Him at His baptism to signify that there would be peace, peace to sinners: "Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near" (Isa. 57. 19). The Prince of Peace reigns, He has this blessing in His hand, this great thing, to give to troubled sinners, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

The peace of God, which when felt tells you that no temporal power can curse; no affliction that can befall the saint has a curse in it; but all, all things come to His redeemed through Him who has made the peace, who has signed and ratified it, and who ratifies it in the conscience by the witness of His Spirit. This calms the troubled breast, this soothes a sinner in affliction, this enables him to say of his trouble, "The will of the Lord be done." This brings him to submit to God's holy will with a quietness of mind, a willingness in his heart, that would be impossible without the peace of God. It puts a new light, a different hue upon everything that may trouble the person who has it. It is a great thing for us to seek, to seek "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5. 1). This true peace is a great matter.

Seek *a sense of the love of God*, seek to have it in your souls. Is not this that "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal"? (Rev. 22. 1). Is not this that pleasure which is at the right hand of God for evermore? For what can be compared with a sense of being loved of God? Solomon, notwithstanding his dreadful sins, was beloved of his God. It is a great

and a beautiful testimony, and may the Lord help some of us who are out-of-the-way sinners, who are ashamed of our poor, ragged profession, of our barren lives, ashamed that we have lived as we have lived; may He make it comfortable to us that it is written of Solomon that he was beloved of his God.

Many things will contradict that in your feelings, many appearances will contradict it, many suggestions of Satan will contradict it, and your own evil pursuits in spirit will contradict it. But if the eternal Spirit is pleased to give power to seek the sense of the love of God, and then give you that in answer to your Spirit-inspired prayers, you will find it very efficacious, you will find it very powerful in you; a thrice-comfortable feeling it will be to you, O, more comfortable than you can express. What harm can reach one beloved of his God? How can there be a curse in that cup which a loving Father gives His child to drink? How can there be a sword in the hand of a loving Father? There is a rod, but O, it is not a sword. Satan may say it is a sword, your fears may say it is, your reason may say it looks more like a sword than anything else. And the effect of it is very bitter, because rebellion is stirred up in your heart; but the truth remains, that there is neither wrath in the cup nor a sword in His hand for His dear children. They are beloved of their God.

Seek *clearer manifestations of the Lord Jesus Christ*. His promise is an abiding promise, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28. 20). Had I time and grace and ability to express some thoughts that I have had about this presence, it might be for edification. *Always* means to the end, with us; and as our journey to the end lies in a path of tribulation, as there is a fire, as there is water, as there is a river, as there is a devil to tempt, this promise must go into all those places. Or, as those places are used to express different troubles and experiences, the presence of Christ is promised for them all. He will not suspend His presence; He may suspend your experience of it, but He will never take His presence away. “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; ... when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned” (Isa. 43. 2) – nothing shall hurt you. “Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?” (1 Pet. 3. 13).

And what a good thing it is to be enabled to seek the presence of Christ in a manifestation of Himself. “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14. 23). Now that word has respect to manifestations. One said, “How is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (John 14. 22). O Christ comes and shows Himself to His disciples who have love in their hearts. Love prepares a welcome for Him, love opens the heart for Him, love gives a

desire for Him, love in you will make you unhappy without Him. Seek His presence. One says,

“In Thy presence I am happy;
 In Thy presence I’m secure;
 In Thy presence all afflictions
 I can easily endure.”

(H. 1101)

And it is so, as some of us know. The presence of Christ is the presence of God’s only-begotten Son incarnate. It is the presence of the fairest of all heaven, the presence of heaven’s best, the Father’s best and greatest and uttermost gift, the presence of Him who was in the Father’s bosom from eternity, of Him who has graciously redeemed His children; who is fairer than the children of men, into whose lips grace is poured. It is a presence that makes heaven, that gives strength, vigour, boldness to the child of God who is indulged with it. Seek this thing.

One may add to these, seek *communion with God*. Communion with Him means nearness to Him; and I find it difficult to speak of this, because of the little I know about it. But there is such a mercy as communion with God, the communication of some good gift from Him to you, and the communication of your heart to Him; the opening of His love to you, and as He says, “My son, give Me thine heart” (Prov. 23. 26), so your heart goes out to Him, the Lord letting out some blessing into your soul, telling you that He will be with you, that He will sanctify to you your deepest distress, that He will guide you with His eye, that He will be all-sufficient to you; as He said to Abraham, “I am God all-sufficient; walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (see Gen. 17. 1); as Paul says to the Philippians, “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4. 19).

These things are the communications which the Lord makes to sinners, a touch here, a beam there, an influence, a drawing at another time coming to your very soul out of the full river of pleasure which is at God’s right hand for evermore. And then the effect of that communication is that you can walk in a path of obedience. When He says, “My son, give Me thine heart”; when, as here, He says, “Seek those things which are above,” you say, “Thy face, LORD, will I seek”; I want to see it; Thy power I seek, I desire to feel it; Thy goodness I seek, I desire to be led to repentance by it; Thy presence I seek, that I may be preserved from the hurt of the fire, and from the evil effect of trouble.” He receives all that. I think we do not half know the pleasure the infinite God has in the prayers, the sighs, the groans, and the desires of His dear children, as they speak them before Him without words, when they present their hearts to Him; and the pleasure He has in the merit of Christ, and in the prayers of the saints which are mingled in the golden censer with the much incense that is there. If we realised it more, our

desires would be to seek the Lord more, to be more fervent and constant in seeking His blessed face. “Seek those things,” seek communion.

Seek *to have the holy Scriptures in their life and their power, their authority, and their sanctifying effect in your hearts*. God has written the Scriptures for His saints. It is said in the one-hundred-and-second Psalm, “This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD” (verse 18). The things in that Psalm, and the whole of the Scriptures, are “written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15. 4). It is a great thing to have the Scriptures in our hands, and in our memories; but the best thing is to have them, in some portions of them, in our hearts; to feel the authority of one passage – a commandment coming to you to kill you, the gospel coming to you to make you live; a promise coming to you, assuring you of divine guidance and of heaven at last; a manifestation of the Lord Jesus in some scripture. To have such things is to have some of the best gifts that God has to bestow on His poor people. “Seek those things” from the holy Scriptures.

And now lastly here, seek *to join the song that is ever being sung in heaven*. Here we sigh and groan; here sometimes we sing, we praise a good God for His greatness in mercy, His greatness in love, His greatness in the gospel. But the Apostle Paul tells us that the saints on earth “are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ... and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12. 22, 23); are come to them, made one with the saints above, who are one with their Head, and one in their holy praises. And every saint, when blessed in his soul with liberty in the truth by Jesus Christ, has the substance in him of that reverence felt by the seraphim, that we read of in Isaiah: “In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly” (Isa. 6. 1, 2). Each was reverential, each worshipped, each felt his creatureship; and have not you that spirit when the Lord blesses you, to cover yourself? to feel as Ruth felt when she said, “Who am I? Wherefore have I found favour in thy sight?” “O how could the Lord bless *me*? How could He look on such as *I* am?” and you cover yourself. A healthy, an acceptable shame covers you; I say, healthy; it is not the shame that attends you when in bondage under the law, no; but it is a shame begotten of the presence and love and goodness of God. And also there is a willingness, and there is worship in your willingness, worship in your submission to God’s holy will. And then you can unite with the spirits of just men made perfect, who are around

the throne, in singing, “Worthy is the Lamb,” and unite with the holy angels who take up the chorus, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing ... for ever and ever” (Rev. 5. 12, 13).

These are the “things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” The joy of the wicked is like the crackling of thorns under a pot (see Eccles. 7. 6); but this joy, though interrupted often, as to our sense of it, is for ever and ever. The song of the drunkard is an abomination, but the song of a broken heart is a sweet song. The theme of a worldling is the world; the theme of a saint is “Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2. 2). The song of the world is nothing but an abomination to God, but the sound of a song arising out of a broken heart, with Christ there the Hope of glory, how acceptable is that! “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1. 5, 6).

I wish we may live to sing oftener in our spirits. Where there have been groanings which could not be uttered, may there be songs also that exceed our voices, that exceed all our ability to speak them, songs of praise rising to the throne of God and of the Lamb. Seek those things “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” And if we seek Him, then we seek all those things, for they are all His; they belong to Him, and He has them to bestow on His poor, seeking people.

FELLOW SUFFERERS FOR CHRIST’S SAKE

Part of a letter written by John Bradford (1510-1555), to Richard Hopkins, Sheriff of Coventry, who was a fellow sufferer with John Bradford. Richard Hopkins was in the Fleet prison, but later released. He fled to Germany with his wife and eight children. He there resided in Basel on the Swiss/German border, returning to England after the death of Queen Mary. John Bradford was born in Blackley, near Manchester. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London and martyred at Smithfield. This letter was written in 1555 shortly before his execution. In our day of ease, materialism and religious liberty, may we lay to heart something of the cost and suffering of our godly reformers.

You may think yourself born in a blessed time, that have found this grace with God, to be a “vessel of honour” to suffer with His saints, yea, with His Son. My beloved, God hath not done so with many. The apostle saith, “Not many noble, not many rich, not many wise in the world hath the Lord God chosen” (see 1 Cor. 1. 26). O then, what cause

have you to rejoice, that amongst the *not many* He hath chosen you to be one! For this cause hath God placed you in your office, that therefore you might the more see His special dignation [esteem to an inferior] and love towards you. It had not been so great a thing for Master Hopkins to have suffered as Master Hopkins, as it is for Master Hopkins also to suffer as Master Sheriff. O happy day that you were made sheriff! by the which as God in this world would promote you to a more honourable degree, so by suffering in this room He hath exalted you in heaven, and in the sight of His church and children, to a much more excellent glory.

When was it read that a sheriff of a city hath suffered for the Lord's sake? Where read we of any sheriff, that hath been cast in prison for conscience to God-wards? How could God have dealt more lovingly with you, than herein He hath done? To the end of the world it shall be written for a memorial to your praise, that "Richard Hopkins, sheriff of Coventry, for conscience to do his office before God, was cast in the Fleet, and there kept prisoner a long time." Happy and twice happy are you, if herefor [for this] you may give your life. Never could you have attained to this promotion, of this sort, out of that office. How do you preach now, not only to all men, but specially to magistrates in this realm! Who would ever have thought, that you should have been the first magistrate, that for Christ's sake should have lost anything? As I said before therefore, I say again, that your state is happy. Good brother, before God I write the truth unto you, my conscience bearing me witness, that you are in a most happy state with the Lord, and before His sight.

Be thankful therefore, rejoice in your trouble, pray for patience, persevere to the end. "Let patience have her perfect work" (Jas. 1. 4). If you want this wisdom and power, ask it of God, who will give it to you in His good time. Hope still in Him; yea, if he should slay you, yet trust in Him with Job (see Job 13. 15); and you shall perceive that the end will be to find Him merciful and full of compassion; for He will not break promise with you, which hitherto did never so with any. He is with you in trouble, He heareth you calling upon Him; yea, before you call, your desires are not only known, but accepted through Christ. If now and then He hide His face from you, it is but to provoke your appetite, to make you the more to long for Him. This is most true: He is a coming and will come, He will not be long. But if for a time He seem to tarry, yet stand you still, and you shall see the wonderful works of the Lord (see Job 37. 14).

O my beloved, wherefore should you be heavy? Is not Christ Immanuel, "God with us"? Shall you not find that, as He is true in saying, "In the world you shall have trouble," so is He in saying, "In me you shall have comfort"? (see John 16. 33). He doth not swear only that trouble will come, but withal he sweareth that comfort shall ensue. And

what comfort! such a comfort as “the eye hath not seen, the ear hath not heard, nor the heart of man can conceive” (see 1 Cor. 2. 9). O great comfort! who shall have this? Forsooth [truly] they that suffer for the Lord: and are not you one of them? Yea, verily are you. Then, as I said, happy, happy and happy again are you, my dearly beloved in the Lord. You now “suffer with the Lord: surely you shall be glorified with Him” (see 2 Tim. 2. 12). Call upon God therefore now in your trouble, and He will hear you, yea, deliver you in such sort, as most shall make both to His and your glory also. And in this calling, I heartily pray you to pray for me, your fellow in affliction. Now we be both going in the highway to heaven, for by many afflictions must we enter in thither: whither God bring us for His mercy's sake. Amen, Amen.

Your fellow in affliction,

John Bradford

ALL THINGS UPHELD BY ALMIGHTY GOD

*Extract from a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth by John Newton,
written in February 1771*

But to come nearer home, and to speak of what seems more suited to our scanty apprehensions – still we may be lost in wonder. Before this blessed and only Potentate, all the nations of the earth are but as the dust upon the balance, and the small drop of a bucket, and might be thought (if compared with the immensity of His works) scarcely worthy of His notice: yet here He presides, pervades, provides, protects and rules. In Him His creatures live, move and have their being: from Him is their food and preservation. The eyes of all are upon Him: what He gives they gather, and can gather no more; and at His word they sink into the dust. There is not a worm that crawls upon the ground, or a flower that grows in the pathless wilderness, or a shell upon the seashore, but bears the impress of His wisdom, power and goodness. With respect to men, He reigns with uncontrolled dominion over every kingdom, family and individual. Here we may be astonished at His wisdom in employing free agents, the greater part of whom are His enemies, to accomplish His purposes. But, however reluctant, they all serve Him.

His patience likewise is wonderful. Multitudes, yea, nearly our whole species, spend the life and strength which He affords them, and abuse all the bounties He heaps upon them, in the ways of sin. His commands are disregarded, His name blasphemed, His mercy disdained, His power defied, yet still He spares. It is an eminent part of His government, to restrain the depravity of human nature, and in various

ways to check its effects, which if left to itself, without His providential control, would presently make earth the very image of hell. For the vilest men are not suffered to perpetrate a thousandth part of the evil which their hearts would prompt them to. The earth, though lying in the wicked one, is filled with the goodness of the Lord. He preserveth man and beast, sustains the young lion in the forest, feeds the birds of the air, which have neither storehouse nor barn, and adorns the insects and the flowers of the field with a beauty and elegance beyond all that can be found in the courts of kings.

Still more wonderful is His administration in His kingdom of grace. He is present with all His creatures, but in a peculiar manner with His own people. Each of these are monuments of a more illustrious display of power, than that which spread abroad the heavens like a curtain, and laid the foundations of the earth: for He finds them all in a state of rebellion and enmity, and makes them a willing people; and from the moment He reveals His love to them, He espouses their cause, and takes all their concerns into His own hands. He is near and attentive to every one of them, as if there was only that one. This high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, before whom the angels veil their faces (see Isa. 57. 15 and 6. 2), condescends to hold communion with those whom men despise. He sees not as man seeth – rides on a cloud disdainfully by a sultan [Islamic sovereign] or a czar [emperor of Russia], to manifest Himself to a humble soul in a mud-walled cottage. He comforts them when in trouble, strengthens them when weak, makes their beds in sickness, revives them when fainting, upholds them when falling, and so seasonably and effectually manages for them, that though they are persecuted and tempted, though their enemies are many and mighty, nothing that they feel or fear is able to separate them from His love.

And all this He does *solus* [alone]. All the abilities, powers and instincts, that are found amongst creatures, are emanations from His fulness. All changes, successes, disappointments – all that is memorable in the annals of history, all the risings and falls of empires, all the turns in human life, take place according to His plan. In vain men contrive and combine to accomplish their own counsels; unless they are parts of His counsel likewise, the efforts of their utmost strength and wisdom are crossed and reversed by the feeblest and most unthought-of circumstances. But when He has a work to accomplish, and His time is come, however inadequate and weak the means He employs may seem to a carnal eye, the success is infallibly secured: for all things serve Him, and are in His hands as clay in the hands of the potter. “Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints” (Rev. 15. 3).

This is the God whom we adore. This is He who invites us to lean upon His almighty arm, and promises to guide us with His unerring eye. He says to you, my lord, and even to me, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness" (Isa. 41. 10). Therefore, while in the path of duty, and following His call, we may cheerfully pass on, regardless of apparent difficulties; for the Lord, whose we are, and who has taught us to make His glory our highest end, will go before us, and at His Word crooked things become straight, light shines out of darkness, and mountains sink into plains. Faith may and must be exercised, experience must and will confirm what His Word declares, that the heart is deceitful, and that man in his best estate is vanity. But His promises to them that fear Him shall be confirmed likewise, and they shall find Him, in all situations, a sun, a shield, and an exceeding great reward.

A SUFFERING SAVIOUR

An extract from Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

"Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb. 5. 7).

I. But what are we to understand by the expression "in the days of His flesh?" By "the flesh" of Christ, then, we may understand chiefly two things. This leads us to the enquiry,

1. What is meant by "the flesh" of Christ; and,
2. What we are to understand by "the days of His flesh"?

1. The whole of His pure humanity, as in such passages as, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1. 14); "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3. 16). But as this humanity the Lord still continues to wear, carrying it with Him into heaven, though exalted and glorified beyond all apprehension, we cannot understand by "the flesh" of Christ merely His human nature. It therefore means, as applied to Him in the text, the weaknesses and infirmities, of course I mean the sinless infirmities, to which He was subject when here below.

2. And by "the days of His flesh" we may understand, not merely the whole time of His sojourning on earth, but especially those last days when in the garden and upon the cross all His sorrows, trials and sufferings came, as it were, to a head, and thickened upon Him. It was then in these last days of His abiding in the flesh that He offered up the

prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears mentioned in the text. They were a part of His oblation, priestly acts of intercession, and therefore not merely supplications for Himself, but necessary adjuncts of [accompaniments to] His propitiatory sacrifice. He had taken upon Himself to stand in our law place and stead, and to endure what, but for Him, His people must have endured to all eternity. O how great a work was this! To expiate transgression, to put away the wrath of God, to appease the ever-burning indignation against sin of Him who is a consuming fire, fully to satisfy the claims of infinite justice and the demands of a devouring law – O what a work was this for the Lord to do!

How little do we know, how less do we feel of the holiness of God, of His terrible majesty, of His inflexible justice, of His fiery wrath against sin and transgression, and the difficulty, so to speak, of so satisfying these claims that mercy might rejoice against judgment, and grace superabound over the aboundings of sin. It is only when we view by faith the struggles, agonies and sufferings of the incarnate Son of God when He had to grapple with and overcome these difficulties, that we seem for a short period to see and feel a little of the dreadful evil of sin.

Our Lord often prayed in the days of His flesh, and on one occasion spent a whole night in prayer unto God; but He never prayed as in the garden, for His prayers then were attended with most vehement, earnest, and intense supplications, as Luke tells us: “And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops” – or rather large clots, as the word means – “of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22. 44). And what was the purport of His prayers, but that He might be supported in the hour of agony upon the cross, that He might fully do the work committed to Him, that the honour of God might be in every point consulted and His glory manifested, that His sacrifice and blood-shedding and obedience might be accepted, and the whole will of God in the redemption and salvation of His people perfectly accomplished?

Our Lord felt the weakness of His humanity, for though in union with His eternal Deity, though most blessedly upheld and supported by the power and strength and consolation of the Holy Ghost, yet it was inherently weak, and an experience of its weakness was a part of the sufferings that He endured. Having then to bear as laid upon this weakness the whole weight of imputed sin, the whole curse of the law, the whole indignation of the Almighty, our Lord was brought to a spot where He needed special support. To be brought through that work safely, honourably, successfully, agreeably to the will of God and in the fullest harmony with the eternal purposes – to this point were the prayers and supplications of our suffering Lord directed; this was the solemn

conflict which our gracious Lord had to endure in the garden in its beginning and upon the cross in its finishing.

We know what He felt – at least the Holy Ghost has given us an account of that solemn agony in the garden, when He said, as in a moment of weakness (see 2 Cor. 13. 4), “Let this cup pass from Me.” It was so bitter in contemplation; it was so full of unmitigated wrath; the ingredients were so mingled with the anger of the Almighty against sin and the manifestation of His displeasure against every one who was chargeable with it, that as He stood there and then as our Substitute, in our place, to endure what we must have endured without Him, and to bear the whole weight of eternal wrath and indignation, which must have sunk us and all with us, were we millions, to a deserved hell, that He needed the special interposition of the help of God to hold Him up as He drank it to the very dregs. It was to obtain this help that He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears; and it was the vehemency of the conflict which made the blood fall from His brow and tears drop from His eyes, and His whole soul engaged in an agony of mingled grief and horror, fear and supplication, each increasing and stimulating the other, and the whole poured forth with prayers, cries, weeping and supplications unto Him that was able to save Him from death: not from the death that He came to die, but to save Him from everything connected with the original sentence of death, as involving in it the wrath of God and its consequences.

The gospels, in the simplicity of their narrative, speak but little of the inward sufferings of Christ. They give us an account of His sufferings in the garden, of His being “sorrowful and very heavy,” or as the word means, “overwhelmed with anguish,” of His being “sore amazed,” and “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” of His being “in an agony and praying more earnestly,” and begging of His heavenly Father that this cup might pass from Him; but they do not enter into the cause of His sufferings. And so with respect to His crucifixion; they make little mention of His sufferings of body or soul, though they record His dolorous cry when forsaken of God, and His bodily thirst.

Where, then, shall we find recorded the suffering experience of Christ? Clearly in the Psalms, such as 18, 22, 40, 69, 102 and others, in which the Holy Ghost has by anticipation recorded the experience and language of the Son of God in the depths of His suffering. There we have His prayers and supplications: “Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto My soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow Me” (Psa. 69. 1, 2). There we have His strong crying: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of My roaring? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest

not; and in the night season, and am not silent” (Psa. 22. 1, 2). There we have His weeping: “For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled My drink with weeping, because of Thine indignation and Thy wrath: for Thou hast lifted Me up, and cast Me down” (Psa. 102. 9, 10). And there, especially in Psalm 22, we have set before us in the most lively colours what His holy soul endured when He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree.

II. But let me now speak a few words on that difficult expression, “Unto Him who was able to save Him from death.” This of course was God to whom He addressed His prayers. But what is meant here by the ability of God to save? And what is intended by the death from which He besought God to save Him?

1. By the ability of God to save we may understand two things:
 - i. The *actual* power of God;
 - ii. The *moral* power of God.

The first is God’s omnipotence, the second is God’s sovereignty. Now to which of these two powers of God did Christ address Himself? To both, but especially to the latter. God was able to save Him by His omnipotence – by putting forth His absolute power; and upon this almighty power the Lord cast Himself in the extremity of His distress and weakness. But He cast Himself more particularly upon God’s sovereignty, as displayed in His will, for He came to do His will. To Him, therefore, He had recourse in the omnipotence of His power and the sovereignty of His will. His faith embraced the power, His obedience submitted itself to the will of God.

2. But what was the “death” from which He prayed to be saved? It was not natural death, for He came on purpose to die, but moral death, i.e., it was not the dissolution of body and soul, but all that was implied in the sentence, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18. 20). In taking upon Him to obey the law, our Lord put Himself under the curse of the law; and this curse was death. All, therefore, that was contained in the curse of the law, in the sentence of death, our Lord had as much to sustain as though He had been actually guilty of every sin committed against the law. From this death in the consequences of it, as He reeled under its dreadful weight, He prayed God to save Him, that He might come out of it, be delivered from it, and thus, as the Surety of His people, might deliver them from it.

III. But we now come to the acceptance of His prayers and supplications. “And was heard in that He feared.” There is something in my mind so extremely mysterious and yet so divinely blessed in the expression, “in that He feared,” that I must, if the Lord enable me, give it a few moments’ consideration. It is right to mention that there is some little difficulty as to the right rendering of the expression. The word

means in the original not so much fear, as indicating dread or apprehension, as a holy reverence and tender cautiousness. It means literally the great care with which we handle brittle vessels, and, as used in the New Testament, signifies a reverential fear of God. It is used, for instance, of Noah, where he is said to be “moved with fear” (Heb. 11. 7) [margin, being wary] and is translated “godly fear” in those words, “whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12. 28). It does not, therefore, mean fear in any such sense of the word as would imply a servile dread. It does not mean that our gracious Lord was possessed with that servile dread of the Almighty which reprobates feel and those who never were partakers of the grace of God. But our Lord, as an exemplar of every grace of the Spirit, was possessed of that holy reverence and godly fear in its abundant measure of which we have but a small portion.

Now just in proportion to the depth of the grace that was in Him, the power of God that rested upon Him, and the operations and influence of the Holy Ghost in His soul, so was the measure of holy reverence and godly fear which dwelt in His sacred humanity. Contemplating, therefore, the greatness of the work; having before His eyes not so much the bodily sufferings of the cross as all the mental agonies – the distress of soul, the conflict with the law in its load and curse, the indignation of the Almighty against sin in the Person of the Surety, the hidings of His Father’s face, and the withdrawal of the light of His countenance – foreseeing all these dolorous sufferings of the cross, and tasting the first drops of that shower which was so soon to fall upon His sacred head, it seemed as if His holy soul was filled with the most solemn reverence and deep apprehension of the majesty of God.

This is the fear of which our text speaks. It is in the margin, “His piety.” But reverence, godly fear, holy apprehension, and tender awe convey the meaning of the word much better than the expression “piety.” It was prophesied of Him that “there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of His roots: and the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD” (Isa. 11. 1, 2). Thus His prayers, His cries, His supplications and His tears rose up with sweet acceptance into the ears of His Father, because they came out of a heart filled with reverence and godly fear under the promptings and influences of that eternal Spirit who wrought in Him every grace both in its possession and its exercise, and through whom He “offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9. 14).

The church foreseeing this, prayed in spirit for Him: “The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;

remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice” (Psa. 20. 1-3). In answer to these petitions, the Lord saved His anointed, and heard “Him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand” (verse 6); for when the sorrows of hell compassed Him about and the snares of death prevented Him, He could say, “In My distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto My God: He heard My voice out of His temple, and My cry came before Him, even into His ears” (Psa. 18. 6). O the power of prayer, and what an example has the Lord set before His praying people; for as God heard and answered and saved Him, so will He surely hear, answer and save them.

ALMOST A CHRISTIAN

From Matthew Mead of Stepney (1629-1699)

“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26. 28).

A man may have faith and yet be but almost a Christian.

The stony ground, that is, those hearers set out by the stony ground, “for a while believe” (Luke 8. 13). It is said that many believed in the name of Christ, yet Christ did not commit Himself to them. Though they trusted in Christ, yet Christ would not trust them. Why not? “Because He knew all men” (John 2. 24). He knew they were rotten at root, notwithstanding their new faith. A man may have all faith to remove mountains and yet be nothing.

OBJECTION. But how can this be, that a man may have faith and yet be but almost a Christian? Does not our Lord Christ promise life eternal and salvation to all that believe? Is not this the gospel that is to be preached to every creature: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”? (Mark 16. 16).

ANSWER. Though it is true what our Lord Christ said, that “he that believeth shall be saved,” yet it is true that many believe that shall never be saved. Simon Magus believed. Yea, James said, “The devils also believe, and tremble” (chapter 2. 19). Now, none will say these shall be saved. As it is true what the apostle said, “All men have not faith” (2 Thess. 3. 2), so it is as true that there are some men who have faith who are no whit the better for their faith.

You must know, therefore, there is a two-fold faith:

Faith that is special and saving.

Faith that is common and not saving.

There is a saving faith. This is called “the faith of the operation of God” (Col. 2. 12). It is a work of God’s own Spirit in the soul. It is such

a faith as rests and casts the soul wholly upon Christ for grace and glory, pardon and peace, sanctification and salvation. It is a united act of the whole soul, understanding, will and affections, all concurring to unite the soul to an all-sufficient Redeemer. It is such a faith as purifies the heart and makes it clean. It influences and gives strength and life to all other graces. Now, whoever has this faith is a Christian indeed. This is the faith of God's elect. But then,

There is a common faith which is not saving, a fading and temporary faith. There is the faith of Simon Magus as well as the faith of Simon Peter. Simon Magus believed and yet he was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8. 23). Now, the faith of most men will at last be found to be no better than the faith of Simon Magus, for:

1. *The faith of most is but a temporary faith.* It endures for a while and then dies and perishes. True, saving faith, such as is the faith of God's elect, cannot die. It may fail in the act but not in the habit. The sap may not be in the branch but it is always in the root. That faith that perishes, a man may have and perish.

2. *There is a faith that lies only in generals, not in particulars.* As there is a general and particular object of faith, so there is a general and particular faith. The general object of faith is the whole Scripture; the particular object of faith is Christ in the promise. Now, many have a general faith to believe all the Scripture and yet have no faith to make particular application of Jesus Christ in the promise. Devils and reprobates may believe the truth of the Scripture and what is written of the dying and suffering of Christ for sinners, but there are but few that can take refuge themselves in the wounds of Christ and, by His stripes, fetch in healing to their own souls.

3. *There is a faith that is seated in the understanding, but not in the will.* This is a very common faith. Many assent to the truth. They believe all the attributes of God, that He is just, holy, wise, faithful, good, merciful, etc., but yet they do not rest on Him, notwithstanding. They believe the commands are true, but do not obey them. They believe the promises are true, but do not embrace and apply them. They believe the threatenings are true, but do not flee from them.

Thus their faith lies in assent but not consent. They have faith to confess a judgment but none to take out execution. By assent they lay a foundation, but never build upon it by application. They believe that Christ died to save them that believe, and yet they believe not in Christ that they may be saved.

Oh, my brethren, it is not a believing head but a believing heart that makes a Christian: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. 10. 10). Without this, our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins.

4. *There is a faith without experience.* Many believe the Word, upon hearsay, to be the Word of God, but they have never felt the power and virtue of it upon their hearts and consciences. Now, what good is it to believe the truth of the Word if a man's conscience never felt the power of the Word? What is it to believe the truth of the promise if we have never tasted the sweetness of the promise? We are, in this case, like a man who believes the description others make of strange countries, but has never travelled there to know the truth; or like a patient who believes all the physician says, but does not try any of his potions. We believe the Word because we cannot gainsay [deny] it, but yet we have no experience of any saving good wrought by the Word, and so are but almost Christians.

5. *There is a faith that is without brokenness of heart, that does not avail to melt or soften the heart, and, therefore, is not true faith;* for the least true faith is ever joined with a bending will and broken heart.

6. *There is a faith that does not transform the heart;* faith without fruit that does not bring forth the new creature in the soul, but leaves it in a state of sin and death. This is a faith that makes a man a sound professor, but not a sound believer. He believes the truth, but not as it is in Jesus, for then it would change and transform him into the likeness of Jesus. He believes that a man must be changed who would be saved, but yet is not savingly changed by believing. Thus, while others believe to salvation, he believes to damnation, for "his web shall not become a garment; neither shall he cover himself with his work" (see Isa. 59. 6).

Now then, if a man's faith may be but temporary, or may lie only in generals; or may be seated in the understanding only; or may be without experience; or may be without a broken heart or without a new heart; surely, then, a man may have faith, he may taste of this "heavenly gift," and yet be but almost a Christian.

FAITH'S AIM

Ely
October 13th, 1638

Dear Cousin,

I thankfully acknowledge your love in your kind remembrance of me upon this opportunity. Alas, you do too highly prize my lines, and my company. I may be ashamed to own your expressions considering how unprofitable I am, and the mean improvement of my talent.

Yet to honour my God by declaring what He hath done for my soul, in this I am confident, and I will be so. Truly, then, this I find: that He giveth springs in a dry, barren wilderness, where no water is. I live you

know where – in Meshech, which they say signifies *Prolonging*; in Kedar, which signifies *Blackness*: yet the Lord forsaketh me not. Though He do prolong, yet He will I trust bring me to His tabernacle, to His resting place. My soul is with the congregation of the firstborn, my body rests in hope; and if here I may honour my God either by doing or suffering, I shall be most glad.

Truly no poor creature hath more cause to put himself forth in the cause of his God than I. I have had plentiful wages beforehand; and I am sure I shall never earn the least mite. The Lord accept me in His Son, and give me to walk in the light, and give us to walk in the light, as He is in the light! He it is that enlighteneth our blackness, our darkness. I dare not say He hideth His face from me. He giveth me to see light in His light. One beam in a dark place hath exceeding much refreshment in it, blessed be His name for shining upon so dark a heart as mine! You know what my manner of life hath been. O, I lived in and loved darkness, and hated light; I was a chief, the chief of sinners. This is true: I hated godliness, yet God had mercy on me. O the riches of His mercy! Praise Him for me. Pray for me, that He who hath begun a good work would perfect it in the day of Christ.

Salute all my friends in that family whereof you are yet a member. I am much bound unto them for their love. I bless the Lord for them; and that my son, by their procurement, is so well. Let him have your prayers, your counsel; let me have them.

The Lord be with you. So prayeth your truly loving cousin,
Oliver Cromwell

ETERNAL SAFETY OF THE SHEEP

Short extract from Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

Grace indeed, if left to us, would be soon lost; we showed that in innocency. But it is our advantage that our security lieth in God's promises, not our own strength, that we are not our own keepers. God would not trust this jewel but in safe hands. Perseverance is God's gift, not man's act; He is engaged in Christ to maintain it: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10. 28, 29); neither shall nor can they be taken out of God's hands. God and Christ are engaged in the keeping of them; Christ by God's command, as Mediator, God by Christ's merit; and therefore he that separateth us from God must tug with Jesus Christ Himself, and be too hard for Him also,

or else he can never pluck them out of His hands. If they should question Christ's power, because of the ignominy of the cross, the Father's hands are also engaged for our greater assurance: "No man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." God never made a creature that should be too hard for Himself.

SEEKING THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Bower,
Caithness
October 17th, 1863

Dear Mrs. Auld,

I received your kind letter, for which I heartily thank you. A note from a friend is like a mouthful of fresh air to one living in sickly confinement. I am much troubled with a carnal mind, so that I am like one bereaved of his judgment, wandering on the mountains of vanity. They are happy that have got a spiritual mind; it will make one to sow to the spirit, whereas the carnal mind keeps one sowing to the flesh.

Dear friend, I have been reading the letter of the Bible for a very long time, and I thought I got some jewels in it about forty-five years ago. But I find I must be brought back to the ABC, to learn to find the pearl of great price, that I may sell all my jewels, and buy this field in which the Person of Christ is so infinitely and incomprehensibly set forth.

The Lord's people have got cabinets in which to lock up their jewels, and it is their wisdom to be doing so. But it is not at all times they can open this, and view what it contains. Sometimes experience is so dark that they cannot see that ever they got a token for good from the Lord. But the next time the light of His countenance shines on their souls, it will take the covering off all the former, and they will see the unchangeableness and faithfulness of Him whose gifts and callings are without repentance.

May the goodwill of Him who dwelt in the bush be with you.

Yours affectionately,

David Steven

Faith gives me to see how distinguishedly this love of God hath set itself upon me. By faith I see that though Esau was Jacob's brother, yet God loved Jacob; that though there were thousands more besides me, who were as good as I, yet I must be the man that must be chosen.

John Bunyan

ENCOURAGING A MINISTER

*A letter written by Esther Sharp to Mr. Caleb Sawyer,
pastor at Mayfield*

Burnett's,
Cross in Hand,
East Sussex
March 12th, 1920

Dear Sir,

It has been on my mind to send a line since you were at Little London a fortnight ago, speaking from 1 John 5. 11, 12. I do trust the Spirit was with the Word that evening; it was very remarkable to me. You were led into what had sweetly engaged my heart in meditation that very afternoon as I was quietly at work, speaking of "putting on the Lord Jesus not only by outward profession, but in His righteousness and obedience, and perfect fulfilling of the holy law of God without a single flaw; and when able to put Him on thus, a poor, defiled sinner can stand before God without fear, covered completely, his transgressions being hidden by *His* spotless obedience."

That verse had been so sweet that afternoon:

"Without a *seam* this garment's wove,
Bequeathed in everlasting love;
Ere time began, designed to be
A royal robe to cover thee"; (H. 113)

and my poor little thoughts were brought out by you in the evening, only more fully than I could express them. Being woven *without seam* seemed so sweet to me – not a *weak* place to expose one's defilement if only *covered* by that robe. I was glad to hear you express last evening that you had felt the Spirit in the little place. Again and again have the words of a fortnight ago been precious. Speaking of being attracted to Him, you said, "If you have ever felt the drawings of His love, He will one day be made over to you as yours; if ever you have felt able to venture your all upon Him, you can never sink, *you have life*." The Lord be with you. I trust there are two seasons in your own chapel very precious to me; may you see much fruit to your labours.

I hoped last evening that I had learned, in a little measure, the doctrines of election and justification, as you spoke of them, by experience; but O I know so little – like putting one's foot in the foam of the ocean. Please forgive my intrusion; I seek only to encourage you in what is to you, I believe, a real labour.

With the sincere wishes of

A poor seeker

BOOK REVIEW

By Faith: The Life and Ministry of John Kemp; hardback; 361 pages; price £14 plus £3 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom and agents.

So many of our older readers were brought up in homes in which the book, *John Kemp of Biddenden* was on a bookshelf. This was published by Mrs. Malvina Kemp and printed by C.J. Farncombe & Sons in 1933. This new and very well-presented book is a reprint of John Kemp's autobiography, which makes such good and profitable reading to believers who know something of the Lord's blessing in their souls, together with "the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6. 12). However, the sermons and letters in this new volume are not the same as those in the first publication, printed by Farncombes. The sermons and letters are sourced from unpublished material or from old magazines. There are just two poems. They were not included in the first publication, which had six poems.

This new book is particularly well illustrated, with many interesting photographs of ministers, chapels, godly friends and chapel gatherings. We notice that a photograph of the countryside around Snape Wood by the South Eastern and Chatham Railway line between Tonbridge and Hastings showing the terrain where John Kemp was brought up in his early days, is missing from the new publication. We were a little surprised at some of the ladies' hats worn at the wedding of John Kemp junior. Whatever would be the reaction if a lady came into chapel to worship with such a hat! Nevertheless, the photographs of some of the godly characters of former generations brought some solemn thoughts about "shall I among them stand?" (H. 938). No doubt, so many of them were among those of whom the apostle wrote, "These all died in faith" (Heb. 11. 13). May we each be among them. It can truly be said of John Kemp and the godly of his generation:

"Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears.

"I ask them whence their victory came,
They with united breath,
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
Their triumph to His death." (H. 477)

We firmly believe that our exercised readers will find this book beneficial and confirming to their souls. Some of John Kemp's utterances in the last years of his life will find an echo in their own souls. Dear Mr. Kemp suffered much pain and weakness in his closing year. The Lord supported him, although he knew some conflict. At the end of the autobiography there is a touching and sweet account given by Mrs. Lily Levell of her memories of her old pastor. Throughout this book we read of the work and breathings of the Holy Ghost in the life of John Kemp and the godly brethren associated with him.

John Kemp had a solemn word spoken to him when at Rotherfield, which truly searched him, and we feel that we need to lay it to our hearts in our day. We quote:

“When at Rotherfield on one occasion, these words were spoken to me, I believe by the Lord, ‘The pastors ... have not sought the LORD ... and all their flocks shall be scattered’ (Jer. 10. 21). This made me fear and quake. I told Mrs. Stace of Folkestone about it, but she thought it did not apply to me. Yet when one falls down quietly before the Lord under His threatenings, they *do* apply to that person – though repentance and prayer have often averted the judgments threatened. My *felt* guilt lay in being too much taken up with secular things, and often have empty seats in chapel charged guilt home upon my conscience respecting things out of chapel. We, as a people, have been too haughty, and though we may easily account for empty seats when we consider the deaths and removals through depression in the agricultural interest that take place, yet we do well at the same time to lay our sins to heart as the procuring cause – whether there be a falling off in numbers, or the ordinances are neglected by those who do attend.

“Well now, let us not despair, but may we confess our sins, and implore His mercy and aid. Do not His past favours to us embolden us to look up for further supplies, though our case be bad? The Lord revive His own work in our midst while we weep and kiss the rod. He smites those who stand high – not those low in the dust of penitence and prayer.”

We must also quote two portions from the funeral address given by Mr. J.K. Popham which is truly pertinent to the death of believers.

“Personally, I have lost a friend. Very shortly after I came into Sussex, Mr. Kemp was kind to me and received me, and from that day to the day of his death we were friends. I have lost a steady, affectionate, kind friend. But what of himself? Oh, he is to be envied! That is true of him which the Lord said in the gospel of John: ‘Where I am, there shall also My servant be’ (John 12. 26). ‘Absent from the body ... present with the Lord’ (2 Cor. 5. 8). And we go to the grave, not to give it a property, but to sow a seed. Think of it! The grave is robbed of its victory, plagued by the Lord Jesus. And so the Scripture says, it is sown a seed. It claims this body, which will turn to dust, but still God’s eye is on the precious dust of His saints. The sea shall give up her dead, graves shall be opened, and the bodies of the saints shall rise.”

“May the Lord fit us to live today, fit us to live our appointed days. There is an appointed time unto man, and God has fixed the bounds of his habitation that he cannot pass. ‘It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment’ (Heb. 9. 27). May the Lord prepare us for that last day, that it may be said of us, as we can truly say of our departed brother, ‘Better is the day of death than the day of one’s birth’ (see Eccles. 7. 1). Amen.”

The bounds of John Kemp’s habitation were fixed by God. He firstly lived in the High Weald with its hills, rills and valleys on the Ashdown and Tunbridge Wells sandstones, together with the Wadhurst clay, and then was directed to live in the Low Weald of the broad valley of the Weald Clay, known locally as the Vale of Kent. Divine providence!

Divine grace made him a gentle, loving and faithful pastor who well understood the infirmities of poor sinners, and directed them to Christ. From first-hand accounts from both my parents and my parents-in-law, he was a man of a friendly countenance, with a tender yet penetrating eye.

We warmly recommend this new publication to our readers. It is another excellent publication by the Gospel Standard Trust.

AN END OF SIN

(*Dan. 9. 24; John 19. 18-30*)

Jesus, when on the bloody tree
He hung, through soul and body pierced,
That all things might accomplished be
Contained in Scripture, said, "I thirst."

Hyssop, the plant ordained by God,
And held by Jews in high esteem,
Which sprinkled them with paschal blood,
Sharp vinegar conveyed to Him.

This done, our dear, our dying Lord
Exerts His short, expiring breath;
Utters this rich, important word,
"Tis finished!" and submits to death.

Henceforth an end is put to sin;
(The important word implies not less).
Now for believers is brought in
An everlasting righteousness.

The Son of God and man, has died,
Sinners as black as hell to save;
And, that they might be justified,
Is risen victorious from the grave.

In heaven He lives, our King, our Priest;
There for His people ever pleads:
How sure is our salvation! Christ
Died, rose, ascended, intercedes.

(H. 815)

Joseph Hart (1712-1768)

NOTICE OF DEATH

Philip Benjamin Pont, the faithful pastor at Zoar Chapel, Norwich, for twenty-six years, passed away to his eternal rest on Monday, March 4th, 2019, aged 86 years. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25. 21).

Faith hath an influence upon all other graces: it is like a silver thread that runs through a chain of pearls.

Thomas Brooks

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
MAY 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

PRAY FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY OVER US

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour” (1 Tim. 2. 1-3).

We read of similar instruction in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans in chapter 13 verses 1-4. If we are able to judge matters rightly, we believe that those of our readers who live in the United Kingdom feel that our present rulers and many of our parliamentarians are a group of people who act and speak despicably, and who have not accepted the result of the referendum to leave the European Union. They are doing that which pleases themselves, and hold the will of the people in contempt. Almighty God, who foreknew the state of affairs in the United Kingdom at this time, inspired the Apostle Paul to give us instruction as to how we should behave toward our rulers. The Word of God is our guide right to the end of time. Both government and people in this land have cast off the knowledge of God, violated His laws, denied His name, and trampled on His Word. Therefore we are in disarray and confusion. In spite of this disgrace, we are under divine command to pray for all in authority over us. We should pray for them!

We must own the hand of God in these things. When Abraham pleaded for Sodom, he respectfully by faith said, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18. 25). It is the same today with our national crisis as it was with the perplexity of feeding “five thousand men, beside women and children” (Matt. 14. 21), for we read that Jesus “Himself knew what He would do” (John 6. 6). The Lord will have the last word in these matters!

One thing is so abundantly clear in the Scriptures, and that is Christ’s love and care over His own dear people. Whatever the outcome from this present confusion, it will be according to God’s own will and purpose, and it must work for the good of those dear children of God who love and trust in Him (see Rom. 8. 28). David said, “My soul, wait thou only upon God” (Psa. 62. 5). We are therefore to “watch and pray” as events unfold, and to pray for our rulers that wisdom and understanding may be given to them, and that the evil forces in our land may be thwarted.

As we see all the confusion around us, may the Lord help us to lay to heart by faith a few glorious gospel truths which we find in the precious Word of God.

1. Jesus said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18. 36). David sang, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom" (Psa. 145. 13). Earthly kingdoms and empires come and go. The European Union is a rising power, and yet it will soon fall, as all the empires of history rose and fell, including the British empire. God uses empires for His own honour and glory, as in the Roman empire: for it gave His apostles space to preach His gospel among the nations. Also, from the recent British and European empires, godly ministers went forth into the world preaching salvation by Jesus Christ.

2. God's people must not indulge any thought of violence or of civil disobedience. We are under instruction to "submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake ... to the king ... or unto governors" (1 Pet. 2. 13, 14). Jesus humbled Himself to pay tribute to the Roman rulers, although He was the Son of God (see Matt. 17. 24-27). When the Pharisees tried to catch out Christ to find fault in paying tribute to Cæsar, He taught plainly that we are to render to "Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's" (Matt. 22. 21). When Jesus answered Pilate (see above), He also said, "If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence." Whatever the outcome from present matters, we are told plainly to pay our taxes, submit to our rulers, and above all to pray for them. It is our duty to pray for them, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life," for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

3. As we pray, may we remember the word of the Lord as touching prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6. 10).

4. The Lord loves His people with an "everlasting love," and therefore will watch over them, care for them, provide for them and bless them. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6. 33).

5. The Lord is preparing a place for His people in heaven above. Jesus spoke of "many mansions" in His Father's house (see John 14. 2). "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4. 9). The Lord has promised that He is always with His people, and He will see them again.

6. Our time here is so short, and our occupation should be to seek to enter into that rest. The Lord bring us safely home to Immanuel's land.

We hope that our readers in other lands will bear with us as we have addressed those readers who live in the United Kingdom. Whatever land or nation we are born into, we hope that our concluding remarks will be

of some benefit to all our readers. We each are called to live in this modern, global and digital age of antichrist, and are witnessing a great falling away of truth and godliness.

IS THE YOUNG MAN SAFE?

*Sermon preached by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
on Thursday evening, May 8th, 1969*

Text: “Is the young man Absalom safe?” (2 Sam. 18. 29).

This was perhaps the saddest, the most solemn day in all the life of David, the man of God. O the grief that filled his heart when his beloved Absalom was slain! This was a real grief. There are no more pathetic words in Scripture than these: “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (verse 33). It was not just that Absalom had turned against his father, rewarded his father’s love with bitter hatred and opposition, but this was the deepest grief – David knew that Absalom was eternally lost. He died without hope. He died without mercy. Perhaps when you read it through, you thought David was using extravagant language, but this was his deepest grief – he sees his own beloved Absalom perished in his sins.

Let us be clear on one point, my friends: this was the Lord’s chastising hand upon David. David grievously sinned in that matter of adultery with Bathsheba and the death of Uriah the Hittite. He grievously sinned. The Lord most graciously pardoned him: “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5. 20). Yet there was to be the rod, there was to be the chastisement, and it is here David comes into it. When Nathan spoke that word of sweet assurance to David that his sin was put away, he also as the Lord’s messenger clearly testified to David of the awful sorrows there would be upon the kingdom and in all his family, and now David has to walk it out. Let us be very clear on this point, that as a man sows, so he shall also reap. We need to watch, my friends. We cannot sin carelessly, we cannot sin lightly. If we are the children of God, it will not keep us out of heaven, but there will be the rod: “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb. 12. 6). And David here is under the scourging hand of his God, and he knows it.

I want to say first of all this evening one or two things concerning **“the young man Absalom.”** Absalom is one of the solemn characters of the Word of God. You know, there are some most blessed characters in Scripture, and there are some most solemn characters, and Absalom is one of the latter. I just want to pause to make one observation here. I do

not want to follow it up; I just want to drop it for your consideration. You know David, among his wives, married Maacah, the daughter of a heathen king, an ungodly king, and she was the mother of Absalom. You have to walk carefully on these points. How often there have been those who have gone astray, and as they have sown so they have reaped!

But I want to say one or two things concerning “the young man Absalom.” First of all this: *from a natural point of view really he had everything*. He had beauty, he was a most handsome man. He had popularity, he won the hearts of the people. He had ambitions and he achieved them. But what of Absalom’s end? What did all his beauty, and all his popularity, and all his ambitions avail for him, when as a young man he was cut off in the midst of his days? Solemn thing, this! My friends, the world teems with Absaloms today, those who are only concerned about their own popularity and ambitions. And let us be clear on this – we all have this spirit of Absalom in our carnal hearts by nature, every one of us. If grace prevent not, the thing we are after is the fulfilment of our own ambitions, popularity or fame or riches or possessions or honour. And these Absaloms are not just found in the world; some of them sit under the sound of the gospel. Now I say this in love, but beware of being found an Absalom. Naturally he had so much, he gained so much. He was a prince, he was handsome, he was honoured, he fulfilled his ambitions, he stole the hearts of the people. “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8. 36). O beware of the spirit of Absalom! It is in us all by nature, in our carnal hearts, but beware of it! It can never bring you to heaven. The Lord grant us more of this spirit:

“Were I possessor of the earth,
 And called the stars my own,
 Without Thy graces and Thyself,
 I were a wretch undone!” (H. 186)

Another thing concerning “the young man Absalom”: *he had a most godly father*. David, with all his faults, was a most godly man. He was eminent in godliness and in grace. The Holy Spirit has recorded that he was a man after God’s own heart (see 1 Sam. 13. 14). And Absalom was David’s son, yet he never possessed David’s grace. Grace does not run in families. Now I know that the Lord in much mercy has ordained that many of the elect shall be the children of His children, and we can see the love and the compassion and the mercy in it. The Lord has ordained that so many shall be the answer to their godly parents’ prayers. But I want to say this: you may have godly parents, but the prayers of those godly parents will not save you if you are never taught to pray for yourself. What did even godly David’s prayers avail for sinful Absalom? Real religion is so personal. The Lord, speaking of His dear children,

says, “Born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1. 13). Grace does not run in families. Beware of having this lurking in your heart, that because your parents and grandparents had grace, you will have grace. You know, Satan is very subtle with this suggestion, and we drift along and take it for granted that the time will come, and can happily sing, “The appointed time rolls on apace” (H. 76). But does it roll on apace, and has it rolled on apace in your heart? Real religion is personal. To have a godly father, a godly mother, will not take you to heaven. Absalom was David’s son, but he perished in his sins.

Now just one more thing concerning “the young man Absalom”: Absalom was *a young man who did think about death*. There are so many girls and boys, young men and young women, who never think about death. If it comes to them, they thrust the thought from them. You know, we hate to be reminded that we must die, and left to ourselves we would make our nest and live here as if we were here for ever. But Absalom was different. He had thoughts concerning death, he had thoughts concerning his end. But what effect did they have? Did they bring him to seek mercy? Did they bring him to cry, “Teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom”? (see Psa. 90. 12). No, my friends, they brought him only to this – to seek that when he was dead his name should still be honoured. For we read that in his lifetime he took and reared up for himself a pillar. He was going to have some wonderful monument, “a pillar, which is in the king’s dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name: and it is called unto this day, Absalom’s place” (2 Sam. 18. 18). Well, Absalom had his monument, and years after it was still called by Absalom’s name, and still Absalom was remembered by it. But what good did it do him? What did it profit him?

I want to make two points here: the first is this – when we come to our end, *it is not what men think about us*. I remember some years ago, a dear young lady was dying and she asked me to bury her, and then she said, “What will you say about me? Will you say at the grave, ‘in sure and certain hope’?” And I said, “Yes, I believe I shall.” And then she said this: “It is not what you think about me; it is what the Lord thinks about me.” You know, there are many things spoken of people when they come to the end, but is our witness in heaven, and is our record on high? (see Job 16. 19). Solemn thing to have a name written in the earth! Where do you want your name to be written? If there is grace in your heart, this is where you will want your unworthy name to be written:

“My name from the palms of His hands,
Eternity will not erase,

Impressed on His heart it remains,
In marks of indelible grace.”

(H. 340)

Have you got a sweet hope that your unworthy name is written there?

The other point is this. When you think of death, when you hear of death from this pulpit, when you are reminded, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9. 27), what effect does it have? With Absalom it had an effect, but it had the wrong effect. If the Holy Spirit uses it and sanctifies it, it will have this effect – *it will bring you to long to be prepared*, to seek to be made ready, to pray to be made right, to have an interest in Christ and in His most precious blood. Have you come so far in your religion that, as you hear of a solemn eternity, the great thing is to be made ready, to be made right, to be fitted, to be prepared? Now I say these few things concerning this solemn character Absalom. May the Lord save us from being Absaloms.

Now this question, “*Is the young man safe?*” This was the point which exercised David’s heart: “Is the young man safe?” I want to bring a few aspects of this before you this evening as the Lord shall help me. There are so many young men and young women in our midst, so many here tonight, and this word has been on my heart since last Sabbath, when I noticed how many young men and young women, how many boys and girls we have in our midst. Then this is the great question, the great point – *eternal safety*: “Is the young man safe?” It is a vital question.

First of all I would bring it before those of you who are members of the church, and those of you who are not but who fear the Lord. I want to press this point on you, I want you to answer it before the Lord. *The young men, the young women, are they a concern to you?* Do you ever have to pray for them? Are they ever a burden to you? You know, my friends, in the church of God when the Lord blesses, when He brings out, when He brings forth, it is usually preceded by a spirit of real prayer flowing from the heart, Spirit-indited prayer. Now I know the Lord is a sovereign in the way in which He blesses, but this is the usual way. But let me ask you this question: Is there this exercise? How long is it since you had to fall before the Lord and lay down before the Lord those who are a burden to you, and plead with the Lord for their souls’ eternal welfare? A father in Israel, a mother in Israel, is one who wrestles before the Lord in this way. You know in the last century, when there was much real spiritual prosperity, one great secret of it was the deep and weighty exercise of the godly as cases were laid on their hearts and they had to bear them continually before the Lord.

I remember in my early days of preaching, I often used to meet with some of the very aged saints in Manchester, some over 90 years of age, who in the days of their youth sat under the ministry of Gadsby’s successor, A.B. Taylor. And in those days he numbered his church by

hundreds; not his congregation, his church! And those godly old souls told me this – that the ministry of some of the men of the last century was no different from the ministry of our godly men today; and if you read A.B. Taylor’s sermons you will find that they are very simple. But it was the *power*, it was the *authority* that attended it. What I am after is this – there were so many godly, deeply-exercised hearers with cases laid upon their heart, and this was their concern for one and another: “Is the young man safe?” And they had to travail in birth until Christ was formed in them. O that the Lord might grant something of this spirit amongst us! “Is the young man safe?” And do not limit this just to older people. You might be very young and the Lord might have richly blessed you. You know, a person can be a father in Israel or a mother in Israel, and yet be very young in years. And I believe sometimes, especially in the time of your first love, there is this spirit, this exercise before the Lord, that the Lord will command His blessing, even life for evermore. “Is the young man safe?”

I want to *speak now to parents*. What are your ambitions for your children? What are your chief desires, your chief concerns for them? Is it this – their souls’ eternal safety? Or are you satisfied to see them going the way of the world, to see them satisfied with earthly happiness, earthly pleasures, earthly possessions? Or is this the great point you long for – their souls’ eternal welfare? Then how often are you led forth in earnest prayer on their behalf, and how often are you able to speak a word in season to them? A word of restraint, a word of reproof, a word of warning? O the blessings with which the Lord has attended such words over the years! May there be this vital exercise: “Is the young man safe?”

I just mention this *concerning the Sabbath School*, those of you who labour there. Is this your concern? Not just that there might be something of interest or even profit, but you know, however young, each one has a never-dying soul. My friends, I do not feel that any of us really realise the awful weight, the solemnity of it, what it is to possess a soul which must endure eternally either in hell or in heaven. When there is some little view of it, then there is this exercise, there is this concern: “Is the young man safe?”

Now I want to come to this question in a different way. I want to *speak to you dear young friends*, and I want the question to be in this sense: “Is the young man safe?” – not someone else, but YOU; how it touches you personally, how it touches your eternal welfare. You each have a soul, you each must die. How soon, we know not. Then there is the judgment day. But are you safe? Have you got that sweet assurance that it will be well with you when you come to die? And is that assurance built on solid ground, or is it just something that you take for

granted? “Is the young man safe?” As you go home tonight, may this be an exercise the Lord fixes and fastens in your heart, and may you find no peace until the Lord grants you that sweet peace which is to be found in Jesus.

It may be that the Lord will bring this solemn persuasion on your spirit that you are not safe, that all is not well. O this will try you! This will make you sad; this will grieve you. But it will be the most blessed day in your life if the Lord for the first time brings you into real concern for your soul’s eternal welfare. “Is the young man safe?” Well, *are* you safe?

“Art thou ready to meet God?
Am I made a real Christian,
Washed in the Redeemer’s blood?” (H. 698)

I just want to touch it with you personally in two other senses. One is *the way you have to walk*. The only way which is safe is the Lord’s way. Beware of departing from it! Especially those of you who fear God, as you seek to walk, as you seek to live day by day, may this be the great point: Am I safe? You are only safe as you walk in the Lord’s way. You know, there are many slippery ways, and really the great exercise with a young believer will be this – to be kept. There are so many slippery ways. But may it often be the exercise with you: “Is the young man safe?” in this sense: that the Lord might keep you, that the prayer might often be yours: “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa. 119. 117). We are only safe as we walk out our pilgrimage as the Lord holds us up. We have not any power, any ability to stand: “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.” “Is the young man safe?”

And then in this other sense. There will be *times when you have to make a decision*, when you have to make a choice. May this be the great question: “Is the way safe, and am I safe in walking in this way?” Not, will it profit me? Will it please me? Will it satisfy my carnal desires? Is it safe? And may there be this written upon your heart:

“The way I walk cannot be wrong,
If Jesus be but there.” (H. 812)

And if Jesus is not there, then the way must be wrong, the way cannot be safe.

“Is the young man safe?” Now my dear young friends, I say it in love, *do not take it for granted*. You know, David asked this question, “Is the young man safe?” Ahimaaz was the first to answer, and he did not deal with this point faithfully, he did not deal with it clearly. The answer he gave was very indistinct. There was no certain sound. He thought he was being kind to David. Now David asks this point concerning Absalom, “Is he safe?” and he does not get a clear answer.

The question was not really dealt with. He was not really told whether Absalom was safe or not. All he says is, he saw a great tumult but he knew not what it was. But another messenger came, Cushie, and the question is put to Cushie, and he is faithful. In love he tells David the truth, and he tells him clearly what has happened to Absalom: "The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is" (2 Sam. 18. 32).

Now I want to say this very affectionately to you, my dear young friends. When a gospel minister probes you and searches you, it is in love. It is Cushie that will profit you, not Ahimaaz. There are those like Ahimaaz about, and as you have this exercise, "Is my soul safe?" they will not give you a distinct answer. They leave it in abeyance, they leave you with a "Who can tell?" You come to the house of God, and you keep the Sabbath, and you like being with the Lord's people, so perhaps everything is all right. You know, Joab did not want to send Ahimaaz. He ran unsent. He was not a sent messenger, and he came the easy way. He ran by the way of the plain and he got there smoothly, and it was smooth tidings. He did not speak the truth; he was not faithful. But Cushie was the one appointed, the one who was sent. He came the rugged way by the mountains, and he clearly spoke the truth. Do not be offended if you find me to be a Cushie, because it is in love. Those like Ahimaaz will never profit your soul.

"Is the young man safe?" Then you come with this enquiry: "*What is it that makes a young man, a young woman safe?*" Well, it is only one thing: *the new birth*. The Lord Jesus insisted upon it: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee ... Ye must be born again" (John 3. 5, 7). And none are safe, none are secure, but those who are born again by the Holy Spirit of God. But you say: "What is it that I have to look for in my own experience before I know that I am safe?" May you never be set down short. You may have feelings and exercises and desires and concerns and prayers, but do not be satisfied with these. I believe an exercised sinner can only know that he is safe, eternally safe, when he is blessed with a *personal saving knowledge of Jesus*. Let me be clear. I do not say that that sinner is not safe until he comes there. A child of God is eternally safe in the covenant of grace, and a child of God is safe in the purposes of God from the moment the Lord begins to work in his heart by the Holy Spirit. But you cannot rest in any sweet assurance that you are safe until you are brought to that personal saving knowledge of Jesus. "They shall all know Me," *all of them*, "from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD" (Jer. 31. 34). It is in a knowledge of Jesus that eternal life is found.

"To know my Jesus crucified
By far excels all things beside."

(H. 771)

O may this be the great point you are after! Not just to be well thought of by others, not just to have some experience, but: “That I may know Him” (Phil. 3. 10). And it sweetly joins up with that word: “That which I see not teach Thou me” (Job 34. 32). Perhaps there are a few dear young friends who are concerned, but you say, “I do not see my safety. There are many things a child of God possesses and I cannot see them in myself. There are many things I do not know. ‘That which I see not teach Thou me,’ especially to know myself in my helplessness, sin and ruin, and to know Jesus in His great salvation.” This is to be safe, eternally safe. But “**Is the young man safe?**”

I just want to come now to say a few things on this sweet truth, *the safety of the people of God*. O there is no sweeter truth in the whole of the gospel than this – the safety of God’s dear people! My mind goes back to my spiritual beginnings. I felt I knew nothing and had nothing, and one Sabbath we sang the 667th hymn, and over the top it said, “Safety in Christ”; and O the weight, the preciousness of that line, “Safety in Christ”! Such a view of the eternal blessedness of the people of God as “saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation”! (Isa. 45. 17). Such a concern as to whether this blessedness was mine! Such a desire that it might be! “Safety in Christ.” It is one of the sweetest themes in the gospel. The people of God are safe. They were safe in Christ before the world had any being, as safe in the covenant of grace as when they are put down in heaven at last. “Safety in Christ.” They are safe as built on a sure Foundation, the Rock of Ages. They are safe as “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Pet. 1. 5); safe as they are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; safe as they shelter under the Redeemer’s most precious blood. “Safety in Christ.”

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand” (John 10. 27, 28). “Safety in Christ.” No sweeter theme than this – the safety of the people of God in the Lord Jesus! O may there be this sweet assurance in many a heart that, whatever else, I know that I am safe in Jesus. And those who are unconcerned, you who drift along, may you be brought to this: “Am I safe? What do I know of this blessed safety, and what sweet assurance, what solid assurance have I that when I come to my end I shall be safe eternally?” “**Is the young man Absalom safe?**”

Now in closing, I just want to speak a word on a different point; that is, *concerning David in this dreadful grief that he endured*. There may be times when in measure you have to walk as David did. Perhaps not in this same particular, but something weighing upon you, resting on your heart, and it fills you with grief, and you cannot find any resting place.

Well, David came to his last end, and upon his dying-bed there was one thing which sorely grieved him. That was that his own family were not as he desired. He looks around in his own family. O so much sin, so many failures, that wicked Amnon, this ungodly Absalom, perishing in their sins! So many things to grieve David in his own family, but now he is on his dying-bed he finds a resting place. “*He* views the covenant sure; *his* hopes all centre there” (see H. 994); he views that there is an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. My friends, if you are brought in measure into David’s grief, may you know David’s resting place. And when you come to your last end (and there will be many things in your life which are not as you would desire them, especially as you consider your own failures, your own shortcomings and sins) may you have this blessed resting place – the covenant of grace confirmed by an oath and sealed with the blood of Jesus. May you, like David, be able to die in peace: “Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire” (2 Sam. 23. 5). The Lord add His blessing. Amen.

ALMOST A CHRISTIAN

From Matthew Mead of Stepney (1629-1699)

“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26. 28).

A man may be very zealous in the matters of religion and yet be but almost a Christian.

Jehu not only served God and did what He commanded, but was very zealous in His service. “Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD” (2 Kings 10. 16). And yet, in all this, Jehu was a hypocrite. Joash was a great reformer in Jehoiada’s time. It is said, “Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest” (2 Chron. 24. 2). But when Jehoiada died, Joash’s zeal for God died with him and he became a wretch.

OBJECTION. But the apostle makes zeal to be a note of sound Christianity. It is good to be zealously affected in good things (see Gal. 4. 18). Nay, it seems to be the non-such [unrivalled] qualification for obtaining eternal life. “The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” (Matt. 11. 12).

ANSWER. It is true, there is a zeal which is good and renders the soul highly acceptable to God, a zeal that never misses heaven and salvation. Now, this is a zeal which is a celestial fire, the true temper and heat of all the affections to God and Christ. It is a zeal wrought and

kindled in the soul by the Spirit of God who first works it and then sets it to work. It is a zeal that has the Word of God for its guide, directing it in working both in regard of its object and end, manner and measure. It is a zeal that checks sin and forwards the heavenly life. It is a zeal that makes the glory of God its chief end, which swallows up all by-ends. “The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up” (John 2. 17).

But now, all zeal is not this kind of zeal. There is a false zeal as well as a true. Every grace has its counterfeit. As there is fire which is true heavenly fire on the altar, so there is strange fire. Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire upon God’s altar (see Lev. 10. 1).

There are several kinds of zeal, none of which are true and sound, but false and counterfeit. I shall instance in eight particulars:

1. *There is a blind zeal, a zeal without knowledge.* “They have a zeal of God,” said the apostle, “but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10. 2). Now, as knowledge without zeal is fruitless, so zeal without knowledge is dangerous. It is like wildfire in the hand of a fool, or like the devil in the man possessed who threw him sometimes into the fire, sometimes into the water.

The eye is the light of the body and the understanding is the light of the soul. Now, as the body without the light of the eye cannot go without stumbling, so the soul without the light of the mind cannot act without erring. Zeal without knowledge is like a dim light in a dark night that leads a traveller out of his way into the bogs and mire. This was the zeal of Paul while he was a Pharisee. “I ... was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death” (Acts 22. 3, 4). And again, “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26. 9). And, “Concerning zeal, persecuting the church” (Phil. 3. 6). Such a zeal was that in John, “They shall put you out of the synagogues,” silence you; you shall not be suffered to preach; “yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16. 2). This is great zeal, but yet it is blind zeal; and that God abhors.

2. *There is a partial zeal;* in one thing, fire-hot; in another, key-cold; zealous in this thing and yet careless in another. Many are first-table Christians – zealous in the duties of the first table and yet neglectful of the second.* Thus, the Pharisees were zealous in their Corban [gifts and offerings consecrated to God] and yet unnatural to their parents, suffering them to starve and perish. Others are mindful of the second-table, but neglectful of the first; more for righteousness among men than for holiness towards God. But now, he whose religion ends with the first table, or begins with the second, is a fool in his profession; for he is but almost a Christian.

* First table – duty to God, commandments 1-4; second table – duty to man, commandments 5-10. Ed.

The woman who was for dividing the child was not the true mother, and he who is for dividing the commands is not a true believer (see 1 Kings 3. 16-28).

Jehu was zealous against Ahab's house, but not so against Jeroboam's calves. Many are zealous against sins of opinion who yet use no zeal against the sins of their conversation.

Where zeal reaches to every command of God alike, that is a sign of a sound constitution of soul; but, where it is partial, where a man is hot in one part and cold in another, this is symptomatic of some inward spiritual distemper [disease].

3. *There is a misplaced zeal fixed upon unsuitable and disproportionate objects.* Many are very zealous in trifling things that are not worth it, and trifling in the things that most require it; like the Pharisees who were diligent tithers of mint, anise and cummin, but neglected the "weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matt. 23. 23). They had no zeal for these, though they were very hot for the other. Many are more zealous for a ceremony than for the substance of religion; more zealous for bowing at the name of Jesus than for conformity to the life of Jesus; more zealous for a holy vestment than for a holy life; more zealous for the inventions of men than for the institutions of Christ. This is a superstitious zeal, and usually found in men unconverted in whom grace never was wrought. Against such men, heathens will rise up in judgment. When was it that Paul was so "exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1. 14), as he said? Only when he was in his wretched and unconverted state! As you may see in the next verses: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. 1. 15, 16).

4. *There is a selfish zeal that has a man's own end for its motive.* Jehu was very zealous, but it was not so much for God as for the kingdom; not so much in obedience to the command as in design to step into the throne; and, therefore, God threatens to punish him for that very thing He commands him to do: "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu" (Hos. 1. 4), because he shed blood to gratify his lust, not to obey God. So Simeon and Levi pretended great zeal for circumcision. They seemed very zealous for the honour of God's ordinances when, in truth, their zeal was covetousness and revenge upon the Shechemites.

5. *There is an outside zeal.* Such was that of scribes and Pharisees. They would not eat with unwashed hands, but yet would live in unseen sins. They would wash the cup often but the heart seldom; paint the outside but neglect the inside. Jehu was a mighty outside reformer, but

he reformed nothing within; for he had a base heart under all. "Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart" (2 Kings 10. 31). Though his fleece was fair, his liver was rotten. Our Lord Christ observed of the Pharisees, "They pray to be seen of men," and fast, so "that they may appear to men to fast" (see Matt. 6. 5, 16).

6. *There is a forensic [Pharisaic or legal] zeal that runs out upon others;* like the candle in the lantern that sends all the heat out at the top; or, as the lewd woman Solomon mentions, whose "feet abide not in her house" (Prov. 7. 11).

Many are hot and high against the sins of others, and yet cannot see the same in themselves.

It is easy to see faults in others and hard to see them in ourselves. Jehu was zealous against Baal and his priests because that was Ahab's sin, but not against the calves of Bethel because that was his own sin. This zeal is the true character of a hypocrite. His own garden is overrun with weeds while he is busy in looking over his neighbour's pale [boundary].

7. *There is a sinful zeal.* All the former may be called sinful from some defect, but this I call sinful in a more special notion because it is against the life and chief of religion. It is a zeal against zeal that flies not at profaneness, but at the very power of godliness; not at error, but at truth; and is most hot against the most spiritual and most important truths of the times. Whence else are the sufferings of men for the truth but from the spirit of zeal against the truth? This may be called a devilish zeal; for, as there is the faith of devils, so there is the zeal of devils. "Therefore his rage is great, because he knows his time is short" (see Rev. 12. 12).

8. *There is a scripture-less zeal that is not butted and bounded by the Word, but by some base and low end.* Such was Saul's zeal when God bid him destroy Amalek and spare neither man nor beast; when, contrary to God's command, he spared the best of the sheep and oxen under pretence of zeal for God's sacrifice. Another time, when he had no such command, then he slew the Gibeonites "in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah" (2 Sam. 21. 2).

Many a man's zeal is greater then and there, when and where he has the least warrant from God. The true spirit of zeal is bounded by Scripture, for it is for God and the concerns of His glory. God has no glory from that zeal which has no Scripture warrant.

Now then, if the zeal of a man in the things of God may be only a blind zeal, a partial zeal, a misplaced zeal, a selfish zeal, an outside zeal, a forensic zeal, a sinful zeal, or a scripture-less zeal, then it is evident that a man may be very zealous in the matters of religion and yet be but almost a Christian.

SOUL WARFARE
Letter by John M'Kenzie

August 19th, 1844

Dear Friend,

I received your letter with the lines, and shall forward them for communication to the proper quarter. They contain good truth, but all rhyme, you are aware, is not poetry. Verses, to be of much use and interest in a periodical, should contain a considerable degree of the quality of poetry, be much to the point and full of matter; and unless this be the case, more or less, lines are never read with much interest.

I believe I know, from heart experience, some of the trials and exercises of which you speak. The kingdom of God does not stand in word, form or mere profession, but in divine life internally felt, and in supernatural power; and as God is a Spirit, holy and good, His power in the heart is an invisible mystery that can neither be seen with our naked eye nor handled with our fleshly fingers, but is as distinctly felt in the heart, at times, as the living babe in the womb; and as that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, divine sensations in the heart are often a great mystery, and a perfect puzzle to the flesh and the natural mind. But the same blessed Spirit who breathes and moves in the saints is graciously pleased, at times, to shine upon the work of His own hands in their hearts, and then we understand what and where we are. Faith is strengthened, hope brightened, the heart enlarged, the conscience eased, and the weary spirit sweetly rests in Jesus and richly glories in His Person, power, grace, love, life, labours, sufferings and resurrection; and feels a sweet knitting of heart to the dear Redeemer and benign [kind] Friend of sinners.

May we know more of this blessed Jesus in our poor, vile hearts, by vital and precious faith, under the unction and power of the blessed Spirit.

I was not very well after my return from Norwich, but, through mercy, I am now much better. I feel I cannot stand much preaching. Most have their bodily infirmities as well as their peculiar temptations, and mine appears to be a weak stomach bodily, and a heart of leprosy and the plague spiritually; but my blessed Physician can manage both. I wish I could, with a full and free heart, submit them entirely to His matchless skill, power and benignity. He has ever been kind to me; but, alas! I am prone to forget Him, and to depart from Him. Still my heart and my desire are towards Him.

Yours, for truth's sake,

John M'Kenzie

GOD MAINTAINING LIFE IN THE SOUL

By Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

Let us consider a few ways in which the Lord keeps our souls alive.

1. *A spirit of prayer* is most certainly one of the most gracious means which the Lord employs in maintaining divine life in the soul. A spirit of prayer is something very different from a custom of prayer, a form of prayer, or even a gift of prayer. These are merely the fleshly imitations of the interceding breath of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the saints of God, and therefore may and do exist without it. But that secret lifting up of the heart unto the Lord, that panting after Him as the hart panteth after the water brooks, that pouring out of the soul before Him, that sighing and groaning for a word of His grace, a look of His eye, a touch of His hand, a smile of His face, that sweet communion and heavenly intercourse with Him on the mercy seat which marks the Spirit's inward intercession – all this cannot be counterfeited. Such a close, private, inward, experimental work and walk is out of the reach and out of the taste of the most gifted professor. But in this path the Holy Ghost leads the living family of God, and as they walk in it under His teachings and anointings, they feel its sweetness and blessedness.

2. *Having the eyes and heart much in the Word of truth* is another blessed means of maintaining the life of God in the soul. O what treasures of mercy and grace are lodged in the Scriptures; what a mine of heavenly instruction; what a store of precious promises, encouraging invitations, glorious truths, holy precepts, tender admonitions, wise counsels and living directions! What a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path! But O how little we know, understand, believe, realise, feel and enjoy of the Word of life. For four or five and thirty years have we read, studied, meditated and sought by faith to enter into the treasures of truth contained in the inspired Word; but O how little do we understand it! how less do we believe and enjoy the heavenly mysteries, the treasures of grace and truth revealed in it! Yet only as our heart is brought not only unto, but into the Word of life, and only as faith feeds on the heavenly food there lodged by the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, can we be made fruitful in any good word or work. We should seek, by the help and blessing of God, to drink more into the spirit of truth, to enter more deeply and vitally into the mind of Christ, to read the Word more under that same inspiration whereby it was written, to submit our heart more to its instruction, that it may drop like the rain and distil like the dew into the inmost depths of our soul, and thus, as it were, fertilise the roots of our faith, and hope, and love.

3. *Separation from the world*, and everything worldly, and that not in a monkish, austere, pharisaic spirit, but from the constraining influence of that love to the Lord which draws up the heart and affections unto

Him away from earthly things, is a gracious, we might almost say an indispensable means of maintaining the life of God in the believer's breast. Nothing more deadens the soul to every gracious and heavenly feeling than drinking into the spirit of the world. As long as *that* is kept out, mere external contact with the world, as, for instance, in the calls of necessary and lawful business, does not injure. The world without and the world within are like two streams of different magnitude which run side by side. Keep them apart, and the smaller stream will not overflow its banks; but let the larger stream get an entrance into the smaller, in other words, let the world without rush into the world within, who shall tell the width of that flood or the havoc that it may make of the crops?

Some constitutions are so tender that every cold blast is sufficient to produce inflammation; and others are so susceptible of disease that they fall sick under the slightest taint of every epidemic disorder. Such sickly constitutions must watch against the east wind, and not expose themselves to the air of the marshy fen. But just such cold-catching, feverish invalids are we all in soul, whatever be the vigour and health of the body. Let us then be afraid of the very breath of the world lest it chill the heart, or inflame the carnal mind; let us dread exposure to its infectious influence lest it call forth into active energy our latent disease.

And above all, let us dread the influence of worldly professors. The openly profane cannot do us much harm. The foul-mouthed swearer, the staggering drunkard, the loud brawler, are not likely to do us any injury. We can give them what the sailor calls "a wide berth," as he does to a known rock when he approaches the place as marked on the chart. Nor are we likely to suffer injury from the moral churchman, or the zealous Arminian, or the political Dissenter. They and we are far enough apart. But the professor of the same truths which we hold dear, who sits perhaps under the same or a similar ministry, whom we cannot altogether reject and yet cannot receive, who, like Bunyan's Talkative, is swift to speak on every occasion, and on no occasion at all, that he may have the pleasure of hearing the music of his own tongue, but who the more we are in his company the more he robs us of every tender, humble, gracious and spiritual feeling, he, he is the robber, not indeed the highwayman who knocks us down with his bludgeon, but the pickpocket who steals our purse as he sits in the same carriage by our side.

4. *To cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart* under all cases and circumstances, under all trials and temptations, under all difficulties and perplexities, amidst a whole storm of objections and suggestions from the carnal mind, the sore thrustings of our pitiless and unwearied adversary, and every obstacle from without or within that may obstruct our path – this, too, is indispensable to the life of faith. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (Matt. 11. 12). It is not folding the hands and crying, "Peace, peace," that will take us to

heaven; no, nor a sound creed, a form of godliness, or a name to live. This is not running the race set before us, or fighting the good fight of faith, or wrestling with principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. Sometimes we are tempted to presume and sometimes tempted to despair. The only cure for both these diseases of the soul is to cleave to the Person and work, blood, love and grace of the Lord Jesus, so far as He has been revealed to our soul and according to the measure of faith which is given unto us. To hang upon Him at every step is the only way to be brought through.

5. The last gracious means which we shall name, is to *live, walk and act in the daily fear of God*. This is, indeed, a most blessed fountain of life to depart from the snares of death. Only, then, as this fountain of life springs up in the soul, watering and thus making the conscience tender, the heart fruitful, the affections heavenly, and the spirit soft and contrite, can the power of grace be maintained in the breast. This heavenly grace of godly fear, the believer's treasure, the beginning and the end of wisdom, makes and keeps the eye watchful, the ear attentive, the smell quick and sagacious [discerning, acute or shrewd], the tongue savoury, the arm strong, the hand open, and the foot wary; and thus amidst thousands of snares and temptations, he walks forward to a heavenly kingdom with his eyes right on, and his eyelids straight before him.

PROPHECY OF CHRIST'S ASCENSION

*From Ebenezer Erskine, pastor of Portmoak
and later Stirling (1680-1745)*

“God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet” (Psa. 47. 5).

This psalm seems to have been composed upon the occasion of that great solemnity, of carrying up the ark from the house of Obed-edom unto the city of Zion; the history of which we have in 2 Samuel 6. But as Zion was a type of the church, and the ark a type of Christ, so this has plainly a respect unto the ascension of Christ unto heaven, and, as a consequence and fruit thereof, to the spreading and enlargement of His kingdom in all parts and nations of the world.

The psalm begins with an exhortation to praise: “O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph” (verse 1). The party exhorted is, “all ye people”; not only all the tribes of Israel, but all the ends of the earth, are concerned in their Saviour and His salvation, and therefore all are exhorted to join in this triumph, and celebrate the glory of our Redeemer. Every soul that hears of Christ should approve

of the promise of Infinite Wisdom through Him. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1. 15). A token of joy and pleasure. Christ is the joy and pleasure of His Father, and He is also the joy of all the redeemed; they are just "gladdened with His countenance," as the expression is (see Psa. 21. 6). A token of admiration and wonder. God manifested in the flesh is the wonder of angels, and the admiration of all the saints, both in the church militant and triumphant.

1. Our Redeemer is to be praised, because of the awful majesty of God that is in Him: "The LORD most high is terrible" (verse 2). But, say you, is this matter of praise? *Answer.* It is great matter of praise that our Redeemer is none other than the Most High God, who strikes terror upon the powers of hell; He comes to bruise the head of the serpent, and through death to destroy him that had the power of death; He is terrible to all the wicked enemies of His church and people; for, "He shall cut off the spirit of princes: He is terrible to the kings of the earth" (Psa. 76. 12). Is it not matter of praise unto the church, to have this God for our God, for our everlasting Friend?

2. He is a sovereign Lord, and His dominion is universal. "He is a great King over all the earth." His kingdom is so extensive, that it reaches from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth, according to the promise made to Him by His Father, "I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psa. 2. 8).

3. He is to be praised for the honour and victory that He gives unto all His ransomed: "He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet" (verse 3); i.e. through Him we shall be conquerors, yea, "more than conquerors"; in Him we shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, according to what we have in Revelation 12. 5, 19. 15.

4. He is to be praised for the pleasant portion and goodly heritage that He bestows upon all His true Israel: "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom He loved" (verse 4); i.e. He will order everything in our lot in the world to His glory and our good; and, which is best of all, He Himself will be our portion for ever, when flesh and heart fails; and this is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 1. 4).

5. He is to be praised upon the account of His triumphant ascension to heaven in our nature, the views of which just fill the church here with transport of wonder and praise: "God is gone up with a shout" (see verse 5-7).

"God is gone up with a shout." Where notice:

1. The glorious and awful name and character of our Redeemer; He is *God*; i.e. God, not absolutely or essentially considered, for in this

respect He cannot properly be said to go up, or come down; but it is God in our nature, in the Person of the Son, God manifested in the flesh; that God who is the Object of all praise and adoration (verse 6), that God who is “King of all the earth” (verse 7), that God who “reigneth over the heathen,” and who “sitteth upon the throne of His holiness” (verse 8), “the God of Abraham,” to whom all “the shields of the earth belong” (verse 9), it is that same God that is “gone up with a shout.” Who dares to wear that great name, but only He who is in the form of God, and thinks it no robbery to be equal with God? (see Phil. 2. 6). Among other winds that are blowing at this day in the valley of vision, the wind of blasphemy against a glorious Trinity, and particularly blasphemy against our glorious Immanuel blows very hard. I fear there are more in this land, that are carried off with the wind of that detestable Arian heresy* than we are aware of; and therefore it concerns all that love the Lord Jesus, to think and speak honourably of Him, and to be established in the faith of His supreme and self-existent Deity. You see here how honourably the church speaks of Him, with a view to His ascending in our nature: “God is gone up with a shout, the LORD” – or Jehovah – “with the sound of a trumpet.”

2. Notice His ascension and exaltation: He “is gone up.” This plainly alludes unto the carrying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity; the ark being the instituted token of God’s special presence among them; its being carried from the house of Obed-edom, where it had remained in obscurity, to the high hill of Zion, did typify the ascension of Christ unto Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem above, from this lower world, where His divine glory had been eclipsed for about three and thirty years.

3. In the words we have the solemnity of Christ’s ascension: He “is gone up with a shout,” and “with the sound of a trumpet.” When the ark was carried up unto Mount Zion, David danced before it, and the priests blew with their trumpets, and the people huzzaed [exulted with praise] and shouted for joy. Indeed, when Christ ascended into heaven, we do not read of any shouting or sounding among the inhabitants of this glorious world, but there was a great and glorious solemnity among angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. The psalmist speaks of the solemnity of Christ’s ascension among the inhabitants of the invisible world: “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them” (Psa. 68. 17, 18). And it is thought by the judicious Owen, that in the fifth chapter of the Revelation, it is the solemnity of Christ’s ascension to the throne of glory that is spoken of: “And I beheld, and I

* A complex heresy, the foundation of which was denying the glorious divinity of Christ.

heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever" (verses 11-14). O sirs, we generally think little of Christ's ascension, and indeed it made little noise here below, but it made a great noise in the other world, and will make heaven to ring with shouts of praise through an endless eternity.

Observe: "That the ascension of Christ unto heaven, or His ascension unto the throne of glory, is great matter of joy and triumph both in the church militant and triumphant." Here it is told us as matter of praise and triumph, even to us who are yet in a militant state, that "God," in our nature, "is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet"; and therefore the exhortation follows, "Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises" (verse 6). We are called to join in the solemnity. O rejoice in an exalted Christ, "ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (Psa. 32. 11).

FREE GRACE, FREE WILL AND THE FREE OFFER

By John Hervey Gosden (1882-1964)

The things of God and His most holy truth are infinitely important, far too solemn for a sinful worm to touch with unhallowed hands, far too momentous to admit of compromise. Yet where a right spirit prevails, one will not make another "an offender for a word" inadvertently misplaced or misused (Isa. 29. 21). Deeply and increasingly do we feel our straitness and inability adequately to set forth the truth as it ought to be declared, in due proportion, in clarity, and with unction. We have much admired good Owen's wise word: "Where light leaves the affections behind, it ends in formality or atheism; and where the affections outrun light, they sink in the bog of superstition, doting on images and pictures or the like. But where things go not into these excesses, it is better that our affections exceed our light from the defect of our understandings, than that our light exceed our affections from the corruption of our wills." No doubt the acutest of theologians, if truly spiritually minded, realise that many divine truths are too abstruse

[profound] to be completely elucidated [explained] in this time-state, much less fully enunciated [expressed, pronounced]. Among these profound matters is the reconciling of human accountability with divine sovereignty. That they certainly are reconcilable, no sober-minded believer will deny.

At the conclusion of a cordial and somewhat lengthy commendation of the late Mr. Anderson's Tracts recently re-issued,* we ventured to take exception to the tinge of free will implied in what is called the "free offer" employed by the Puritan and Scottish writers, and others of lesser note; at the same time allowing that this blemish was not so pronounced in the tracts in question as in some other writers. We then quoted two paragraphs to show that the confusion between free grace and the free offer is self-evident.

Although we indulged no cavilling spirit, this has brought criticism. The strictures are couched in sober and kindly terms with evident sincerity, far removed from the carping noticeable in some quarters. By the help of God, we would in the same spirit humbly attempt a brief examination of the important subject.

The two chief points of our offence are:

1. That we deny "duty-faith"; that is, that it is the duty of every person savingly (or spiritually) to repent and believe the gospel.

2. That we deny "offers of grace"; that is to say, we deny that the gospel is to be *offered indiscriminately to all*. The italics are important; very much hangs upon them.

Strangely enough, our esteemed critic immediately translates our denials of offered grace and duty-faith into a violation of Christ's commission to the disciples to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16. 15)! We are charged with preaching the gospel to the elect only. Strictly, that charge is true. We do preach only to the elect, yet not to them only as such, but "indiscriminately" to all brokenhearted sinners in whom the law's relentless claims are really insistent and its inflexibly-just sentence of condemnation for transgression is solemnly positive; not to the elect *as themselves knowing their election*, do we exclusively preach: to these, yes; but also to those in whose souls Newton's deep question once asked through grace, is still an unresolved and burning anxiety:

"Tis a point I long to know,
(Oft it causes anxious thought),
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

(H. 283)

And to the impenitent we speak, not offers of Christ, but solemn warnings concerning the "wrath to come," deeply conscious the while that only the Holy Spirit can carry divine conviction effectively home to the

* See review of *Free Grace Tracts* by J.R. Anderson in the *Gospel Standard*, 1940, p. 319.

conscience, and deposit eternal life in the soul, which He does sovereignly to none but the election of grace. "The rest were blinded" (Rom. 11. 7). But never must God's character be maligned by suggesting that on the ground of election He refuses to regard the cry of any distressed sinner who seeks for mercy at His gracious hands. Indeed, who except elect vessels of mercy ever sue for blood-bought pardon? Nor indeed will any lost soul ever be able to rise up in hell and say he is there for any other cause than his own sin. Now, we consider that there is a vast difference between *preaching* the gospel and *offering* it indiscriminately to all. The latter in our judgment is capable of implying a very serious error of violating the doctrines of particular redemption and divine election. We *offer* the gospel to none, elect or non-elect; we *preach* it, as God gives ability, not indiscriminately to all (though before all who assemble), but to *characters* whom we seek to delineate.

Isaiah 45. 22; 55. 7 are quoted as complete proofs that "men in a state of nature (that is, dead in trespasses and sins) are to be invited to come and partake of salvation." But is not salvation a relative term, implying lostness? Is not the felt conviction of the wickedness of one's way and the unrighteousness of one's thoughts, indicative of supernatural light and life? Are such conditions truly recognisable by those in a state of nature before quickening power reaches the soul (Eph. 2. 1)? That effectual conviction may follow close upon and sometimes even accompany the hearing of a gospel direction, invitation, or promise, does not in our view import that the invitations and comforts of the gospel are to be indiscriminately broadcast without first warning sinners of the danger of their state. But let a sinner be brought by divine conviction to recognise and acknowledge that his ways and his thoughts have been wicked and unrighteous, then, says God to the trembling, guilty culprit, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55. 7). Let him not think, vile though he now feels himself to be in My sight and loathsome in his own, that he shall be rejected, for "him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6. 37). The description of the character pre-supposes a felt sense of the need of mercy on due conviction. Without this, what does Christ say? "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Matt. 9. 13). Rutherford truly says, the gospel of Christ is suitable for sinners, but where will you find a sinner suitable for Christ? O it is a rare sight to see a thoroughly-convinced sinner!

We realise that the "Evangelical Prophet" was not in precisely the same position as a New Testament minister of the gospel, but still the gospel shines brightly in Isaiah's prophecies. Yet in chapter 6 he is commissioned to "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but

understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not ... lest they see ... and hear ... and understand ... and convert, and be healed” (Isa. 6. 9, 10). That appears different from the indiscriminate free offer! However Isaiah might have “logically” concluded that the blinded ones were not accountable, and however in his natural charity he might have wished to have “evangelised” them, God’s holy, solemn, just and sovereign word must stand. John transposes this (12. 37-40) to the blindness of the Jews, saying that their unbelief of the Messiah fulfilled the saying of Esaias which he spake: “Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.” Wilful blindness followed by judicial hardness, and impenitence; how solemn!

Then the writer proceeds to run a parallel between our not excluding any rational creature from our places of worship, and the propriety of not excluding the non-elect from the free offer of the gospel; that is, in other words, each person in a mixed congregation is to be addressed as if he is assured of an interest in salvation, that he has a “chance” if he but embraces the opportunity! Does this not make salvation dependent on the sinner? Our reply to the charge of *excluding* is: *we exclude none*. If our preaching has the effect of “taking forth the precious from the vile,” it is God’s sovereign prerogative that is exercised through the ministry: “Thou shalt be as My mouth” (Jer. 15. 19). It is God alone who either shows mercy or hardens (Rom. 9. 18). That is a daring man who says: “Who hath resisted his will?” Paul replies: “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” It behoves us to speak, as it were with bated breath, but as watchmen we dare not offer impunity to impenitent sinners. Discrimination is unavoidable.

(To be continued)

DIVINE FAVOURS ALL OF GRACE

Extract from John Owen (1616-1683)

Look for all relief and for help against sin merely from grace. A wilderness will not help you, nor a paradise. In the one, Adam sinned; in the other, all Israel sinned, who were an example to us all. It is to no purpose to go into a wilderness to seek for these things; their dwelling is in the love and favour of God, and nowhere else can they be found. Do not expect that mercies of themselves will do you good, or that afflictions will do you good; that the city or wilderness will do you good. It is grace alone that can do you good. And if you find inward benefits by outward

things, it is merely from the grace God is pleased to administer and dispense with them. And He can separate them when He pleaseth. He can give mercies that shall be so materially, but not eventually; like the quails which fed the bodies of the people whilst leanness possessed their souls. And He can send affliction that shall have nothing in it but affliction, present troubles leading on to future troubles. May we, then, in all places, in every state and condition, live in the freedom, riches and efficacy of grace; for other helps, other advantages, we have none.

THE LIVING ROCK

Extract from a sermon by John Kershaw (1792-1870)

“The LORD liveth; and blessed be my Rock” (Psa. 18. 46).

I. In the first place, “The LORD liveth.” This is our Lord Jesus Christ, the immortal Word – He who created the heavens and the earth – He who in the Book of Revelation calls Himself the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty” (see Rev. 1. 8, 11) – He who is the Maker of all things visible and invisible – He, who was made flesh and dwelt among us, and manifested His glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth (see John 1. 14).

1. “The LORD liveth.” Now this was the glorious foundation which the Apostle Paul laid in his preaching, and it was his support under all his trials – the blood-shedding, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ our great High Priest into heaven. Mark his language; he says, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” O what a solemn and important question this is! Then he adds, “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8. 33, 34). Do you not see what a prominent feature the death of Christ has in this solemn question? He lives and intercedes for His redeemed; He pleads their cause, and manages their affairs. The apostle’s soul being fired with these important truths, exclaims in another place, “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7. 25). Sometimes when I have heard our people singing the following hymn, it has so lifted up my heart and soul as I have sat in the pulpit, that I have scarcely been able to constrain my feelings:

“Who shall the Lord’s elect condemn?
 ’Tis God that justifies their souls;
 And mercy, like a mighty stream,
 O’er all their sins divinely rolls.

“Who shall adjudge the saints to hell?
 ’Tis Christ that suffered in their stead;
 And the salvation to fulfil,
 Behold Him rising from the dead!

“He lives! He lives! and sits above,
 For ever interceding there;
 Who shall divide us from His love,
 Or what should tempt us to despair?” (H. 72)

Bless His precious name, He ever lives within the veil to plead the cause of His people. The Lord enable us to commit it into His precious hands, and we shall never be disappointed.

“The LORD liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.” He lives in heaven, my friends. And He lives and dwells on earth too. But where is it that He lives and dwells in this world of sin and woe? I am going to tell you, my friends. He lives *in the heart* of every elect vessel of mercy, redeemed by blood, and regenerated by the Spirit. Such a precious soul as this is the palace of the great King, the dwelling place of the mighty God of Jacob. In the prophecy of Isaiah, we have a beautiful description of the greatness of the exaltation, majesty and glory, and yet at the same time amazing humility and condescension of the Lord of hosts: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.” Let us pause here for a moment. “That inhabiteth eternity”! Eternity is His dwelling place. You and I inhabit our houses in our short span of existence but for a very little time, though I have been an inhabitant of one house in Rochdale for thirty-one years, and still inhabit it. But our God, the Rock that is to be exalted, He inhabits eternity; “Whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place.” Heaven is His throne, and the earth is His footstool (see Isa. 66. 1). He dwells in another place also: “With him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57. 15). The Lord lives, then, in the heart of every poor, broken-hearted sinner. Bless His precious name, He has taken up His abode there, and says, “Here will I dwell for ever, for I have desired it” (see Psa. 132. 14).

Hear the Apostle Paul’s heart-cheering testimony in reference to his own case. He says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” You see, Christ lives in the very heart and soul of His people. “And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2. 20). This is doctrine, and good doctrine too. But, as I am speaking these words, and proving them from the Bible, methinks I hear some child of God saying, “Can ever the Lord Jesus Christ dwell in such a filthy, vile and evil heart as mine? If He dwells in the heart of His

people, I am afraid I never can be one of them. Such a polluted wretch as I am, sure He never can dwell in me.” But what this soul says is only a confirmation that the Lord does dwell in His heart. Mark it, then, for thy encouragement; it is only such tempted and tried souls as thine that feel their vileness, pollution, helplessness and weakness. The Lord does not dwell with those who care nothing about sin, who have never had a heart broken on account of their iniquities. O no; the dwelling place of the Lord Jesus Christ is with the humble, broken and contrite heart. The haughty looks of man must be brought down, and the Lord of Hosts alone exalted in his soul.

“The LORD liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.” He lives, then, in the souls of His people. He lives in their prayers, He lives in their praises, He lives in their hearing; yes, He lives in them as their All in all. There is no spiritual life but what is in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are said to be dead, and our “life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3. 3, 4). So the Lord lives in the hearts of His people.

2. But again, the Lord *lives in the assemblies of His saints*. Wherever His twos and threes are gathered together in His name, there He lives and there He dwells. He says, “In all places where I record My name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee” (Exod. 20. 24). But how amazingly the omniscience of the Godhead shines forth in this blessed passage of Scripture! In this great metropolis [London], there are now at this present time many gospel churches assembled, and through the length and breadth of the land, where the name of the Lord is recorded, where the silver trumpet is being blown, and where the shout of a King is heard in their midst. The Lord comes and lives and dwells in these assemblies. He alone must be exalted in the pulpit, and in the souls of His living people. And as the Lord lives in them, so they live in Him by virtue of their union to Him, and shall never be brought into condemnation. As sure as the Lord now lives in heaven for His people, so shall they live and reign with Him in blessedness for ever when time with them is no more.

II. But I must come to the second point of our subject, “Blessed be my Rock.” Now who is this Rock? It can be none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. He is in Scripture set forth by the character of a rock. But why is this? Because there is nothing so firm and imperishable as a rock. He is exalted by this metaphor to show His immovability and durability.

But let us make a few observations to show wherein the Lord Jesus Christ is a Rock.

1. As a Rock He is a *foundation* to build upon; and the man made wise unto salvation builds his house upon it. This is that glorious Rock

spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah: “Behold,” says God, “I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation” (Isa. 28. 16). And the Apostle Paul taking up the same subject, says, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3. 11). The foundation, therefore, which our God has laid in Zion, and which every Christian minister should lay in his preaching, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ in His covenant engagements; Christ in the complexity of His character as God and Man; Christ in His pure and holy humanity; Christ in His atoning sacrifice; Christ in His perfect obedience to the divine law; Christ as the living Advocate before the throne – are the themes upon which he should dwell. Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which God builds His church for time and for eternity. “Upon this Rock,” He says, “I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16. 18). Christ, then, is a Rock; and as a Rock He is the foundation of the church.

But again, the text says, “Blessed be my Rock.” Now a word or two in reference to the blessedness of this Rock. When David was sinking in his feelings in the mud and mire of the slough of despondency in the fortieth Psalm, he was afraid his feet were not upon this Rock. Good old Bunyan says, “There are many persons who make a bridge over this slough.” But, my friends, that is not the right way. The Lord’s people are brought to feel their sin, their guilt, their burden; they are made to sigh and to cry and to wait patiently till the Lord inclines His ear unto them; and then at last they will say as the Psalmist did, “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings” (Psa. 40. 1, 2). David could not say by his own wisdom and strength, “Here is a rock, a firm rock; I will stand upon it for life.” O no, he could not put himself on the rock; he felt to be sinking in the horrible pit, and his feet sticking fast in the mud. But when by the Spirit’s witnessings in his heart, he could feelingly say the Lord had brought him up out of the horrible pit, had set his feet upon the rock, and established his goings – that he was standing for eternity on the incarnate God, on the finished salvation of Christ, that his sins were put away, and he was delivered from the curse of a broken law, that justice was satisfied and heaven opened up through the new and living way – then feeling the firmness and blessedness of the Rock, he has a song of praise and thanksgiving put into his mouth and his heart, and with the Prophet Isaiah says, “Let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains” (Isa. 42. 11). The dear child of God sings and shouts when he sees and feels the blessedness and security of his salvation. My friends, if we are built upon this Rock, we shall be found safe in life, safe in death, and safe in the judgment day. There is no safety

anywhere else. “The LORD liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.”

2. But again, “Blessed be my Rock.” He is not only a foundation, but He is also the *shadow of a great rock in a weary land*. The Prophet Isaiah says, “A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa. 32. 2). We are in the wilderness, in a waste howling desert, my friends. This world to a heaven-born soul is a weary land. The Christian often sings,

“Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supply;
No cheering fruits, nor wholesome trees,
Nor streams of living joy.”

But there is something more weary than the land we live in. If we look into our hearts, we shall find more weariness there than in all things else around us. Weary of sin, weary of self – where is the poor soul to go, where is he to flee? He can go nowhere but to the Rock of Ages! David says, “When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psa. 61. 2). Lead me to Christ – the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Let me sit down beneath His shade, and enjoy sweet peace, rest and comfort to my soul. Ah, my friends, this Rock shades us from the fiery flames of Mount Sinai; it shades us from the buffetings of Satan; and oftentimes it shades us in the storms and tempests of life. Sometimes the dear child of God in this weary land is enabled to sit down by faith sheltered beneath the shadow of this great Rock, and enjoy sweet peace, rest and communion with the Lord. O how sweet and happy are his feelings then! “The LORD liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.”

3. We observe again, in reference to this blessed Rock – He is not only the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, but there flows a *stream of water* from this Rock to satiate the thirst of His dear people in this barren land. This was beautifully typified by the rock smitten at Horeb. The apostle says, “That Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10. 4). There flowed from it a stream which followed the children of Israel in all their wanderings through the wilderness to nourish and refresh them. And so the fountain of precious blood and water that flowed from Immanuel’s side follows the church of God through this weary land for the taking away of sin and uncleanness, and for giving sweet comfort and rest to the weary soul. Whenever, by the bedewing influences of the Spirit of God, it enters into their heart and conscience, it fills them with all joy and peace in believing. “Blessed be my Rock,” then, for His atoning blood and His justifying righteousness to His beloved church and people. Well may they say, “The LORD liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.”

4. But again, “Blessed be my Rock.” There is a cleft in this rock, and God puts His people in “the cleft of the rock.” Moses besought the Lord to show him His glory. But the Lord answered him, “Thou canst not see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live.” But He said, “Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock.” Here is a Rock by Me, One brought up with Me; on this Rock thou shalt stand and see My glory. “And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by: and I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back parts: but My face shalt not be seen” (Exod. 33. 20-23). The Lord put Moses in the cleft of the rock while He passed by, and displayed His glory and majesty; and He covered him with His hand of mercy and compassion while He proclaimed His great and glorious name, as the Lord God, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Moses was put into the cleft of the rock for safety and security; and so the Lord’s living family are sheltered in the cleft of the Rock, the glorious Person of the dear Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is their safety and security; here they are safe in life, safe in the swellings of Jordan, and safe at the judgment of the great day. What a sweet and blessed frame of mind the celebrated Toplady was in, when he penned that solemn and beautiful hymn:

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me;
 Let me hide myself in Thee;
 Let the water and the blood,
 From Thy riven side which flowed,
 Be of sin the double cure,
 Cleanse me from its guilt and power.” (H. 143)

This is God’s religion, my friends. And when this is felt in the soul of a sinner, it is the power of God unto salvation. But O how blessedly he speaks of death. I should like, if it were the Lord’s will, that they might be my last words; and as they are so appropriate to our subject we will cite the lines:

“While I draw this fleeting breath,
 When my eye-strings break in death,
 When I soar through tracts unknown,
 See Thee on Thy judgment throne,
 Rock of Ages, cleft for me;
 Let me hide myself in Thee.”

O what a blessed shelter! what a hiding-place! what a refuge from the storm! what a strong tower into which the righteous run and are safe for ever! Well might David say, “The LORD liveth; and blessed be my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.”

LETTER FROM ONE PASTOR TO ANOTHER

Staplehurst
January 29th, 1896

To Mr. George Frost, Jarvis Brook

Respected Friend and Brother and Fellow-labourer in Christ's vineyard. Peace be with you. And how do you find it with you? I feel so often like a poor, dried-up potsherd, and I often wonder what it will all come to. It is no fancy of mine; it is a reality. O dear, George, I never thought it would be like this when I first started on the mission; but I do believe, that if we are to be of any use to the tried and exercised children of God, we must go through the fire and into the water, and I do not seem to have any life or power when out of the work or out of harness. There seems a power attends the word when speaking, then I drop into the old place. I feelingly cry out, "O that it was with me as in years that are past, when the candle of the Lord shone round about me," and in me. Alas! those golden hours are fled and gone. What, no more to return? No; but I have a humble hope that I shall arrive at that place where my sun will never set, and "there will be no night there."

My reason for writing to you is to know how you are in your bodily health, and also how you fare in soul matters? I want to hear about old, and young* George Frost.

Trusting your spouse is well, with yourself. Send me one of the Guides. Myself fairly well through mercy. Wife poorly. Alice well. Believe me to remain

Yours in love,

Isaac Lewis

GIDEON'S ARMY

When Gideon took his army down
To drink from out the stream,
And watched them (as the Lord had bid),
A difference soon was seen.

Some in the hollow of their hand
A little water took;
The greater number bowed them down
And drank from out the brook.

That army is a type of those
Who *know* and *love* the Lord,

* Old man of sin and new man of grace. Ed.

And those who but profess to know
And love Him but in word.

For he whom God Himself hath taught
Knows that the mighty stream
Of earthly pleasure, wealth or fame
Hath nought to comfort him.

In worldly things he does but sip
As duty may demand,
With caution takes a little in
The hollow of his hand.

That river only, whose pure streams
Make glad the sons of God,
Can strengthen and refresh the soul
Redeemed by Jesus' blood.

While they who but profess the Lord,
With hearts from Him estranged,
Their taste, like Moab, still remains;
Their scent is yet unchanged.

The gains, the pleasures of this life
Alone they care to win,
To these, their gods, behold they kneel!
Bow down, and drink therein.

Of Gideon's army 'twas the few
Who merely turned aside,
And lapped the water from their hands,
With little satisfied;

Yes, 'twas the few whom God declared
Should fight, and they alone;
Whilst those who bowed to drink full draughts
Turned each man to his home.

So none e'er fight the fight of faith,
Save *God's despised few*;
And through their King they'll conquerors prove,
And more than conquerors too.

R.H.B.

There may be several things which may help to make the life fair in the eyes of men; but nothing will make it amiable in the eyes of God, unless the heart be changed and renewed. All the medicines which can be applied, without the sanctifying work of the Spirit, though they may cover, they can never cure the corruption and diseases of the soul.

George Swinnock

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

JUNE 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

FORGIVE, AS WE HOPE TO BE FORGIVEN

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11. 25, 26).

When the Lord Jesus was living in this lower world, He taught His disciples the pattern of prayer, which is now commonly called “The Lord’s prayer.” He taught us to say, “Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us” (Luke 11. 4). This prayer the Lord Jesus could not pray Himself, for He had no sin to be forgiven, and He could not sin. Immanuel Himself walked according to His own teaching, for when the soldiers nailed Him to the cross, He prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23. 34). As the Lord Jesus could not speak or pray an idle word, we believe that they were truly forgiven. We see a particular enlargement from this prayer on the Day of Pentecost, when the Apostle Peter charged the Jews, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2. 36). As they were pricked in their hearts and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” the apostle said unto them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Three thousand souls were added to the church that day.

What stupendous love Almighty God shows, and what an amazing thing it is, that He should forgive the great multitude of our sins and innumerable trespasses. Our sins appear innumerable to us, but mercifully not to God, for He has gathered up the total sum of our sins, and imputed them to His beloved Son, Immanuel, that we might be forgiven. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5. 6).

“’Tis He forgives thy sins;
’Tis He relieves thy pain;
’Tis He that heals thy sicknesses,
And makes thee young again.” (H. 420)

The teaching of God by the Apostle Paul is very clear in this matter, for he wrote, “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” (2 Cor. 5. 21). The Lord Jesus bore our sins away by the sacrifice of Himself, that we might be reconciled to God, and made righteous by the imputation of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, to us, who is “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23. 6). The tremendous love of God is shown by the declaration of Jesus, when He said, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15. 13, 14).

“Since I can hardly, therefore, bear
What in myself I see;
How vile and black must I appear,
Most holy God, to Thee!

“But since my Saviour stands between,
In garments dyed in blood,
'Tis He, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God.

“Thus, though a sinner, I am safe;
He pleads, before the throne,
His life and death in my behalf,
And calls my sins His own.

“What wondrous love, what mysteries,
In this appointment shine!
My breaches of the law are His,
And His obedience mine.”

(H. 119)

The sins of the Lord’s dear people are put away for ever. “I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins” (Isa. 43. 25). “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10. 17).

Fallen men, by nature, generally possess a very unforgiving spirit, and especially concerning their own dignity. What can stir up our hearts more, than when we are sinned against, criticised, talked down, or despised by others? O the resentment felt by our proud hearts!

The Apostle Peter asked the Lord Jesus how many times he should forgive those who had sinned against him. “Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matt 18. 21, 22). Jesus did not mean literally 490 times, but using the number seven, which appears to set forth divine perfection, instructed us that we should always be ready and willing to forgive. We also read in Luke, that Jesus said if a man sins and then repents seven times in a day, “thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17. 4).

We are naturally very sensitive as to how other people treat us. It would be good to ask ourselves the question, “How do I treat my fellow men?” As we may grieve over how others have treated us, may we with

godly sorrow consider how many times we have treated other brethren unkindly. We must lay to heart the solemn parable of the unforgiving servant, as recorded in Matthew chapter 18. We read that a master forgave a servant the debt that he owed him. Afterward, a fellow servant owed that same servant a debt. He showed his fellow servant no mercy, and cast him into prison. His master then said to him, "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?" The unforgiving servant was cast into prison. Jesus then applied the parable: "So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

How small and few are the trespasses of our fellow men against us, compared with the enormity of our sins against a holy God, and not only a holy God, but a very merciful and gracious God. May the truth of this enable us by precious faith to forgive the small debts of our brethren, as our dear Saviour has pardoned all our many, many sins against Him.

There is a saying among the sons of men, "I forgive, but I do not forget." This is not true forgiveness. And it certainly is not the manner of God's forgiveness. Good King Hezekiah could say with much consolation, "For Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Isa. 38. 17). The prophet says, "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7. 19). We read of the Lord speaking to His Israel of old: "Thou art My servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isa. 44. 21, 22). The spiritual Israelite shall not be forgotten of God, but her sins are not remembered against her any more, and that for ever.

Nearly fifty years ago at Maidstone, a God-fearing man was lying on his death bed. There had been some neglect by the medical people. His godly wife, being distressed, remarked with anguish about this matter. The good man just quietly said, "My dear, forgive as we hope to be forgiven." The bereaved widow told me of this after his death. Both of their mortal remains lie under the clods of the earth in a cemetery at Irthlingborough, awaiting the glorious resurrection. I have never forgotten that remark made by Mr. Charles Fuller, as it has been some instruction and reproof to me at times, to be willing to forgive men their trespasses.

"Are thy sins beyond recounting,
Like the sand the ocean laves?
Jesus is of life the fountain;
He unto the utmost saves." (H. 913)

May we each by precious faith, be ready with cheerfulness to forgive the sins of our fellow sinners, as we live in gospel hope that the

Lord has forgiven all our own transgressions. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1. 18). “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Eph. 4. 26).

“O’er sins unnumbered as the sand,
And like the mountains for their size,
The seas of sovereign grace expand,
The seas of sovereign grace arise.

“For this stupendous love of heaven
What grateful honours shall we show?
Where much transgression is forgiven,
May love in equal ardour glow.” (H. 755)

GOSPEL STANDARD SOCIETY AND BETHESDA FUND MEETINGS

Report of the Annual Meetings of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society and also the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund, held on Friday, April 12th, 2019, at Clifton, Bedfordshire

THE VITAL NECESSITY OF THE LORD’S ANOINTING *Sermon preached by Mr. Gerald D. Buss at the evening service*

Text: “And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he” (1 Sam. 16. 12).

The background to our subject this evening is both solemn and sacred. There are really three persons closely involved in our subject. First, there is the king already on the throne, King Saul. Secondly, there is this godly prophet, Samuel, doing the Lord’s bidding, fearfully, tremblingly, hoping that Saul will not even find out what he is about. And then there is that one upon whom the anointing oil was poured at God’s command, young David. With God’s help I want to bring before you those three characters and the lesson there is for us this evening hour, and may it be for one in particular. “And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he.” It was not the one that Samuel thought, the eldest son of Jesse, nor the next one, nor the next one, until it came down to young David, of whom we will speak in a moment.

What about King Saul? There is a very solemn word in one of the minor prophets concerning King Saul. We read, “I gave thee” – that is Israel – “a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath” (Hos. 13. 11). Saul’s reign was a tragic period in the history of the children of Israel. In the Book of Deuteronomy you can read how the Lord had prophesied through Moses that there would be a succession of kings. He had also told them from which tribe that king would come, and that

would be the tribe of Judah. But Israel in their rebellion wanted to be like the nations around them, and they wanted a king before the Lord's time, and they wanted it for the wrong reason.

Friends, beware in your prayers of asking like that, going before the Lord, and also asking for the wrong reason. They wanted to be like the nations around them, to copy them and imitate them, even as it were, outwit them. And they wanted the king before it was the Lord's time for them to have one. And thus the Lord gave them their request, but then sent a leanness into the nation which lasted for many years.

What of King Saul, then? Well, he is one of those sad and solemn characters of a man who had gifts without grace. Some people make a lot of gifts. Yes, you can discern a gifted man very quickly. But friends, however able a man may be in gifts, without grace those gifts are nothing but a snare. King Saul was a very gifted man. Naturally speaking he had many excellent qualities, which were evident, certainly at the beginning of his reign, but he had not got grace.

Dear friends, do look hard into your soul this evening hour. Look deep, deep down. Have you got grace? God has given all of us gifts in different ways, but those gifts God has given us, without grace, will be a snare. Saul was a very gifted man, but he had not got the grace of God to go with those gifts, and as his tragic reign unfolded step by step, it became more and more apparent there was something solemnly wrong at the root of that man's religion. He had not got the root of the matter. He had not been born again of the Holy Spirit. He did not know what real repentance was. He did not know what it was to seek the honour and glory of God in matters. He spent most of his reign fighting the future king that God had ordained. Instead of fighting the Philistines whom he should have been fighting, he wasted his time, energy and talents, fighting against God's will and one of God's people. Friends, what a wasted reign Saul's was. So eventually the Lord said, "I have rejected him" (1 Sam. 16. 1). Very, very solemn to hear those tidings from a holy God: "I have rejected him." O friends, may that make you and I tremble this evening hour, lest we should be like Saul. Yes, you have many things to thank God for in a natural way, and perhaps some of you younger ones might be able to say you have many abilities. Now do thank God for them, but what are they without grace?

"Happiness, thou lovely name,
Where's thy seat, O tell me, where?
Learning, pleasure, wealth, and fame,
All cry out, 'It is not here.'

No.

"Object of my first desire,
Jesus, crucified for me;

All to happiness aspire,
Only to be found in Thee.”

(H. 988)

Friend, O may the first part of our discourse this evening be a stirring up of our hearts to seek the one thing needful, the one thing needful that Mary chose when she sat at Jesus’ feet and received of His word (see Luke 10. 39). May we be like godly Moses, who forsook Egypt with all its prizes and pleasures and privileges, because he esteemed “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward” (Heb. 11. 26). Now Moses’ heart was fixed, as the good psalmist’s was: “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed” (Psa. 57. 7). May God fix your heart and mine on better things. All the other things you need in this time state, the Lord will certainly go before you in, if you are enabled to walk in that word: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6. 33).

First of all, then, a solemn warning to us each: beware, I say, beware, of gifts without grace. And those of you, those of us, who have to deal with church matters in the things of God, may God give us discernment to look beyond gifts to find grace. Now there *are* gifts. David had gifts, but my dear friends, grace was at the root of it.

Let us now think for a moment of godly Samuel, an eminent character on the page of Scripture. He, when he saw the determination of the children of Israel to have a king, wept bitter tears because they were rejecting him as their leader, and God said, “They are rejecting Me, Samuel, not you” (see 1 Sam. 8. 7). That is how deep it went. And the Lord showed Samuel how he was to obtain the future king to succeed King Saul, Israel’s first king. At the time of his institution, how solemnly and faithfully Samuel reproved the people for their behaviour, but he said this, and I admire the man:* “God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you” (1 Sam. 12. 23). Though you have rejected me as your leader, though you want someone different, something different, “God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you.” Do you pray for those who have rejected you? Do you pray for those who despise you, who buffet you? Well, the Lord Jesus Christ exhorts us so to do. “Pray for them which despitefully use you” (Matt. 5. 44). We are to bring them before the Lord and lay their case there, just as Samuel did, because he had the honour and glory of God in his heart concerning Israel.

Well, Saul’s reign, as we know, came to its climax in its sadness when he did not fully do what was commanded to be done with Amalek. That is when the Lord said to Samuel, “I have rejected Saul. I now am going to send you to anoint the man after Mine own heart, a man not just with gifts; a man with grace, a man who has the mind of – to put it in

* The sense here would be “admiring the grace of God in him” Ed.

gospel language – the mind of Christ, a man after Mine own heart. I have found such an one. I know where he is, Samuel. You do not know, but I know.” And the Lord sent Samuel on an errand. You are to go down to Bethlehem, and there you are to anoint one of Jesse’s sons whom I have appointed in My eternal mind to be the king over Israel. And immediately Samuel’s heart failed him. “How can I go?” (1 Sam. 16. 2). Is that what one of you has said tonight? “How can I go” – look at all the obstacles; Saul will hear of it, and he will slay me. “Samuel, where is your faith? Surely if I send you, Samuel, I will watch over you!”

I think it was in Queen Victoria’s time that she sent for a man to go abroad on ambassadorial business, and he said, “But I have got a family.” She said, “I know you have got a family. You do my business, and I will make sure your family is looked after while you are away.” Well, in a different sense the Lord was saying to Samuel, “You do as I bid you, and I will take care of all the consequences.” Good John Newton says,

“Though dark be my way, since He is my Guide,
'Tis mine to obey, 'tis His to provide.”

Friends, we put it round the wrong way so often. It is ours to obey and it is His to provide.

“Though cisterns be broken, and creatures all fail,
The word He has spoken shall surely prevail.” (H. 232)

“Samuel, go! Go down to Bethlehem. Take an heifer. Sacrifice unto the Lord. Do as I bid you, and I will be with you every step of the way.” Friends, it is a wonderful privilege to walk in obedience. In the keeping of His commandments, there is great reward (see Psa. 19. 11). And one of the great rewards, blessed reward, is the answer of a good conscience. If you are fighting against God’s will, you have not got the answer of a good conscience, but if you are walking in His will, with His dear Spirit moving your heart and your feet, then you have the answer of a good conscience (see 1 Pet. 3. 21). You will know it if you have it, and you will know it if you have not got it. “Samuel, go down to Bethlehem.” And the dear man went down, no doubt with many fears and much to trouble him, but the Lord was a shield for him, watched over him, and he arrives at Jesse’s house and calls them together, and the elders were rather troubled about this. Did he come peaceably? “What have you come for, Samuel?”

So Samuel called the family together, with those several sons of Jesse, and here we have, dear friends, another lesson to learn with godly Samuel. He saw the first son of Jesse. He was tall, he was broad, he was strong, he was young, he looked just the part. All the gifts seemed to be there. Surely this is the Lord’s anointed. “No,” says the Lord. “I have

refused him ... man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16. 7). It does not mean the outward appearance has no consequence – we are to walk worthy of what we profess – but my dear friend, the vital matter is the heart. God looks on the heart. What does He see in your heart? You say, O I know what He sees in my wretched heart – nothing but sin and uncleanness. That is what you are by nature. He sees that. But dear friend, does He see something else? Deep, deep down in your heart there is that – you can say with good Peter when the Lord said, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?” – more than these sheep, more than these fish, more than these disciples. “Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee” (John 21. 15). He bared his heart before the Lord in sweet simplicity. Lord, Thou knowest, deep, deep down I love Thee.

“Lord, it is my chief complaint
That my love is cold and faint;
Yet I love Thee and adore;
O for grace to love Thee more!” (H. 968)

I think it was said of Mary I, that sad and solemn character that she was. At the time England lost Calais she said, “When I die and they open up my heart, they will find *Calais* written across it.” Poor, foolish woman! But my dear, friend if your heart was opened, what would be written across it? Would the name of Jesus be there? Be honest. Is it engraved there?

“Jesus, engrave it on my heart,
That Thou the one thing needful art;
I could from all things parted be,
But never, never, Lord, from Thee.” (H. 1105)

Well, this first son of Jesse’s is rejected, and so were all the other seven. It seemed as if Samuel had gone on a fool’s errand, but he had not, because God had sent him. Friends, if God sends a man, He does not send him on a fool’s errand. I say that reverently. If God sends a man, God has a purpose for that man, and he had a purpose for Samuel going down to Jesse’s house, though it seemed as if it had all come to nothing. “Have you any other sons, Jesse?” “O yes, there is young David out in the field. We did not think he was involved in this. Surely he is too young.” “Send and fetch him” (1 Sam. 16. 11). Years later, David was to say that about Mephibosheth. “Send and fetch him” (see 2 Sam. 9. 5). And that poor, lame man was brought into his presence. “Art thou Mephibosheth? I am thy servant; I am.” And how wonderfully kindly King David dealt with Mephibosheth when he sent and fetched him.

And when Jesse sent and fetched David in that way, really it was the same kindness, that God showed, greater than David showed to

Mephibosheth. This young lad stands before his brethren, the youngest of them, and as soon as he comes in, the word of the Lord comes as our text says. Samuel knew the word. He had heard the voice of God before, unmistakable. "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." And do you remember that Samuel went down with a horn full of oil? I will just make this comment. When God's servants are called to preach, God gives them a horn, and that needs to be full of oil – not man-made oil, not opinions, not intellect. It needs nothing less than that which comes from Gethsemane, the fruit of the olive press where our Lord sweat and bled on behalf of poor sinners. It is that oil, that unction we read of in 1 John chapter 2. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One" (verse 20). That is what we need. David himself said later on, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil" (Psa. 92. 10) – not different oil, but fresh oil, fresh supplies.

Every time a minister comes into this pulpit or the pulpit you are used to, friends, pray the Lord will fill his horn with fresh oil from Gethsemane and Calvary, yea the fruit of the sufferings of Christ, that he may preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to you. Often we feel to come with an empty horn, but the Lord does fill it sometimes, blessed be His holy name.

Well, the horn of oil was poured on young David, and three things happened at that moment. One, his brethren saw it. He was separated out, distinguished. The anointing, dear friends, I am speaking of, separates. It distinguishes. Some of the brethren were not too happy about it. Later on, they resented it. That may be with one here tonight who feels to have the anointing I am speaking of – not accepted. But if God accepts you, my dear friend, that is the great point. That is the answer of a good conscience you need. Beware when all men speak well of you (see Luke 6. 26). It is far better to have the Lord's approbation than man's, but O make sure you have the anointing from God and nowhere else, not man-made, not a substitute.

The second thing that happened was this: he received an outward anointing for the throne of Israel, and thirdly, he received an inward one – something King Saul never had. He never had an inward anointing. It could never have been said of King Saul, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." It could be said of King David, and he carried that inward anointing right through his days, and as we read in 1 John chapter 2, that beautiful chapter, the anointing teaches, the anointing guides, the anointing is the Lord's means of instructing His dear servants and His dear people. So it is when the Lord anoints one of His servants to preach. That anointing is an unction within, and it teaches them, it guides them, and not just God's servants who preach. When a sinner is born again by the Holy Spirit, he receives an anointing for a throne, a heavenly throne, a heavenly mansion.

Now David did not know what lay between the anointing and the crowning, and you dear friends here tonight who know the anointing of the Holy Spirit, whether it be in the quickening of grace which is the vital thing, or the anointing for the ministry, you do not know what lies before you. You do not know what trials you may have to come through, what tribulations you may have to endure, what fires you may have to pass through. You do not even know what slips and falls you may make, as David made one or two slips and falls on the way to his throne. But the one thing is certain: if God is in the anointing, He will be in the fulfilment of it. As surely as God anointed David through His servant Samuel at this time, so surely he came to his kingdom. Nothing could undo that anointing. Not all of Saul's jealousy, javelins, deceit, not all of Doeg's treachery, not all the jealousy of Achish's men, not even David's own slips and falls, could undo what God did with that anointing.

And child of God, not only God's dear servants here tonight, but each of the dear children of God here tonight, *nothing*, I say, *nothing* can undo the anointing that God gives. Yes, your wretched heart cannot undo it. The vile temptations of the evil one cannot undo it. The world in which you are living cannot undo it. That thorn in the flesh cannot undo it. That crook in the lot cannot undo it. That heavy burden you are staggering under cannot undo it. That darkness you are passing through cannot undo it. Go to Ecclesiastes 3. Hear the wise man, Solomon: "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before Him" (verse 14). The anointing is like that. It is done. God has done it, and neither man nor devil can undo what God has done. "I will work, and who shall let it?" (Isa. 43. 13). But be sure, dear friend, you have the anointing. It must begin with that. No counterfeit will do.

"Arise, anoint him; for this is he." And so we have, dear friends, this work that God wrought, rejecting Saul, constraining Samuel to do His bidding, and separating David out for the work that God had for him to do.

"Arise, anoint him: for this is he." I want just to speak a little more about the anointing, because it is a very precious subject. There are perhaps three things we may say about it. First, where does it come from? I like Psalm 133. We read of that holy ointment that was like the anointing that flowed down from Aaron's beard to his garments, across his beard (see verse 2). That speaks, dear friends, of the mouth of Christ. "Never man spake like this Man" (John 7. 46). But it flowed right down to the skirts of His garments where His dear people are often in the dirt, in the dust. "If I may but touch His garment" (Matt. 9. 21), and just as that dear woman did touch the hem of His garment and receive virtue, so

there is in that anointing of the great Head of the church that flows down to the mystical members of His body.

You sang of it in that beautiful hymn just now (405), and friends you will know when you get a touch. You will know when you get a precious sense of that unction in your heart, you have been in blessed contact – I say that most reverently – with the Holy One of Israel. That is communion. That is fellowship. How we need it! Friends, there is no substitute for it. A mere profession of the name of Christ is no substitute for it. An association with God's people is no substitute for it. All the recommendations good and godly men may give about you are nothing to be considered. Do you have an unction from the Holy One? What a question! Do I have it? Do you have it? Where there is unction, there is fellowship with Christ. There will be a sense of His presence, there will be a hearing of His voice, there will be a drawing of your affections. You will run in the way of His commandments. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One."

Secondly, this word *unction* has this in it: *sanctification*. We speak much about justification – wonderful subject, blessed subject! O the sinner accounted just in God's sight for Christ's sake, who is "just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3. 26). Wonderful, sacred truth!

You go to John chapter 3. There are four *musts* in that chapter. There is the *must* of regeneration. "Ye **must** be born again" (verse 7). There is the *must* of justification. "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 eternal life" (verse 14, 15). But there are two *musts* of sanctification. Listen to good John the Baptist. "**He must** increase, but **I must** decrease" (verse 30). If you have an unction from the Holy One, dear friends, you will have to walk that path. That great *I* that is in you and me has to come down. It had to in David. Some of the slips and falls he made on the way to his throne were to dethrone that great *I* in him. You have got it; I have got it. O how we need Paul's confession of faith. "I" – that is my proud, rebellious *I* – "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2. 20). That is unction, friends. That is unction – Christ living in the heart of God's dear people. It is what we have in Colossians: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1. 27). There is no hope without it; no.

When Ignorance came to the Celestial City gate, you remember Vain Hope ferried him across the river of death – no bands in his death (see Psa. 73. 4) – and he confidently ascends the hill to knock on the Celestial City gate. No-one opens it to him, but a shining one looks over the

parapet and asks him what he wanted. “Well, I have come to gain entrance.” “Where is your certificate?” He fumbled in his bosom. Even in that solemn moment he pretended to look for that he had not got. Friends, if you have not got the unction, how will it be in that great day? No work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, no repentance, no faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, no love of God shed abroad in your heart. O how solemn it would be in that awesome moment when death overtakes you to have no unction, no union, no communion, no fellowship. We read, “I beheld from the very gate of heaven there was a way down to hell.” Ignorance was a professor. He went a very long way in his profession, but he lacked the anointing. Friend, how is it with you this evening hour? You may have gone a long way in your profession, but O where is the anointing?

The next thing I want to notice is something very precious. When the Lord anointed David through His servant Samuel, the Lord knew all that would take place, and that anointing was to be the life of the faith of God in the heart. I am speaking now of the inner anointing he received. The Lord knew that the javelins of Saul would whistle past his ears. He knew he would have years in exile going from one cave to another, hunted by Saul. But because of the anointing, He knew He would bring David through. That is a lovely hymn, a lovely verse from Scripture: “The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger” (Job 17. 9).

“As Jesus, in covenant love, did engage
A fulness of grace to display,
The powers of darkness in malice may rage,
The righteous shall hold on his way.” (H. 350)

And God’s dear people, not just God’s dear servants who have to preach, but others, they look back to the anointing at the beginning, and in that beginning, dear friend, there was the essence of all that they would need to bring them safely through to the end of the journey. “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1. 6).

“Arise, anoint him: for this is he.” But then there is something else, David, you have to learn. If you are going to get to your throne that I have promised you, I must bring you there. In other words, David, you must lay aside your wisdom as to how it is going to be done; your plan and your mind as to how it might come to pass must be put behind you. You are to lay all that at the feet of your covenant God who knows the end from the beginning, who knows how He will manage matters “by the way and to the end” (H. 277). But be sure of this: He will bring you safely through, because of the anointing. God’s dear people are sometimes on the bed of affliction, and the Lord brings them through,

sanctifies that path, because of the anointing. Others in paths of bereavement and deep loss – why do they not despair altogether? The anointing sustains them.

Those of you, and there may be one here perhaps tonight to whom this word may be peculiarly applicable, you may dread the future, whatever it is going to mean. What is the anointing? What does it mean for me? Listen, dear friend. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13. 8). He knows your tomorrows. He knows your todays. He is the same. He is immutably the same. He is the true and the living Vine, and your feeble arms need to be, as it were, wrapped around Him to support you, to carry you. “He is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10. 23).

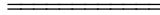
“Arise, anoint him: for this is he.” And you see, dear friends, David became in God’s time, and only in God’s time, accepted as the king. He had to pass through opposition, persecution, loneliness. Sometimes everything seemed wrong. On more than one occasion he says, “I will never get to my throne; I will fall by the hand of Saul” (see 1 Sam. 27. 1). But he did get there, and when he got at last to his throne and sat before the Lord, you read in the first Book of Chronicles, he said this, and you will say it when you get to the end of the matter. You will say this: “Who am I, O LORD God, and what is mine house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?” (1 Chron. 17. 16). There are some here who can come along with that even now. You see how the Lord began the work of grace in your heart, and see where you are now. It is a miracle, as well as a mystery. You are still on praying ground. The Lord has not left you. It is because of the anointing.

“Arise, anoint him: for this is he.” And Samuel poured the oil in the presence of his brethren. They saw it, and they recognised that God had set His purpose on this one. I like the difference between Jonathan and Saul in this matter. It was not long before David came to the fore, and we find in the matter of Goliath, was wonderfully helped. Then those women sang, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam 18. 7). That singing added to David’s troubles more than once. But we read two things in that chapter. From that moment Saul eyed him jealously, and he sought to undo the anointing from that moment. He spent most of his reign trying to kill, as it were, that work that God had begun in David’s heart. Did he succeed? No. Could he succeed? No. “A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory” (Matt. 12. 20).

But what about Jonathan? Friends, if ever there is an evidence of great grace, it is in that man Jonathan. He was the natural heir to the throne, and he would fully expect to take King Saul’s place. But immediately this godly man discerned that David would be the next king. Was he jealous? Did he resent it? No! He loved him as his own heart.

Why was that? It was the same heart as David's, which knit them in spiritual things in the bonds of grace. There was the difference between Saul and Jonathan. The anointing, you see – Jonathan recognised it, and he himself was, as far as the work of grace was concerned, one who was an anointed one.

“Arise, anoint him: for this is he.” One last thought. You take it home and pray about it, dear friends. We must pray for this anointing. If ever there is a generation in which we need the anointing of the Spirit, it is this generation. There is much preaching, there is much talking, there is much going hither and thither. But friends, what is it without unction, without the anointing of the Spirit in the pulpit and in the pew, in our prayers, in our praises, in our meditation, in our conversation one with another? If the anointing is not there, it is dry, it is barren. The flesh may like it, but dear friends, it leaves the soul with a solemn, awesome emptiness which the world cannot fill. O that the dear Spirit would return, in the pulpit and in the pew, and may God give us the grace to discern those in the ministry whom God has anointed – not man – whom God has anointed with this work, and see them separated out and know, “This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes” (Matt. 21. 42). May God add His blessing. Amen.



MORNING PRAYER MEETING

Mr. Stephen P. Rosier (Maidstone) read Psalms 93 and 105. 7-22 and spoke as follows:

The word that is upon my mind is found in Psalm 105 verse 20, where we read:

“The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.”

This, in its context, primarily refers to Pharaoh in the act of setting Joseph free from prison, and yet we must acknowledge – and this is how the word came to me – yes, it was indeed the Lord, the King of heaven, who commanded and set Joseph free. For we must acknowledge that Pharaoh, great though he was in the earth, was altogether in the Lord's hands. When we read, “The king sent and loosed him,” and when we consider that Pharaoh indeed did send and loose Joseph, may we remember that it was the King of heaven. It was His will. It was His command and power by which Joseph was loosed.

Are not all our times in His hand? Was it not so with Joseph where we read, “Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him” (verse 19)? Is it not so this very day! O how weak we are! How poor we are! Is there not a time appointed when the Lord will set His

people free? Is there not One who sitteth upon the throne? Hath not God committed all things into the hand of His beloved Son? Doth He not now rule and reign among the nations of the earth? Where we read, “The king,” O may we be enabled to consider Him who reigns over the whole earth and in heaven. For “All power,” saith He, “is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28. 18). O for this is a blessed truth, that God does reign in the Person of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In Him God reigneth.

But then also this: “The king sent and loosed him.” May we be enabled to consider what King Jesus doth and what He has done, and may we be enabled to consider the peculiar manner in how the blessed King of heaven has sent and loosed His people. First, what great bonds lay upon us. What great bonds every man and every woman and every child, who ever lived upon the face of the earth, need to be loosed from – I mean judgment bonds, law bonds, yes, the bonds, those eternal chains of God’s broken law. O my friends, what will it mean or matter to us, indeed what will anything mean or matter to us, if we shall be held fast still in those eternal chains, those bond chains of God’s broken law? We need them to be removed; we need to be loosed from them. For are we not hell-worthy? We are wretched sinners. We need the King to come and loose us and loosen our bonds, and set us free. But the peculiar manner in which King Jesus setteth His people free: He died for them. May we remember that He who now sitteth upon the throne has died for His people and set them free.

May we also be enabled to remember who He is: the “KING OF KINGS.” What a great truth this is in the gospel, that the King of kings has died to set His people free! He has given His life; He has suffered. What is this indeed which has procured their liberty? Why, the shedding of His precious blood. Yes, that blood which speaks peace to the transgressor and sinner as it was the blood of righteous King Jesus who condescended to live on the earth for His people’s sake and suffer, bleed and die for them.

“The King sent and loosed him.” And what blessed truth this is! Yes, how the Lord now sends from heaven and loosens His people by the sending of His Spirit, who bringeth the tidings of heaven’s King, who lay down His life for His people, who brings the tidings in the gospel of the precious blood of Jesus, which cleanseth from all sin.

“The King sent and loosed him.” What the Lord Jesus does loose on earth, He loosens also in heaven. May we remember He is now the King of glory and He has opened heaven’s door. Yea, He has opened it for all those for whom He died and shed His precious blood. We read He has entered heaven by His own blood (see Heb. 9. 12). May we be enabled to remember in this solemn day and age in which we live that the

King of kings who has died to set His people free, has opened the door of heaven for them. What a great truth this is! O that we might be enabled to fix our hearts on Him.

Yes, "The King sent and loosed him." All things are in His hand. See in this Psalm 105 how He preserved His people. No-one could do them harm. That is, no-one could ruin them and cause them to perish. Who is He that now reigneth? The King of kings who died, who suffered and bled for His people, who has now entered into glory for them. This is another sacred truth of Him who sitteth upon the throne. He sitteth there as a Priest, an Intercessor, a Mediator; for the One who reigns is that gracious, merciful One who shed His precious blood.

And then there is this too: "The King sent and loosed him." It will be so with all of the Lord's people in time. Yes, and at the end of time, they will be loosed from this earth, O this earth of bondage where there is sighing, where there is distress. May we remember, and be enabled to remember, all things are being overruled for this end: the kingdom of God, the ingathering of the Lord's people from this time state, safely and abundantly into the kingdom of heaven. O may we pray for the gracious ingathering of precious souls into that kingdom. There is no liberty outside of this kingdom. There is no liberty outside of that which the King of kings doth give, He only who setteth His people free from those everlasting chains of death and hell. Yes, and then the resurrection. "The King sent and loosed him." Who can loosen souls and bodies from the pains of death? King Jesus. Why, He is the risen King. There is none like Him. He is "the Resurrection, and the Life" (John 11. 25), and those who follow Him, who look to Him, they shall rise also. Yes, "The King sent and loosed him."

Just one thought further. "Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him." "Before honour is humility" (Prov. 18.12). What do we deserve? We cannot say we do not deserve hell. We need the King to loosen us. Even in our trials on the earth, we cannot say we do not deserve even any of these temporal trials on the earth. We need the King in His grace to come and loosen us. See how Joseph was taught this in the prison, and see how the Lord humbled him. He knew that he was so helpless, so weak and he needed God to do everything.

Hymns 1023, 120 and 1062 were sung during the prayer meeting. The following prayed: Mr. D.W. Kerley (Swavesey), Mr. G. Dadswell (Blackboys), Mr. A. Rayner (Ebenezer, Luton), Mr. J.R. Rutt (Pastor, Lamberhurst), Mr. P.C. Tyler (Hastings), Mr. P. Hill (Manchester) and Mr. J.S. Redhouse (Chippenham). Mr. Rosier closed with prayer and the benediction.

BUSINESS MEETING

After the singing of hymn 517, the Chairman of the Society, Mr. Gerald D. Buss, called on Mr. J.B. Hart (Rotherfield) to seek the Lord's blessing on the meeting.

The Chairman then read Psalm 90.

CHAIRMAN: God's servant Moses wrote Psalm 90 under direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost at a time of great tragedy, we might say, certainly of divine judgment, among Israel. Many had been cut off for their sins, and there was much to discourage God's servant Moses. But the dear man at the end of this well-known Psalm takes up a prayer suitable for all generations in the church of Christ, and just as suitable for us in our day as it was in his.

You will notice there are four things that he asked for. First of all, "Let Thy work **appear** unto Thy servants" (verse 16). Sometimes it is hidden, like the seed that is cast into the ground, and we cannot see the germination that takes place, the root going down. Eventually, though, the blade appears, and God willing, the fruit, and the full corn in the ear in due season. There are those times in the church of Christ when the work does appear, and we should be thankful for it. There are other times when we cannot see it, and that is when we need this prayer to be engraved in our hearts and beg the Lord to do as He inspired His servant Moses to pray. No other work will do than the Lord's work. No substitute will do.

Many, many years ago at a church meeting I was attending as a young member, one of the aged deacons got up and he said that when the Holy Spirit withdraws there is a vacuum, and the danger is that we try to fill the vacuum up with something other than the Lord's work. I have never forgotten it, and friend, it is a word in season to us all. When there is a vacuum what do we need?

"Return, O holy Dove! return,
Sweet Messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,
And drove Thee from my breast." (H. 958)

"Let **Thy** work appear." It is the Lord's work that will stand. Man's work must be tried by fire. We read in 1 Corinthians 3. 12, 13: "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." "Let **Thy** work appear unto Thy servants."

The second thing he prays for is that the glory of the Lord would appear (see verse 16). Of course, he was living in Old Testament times, and they were awaiting the coming of the dear Saviour, and blessed be God He did come, and we thank God for that.

“Would we view His brightest glory,
 Here it shines in Jesus’ face;
 Sing and tell the pleasing story,
 O ye sinners saved by grace.” (H. 514)

Yes, blessed be God, it is “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4. 6) that we desire to see. That is what is needed in the churches – a revelation of Christ, an all-consuming revelation so we lose sight of all men, “save Jesus only.” Then the church prospers. Then the soul is satisfied. Then we see God’s work appearing.

The third thing he prays for is, “Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us” (verse 17). In Ephesians 5, the well-known chapter read at times of the marriage service, it speaks of a garment without “spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (verse 27). There are plenty of spots and wrinkles in us, aren’t there! You can see them, and it causes much grief because we are yet in the flesh. But blessed be God, the obedience of Christ is without spot, it is without wrinkle, it is without blemish, and this is what we desire to be clothed with, clothed in that perfect robe of which Jeremiah speaks: “This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness” (Jer. 33. 16). What a beauty there is in that! All other beauties fade away, insignificant, not once to be compared with that perfect obedience. But never forget, dear friends, how it has come to the church with the laying down of the life of the dear Lamb of God. The cost is infinite. We can never measure it. But O the wonder of it, that He should fulfil that mysterious word we have in the Epistles: “He” – God the Father – “hath made Him to be sin for us” – that is God the Son – “who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5. 21). This is beauty indeed. May we know more of it.

And the fourth thing he prays for is that God would bless the means He uses. It speaks of the work of our hands (see verse 17). Now Moses did not believe in man’s free will. He knew that nothing could possibly succeed unless the hand of the Lord was on him. Because when the hand of the Lord is on us, whether we be a preacher, or take any other part in the service of God, or in any way God may call us to, it is only as that hand of God is upon us and establishing His will in us, that anything prospers.

I like the Book of Nehemiah for many reasons, but one thing I find particularly attractive. He went in before the king to plead for the cause of Jerusalem, his home city, which was in such a desolate state. We read these lovely words, that the king – that is King Artaxerxes – granted his request – that is Nehemiah’s request – according to the good hand of his God upon him (see Neh. 2. 8). The hand of God was on Nehemiah in the asking and on that wicked king in giving the answer.

As we heard this morning, when the King looses the fetters, dear friends, who can withstand Him? “I will work, and who shall let it?”

(Isa. 43. 13). May the hand of God be on the dear servants of God here and all who have the cause of God and the interests of His cause at heart. Even in our Societies, yes, we are only poor sinners, seeking, we trust, to do the will of the Lord. It can only prosper as the hand of the Lord is upon us. “Yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.” In our prayer meetings, around the Lord’s table, in the ordinances of His house, Lord, Thou must establish it, and “what God doth He doth for ever. Nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it, that men should fear before Him” (see Eccles. 3. 14).

May God bless these few opening remarks to our Annual General Meeting here this afternoon.

CHAIRMAN: It is the 137th Annual General Meeting. We are very thankful that the Lord has been so kind to spare the Society for so long, and it is our privilege in the Lord’s hand to be some small means in the continuing of this benefit to His dear people.

A resolution was put to the Meeting that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on April 13th, 2018 be approved. This was proposed by Mr. T.J. Parish (Pastor, Attleborough), seconded by Dr. M.J. Hyde (Pastor, Brighton) and carried *nem con*.

The Secretary, Mr. David J. Christian, then introduced the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Aid and Poor Relief Society for the year ended December 31st, 2018.

MR. CHRISTIAN: Dear Chairman, subscribers and friends, we meet on this another annual occasion and thinking about today, the words of Moses to Hobab have been on my mind: “We are journeying.” This is true of all the human race, but Moses had something further to add: “unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you” (Num. 10. 29). Some friends who have met with us over the years, among them Mr. Philip Pont, pastor at Norwich, have now finished their journey and have gone to that place

“Where congregations ne’er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”

The Word of God clearly tells us, however, that not all journeys will end there. How important then to be found in the way that leads to life eternal and that will only be through Him who said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14. 6). We have not been promised an easy path to heaven and Joseph Hart writes,

“How hard and rugged is the way
To some poor pilgrims’ feet.” (H. 747)

The Society was founded with the aim of helping those in need, while on their journey heavenward, in a practical way by giving personal grants. Some of our chapels are low in numbers, and where needed, grants are made to assist in the payment of ministers. During the last year grants totalling £129,000 were made, including two grants to ministers needing help in replacing their cars. This figure

is considerably more than our income, but we are thankful that the funds in reserve enable us to maintain the level of grants. We thank all those who contribute to the Society through donations and chapel collections.

The income for the year was just over £6,000 lower at £112,489 but the previous year included nearly £12,500 in legacies of which there were none in 2018. Expenditure increased by £13,500 to £207,281 mainly due to the increase in grants. The deficit for the Society as a whole was £94,878 and was split between the Aid and Poor Relief Society – £83,766, Gadsby Memorial Christmas Fund – £9,935 and the Magazine Fund – £1,177.

We aim to break even with the Magazine Fund and so a small increase was made in the prices of the *Gospel Standard* and *Friendly Companion* for 2019.

Our Editors, Mr. Timothy Rosier – *Gospel Standard*, Mr. Gary TenBroeke – *Friendly Companion* and Mr. Trevor Scott – *Perception*, have, through the Lord's mercies, been helped for another year, and we seek to uphold them in prayer that they will still be maintained as they continue their labours. May the Lord's blessing rest upon the truths contained in the magazines as they go out month by month. We welcome new subscribers to our magazines and we offer a year's free subscription to newly-married couples, either direct, or through the chapel parcels.

We would encourage churches to put forward the names of ministers who are members of our churches and whose ministry is in power and with the Holy Ghost, and during the year the name of Mr. Stephen Rosier was added to the list of Gospel Standard ministers. Following this, he was invited to re-join the Committee and we are pleased that he felt able to accept the invitation.

Sadly, two members of the Committee have decided not to seek re-election. Mr. Henry Mercer has served on the Committee from 2009 and was Secretary for twenty years prior to that, and now feels that with his increasing age it is time for him to retire. We thank him for all he has done for the Society over these many years and he will be greatly missed. Mr. David Broome has served for six years, but with an increasing workload at the Trinitarian Bible Society, feels unable to continue. We thank him for his time on the Committee and he too will be very much missed.

The members of the Committee seek wisdom and grace in conducting the business of the Society and they value your prayerful interest.

It is always with sadness when we hear of chapels closing, and in the past months Croydon (Providence, West Street), Canterbury, Haslingden and Rochdale have all been sold and others have closed or are on the point of closure. We are thankful that in several places there have been those constrained to be baptized and join our churches, and we pray that we might know the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the churches.

We remember our friends overseas and especially in Australia, where there is no regular minister, and we are pleased that some of our ministers have been able to visit the churches there, as well as others visiting North America. We think of Grand Rapids, and especially Mr. Stehouwer who is now unable to preach. We pray that the Lord will bless the labours of our friends, Mr. TenBroeke, Mr. Pickett and Mr. Dekker, in the United States and Canada.

In November a meeting took place at Clifton for prayer for our churches and the nation to which all friends were invited. This was conducted by the Chairman, Mr. Buss, as Mr. Timothy Rosier was unwell. The Committee has arranged a

similar meeting to be held, if the Lord will, at Clifton on November 1st at 11 a.m. and all friends are welcome. As we think of our churches and the solemn state of our nation, what need there is for prayer and repentance.

The Committee has printed copies of the article written by Mr. T.J. Pocock warning of the dangers of the internet and social media, titled, *The Subtle Serpent*, and these are available free of charge.

Each year some of our elderly friends and subscribers pass away and we would welcome new subscribers, particularly among our younger friends. The minimum subscription is £5 and is open to all those who attend our churches regularly and can subscribe to the Articles of Faith of the Gospel Standard Society. Forms can be obtained from the Secretary.

We do appreciate the kindness of our friends at Clifton for the use of the chapel and all they do to make the day run as smoothly as possible. We are thankful for all that Mr. Lawson has done over the years and pleased that he now has some additional helpers in the church.

The Gospel Standard Library is not part of the Society, but the Annual Report and Accounts have again been included at the end of the booklet to bring this very useful resource to the attention of our friends and subscribers.

Finally, as we opened our report thinking of our journey, we close with the lines by John Cennick:

“Children of the heavenly King,
As ye journey, sweetly sing;
Sing your Saviour’s worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways.”

(H. 267)

“Brethren, pray for us.”

The Chairman thanked Mr. Christian for all he does as Secretary and for his very interesting and helpful report. He asked if there were any questions. There were none, and the proposal to approve and adopt the Annual Report and Accounts was put to the Meeting. This was proposed by Mr. J.R. Rutt (Pastor, Lamberhurst), seconded by Mr. N.T. Shaw (Attleborough), and carried *nem con*.

The Chairman expressed his gratitude for the long service of Mr. Henry Mercer, who for so many years gave so much time and effort for the Society, both as Secretary and a member of the Committee. Behind the scenes he spent hours doing work for the Society in love to the cause of God in our churches. The Chairman also spoke of the importance of the subscribers, as they are the ones who have the vote, and should a severe doctrinal issue face the denomination, subscribers would have a vote on the matter. He said it is important that those who are one in heart with us and can subscribe to the Articles of Faith, should become subscribers, to give the prayerful support that is needed for the Society.

The Secretary announced the result of the election of three members who were retiring at this Meeting and eligible for re-election, and also one new member who had been appointed. 242 papers were sent out, of which 145 were returned. All members received over 90% of the votes cast, so the retiring members of the Committee, Messrs. J.H. Cottington, G.W. Hyde and T.H.W. Scott, together with Mr. S.P. Rosier, were elected to serve for a period of three years. The Secretary mentioned that the result of the ballot is expressed as a percentage of the votes cast against the number of papers returned. A blank space

against any name is counted as a vote against. Papers that are not returned or are spoiled do not count.

Mr. T.H.W. Scott then expressed thanks on behalf of the re-elected members of the Committee.

The Chairman explained that with the retirement of Mr. H. Mercer and Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom from the Committee in recent years, two new Funding Trustees were needed to replace them, and there was a motion put to the meeting that Mr. T.J. Rosier (Editor of the *Gospel Standard*) be elected a Funding Trustee. This was proposed by Mr. D.J. Lawson (Clifton), seconded by Mr. J.E. Hickman (Redhill) and passed *nem con*.

It was further put to the meeting that Mr. G.W. Hyde also be elected a Funding Trustee. This was proposed by Mr. P.C. Tyler (Hastings), seconded by Mr. F.A. Ince (Hope, Sedgley) and passed *nem con*.

The Chairman said he had received greetings from each of the overseas churches, and reminded the friends how very important it is that that we remember these churches. He had heard from Mr. H.J. Flitton, who expressed the deep appreciation of the friends in Australia of the visits of the Lord's servants in recent years. The churches there are in a very low state numerically. He had also heard from Grand Rapids and Sheboygan. The Grand Rapids friends expressed their gratitude to the ministers who have been and are expected to go and help them at this time of need. Mr. Stehouwer is now very infirm, but still as lively as ever spiritually. Over the years, he has been a wonderful example of perseverance. The friends in Chilliwack had sent greetings, as had Mr. M.T. Pickett of Choteau, where the church is in a low state in numbers, with only Mr. and Mrs. Pickett as members of the church there. It is a very isolated position, and we would remember them in their need. Likewise we remember the "twos and threes" in our churches here in England as well as those abroad. They need our prayers. Those of us who are blessed with larger congregations should not forget them, whom the Lord loves just as much as those who may have more gathering with them.

The Chairman gave notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Trust at Hope Chapel, Shaw's Corner, Redhill, on Saturday, May 18th, if the Lord will, when Mr. H. Sant will speak on "Martin Luther on the Eternal Sonship of Christ."

The Chairman mentioned the Gospel Standard Trust books and also a book published by the James Bourne Society entitled, *John Kershaw and Blessing Over the Moors*, by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom, which he heartily recommended as excellent reading about a day of real revival in the Lancashire moors, and a day we wish would return in our own generation.

He also commended the booklet by Mr. T.J. Pocock on *The Subtle Serpent*, saying it should be in every home, and be read and re-read. He said: "It is graciously written, faithful, to the point, and very relevant to the great dangers in the use of the media in our day. We cannot live as hermits, in convents, and isolate ourselves from the world, but Mr. Pocock was given much wisdom in handling these matters, and I think everyone should read it and take to heart the advice and the warnings he gave."

He reminded the meeting of the Gospel Standard Library, which is an excellent resource of books, and expressed appreciation of all done by those who labour there.

He thanked the friends at Clifton Chapel, and wished Mr. D.J. Lawson the Lord’s blessing as he is due to go into hospital any day for his hip operation. He also thanked Mr. Peter Hill for his help with starting the singing, and those who worked behind the scenes with the catering.

The Chairman said the collection at the evening service would be for the Gospel Standard Magazine Fund.

Hymn 514 was then sung.

The 12th Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund then followed.

GOPEL STANDARD BETHESDA FUND
12th ANNUAL MEETING

MR. M.D. RIDOUT (Chairman, Bethesda Fund): Subscribers and friends, we would welcome you to the 12th Annual General Meeting of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund and present the 74th Annual Report and Accounts.

We would acknowledge the Lord’s hand in providing, once more, for the needs of Bethesda during the past year. The General Manager will refer to this and provide an update on various issues that are of concern to Bethesda, and I will confine my remarks to more general matters relating to the Charity. Although the General Manager will make reference to Bethesda’s financial performance as set out in the Annual Report and Accounts, I would, however, assure subscribers that the trustees are well aware of the financial state of Bethesda and are seeking to drive forward the recent improvements in financial planning and control and the provision of reliable information to ensure sound decisions are made together with developing, within Bethesda, a culture of “making every penny count.” I would just add here that a friend was speaking to me this morning and saying that Bethesda is not just a business; it is about people. I would assure you that the trustees have this very much at their heart, but at the same time we have a responsibility to steward those resources that we have to ensure that there is a Bethesda. I appreciate those things are said before Almighty God who is able to supply all our need above all we can ask or think.

Firstly, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the service that Mr. Henry Mercer has given to Bethesda since 1991 as a trustee, and fifteen years as Chairman of the Bethesda Committee. Consequently, I would, on behalf of the trustees and those present, publicly thank Mr. Mercer for the time given and commitment to Bethesda in the many changes over the past twenty-seven years. We would wish Mr. Mercer the Lord’s blessing both now and in the future, and I know that his thoughts are still very much with Bethesda.

Secondly, I would also add that standing here as Chairman of Bethesda is not a position that I looked for, but trust that in the Lord’s purposes it is one I will be given strength to fulfil in serving Bethesda to meet its present and future needs.

Thirdly, I was recently asked, “What do trustees do?” A very valid question and a simple answer would be, trustees are the guardians of the purpose of the charity, making sure the charity is run in the best interests of the people it is there to serve and support (in our case the residents) and that all decisions focus on the needs of the beneficiaries (the residents) together with ensuring the responsible use of the resources available.

Bethesda trustees are aware of their responsibilities and the challenges ahead of them in focussing on the best interests of Bethesda and ensuring that all decisions made are transparent, objective and comply with the Trust Deed and above all, each decision made is done so in the fear of the Lord.

Fourthly, I would reiterate the purpose of Bethesda, as set out in the Annual Report: “The purpose of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund is to provide accommodation and personal care and support to adults aged 65 and over who are members of Gospel Standard Strict and Particular Baptist chapels, or who regularly attend Gospel Standard chapels.” The challenge ahead for the trustees is to fulfil the purpose of Bethesda against the background within which Bethesda operates both now and in the future.

This is not the time to rehearse all these challenges. The following, however, highlights some of the challenges Bethesda is facing. In June 1998 there were, in England, 135 chapels listed in the *Gospel Standard*; in June 2018, twenty years later, there were eighty-nine chapels (a decline of forty-six chapels). On April 1st, 2019, thirty-seven of the sixty total places across the Homes were occupied. This represents an occupation rate of 62% (compared to 80% on January 1st, 2018) and the average age of the residents across all the three Homes is ninety-one years. I do not say these things in any alarmist way, but to give a background to the challenges that are before us. These factors may well have been influenced by individuals leaving the decision to come into Bethesda later than previously, and as our General Manager will remind us in a moment, sadly, there have been cases where individuals have left this decision far too late and to a stage where their needs are beyond the care that Bethesda can offer. Equally, the move by local authorities, to care in the community, and individuals wishing to maintain their independence, due to various circumstances, has impacted on Bethesda’s occupancy.

There are difficult decisions ahead for Bethesda’s trustees, and we trust that we will be lifted up above our own will and thoughts and be given grace to seek the Lord’s will in the best interests of the Charity.

We do thank those who contributed to the consultation on Bethesda, and the report and the feedback received was published earlier this year. (This is available on Bethesda’s website or can be obtained from the General Manager.) The feedback will be drawn on in the additional meetings of the trustees, that will need to be held over the next year, to address Bethesda’s future. We will at an appropriate point share the outcomes of these discussions with Bethesda’s subscribers and other interested parties. Whether this will be in writing or verbally or both will depend on what needs to be communicated and how this is best done.

Fifthly, at this point, I would address the question raised at last year’s Annual General Meeting concerning widening Bethesda’s admissions criteria to increase occupancy. This has been discussed and the trustees are conscious of their responsibility within the Trust Deed regarding entrants to Bethesda affirming their support of the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith and the need to uphold this distinctive position. Consequently, the decision was taken by the trustees to maintain our current position regarding the admissions criteria for Bethesda.

Finally, I would conclude by reading an extract from a letter received during the consultation, which expresses the concern of Bethesda’s trustees and, I trust, those who have an interest in Bethesda. The extract from the letter is this: “There

is one certain thing, the Lord has a perfect will for Bethesda. May all the trustees be favoured with the revealing of His will and be able to go forward in humble dependence on Him. The Lord be with you all. ‘Jehovah Jireh.’”

I would also, on behalf of the trustees, take this opportunity to thank the General Manager, home managers, staff, members of Home Support Groups and volunteers who contribute in various ways to make a difference in the lives of the residents, which is ultimately the purpose for the existence and continuing of Bethesda.

As we look, in the fear of the Lord, to the unknown future, we would value your prayers, support, forbearance (we are only but men) and understanding in the challenging times ahead. Thank you.

A resolution was then put to the Meeting that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on April 12th, 2018, be approved. The resolution was proposed by Mr. G.E. Hadley (Pastor, Stotfold), seconded by Mr. T.J. Rosier (Pastor, Maidstone) and carried *nem con*.

The Chairman then asked Mr. Topping to introduce the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2018.

MR. A. TOPPING (General Manager): During 2018 and since the year end, we have proved once more the faithfulness of our Lord in supplying our needs and in answer to prayer.

As the Chairman has remarked, Bethesda is facing many challenges. Nevertheless, we have been maintained through another year, with the Homes proving a haven of rest for the Lord’s people in their last days.

On the subject of occupancy: since the beginning of the year, there have been a number of changes. For Harpenden, the number of people living in the Home has continued to decrease, with occupancy starting the year at thirteen, now reduced to ten. Brighton’s occupancy has improved from sixteen at the beginning of the year to nineteen currently, and the Home is to all intents and purposes full, with every room occupied. Occupancy in the Studley Home remains unchanged at eight.

Although it is to be expected that people will pass away in the Homes, given that they come to us for their last days, it is always hard to lose our friends when this happens, and it is particularly difficult for the staff and managers of the Homes as they naturally get very attached to the people they care for. 2018 was especially hard in this respect as, in the Lord’s purposes, twenty residents were called home; an unprecedentedly high figure for a single year.

Sadly, since the beginning of the year we have lost a further three residents, all from Harpenden: Mr. David Crowter, Mrs. Margaret Ruse and Miss Dinah Gibb. We remember with sympathy those that have lost their loved ones during this time.

On financial matters, the overall income for the Charity in 2018 was £1,796,670. This figure is made up of income from residents’ fees, donations, legacies, investments and the grant from the Piggott Charity. Although fee income was higher in 2018 than in 2017, overall income decreased by £81,424 due to a lower legacy income.

Overall costs for the Charity during 2018 were £1,947,557, which is £106,984 higher than in 2017, due in part to increases to the National Living

Wage and, in the early part of the year, high agency costs for the Studley Home to cover a short term increase in occupancy and care needs, which has since come to an end.

The combined effect of the overall lower income and higher expenditure is that the Charity incurred a deficit for the year of £150,887.

Repairs and renewals costs for the Charity remain high due to aging building fabric and services, particularly at the Harpenden Home, where ongoing repairs have had to be made to the plumbing and electrical services. In addition, substantial investment has had to be made in the building fabric in order to comply with current expectations around fire safety.

Also during 2018 there were a number of changes within the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund Board of Trustees that constitutes the Bethesda Committee. Mr. Richard Wells stepped down from the Committee in January and Mr. Michael Bailey in August, both after many years of service to Bethesda. They have been replaced on the Committee by Mr. Philip Pocock and Mr. Ray Saunders, both of whom bring considerable knowledge and experience in the areas of building and management. In connection with this, it is noted that there is a typing error on page 4 of the report, which lists their appointments as being October 1st, 2019, which should of course read October 1st, 2018.

Since the year end, Mr. Mercer has stepped down as Chairman of the Bethesda Fund Committee, and has not stood for re-election as a trustee. We would echo the good wishes expressed by the Chairman.

We are thankful that we are able to continue to maintain a high standard of care and support for our residents, as is evidenced by the very positive comments that we continue to receive from residents, relatives and visiting professionals, a few of examples of which we give as follows:

From residents: "The staff are very kind and attentive to all my needs." "This Home is fit for a queen!"

From relatives: "The Home provides care that is above and beyond the care that is required. I can think of no other place where I would rather have my relative." "My mother has advanced dementia so is unable to participate in decision-making about her care plan, but the staff are extremely good at noticing her non-verbal expression of wishes about her immediate needs through facial expression, and through her behaviour, understanding yes, no, or if she is looking tired."

Visiting professionals: "I am very impressed by this well-run care Home." "The Home has good relations with outside agencies, i.e. G.P. or pharmacist, to ensure safety is maintained to a very high level."

As part of our quality assurance process, we routinely seek feedback from those who use our service, which includes relatives, staff and visiting professionals, through an independent feedback service run by the Hertfordshire Care Providers Association. Feedback is sought against the same criteria used by the CQC, which is: is the Home safe, caring, effective, responsive and well-led? These consistently report satisfaction levels in excess of 90% against all criteria, which puts our Homes well above the average for the homes within the survey, where these average about 83%. Although we achieve high levels of satisfaction, we are not complacent about this, and continue to strive to maintain and improve the care offered.

Bethesda has continued its work, at the Brighton Home, to address the needs of the residents with dementia, which is being introduced to the other two Homes,

and it is pleasing that this has been recognised as good practice by the Brighton NHS dementia in-reach team (a team of specialists providing advice and training to care homes in the Brighton area). The in-reach team have been extremely complimentary of what the Home has achieved, and as a consequence have arranged for a number of other local care homes to visit us to learn from the work that has been done at Bethesda. This work includes remodelling the corridors to make them more interesting, redecoration of the lounge to make it more homely, and improvements to the service to ensure that people living with dementia are as fully engaged with their day-to-day life as they wish to be, and these improvements have benefited everyone in the Home.

This is also an example of how Bethesda provides managers and staff with support and training continually to develop their skills and professionalism in all areas of residential care provision. Bethesda does offer high levels of job satisfaction for those who wish to serve and care for the Lord's elderly people. We provide opportunities for staff to develop expertise, in new areas such as dementia, and to lead on this across the Homes. This in turn helps to enrich the roles that managers and staff undertake in the Homes. Information is available on the website for anyone who may be interested in career and job opportunities in the Bethesda Homes.

In terms of the service that we provide, we are aware that this is something that we repeat every year, but it is important that people understand what we can and cannot do.

In addition to permanent residential care, respite care and managed accommodation (flatlets) services, we provide a day care service. This is a service for people who wish for some care and support, but do not need to stay overnight. It is very flexible and can be tailored to individual requirements subject to prior discussion. It is often a helpful way to supplement care received at home, provide social contact with people of like mind, or for assisting transition to a longer, or even permanent stay in a Bethesda Home.

We can provide services to people requiring residential care, support for dementia and, within certain limitations, those with complex care needs.

We would, however, reiterate that we are unable to provide in-house nurses for those that require regular nursing care. For this service, we rely on the community care teams, including district nurses, with whom we have a very good working relationship in all three Homes. Whilst it has been possible to support residents with nursing care needs, this is often when someone has already been a resident in the Home for a period of time, and their health has changed over this period. By working with the local community teams, it has been possible to provide a care package for them. Sadly, we are often unable to do this for individuals who come with pre-existing nursing care needs. Consequently, we would encourage individuals to make contact with Bethesda before circumstances prevent us being of help.

We now come to the matter of fees for 2019. After much careful consideration, the decision has been made to make a modest increase to the fees of 2.03%. This is in line with inflation and makes an appropriate allowance for the increases to wages costs arising from the government's National Living Wage increment. In setting our fee levels, we are also conscious of the requirements of the Consumer and Marketing Authority's guidance on setting fees for care homes.

Therefore, the changes to the fees that came into effect from April 1st 2019 were: for the ordinary rate there is a change from £644 to £657 per week; for the intermediate rate a change from £749 to £764 per week; and, for the higher rate, a change from £889 to £907 per week. There is also an advanced dementia rate, used for those requiring one to one care, which has changed from £959 to £978 per week.

I would at this point make reference to the Underfunded Residents' Fund which is for those unable to afford the full cost of fees, and we are thankful that we are still able to provide assistance. As has previously been announced, all donations received by Bethesda from chapels or individuals are automatically allocated to the Underfunded Residents' Fund, unless requested otherwise, and we would thank those individuals and congregations who have made donations to Bethesda, thus supporting many of the residents to remain in the Homes.

Once again, our sincere thanks go to all our staff for the hard work, dedication and care that they give to our friends living in the Homes. We would also like sincerely to thank once again the Home Support Groups and other volunteers who give so much to support the people living in the Homes in so many different ways. The value of their contribution to the physical and spiritual welfare of the residents cannot be overstated.

We are also thankful for the assistance given by those who take the morning readings in the Homes, and if there are any male members of the churches who feel able to assist in this way, especially in the Brighton and Studley areas, we would appreciate hearing from you, as there are a number of gaps in the reading rota.

Finally, we are also thankful for the support given to us by our subscribers. We have been pleased to welcome a small number of new subscribers since the last AGM. However, the overall number has continued to decline, and we would encourage more people to consider supporting us in this way. Anyone who regularly attends a Gospel Standard cause of truth and agrees with the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith is eligible to be a subscriber, and copies of the subscribers application form can be found in the chapel porch and the school.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Topping for his report and update on the work of Bethesda. He asked if there were any questions, and Mr. D.J. Lawson (Clifton) asked whether a meeting could be called with the subscribers so that they could be informed about the future of Bethesda, and provide an opportunity to recruit new subscribers. Mr. Ridout responded, and the following has been supplied since the meeting by the Bethesda Chairman, Mr. Michael Ridout:

Mr Ridout subsequently met with Mr. Lawson, on Saturday April 13th, 2019, to discuss further background to the question raised at the AGM. This was a very useful opportunity to explore how Bethesda communicates with its subscribers and what approaches might be used to increase the number of subscribers, especially from the "next generation."

There were no other questions and it was proposed by Mr. D.J. Sayers (Bethel, Luton) and seconded by Mr. D.J. Broome (Trowbridge), that the Report and Accounts of the Gospel Standard Bethesda Fund for 2018 be approved and adopted. This was carried *nem con*.

The Chairman then asked Mr. Topping to declare the results of the secret ballot to elect the two new Committee members who had been co-opted as trustees. Mr. Topping announced that 219 ballot papers were issued to subscribers, of which 164 (75%) were returned, and as a result both of those standing for election had received at least 95% of the votes. Therefore Mr. R.A. Saunders and Mr. P.J. Pocock had been elected for three years.

MR. RIDOUT: Can I thank you all for your attendance. As I said in my remarks, "Brethren, pray for us."

MR. BUSS: May the Lord help Bethesda in all that lies before them. Much prayer is needed for them, that the Lord will guide them aright.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL Substance of Business Meeting Address

After hymn 1082 was sung, Mr. Bryan E. Izzard (Pastor, Fenstanton) read Revelation 14. 1-7 and spoke as follows:

I do desire to seek the Lord's gracious help. It strikes me, friends, that we may humbly hope and trust we have been led to the verses here, especially to the sixth verse about the preaching of the everlasting gospel. I have had them on my mind for a little while now and they seem to follow on from this morning's comments. I hope we speak in the same spirit although I feel my poverty. Our brother spoke of liberty and I trust it is the same Spirit.

"And I saw another angel ... having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth."

In drawing your attention to the words, "Having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth," there is a sense of poverty, and fruitlessness with me in a very great way, but not entirely so. My thoughts went so sweetly with our brother this morning and it is either the same spirit of the liberty of the gospel or it is not. I hope it is so.

The matter before us is the great matter of the preaching of the everlasting gospel, the everlasting gospel given to be preached to poor sinners, but we need to be renewed within and to be blessed with the Spirit of God, or we can never preach. What thoughts it brings to us. But we trust there is some following on. We trust there is something in the word here that may be applicable as God may send His Word even this afternoon. We have heard this morning of the loosing of bonds and that appointing of the Lord's liberty. Now that is what we need. We need it personally, and we need it certainly in preaching the gospel.

A few things as God may help me. We read here, "Having the everlasting gospel." What does it mean? Well it is my belief it means the sweet truth of it, with the appointing of God of these everlasting tidings, Christ appointed by the Father with the everlasting gospel. There will be

a time when the gospel will not be preached in the sense that it is now, but the fruit of it will be for ever and ever. The Lord grant that we may be amongst those who know the certain sound and the truth of it in our hearts, and be able to sing God's praises, as we were reminded, for ever and ever.

We notice that the Lord Jesus is so exalted in these words – not just an angel, but it is the tidings that angels admire. We think of the chorus from heaven when He came, and the great praise unto God Almighty because of the truth in the dear Redeemer and the gospel tidings that are still to be proclaimed. The angels, so many of them, sang so sweetly of the tidings of the coming of Christ, but they could not taste or know it savingly, being sinless creatures. It is given for sinners to taste and know the riches of God's redeeming grace. It is a wonder indeed that the tidings of forgiveness are known in Christ Jesus.

It is given here, we notice: the giving of "the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth." What a great matter that is! We find it so, and have done especially as we get older in preaching the gospel; it is such a great subject, there are many disappointments and sorrows, but not entirely so, friends. There are those things that God is pleased to grant as tokens that He is with us. We seem to live upon them. The Lord grant many a token to the Lord's servants. The matter before me, if I may be enabled to speak, is this preaching, not only in the sense it is to be proclaimed worldwide as God sends His servants, but there is a particular matter on my mind about the subject, "having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth."

I am sure as we stand before you, it is principally the great matter of this gospel being given to the Son of God to come in this way to proclaim it as only God can. That is the nature of it. He was both Appointed and Anointed in the great matter of preaching the gospel, the sum of it all.

Friends, it is contained in this. There is no more harmonious sound than this. I think the hymnwriter speaks of the harmonious sound when it reaches poor sinners' hearts. It is a sweet melody to those who know the Lord, a gospel of good tidings. For the guilty, the banished – we have heard a few things this morning that belong to these characters, in the gospel tidings of what God does by His grace for poor sinners by the Holy Spirit of God. O that the Lord may send out these servants of the Lord with no uncertain sound and gospel liberty be given to believe; it needs the Spirit. Only the Spirit can give the tidings that come from heaven to reach poor sinners' hearts. I am sure of it.

And then the matter perhaps upon my mind is this: that ever the dear Redeemer was pleased to come from the councils of eternity in His Father's holy, sacred will and in obedience to Him to proclaim this everlasting gospel and the truths of it to His people. The Father's love is

in it so sweetly. Some of us love doctrine. O these tidings, they are in the Saviour Himself. They are in His love. They are indeed in the eternal purposes of the Father and Holy Spirit, but especially as the hymnwriter speaks of it in the love of Christ:

“Nor is the Surety short of love;
He loves beyond degree.” (H. 579)

He came with these tidings in the gospel; and in the sweetest obedience unto His Father with tidings that He appoints by the Spirit. These things perhaps belong especially to the appointing and anointing of the Saviour with these tidings. A very, very sweet subject that is: the appointing of it, the councils of Jehovah; the appointed time and the manner and way in which God would deliver these sweet tidings is through the anointing and merits of His own dearly-beloved Son in whom we read, “He is well pleased” (see Matt. 3. 17). The subject is divine.

The Father’s sweet counsel and blessing is that these tidings must reach these characters of His love. They are given to Christ for His people. He is that One anointed to come with these tidings of the everlasting gospel of salvation.

Perhaps just for a moment I think of those who receive a little from the good hand of God. They can trace the Father’s love in it. Their hearts are led out so much unto the Saviour. They want to hear His Word. They come to hear it in the sanctuary. There may be a time to speak of those examples and those anecdotes, and I do myself with the younger ones, but principally it is the tidings from heaven for guilty, ruined sinners, and they that are at enmity by nature. And yet there are the tidings for it. O friends, the Lord grant it, to deliver such as we have been noting this morning and thinking about. O that these tidings should so reach the hearts of sinners and deliver them. “I delivered thee when bound” (H. 968), we sing. It is the voice of a trumpet in a poor sinner’s conscience that there is a way to God and it is through the merits of the Saviour. Man is so lost, so ruined, it needs the Holy Spirit for His people’s deliverance.

We could speak of it in different ways, but O the sweetness of it, that these tidings should reach poor sinners by the certain sound, and effectual working of God the Spirit. If we are right, friends, we will love the work and witness of the Holy Spirit. We just touched briefly on the appointing and much more could be said of it. There is also the sacred subject of the anointing by the Father and Holy Spirit to preach.

Now I want to come a little further. Perhaps it follows in my last few thoughts in Luke’s gospel here, the anointing in Luke 4. 17, 18. Let us look at it for a moment: the words of the dear Redeemer in this great and blessed work and the witness and obedience to the Father in it. He

said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me” (verse 18). Some of us covet that. I hope we know just something of it. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.” We have it in the words of Christ, and it is in the truth of the gospel. That is where we come. We consider the anointing for a moment. “He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.” These are the characters. They love the gospel. Really, the poorer the better, but we want to measure our comments: spiritually poor, those who are brought to the stripping room perhaps, they feel so poor but they are still brought to hear what God will do, what He will say about it. “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt. 5. 3). A sweet word indeed! The poor are near to God by His grace.

There is the anointing. We have not much time to look at it because of the time constraint. “Anointed ... He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted.” The brokenhearted. That is what God’s grace does. If He does not break our hearts, nothing will. They are hard and obdurate. “Something yet can do the deed” (H. 316). It is in the Saviour and by His precious blood. That is a sweet hymn about it. “Something yet can do the deed.” It is in Christ. O the sweet savour of His name, the unction of that name and the sweet witness of it in poor sinners’ hearts!

“To heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives.” It really flows very sweetly from the morning’s discourse, and we just follow on. “And recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4. 18, 19). It struck me that perhaps there is some purpose in me having to come here with just a very few things. The Lord raise up those who shall preach – I like that term – “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3. 8). *That* is what the church of God needs – “the unsearchable riches” – all for them. The Lord grant it in the truths of the gospel and the savour of it, the blessedness of it.

We could spend a little time there, but I want to direct you just for a few moments to the gospel itself. I am so poor, and yet there is a part that touches my heart. Perhaps you will gather these thoughts up with me where we read of the Lord’s teaching in Luke chapter 15. Perhaps it may come sweetly – I must soon leave it – the preaching of repentance. Just for a moment we draw you to it. “A certain man had two sons,” and the things that follow on in the fifteenth chapter of Luke in the spirit of the gospel. The younger said, “Father, give me the portion” (verse 12), and soon he was gone. Friends, have we not gone, but for God’s rich grace? Are we among those who are brought back and can say that now we are in want of all?

That is where I want to leave a few thoughts. These characters can only describe themselves to be in “want.” They cannot bring anything to the Lord of themselves, but they receive everything. There is a spirit of

repentance in the gospel, Jesus preaches it in the parable: it is in the gospel; may it be ours by grace.

“And he divided unto them his living.” But of the prodigal we read that he came to himself, and said, “How many hired servants of my father’s have bread enough and to spare!” (verse 17) and so on. It was the spirit of the man that was broken. That is the teaching of it, broken in repentance. I do not want to get drawn aside, but we do want to be able to preach this sweet spirit of repentance from Christ for sinners that it might sweetly be known by a Saviour’s love, and His precious blood may be all in all.

“Repentance flows freely through Calvary’s blood,
Produced by the Spirit and goodness of God.” (H. 239)

I believe it to be so.

Now it speaks in those few verses in Luke of the gospel. Indeed, my thoughts have gone to a sweet hymn about it, as we have been trying to speak. It is the gospel in those few verses. There are many parts that are so sweet and there many dear characters in God’s own Word. There is one servant of God we are reminded of today: dear John Kershaw. O friends, how I admire that man’s gift of God’s grace in his heart, so enabled to stand for the truth boldly, and yet God dealt with him so gently and powerfully. It is a sweet account; I commend it to you, *John Kershaw and Blessing Over the Moors*, so ably written. The matter is this: it is the gospel. He knew it; he loved it; he preached it. I have seen his writings. It is a very sweet truth: that all of these characters who are appointed to preach and indeed believe, are included in that verse:

“They all declare, I nothing am,
My life is bound up in the Lamb,
My wit and might are His.” (H. 745)

Well, the Lord just help me to turn for a moment about it, in hymn 51. If it does not touch our heart, or if it never touches our heart, there is something wrong:

“What wisdom, majesty, and grace
Through all the gospel shine!
'Tis God that speaks, and we confess
The doctrine most divine” – the doctrine of Christ.

The Lord apply it with deliverance. Perhaps that is the theme today. The Lord grant it and we may then be able to speak about it and preach it, to lift Him up:

“Down from His shining throne on high
The Almighty Saviour comes,
Lays His bright robes of glory by,
And feeble flesh assumes.

“The mighty debt His chosen owed
 Upon the cross He pays;
 Then through the clouds ascends to God,
 ’Midst shouts of loftiest praise.”

It is a sweet hymn.

Now may the Lord just take a few things, if it be of the blessed Spirit, by way of deliverance or even awakening and a spirit of great searching and desire. “Be this religion mine” (H. 105). We need to be dug right out of self-assurance and a spirit of unconcern. Friends, we need the Lord continually. Those that know the Lord have to say, “Leave not my soul destitute” (Psa. 141. 8), and that takes it up – the Lord be our sufficiency and grant us the sweet blessing of His gospel for what is left of our life here and for all eternity, to know a few sweet truths of the gospel and to leave the world like that. I have said at home, the Lord’s people, by grace divine, take Jesus with them when they die. He is their All, and they are brought safely to be with Him and rest upon His breast. But friends, it is by the doctrine of redemption and tidings of the gospel. These guilty souls shall be brought to heaven at last to praise the Lord for ever and ever and through the merits of the Saviour

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice” – that is by the power of God – “Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” We leave a few things. May it please the Lord to forgive all amiss and help us now to seek the convoy of His love for the rest of the day. Amen.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT

By Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5. 16).

To glorify God is the highest ambition of angels. The brightest seraph before the throne has no higher aim, no greater happiness, than to bring glory to His name. And yet a poor sinner on earth may glorify God as much, and in some way more, than the brightest angel in the courts of eternal bliss. What different views the eyes of God and the eyes of men take of events passing on the earth. What glory is brought to God by all the victories gained by one country over another? I have thought sometimes that a poor old man, or feeble, decrepit woman, lying on a workhouse pallet, fighting with sin, self and Satan, yet enabled amidst all

to look to the Lord Jesus, and by a word from His lips overcoming death and hell, though when dead thrust into an elm coffin, to rot in a pauper's grave, brings more glory to God than all the exploits of Nelson or Wellington, and that such victories are more glorious than those of Waterloo or Trafalgar. It is true that the parish officers will not proclaim such a victory; nor will bells ring or cannons roar at such exploits; but the God of heaven and earth may get more glory from such a despised creature, than from all the generals and admirals who have ever drawn up armies in battle, or sunk hostile fleets beneath the wave.

Truly does the Lord say, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways" (Isa. 55. 8). It is indeed marvellous that glory should be brought to His great name by what His people do and suffer upon earth; that their feeble attempts to believe, to love, and to hope in Him, to speak well of His name, and to adorn His doctrine in their life and conversation, should redound to His honour and praise. Wondrous indeed is it that a poor, insignificant worm, whom perhaps his fellow-mortal will scarcely deign to look at, or passes by with a shrug of contempt, should add glory to the great God that inhabiteth eternity, before whom the highest angels and brightest seraphs bow with holy adoration! Well may we say, "What are all the glorious exploits that men are so proud of, compared with the tribute of glory rendered to God by His suffering saints?" You may feel yourself one of the poorest, vilest, neediest worms of earth; and yet if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with a living faith, hope in His mercy, love His dear name, and in your vocation adorn His doctrine by a godly, consistent life, you are privileged above princes and nobles, yes, even above crowned heads, and all the glory of man, because you are bringing glory to God.

It matters not what may be your station in life. You may be a servant, master, wife, husband, child; your rank and station may be high or low; but whatever it be, still in it you may bring glory to God. If a servant, by obedience, cleanliness, industry, and attention to the directions of your master or mistress. If a master or mistress, by kindness and liberality to your dependents, and doing all that you can to render the yoke of servitude light. There is not a single Christian who may not glorify God, though in worldly circumstances he be, or seem to be, totally insignificant. Glory is brought to God by those who live and walk in His fear, and more sometimes by the poor than by the rich. Only adorn the doctrine of God in all things, and you will bring glory to God in all things.

True repentance is a gift that is from above, and if the Lord does not give it, man will eternally perish for the want of it.

Thomas Brooks

GRACIOUS COMMUNICATION FROM THE NETHERLANDS

Tholen, Zeeland
1947

Dear Mr. P.,

I learned out of your letter you have had to wade through deep waters of afflictions, perhaps to endure temptation, or to sustain a heavy burden or weighty cross, or suffer cruel reproaches, or sorely tried with a body of sin and death. But as I understand well, the King was on your side and brought you out into a wealthy place. Delivered! Dear promise: "I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out" (Ezek. 34. 11). Dear Guide, dear guidance, for such unworthy persons! No doubt you will say: The way the Lord has led me has been a right one. He leads His own people by the right way to a city of habitation. He knows how to humble His people and to keep at His feet, with their mouths in the dust.

The book contains real gospel truths, some parts seem to me golden apples in silver scales (see Prov. 25. 11).

One complains of the prevailing sins in England: "The Lord's day is set apart for everything but for the Lord. Surely God hath a controversy with us and will be avenged on such a nation as this, for our horrid abuse of His sacred day of rest." Dear friend, it is not better with our people. Thousands take the Lord's day to enjoy themselves with football, etc. It is small wonder that the glory of Holland be removed. I have in my eye the foreign affairs in India, etc. Besides there is the withdrawing of God's beloved Holy Ghost in working conversion. I know the Lord cannot forget His people and He shall call His elect and unite to Him; but the living church, the gold has become dim: "I am of Paul, and I of Cephas" (see 1 Cor. 1. 12). It is divided, as the man of God, David, complains: "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth (Psa. 141. 7). We cannot get to the bottom of the Lord's dealings with human beings; the simplicity of His works many times is a stumbling-block for the high conceit of our nature.

The Lord has given us into the hands of strangers for a prey. He has stricken us, but we have not grieved. And yet the Lord has given us a little rest, out of His charity. England and Holland were the countries where the gospel sun has shone gloriously, and how many godly persons have sprung out of it, who trumpeted forth God's praise! But we have run away from Him and forsaken His commandments; therefore it is apposite to our case: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3. 2). The Lord put us to blush before His face. And yet there are much people that fear God in England and here also. The Lord be merciful to us as a church

and nation, and give us repentance, that we may turn from and hate our sins.

May much grace rest upon you, and a nice safe and quiet place be given you at the feet of Jesus!

Yours affectionately,

D.S.

MEMORY OF THE JUST

An account of Walter Frank Elliott, by E.P. Coleman

Walter Frank Elliott, of West Parade, Ryde, New South Wales, Australia, passed to his eternal rest on February 1st, 1926, aged 54 years.

It is a matter of regret that we have no particulars of the early life and experience of Mr. Elliott, except that he was born at Deptford, Surrey, England, I believe of God-fearing parents, who attended the Strict Baptist chapel, Devonshire Road, Greenwich. On September 8th, 1908, in company with a brother he came to Australia, and after a time to Sydney, where he was enabled to work at his calling of a plumber. He was led to attend the Particular Baptist chapel in Castlereagh Street, Sydney, and one day while seated in the park, he asked a man if there were any other Strict Baptist churches in Sydney, and was directed to Mr. Fremlin's church, worshipping in the Oddfellows' Temple, Elizabeth Street, where he attended regularly for a number of years. Here he met with a professing Christian, to whom he was married on December 23rd, 1913, and they lived happily together till his death.

As far as can be gathered, he evidenced no concern about the state of his soul previous to coming to Sydney, and was a frequent visitor to theatres and picture shows, according to his brother's account; but when it pleased the Lord "not to *propose*, but *call* by grace" (H. 76), there was an aching void the world could never fill. This was soon manifest by his regular attendance at chapel, his earnest attention to the preached Word, and an unconcealed pleasure and keen discernment in reading good books and the lives of gracious men. His widow declares that the first word that was given to him was, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31. 3).

About twelve months before his death, a young man who was preaching at Ryde, was exercised very much, and led to speak from Isaiah 38. 1: "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." The Holy Spirit applied it with power to Mr. Elliott's soul, and he went home, and set his temporal affairs in order, made his will, etc. A week or two later, in company with his wife, he went to Woy Woy for a holiday, and while there, was taken ill with heart trouble. Soon after returning home

and resuming work, he had another severe attack, and was hurried to the Coast Hospital in a very critical, and supposed dying, condition. The young preacher, on hearing of it, hastened to the hospital, and soon saw what appeared to him to be a fast-dying man, just fighting for life and breath. On seeing the minister, he said, "Do you remember that text you preached from: 'Set thine house in order'? Well, it was for me. I went home, and made my will, and here I am on a bed of suffering; but I feel resigned, if it should please God to take me. But oh, I am concerned to know whether my soul is in order." In the brief, though laboured, conversation which followed, he spoke of "Mary's tears" when she had lost sight of her Lord in His resurrection, and of her being arrested by that one word, "Mary," spoken by Jesus.

From that time our late friend began to mend, and in a few weeks was able to go to work, and to attend the Lord's house. But how softly did he walk in the bitterness of his soul, humbly cleaving to God's Word and the sound of the gospel, like a hungry man waiting for a morsel of food. On several occasions he has remarked upon the sermon, that certain things were sweet to him. He was truly sitting down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to his taste (see Song 2. 3).

On the Sunday before he died, he was at chapel, and complained of having had a bad night and of an annoying pain round the heart. The following evening, when retiring to bed, he was taken with a sudden heart attack, and passed peacefully into eternity. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him" (Isa. 3. 10).

BOOK REVIEWS

The Crook in the Lot, by Thomas Boston, 168 pages, price £5; published by The Banner of Truth Trust, in their Puritan Paperback series, and obtainable from Christian Bookshops.

Thomas Boston (1676-1732) spent most of his life preaching the gospel in the relative obscurity of the Scottish Borders. Twenty-five years of his pastoral ministry were spent in the small and isolated parish of Ettrick – beautifully situated in a long, secluded valley, which even today is reached only by eighteen miles or so of narrow, single-track road. He laboured to a small congregation, often against severe opposition, but his ministry was prospered – God giving the increase – such that the number of communicants rose by nearly thirteen-fold during his pastorate (from sixty to seven-hundred-and-seventy-seven).

The quaint title of this book, *The Crook in the Lot*, literally means: the difficult or surprising things in our life. The subtitle is: *The Sovereignty and Wisdom of God in the Afflictions of Men Displayed*. Boston sets out to establish why the Lord's people have adversity, trouble and affliction, in an exposition of Ecclesiastes 7. 13: "Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which He hath made crooked?" He shows that,

1. All crooks are made by God.
2. Man will never be able to get rid of the crook by himself.
3. The right response therefore of the Lord's people to crooks – humility (see 1 Pet. 5. 6, 7).

This is a book that was produced from a lifetime's experience of crooks (and who has had as many as Thomas Boston?) in the life of the author. Boston stood alone against serious matters of error which arose in the church. He was despised at times by some of his parishioners. He suffered severe privation in material things. Several of his children were taken by death. Perhaps, most touchingly, he in faith, called a son Ebenezer – he died. The next child, also a son, his faith still holding firm, he similarly called Ebenezer – he died too. But the faith of Boston, well tried, stood the test and shone. Finally, his wife was mentally afflicted and he tirelessly ministered to her needs, especially spiritual – he described her faith as being like the tips of birds' claws holding on to a rocky crag. It is the note of experience which gives *The Crook in the Lot* profound authority. Boston sets before us the doctrinal foundation which was his comfort in the trials of life which he passed through.

It is a mark of the Lord's people – trials are sanctified. Among the other ends which the Word of God gives, they are sanctified for the purpose of teaching us more of the Rock of Ages upon which we rest. Boston's trials were undoubtedly sanctified to the good of his soul and his labours in the ministry. For those that would draw most comfort, teaching and the sweetest honey from this book, we recommend that it is read alongside Boston's *Memoirs*, so the practical outwalking of the doctrine Boston teaches can be clearly seen.

The book under review is one of the many that Boston wrote in the seclusion provided by his parish ministry (his collected works fill twelve thick volumes). It once commonly had a place (along with his better known *Human Nature in its Four Fold State*) in virtually every library, whether small or large, belonging to the Lord's people. We desire that it might return to a similar standing today.

The only fly in the ointment is – the otherwise excellent introduction to this edition quotes the Bible from the English Standard Version. All other quotations in Boston's text appear to be from the King James Version.

Matthew J. Hyde, Brighton

John Kershaw and Blessing Over the Moors, by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom; price £12.95 plus £3.50 postage; obtainable from The James Bourne Society, Gable Hook Farm, Bethersden, Ashford, Kent, TN26 3BQ.

This is an excellent book and very readable. Humble believers will find some heart-warming union with the accounts recorded of godly believers who lived over one hundred and fifty years ago. A book hard to put down! We hope that it will have a large circulation. We shall hope, if the Lord will, to insert a review in the next issue of the *Gospel Standard*.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Due to lack of space, the article by J.H. Gosden, entitled, "Free Grace, Free Will and the Free Offer," has been deferred and will be continued in July, if the Lord will.

RESIGNATION

Lines written on becoming blind

"For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death" (Psa. 48. 14).

God of my fathers look on me.
A poor, blind worm, I'll lean on Thee;
Upon Thine arm I'll trust.
I'll lift my hands to Thy dear name,
Thy lovingkindness I'll proclaim,
To Thine unworthy dust.

What though my vision darkened be,
Nor aught upon the earth I see,
Yet Thou art with me still.
Thy love shall cheer my saddest day,
Thy light shall guide me on my way;
I would do all Thy will.

God of my fathers and my God,
I'll humbly bow beneath Thy rod,
And own Thy sovereign right.
I'll bless the hand that dealt this blow;
'Tis quite enough for me to know
It seemed good in Thy sight.

Not willingly dost Thou afflict,
Nor grieve the hearts of Thine elect;
In mercy Thou dost chide.
For well Thou know'st my treacherous heart
Like a deceitful bow would start,
And turn from Thee aside.

God of my fathers, hear my prayer,
Let me Thy best of blessings share
To sanctify my loss.
I plead Thy promise, gracious Lord,
That Thou wilt needful aid afford,
And strength to bear my cross.

And when the appointed hour shall come
Through Jordan's streams to call me home,
Wilt Thou be then my Friend?
O yes, I know, I feel Thou wilt.
Thy mercy goes beyond my guilt;
Thy love, it knows no end.

Mary Blake (1852)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
JULY 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

GOD'S PROMISE TO COMFORT THE BEREAVED

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4. 18).

The Apostle Paul is instructing the Thessalonian believers not to be overwhelmed in their grief for the loss of loved ones who died in faith, for in verses 13 to 17 he shows that at the second coming of Christ the bodies of the buried believers will arise to join the souls of those whom Christ brings with Him. The apostle then wrote, “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (verse 17). “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Death is the most certain thing in the lives of men in this world. All other future matters of men are uncertain. All that men plan or propose has this cloud of uncertainty upon it. The second coming of the Lord Jesus is equally certain as death, together with all that pertains to His second coming. Therefore the resurrection of mankind from the dust is most certain, and also our appearing “before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body ... whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5. 10). All the offspring of Adam and Eve will be gathered before the throne of Jesus at His second coming.

Death is such a scourge upon man, and sin must bring forth its fruit in bringing us down into utter weakness and helplessness to draw our last breath or gasp, when our spirit will then return unto God who gave it. Death cannot be reversed by man, although he tries hard with “oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Tim. 6. 20). We do not know how far ungodly men may be allowed to go in prolonging life and trying to reverse the sentence of death (which they will not be able to do), but one thing is so solemnly certain: such will also enter into the second death, which is so unspeakably awful. And neither will any one of us escape the second death except we repent and look to Christ, as we read in the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13. 3), and again, “For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8. 24). May the Holy Ghost make us each truly humble, repenting believers in the blessed Lord Jesus, whom God hath sent, as He said, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (John 6. 29).

With death on the road ahead because of our transgressions, the only real, solid comfort is to be found in the glorious Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16. 16). Death brings a distressing end to all earthly comforts, but through the rich grace of God to sinners, for the elect of God it is a portal into that everlasting comfort and heavenly heritage.

The Lord Jesus in His everlasting love to poor and needy sinners, instructed the Apostle Paul to write those comfortable sentences to both the Thessalonian believers, and the believing church to the end of time, to assure them of their eternal comfort at His second coming. As God’s “merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God” (Heb. 2. 17), He fully understands the fears and temptations that the dear saints experience in their pilgrimage to the heavenly kingdom. He Himself who “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself” (Heb. 12. 3), and also “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4. 15), knows how to deliver the godly in all their many fears and griefs. “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb. 2. 18).

The Lord Jesus truly sympathises with all the grief of those believers who have lost their dear loved ones, by the icy hand of death. He demonstrated this so clearly when with true, sincere and heartfelt grief, He entered into the sorrows of godly Martha and Mary, at the loss of their dear brother Lazarus. We read that when the Lord Jesus met Mary, and “saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He **groaned** in the spirit, and was **troubled**,” and then we also read that wondrous, sacred verse: “**Jesus wept**” (John 11. 33, 35). The reason is shown to us in verse 5: “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” The Lord Jesus loves all His dear, chosen people who love Him, and the sweet and sacred truth of this is, “We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4. 19). In this great love, Jesus so fully enters into the griefs and sorrows of His dear, bereaved people. Death brings such devastation with it, and has such a devastating effect in happy marriages, family circles, churches and among friends. The finality of the loss is truly felt, and a great gap appears in our lives, when the hand of death comes among us poor, frail creatures of a day.

Benjamin Beddome expresses in poetry the wondrous truth of the love and sympathy of the Lord Jesus, with the plight of the dear saints in this world of sin, sorrow and death:

“So fair a face bedewed with tears;
 What beauty e’en in grief appears!
 He wept, He bled, He died for you;
 What more, ye saints, could Jesus do?”

“Enthroned above, with equal glow
His warm affections downward flow;
In our distress He bears a part,
And feels a sympathetic smart.

“Still His compassions are the same;
He knows the frailty of our frame;
Our heaviest burdens He sustains;
Shares in our sorrows and our pains.” (H. 441)

The apostle wrote in this way of comfort to instruct the dear saints in the sorrow of death: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4. 13-17).

Not only was this written for sweet instruction and comfort to the bereaved, but it is also gracious instruction to us each who fear God, and have death's dark vale ahead. The Lord give us much wisdom and power to lay up prayers against the day of our departure from this lower world. The Lord's promise is sure: “Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (John 16. 22). The Lord give us the abundance of grace, that we may exercise ourselves in the precious promises, even as Anne Steele expresses in poetry:

“When sins and fears prevailing rise,
And fainting hope almost expires,
Jesus, to Thee I lift my eyes,
To Thee I breathe my soul's desires.

“Art Thou not mine, my living Lord?
And can my hope, my comfort die,
Fixed on Thy everlasting word,
That word which built the earth and sky?

“If my immortal Saviour lives,
Then my immortal life is sure;
His word a firm foundation gives;
Here let me build and rest secure.

“Here let my faith unshaken dwell;
Immovable the promise stands;

Not all the powers of earth or hell
Can e'er dissolve the sacred bands.

“Here, O my soul, thy trust repose;
If Jesus is for ever mine,
Not death itself, that last of foes,
Shall break a union so divine.” (H. 980)

What a glorious prospect awaits the humble believer who looks to the Lord Jesus alone for mercy and salvation. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2. 9). In Isaiah 64. 4, this verse reads at the close: “What He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.” We read in Revelation 7. 14-17 of the glorious prospect for those dear saints who live in “great tribulation” here below, and by faith “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” We read what they will inherit hereafter, and something of what their glorious state will be: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

HAVING OBTAINED HELP OF GOD

Recollections of sermon preached by Mr. Timothy J. Pocock at Mount Zion Chapel, Leatherhead, on Tuesday, January 1st, 2019, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the pastor, Mr. Peter Woodhams

Text: “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26. 22, 23).

There is great cause for gratitude to the Lord, the great Head of the church, that forty years ago He gave unto this church and congregation Mr. Peter Woodhams as a pastor according to His own heart, and that He has blessed his ministry here and sustained him to this day. What an immense favour to obtain help to continue faithfully for forty years. Through him, the Lord has fed His flock here with knowledge and with understanding. Every time the Lord anoints, calls and sends one of His

appointed servants, it is a declaration of His love to His elect church. O what a mercy that God should send men to preach His Word to sinners! They are His ambassadors, and the word says that “a faithful ambassador is health” (Prov. 13. 17). That is because a faithful ambassador only declares the Word of God, and he has the anointing of the Spirit. He is an ambassador of Christ, the great Physician of souls. He comes in Christ’s name, not his own. He preaches Christ, not himself.

Why does the Lord send these ambassadors? Because He will have every one of His elect reconciled unto Himself. He will have every one brought in that blessed only way to God. Only by Jesus Christ can sinners be reconciled to God. Paul says, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. 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” (2 Cor. 5. 20, 21). Only by the Son of God becoming Man could the way of reconciling sinners to God be made. He who is truly God and truly Man in one glorious Person is able to put His hand upon both as Job said (see Job 9. 33). As Paul wrote, “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2. 5). What a favoured people they are to whom God sends one of His ambassadors to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ into their hearts.

Now these men are in themselves utterly incapable of the work to which the Lord calls them. But He who sends them as His ambassadors helps them in the way that Paul records here. For as he gives his own personal testimony here before Festus and Agrippa, he says, “Having therefore obtained help of God.” The help of God is infinitely greater than the help of man. The help of man is assistance as far as we are able. The help of God is salvation. Sinners need much more than assistance. They are helpless. They cannot do one thing toward the salvation of their souls. When the Lord helps, He does all for them – it is done by Him. The Son of God began the work of redemption at His birth and finished it at the cross. The Holy Ghost accomplishes the work of grace in a sinner from beginning to end. That which the Lord calls His people to believe is beyond their power to believe, and what He calls them to do is beyond their power to do.

Consider Abraham when the Lord appeared to him in that vision in the night and said, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Gen. 22. 2). This was the same Abraham who could not of himself trust God to keep him safe when he sojourned in the land of Egypt. But that night when God appeared to him and in the following three days he obtained

help of God. And that help was faith in God. “My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering” (Gen. 22. 8).

Now Paul surely obtained help of God on the road to Damascus as, unasked by him, the Lord called him by His grace, granting him the new birth. Immediately we find him feelingly in need of the Lord’s help and asking Him for it. “Who art Thou Lord?” – “What wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9. 5, 6). In the Lord answering him, he obtained help, didn’t he? He told him who He was and told him what he must do – that was help, wasn’t it? And then three days later when the Lord sent Ananias to him, what further help he obtained as the Lord revealed Himself to him, causing the scales to fall as it were from his eyes.

Now before we go any further, let us consider this matter of obtaining help. Firstly it speaks of the help being sovereign – not everyone obtains this help. God has eternally chosen in Christ a people who shall receive this help. As I look over this congregation this afternoon, the Lord alone knows those that have obtained this help, and those that have not. There may be those that have not yet obtained this help, who will yet do so at the Lord’s appointed time. For the timing of the receiving of this help is sovereign too; it is wisely timed. Secondly, this “obtaining” speaks of a man or woman or boy or girl being led in such a way as shall result in them obtaining the help of God. My dear friends, this obtaining of help is not a theoretical thing. No, it is a very real thing in that person’s experience. Really to get help when you are helpless is a wonderful thing.

But what is the way that the Lord leads them, so that they obtain help? The Apostle Paul answers that question in the Epistle to the Hebrews, doesn’t he? He speaks of coming to that “great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God” (Heb. 4. 14) – He who shed His precious blood for sinners and entered heaven with that blood to appear in the presence of God for sinners. He sits upon the throne of grace. O my friends, what a mercy that is – He sits upon a throne of grace. He saves sinners out of that rich bounty of grace that is His, without any respect whatever to anything about them or anything that they have done. So Paul exhorts, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4. 16). But what a real thing it is to come to that throne. It is not just saying prayers, my friends. No, it is to venture to God pleading from your heart that the Lord will help you. That may be expressed in words, or groans, or merely the living desire of your heart that the Lord hears and answers. Help is obtained by the Lord answering that plea. Help must be given – it cannot be taken. When He speaks in mercy it is help obtained. When He works in mercy it is help obtained.

My dear friends, I find that as I get older the prayer, “Lord, help me” (Matt. 15. 25) becomes more needful. There is everything in that prayer, isn’t there? Every need we have may be summed up in that prayer. Sometimes our distress is so great and our perplexity so complete that we can cry nothing but, “Lord, help me.” Now think of that woman who prayed this prayer to the Saviour when He was here on earth. What was her trouble? She had a daughter grievously vexed by the devil. O your dear pastor and every one of the Lord’s servants know much of being grievously vexed by the devil. But there is a principle in them that by grace resists the devil by faith – in looking to Him who has conquered the devil. Did not His Father promise that the seed of the woman would bruise Satan’s head? Was not the woman of Canaan taught that Jesus was the promised seed of the woman? Look how she came by the Holy Spirit and said to Him, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David” (Matt. 15. 22). But look how she saw that this Man, the Son of David, was the Son of God, as she prayed, “Lord, help me.”

The thief was taught the same blessed truth: “This Man hath done nothing amiss.... Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom” (Luke 23. 41, 42). These people did obtain help, didn’t they? The woman had to wait a while, but the thief had an immediate answer. Only by the Son of God taking the nature of man without sin could Satan be conquered. Only in truly being made man could He be tempted, but as His sacred humanity was impeccable and in union with His Godhead, it was impossible for Him to sin. He stood the fiery test against all the devil’s temptations, then endured the infinite curse of the broken law at Calvary. Only by truly being made man could He bear the sins of His people and suffer, bleed and die for those sins. That is how He bruised the head of Satan. But O my friends, we must obtain this help in our experience. We need more than theory. Faith gives the victory, but who can give us faith?

Now I know that your dear pastor has obtained help of God to continue for forty years as your pastor. Only when a minister is dependent upon the Lord will there be any profit to the people. He must obtain help in the giving of words to bring before you. He cannot simply pick a text. O what help he needs when the Word of God seems to be a closed book. What help is needed when he is required to go and preach the Christ that he feels to know so little of. What help is needed when he feels so tried about his own calling to preach and even his own standing. What help he needs to get into the pulpit with guilt lying hard on his conscience – bowed down under self-procured trouble. What help he needs when he comes out of the pulpit feeling to have completely failed – how can he go again? What help he needs when according to

sense and reason he is not in a fit condition to preach, but necessity lies upon him (see 1 Cor. 9. 16). He must obtain help, or be left to complete confusion. He cries, he groans, he sighs unto his God. He has the sentence of death in himself that he should not trust in himself (see 2 Cor. 1. 9). But all this experience is actually obtaining help. He has to venture all on One.

It is a great mercy when, as in your pastor's case, a godly, gracious helpmeet is given by the Lord. As grace is given, the Lord does help by this means. But my dear friends, the pastorate and indeed any minister's path is a very lonely one. How can the man's nearest and dearest in the flesh enter into his soul's innermost exercises, fears, distresses and griefs? His wife isn't guilty of his sins, is she? In Zechariah we read of the husbands and the wives mourning apart (see Zech. 12. 12-14). His wife cannot relieve his fears, assure him of his calling or give him a text. She cannot touch it; it is God's work. In this way his sermons are given by God.

Did not Mr. Popham one day have a visitor to his study who was admiring the many good books on his shelves? When Mr. Popham saw his visitor admiring all those volumes, he assured him that those books were not the secret of his ministry. That would not do. Borrowed sermons will not do any good. "Alas, master! for it was borrowed" (2 Kings 6. 5). "No," he said, "I have to get my sermons on my knees poring over the Scriptures." Did he mean that in answer to prayer he was given a complete sermon before he got into the pulpit? No – perhaps he was granted a text with some light and persuasion – maybe an outline of truth, but the sermon only appeared as he preached it. What a humbling experience that is! And so it should be. The Lord's servants are not to have any of the glory. What help they need to be willing to be nothing. The Lord helps them by making them feel to be nothing.

Sometimes things arise that make the pastor feel his pastorate is finished; he must lay down the work. But the fear of the Lord is given so that he cannot do so. Very often it is our desire to be something, that makes us feel we cannot continue. But the Lord will have us be nothing.

I have thought regarding these forty years, of the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 8: "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no" (verse 2). It is a most humbling thing to be dependent upon help obtained from God. O when the minister sees himself to be a greater sinner than the people he is to preach to, what humbling work this is. But it is needful – in this way the Lord helps him to preach to sinners, not good people.

You know that our dear brother, your pastor, is not what men would call a naturally-gifted speaker. But it is not a natural gift in speaking that makes a true minister of the gospel. Your pastor has obtained help to make him a spiritually-gifted speaker. Perhaps when he feels to have had no liberty in speaking you have had liberty in hearing. And when the Lord has loosed his tongue and made it the pen of a ready writer (see Psa. 45. 1), what gospel eloquence has been given – what a blessed thing it has been to sit in the pew and listen. I have known it myself, dear friends, under his ministry. Who has the glory? The Lord will have it. And if we think otherwise, He soon helps us by humbling us, suffering us to hunger for want of His help. And we have to fall again at His feet in complete dependence: “Lord, wilt Thou enable me to speak for Thy glory, not my own?”

But in addition to all these impossibilities from within, the Lord sees fit further to humble His servants by what they suffer from without. I mentioned earlier that the Lord’s servants are constantly under attack from the devil. This is particularly so at times, but when perhaps it is not felt by way of a fierce storm, the devil is often quietly working in a more subtle way. Why is it the Lord’s servants are at the forefront of this battle? It is because Satan knows that it is through the preaching of the gospel that God is glorified as sinners are saved, and the power of sin in the Lord’s people is subdued. It is the preaching of the gospel that glorifies God in the deliverance of sinners from Satan’s kingdom of darkness into Christ’s kingdom of light. It is Satan’s aim to stop the Lord’s servants preaching – either to stop them completely, or to get them preaching something other than the truth.

But how does the Lord’s servant (or indeed any of the Lord’s people) obtain help of God against the devil? It must be as faith is given in Him who has conquered the devil. The help is obtained by the Holy Spirit pointing the devil-vexed soul to Christ. None was so tempted and tried as He. Hear how He “shrinks” from that which came upon Him in Gethsemane, but bows to His Father’s will! “If it be possible let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done” (see Matt. 26. 39 and Luke 22. 42). Did He turn back? No, He set His face as a flint. He endured Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha. Does that mean the poor sinner must of himself set his face as a flint? No, he could not do it – only the God-Man could. It means that the Holy Spirit fixes the eye of faith on Him who did set His face as a flint (see Isa. 50. 7) to go to the end of that infinitely-trying path.

He has overcome the world and the prince of the world, the devil. Such a glimpse of Christ strengthens the sinner to say, “I am nothing, but I may still go in the strength of the Lord.”

What help a minister needs when, through some trial being laid upon him, his old nature rises up in rebellion, and it is still raging as he has to go to preach. He cannot quell it, but the Lord helps him to loathe it and cry for help lest it should all come out in his preaching. O if the Lord sees fit to let some of it come out in his preaching, what help is needed to humble himself in confession and repentance. Then what help he needs to feed the flock over which the Lord has made him overseer. Though he should know something of their condition, he certainly does not know all – you could not tell him all, could you? Having said that, I would encourage you to make your pastor acquainted with your soul's exercises as far as you can. Surely that is part of the particular office of a pastor – he is the under-shepherd who needs to know the ailments of his flock. But have you ever proved personally in your case that the Lord's servant has obtained help as he preached in a way that suggested that he knew all about your case? Sometimes after a particular sermon, a pastor is asked, "How did you know about my case?" The answer is, the Lord knew and helped His servant to preach, not knowing whose case he was speaking to.

Now as we remember the forty years' pastorate here, we have to acknowledge to the glory of God that the ministry has not been without fruit. Over the years believers have been added to the church, deacons have been raised up and have served the Lord in their generation. Believers have testified of blessing under your pastor's ministry. That proves that he has obtained help of God. I am sure that it grieves him that there has not been more fruit (his sigh as I say that confirms what I say), but it would be a denial of what the Lord has done, to say there has been no fruit. Real fruit is Christ's fruit. It is not the result of enticing words of man's wisdom (see 1 Cor. 2. 4). It is the result of the Holy Spirit's power accompanying the word into sinners' hearts. It is this obtaining of help that is the remedy for our souls' barrenness. O may we yet obtain that promised help – the Spirit poured upon us from on high and the wilderness made a fruitful field (see Isa. 32. 15). It is the Lord's converts that are truly saved – not ours. William Gadsby was once taunted by an enemy of his who saw a drunkard laid in the gutter who had attended Gadsby's ministry. "Ah," he said, "look where your convert is now!" The gracious reply was, "You're right, he must have been my convert, for if he was God's he would not be lying there in that state."

Then we might mention the times in a pastor's experience when matters arise and he does not know what to do. Psalm 107 says they come to their wits' end (verse 27) – all their wisdom is swallowed up. For their wisdom is foolishness with God. The wisdom of man cannot

solve man's problems. What a good thing it is so, but not comfortable to the flesh. Why is it a good thing that they do not know what to do? Because the Lord uses this experience to make them cry unto Him. "Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses" (verse 28). His help begins to come as He bids the sinner wait on Him. "Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long. For surely there is an end; and thine expectation shall not be cut off" (Prov. 23. 17, 18). "Do not put your hand to it, but commit it all into My hands." But we do not do that merely by knowing that is what we should do. We have to obtain help to do it. What a lot of grief we cause ourselves by not doing so. When He brings us to wait on Him, we shall see Him direct us as to what we must do, or He will completely take the matter in hand Himself and we shall have to do nothing.

Paul goes on to say that he witnessed "both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come." His witness was in word and deed. He lived what he preached. How far short some of us feel to come in that respect. A witness declares what they have seen with their own eyes. Paul had seen by faith the Lord. He had seen and felt his own miserable, ruined state as a vile sinner before an holy God. So he had seen and felt man's need of salvation. That is what he preached to others. He obtained help faithfully to declare the same, regardless of who the person was he was speaking to. What help we each need to do that. We are such cowards, that we are inclined to modify our speech and behaviour to suit the person we are speaking to. But Paul obtained help – the fear of the Lord in exercise that made him realise the Lord was watching and listening to all he was saying. And whether the person he spoke to was a king or a beggar, he knew they were all the same really – poor sinners needing God's great salvation. So he daily saw and felt the malady – and preached it. He daily saw and felt the remedy – and preached it. He was a witness of Christ the Refuge for sinners – and he bade sinners flee to that refuge.

Paul said "none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." He had continually to obtain help of God to do this. Do you remember how I tried to describe the inmost exercises of a minister in the daily conflict against sin, the devil and the world? Well, it is through that conflict a minister obtains help to preach nothing but the Word of God. For he finds in his own experience that there is nothing else of any worth. Everything else is useless. If a minister found that he had some inherent righteousness, some creature

power to serve God, some ability to perform God's law, he would come forth preaching that, wouldn't he?

Paul declares in his testimony to Agrippa how the help he had obtained from God had completely changed him. In verse 5 he says "that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." But then what a change in verses 6 and 7: "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come." It was this promise that Moses and the prophets said should come. What is the promise? Even the promised seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ who should live that perfect, holy life for His people and die that ignominious death in their place. Paul preached the Lord Jesus Christ who was now come according to the promise of God. He determined not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, "that Christ should suffer." Yes, this was the promise of God. Why must Christ suffer? There is no other possible way of sin being pardoned.

I mentioned Abraham's faith, and we know that when he came to Mount Moriah he bound Isaac on the altar and raised his knife to slay his own son. But the Lord stopped him, saying, "Abraham, Abraham: ... lay not thine hand upon the lad." And he "looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns." And he took the ram and sacrificed him in the place of his son Isaac (see Gen. 22. 11-13). The doctrine of substitution. He saw Christ's day and was glad (see John 8. 56).

This has been the great theme of the Lord's servant's ministry here for forty years. Sinners deserving to die an eternal death, deserving to suffer eternally in hell for their sins, are bidden to look to Him who suffered, the Just for the unjust that He might bring them to God (see 1 Pet. 3. 18). Christ suffered the whole of the wrath of God for all His people's sins. But what we need, my dear friends, is faith in this blessed Person. How do sinners come to saving faith in Christ? "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. 10. 14, 15). God will have His suffering, dying Son preached, that sinners who know they deserve to suffer the wrath of God may have a name to plead, a Person to cry unto for mercy, a Person to trust upon. O how beautiful to a hell-deserving sinner is the Holy Spirit-anointed preacher of Christ!

This truth that Christ suffered shows the awfulness of sin. Nothing but the sufferings and death of the God-Man could deliver sinners from the awful guilt and power of sin. We preach to sinners that Christ

suffered, under the complete realisation of the awfulness of the sin He was bearing. He could not harden His heart against it. Is there a sinner here this afternoon that says there is no hope for them because they do not realise the awfulness of their sin or rightly grieve over it as they ought? We do not preach to that sinner that he or she must go away and discover the awfulness of their sin, and then come to Christ. That is not what your pastor has preached, is it? He does preach the law of God unto you, but not as the remedy for your complete sinfulness. He has preached Christ in the way the hymnwriter put it:

“Law and terrors do but harden,
 All the while they work alone;
 But a sense of blood-bought pardon
 Soon dissolves a heart of stone.” (H. 746)

Listen to the Lord’s own words in John 6: “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (verse 37). Christ in love suffered for His people’s sins, so that a sinner may come to Him with nothing but sin, and receive from Him nothing but love. Then they feel something of the awfulness of their sin.

“And that He should be the first that should rise from the dead.” Christ’s resurrection was central in Paul’s ministry. “If Christ be not risen, ye are yet dead in your sins.” (see 1 Cor. 15. 14, 17). Christ’s resurrection showed that His sacrifice was sufficient. His resurrection ensured His people’s resurrection. He was the first, in that every resurrection of a sinner from the dead is the fruit of His resurrection. There were those raised from the dead through Christ’s resurrection even in Old Testament times – such as the Shunemite’s son. In the will and mind of God, Christ was slain from the foundation of the world. Now as Christ was the first to rise from the dead, the Lord’s servants have that truth to preach to sinners that reaches into their grave. For, “He made His grave with the wicked” (Isa. 53. 9). He says “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise” (Isa. 26. 19). That was help obtained from God which Paul speaks of when he says, “We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead” (2 Cor. 1. 9). The feelingly-dead have been exhorted by your pastor to trust in Him who raiseth the dead.

“And none can raise to life the dead
 But He who raised Himself indeed,
 And for dead sinners died.” (H. 904)

Christ’s resurrection also sets forth the newness of life by faith in Christ Jesus. Your pastor has not preached the gospel as a way of correcting your fallen sinful nature, has he? No, he has preached that “if any man

be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5. 17). Sinner, here is the only hope for you who have tried to correct that perverse will, crooked temper, base lusts and vile evils that you feel within. The hope is set before you in the truth that Christ suffered and was the first to rise from the dead. “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isa. 45. 22). O to know the power of His resurrection making us new creatures!

“And that He ... should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.” He is come a light into the world that whosoever believeth in Him should not abide in darkness (see John 12. 46). “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1. 4). But the apostle speaks of Him showing light unto the Jews and then the Gentiles. No one sees the Light of men, but as He reveals Himself. In Jesus’ name, the Father gives the Holy Spirit to reveal Him. The Sun of Righteousness arises upon those walking in darkness. Your pastor has preached the necessity of a revelation of Jesus Christ to your soul. He has not told you that this revelation will appear as a vision in the sky that you will see with your eyes. No, it is in the Word of God that the Spirit reveals Christ. Your pastor has preached that the revelation is when faith is given to see Christ in the Scriptures. How this was fulfilled in those favoured to see and know Christ after His resurrection. “He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24. 27). Dear Thomas said, “Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20. 25). What a miserable week he must have spent, but at the end of it the Lord came and showed light unto him, and in that light he could say, “My Lord and my God.”

I think of a man who was called by grace when serving in the army in a foreign land. He came into such dark soul trouble and distress, he felt that he must go and see the chaplain. In simplicity he poured out his troubles and was told that he must believe in Jesus Christ. When he replied that he could not believe, the ignorant chaplain said, “There is no hope for you, then.” Ah, my dear friends, the Lord was watching over that man, and showed him there was hope for him in Christ who suffered and was the first to rise from the dead. Many of you have heard me say before that if you come not to Christ as an unbeliever, you will never come as a believer. He is the Saviour of unbelievers.

“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God” (Isa. 50. 10). This name of the Lord – “the first that should rise from the dead.” “I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead,

yet shall he live” (John 11. 25). As the Lord’s servants obtain help of the Holy Spirit so that in a little measure and with many infirmities they preach Him in His infinite sufficiency, the one in their congregation who is walking in that darkness obtains help of the Holy Spirit to trust in that blessed name. But He must be revealed to us. Ask Him to show you Himself, poor sinner. As I said earlier, there is no other remedy for our souls’ barrenness. Paul himself wrote: “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 12. 3). What infinite sufficiency of pardon and life, when it is the incarnate Son of God who died and rose again! An infinite atonement – pardon for the vilest sinner out of hell who lives to feel his need.

And who gives that life to feel his need? Does someone say, “I don’t feel my need like I ought to”? That is because you are a sinner. Christ died for such. He suffered for all their sins, not some of them. He suffered for the sin of impenitence, as well as all the other sins. He saves from impenitence, from unbelief, from hardness, from enmity, from all manner of sin and of blasphemy. Does someone say there is no hope because they have sinned for too long or their sins are of too vile a nature? My dear friend, “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again” (Rom. 8. 34). Nothing but His death and resurrection can save you, and nothing more is needed to save you.

May the Lord’s servant yet be spared to you for a while if the Lord will; may he continue to obtain help of God to preach Christ and Him crucified, and may his hearers obtain help in hearing, to the glory of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

On behalf of the church and congregation, a framed photograph of Mount Zion Chapel, with a loving inscription of appreciation and thanks to the Lord for their pastor, was presented to Mr. Woodhams. In response, he said: “Dear friends, I do sincerely thank you for your loving kindness to me. We have heard much about a pastor’s pathway this afternoon and I can acquiesce in it all. What can I say? As has been said, I am not a naturally-gifted speaker. No one really knows me, but the great Searcher of hearts, He has seen my secret faults. I desire above all else to acknowledge the faithfulness of God to me over these forty years, and give thanks for His innumerable mercies. But I also thank you as a church and congregation for your great kindness to me in so many ways. You have covered over my faults and failings which are many. My dear wife has been a true, God-given help-meet for me. We have been married now for sixty-nine years. I do not know how much longer we shall continue, but that is in the Lord’s hands, not ours.

“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake” (Psa. 115. 1).

RECORDING THE LORD'S DELIVERANCE

150 Freshfield Road,
Brighton
August 8th, 1935

Dear Mr. Sawyer,

I feel compelled to write and tell you that on the occasion of your recent visit to the Aged Pilgrims' Homes, it pleased the Lord to use you to deliver me from a state of darkness in which I have been for about ten years.

You no doubt remember the subject you were led to speak from, namely the account of Naaman being healed of his leprosy by washing in the River Jordan (2 Kings 5), and how you stated that as the text, verse 13, had been on your mind for several days, you felt you must speak from it. As you opened up the narrative in a spiritual way and showed how the seeking sinner would strive to do everything he possibly could to get the coveted blessing he was seeking for, but how he must be completely emptied of all help in self, and be made willing to be saved in God's own way and means, without money and without price, and how that when thus dealt with and brought down, his interest in the atonement was revealed to him and he could then rejoice in Christ as his Saviour.

It was not any word in particular that was applied to me, but as you continued speaking in this way, it pleased the dear Lord Jesus to break into my soul and my hard heart was softened. I felt I well knew the path you had been tracing out, and O the love that did spring up in my soul! How I wished you could have gone on for another hour!

When the service was over, I quickly left the building, and O what a different aspect everything seemed to bear! What love filled me towards the dear Lord Jesus! What different language I was enabled to address Him with, such terms as previously I would dare not have taken on my lips, but now my guilt and load were all removed and I could believingly say, "My God and my Saviour!" What bitter hatred I felt to sin! As I hurried through the streets, I feared to look at any person lest I might lose the blessing I had received. On reaching home and reflecting on my changed condition and the cause of it, I thought, "Why, this is nothing less than the love of God shed abroad in my heart!" What condescension for the Lord Jesus to stoop so low as to come and save me. How I could adopt the language of your text at Galeed last Sunday evening: "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Thy countenance" (Psa. 89. 15).

I am thankful to be able to say that my comfort still remains with me and has done since first hearing you, with one painful exception when the

Lord withdrew, but it was for my instruction, and He did graciously return after many days.

Such favours as these, when received through the preaching of the gospel, do raise the Lord's servants in the estimation of His people and cause love to flow out to them, and I do hope and pray that you may be favoured with much of the Lord's presence while ministering to others.

Yours very sincerely,

David Lewis

A FEELING RELIGION

By Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

There is more true religion, more vital godliness in a sigh, cry and groan, in a simple petition put up out of a labouring bosom at the footstool of mercy, than in the presumptuous language of all the hypocrites in the world put together. There is more of the Holy Ghost's work in the conscience of a sinner that goes burdened, exercised, tried and distressed to the throne of grace, and there looks up to a bleeding Jesus and longs after an application of His atoning blood to his conscience, than in all the presumptuous claims that thousands have made with presumptuous lips. In the Word of truth, we have before our eyes the experience of a saint of God, drawn by the hand of the Spirit; here we have the breathings of a tender conscience, the sighings of a broken spirit, the utterance of a feeling heart.

Now, can you find yours there? Look and see whether you can find anything of the experience of the 119th Psalm in your soul. Look at verse 132: "Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name." Never mind what people say about you, nor what they say against you; no, nor even what your own heart may say in your own bosom. But can you in honesty, simplicity and godly sincerity find David's feelings in your bosom? David's prayer in your heart? David's breathings in your breast? If so, God has made you a believer. If so, you are under divine teaching. If so, David's God is your God; and as sure as David is in glory, so surely will you be in glory too.

But as to a religion that knows nothing of these things, neither sighs, nor cries, nor breathings, nor groans, nor longings, nor languishings, nor meltings, nor softenings, that feels no contrition, no tenderness, no godly sorrow, no desire to please God, no fear to offend Him – away with it! Throw it into the river! Bury it in the first dunghill you come to! The sooner it is got rid of the better. Religion without heavenly teaching, and the Spirit's secret operations, without a conscience made tender in the

fear of the Lord, without the spirit of prayer in the bosom, without breathings after the Lord, without desires to experience His love, and enjoy a sense of His mercy and goodness – all such religion is a deception and a delusion. It begins in the flesh, and it will end in the flesh. It is all that man can produce; and as the Lord says, “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15. 50), so fleshly religion cannot. “The flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you,” said the Lord, “they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6. 63).

But if there be within these walls any who know something of these fruits in your souls, something of this experience traced out by the Spirit of God in your hearts, you are safe, though perhaps you cannot see it yourselves; you are secure, though your hearts may sometimes quake and fear. For the Lord, who has begun the work, will carry it on, and bring it to full perfection, satisfy you with a sweet discovery of His grace and love, here and eternally.

FREE GRACE, FREE WILL AND THE FREE OFFER

By John Hervey Gosden (1882-1964)

(Continued from page 152)

As enabled, we seek to preach the gospel to all who will listen to us, trusting it may be the gracious will of God to give the hearing ear and the understanding heart and the obedient will, to make the Word effectual in our hearers unto their conviction and repentance unto salvation, “that the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified” (2 Thess. 3. 1). When it is realised that the eternal decrees of Jehovah are connected with the gospel ministry, that it hath pleased God by it to save them that believe, the work is charged with a grave responsibility. In our preaching we aim at declaring the whole “counsel of God.”

- i. The perfections of the divine nature.
- ii. The relation between a good, holy, just, eternal and righteous Creator and His creatures, embracing their accountability to Him as Law-Giver and Judge.
- iii. The terrible fact of the fall of man from his primitive innocence, and his loss of the divine image, and the total depravity of human nature in consequence of sin.
- iv. The inflexibility of divine justice, which in the law does not permit mercy to a transgressor; that God is just and holy in His inexorable claims by the law, notwithstanding man in his guilt and ruin is incapable of willing, acting or moving Godward; that man is thus become liable by his own sin to be cast into hell according to the sanctions of that relentless but perfectly just taskmaster, which however, through rich grace,

ultimately becomes to the elect a schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ (Gal. 3. 24).

The above points represent, in our humble judgment, a most awesome part of the minister's commission to "preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16. 15). But to "offer" Christ, grace, and the gospel to all indiscriminately, reminds us of Samuel Rutherford's word: "Many would have Christ good-cheap, without one sick night for sin." Not that for a moment we believe that Christ and salvation are merited by the enduring of suffering occasioned by a sharp law-work; nor would we dare lay down a standard by which to measure the degree in which this must be known; but "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3. 20), without which how can Christ be even so much as desired, or salvation wanted? What congruity would there be, for example, in offering Christ to the pharisaic Jews who were offended because "this Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them?" (Luke 15. 2) or to the synagogue Pharisee who wanted nothing of God, but, using the divine name, "prayed thus with himself" (Luke 18. 11), and proceeded to inform his Maker of his own good deeds?

But having set before a mixed congregation these most solemn truths, we next seek to preach (not offer) the provision a gracious God has made for the salvation of the lost, namely, the setting up of His dear Son, the only-begotten of the Father, to be Mediator; the infinitely-glorious character and precise suitability of the incarnate God-Man, His suretyship, His obedience to the law in every jot and tittle, His unreserved submission to the penalty due to all the sins of all the elect, as their substitute (see 2 Cor. 5. 21), His enduring the unmitigated vengeance of divine justice which man had outraged, His voluntary, vicarious death as a sacrifice to God for the sins of His own people, His resurrection, ascension, and intercession on high; His kingly authority to dispense from His throne of grace to His own redeemed people the Holy Spirit of promise, by whom are conveyed the rich gifts of repentance and forgiveness of sins; the abiding indwelling of the divine Comforter to teach and lead into all truth, and as the Spirit of God's Son to cry in their hearts, "Abba, Father," enabling them to believe that they are elected and predestinated unto the adoption of children unto God and are joint-heirs with Christ (John 15. 13; Eph. 1. 17; Rom. 8. 15-17; Gal. 4. 4-7); Christ's sweet invitations to the weary and heavy laden to come to Him for rest, with the assurance that He is able to save all them to the uttermost that do come unto God by Him, for He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Blessedly wide is the scope of the gospel, a full, deep, rich, crystal-clear river ever flowing to make glad the city of our God! With what gladness, burning zeal, fervent desire, intense longings and anxious concern does a minister of Christ endeavour so to set forth Christ in His Person and work, His quenchless love in dying, the Just for the unjust, that the blackest and vilest convicted sinner may receive and embrace

Him by faith! Thus to endeavour to preach is not to offer the gospel indiscriminately to all, surely! Paul tells us that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10. 17), and shows that this hearing is through the preached Word. He does not say by the offered gospel.

But although our godly friends will probably cleave to their age-long term, *offer*, we humbly venture to believe that in spirit the teaching above feebly hinted at is what they also follow after. We can believe that their difference with us is more a matter of *terms* than difference of doctrine. But inasmuch as in other spheres the idea of “offering Christ” has led to much abuse, and we fear, to the deception of souls and the dishonour of religion, and because *we do not find the term used in the New Testament in relation to gospel preaching*, we therefore eschew it.

Does our rejection involve what we are charged with – the unscriptural restriction of salvation? Are we thereby guilty of a gross violation of Christ’s commission, to “preach the gospel to every creature,” as is imputed to us? We trow [believe] not. Some *maliciously* declare that we do thus imprison the gospel.

In our humble view the Scripture term to preach signifies something totally different from to offer. The latter term is, in our view, capable of implications which involve very serious fundamental errors (though not intended by all who use the word); whereas to preach, to herald, proclaim publicly, publish, declare, announce, promulgate, set forth, these synonymous terms carry no such implications.

There are those who consider that an indiscriminate offer of the gospel is imperative to render rejecters inexcusable. They say that men cannot be logically held responsible for not receiving the gospel unless it is offered to them indiscriminately. But may not a solemn *testimony* be rejected as well as an offered gospel? (John 3. 32; Luke 7. 30; Acts 13. 41). Here come in the profoundly-solemn doctrines of election and reprobation, which needs much gracious wisdom to contemplate. This is, of course, not the place to attempt even a superficial examination of so grave a subject. But our critics reckon us to be so disproportionate through “the swing of the pendulum away from Arminianism,” that we are actually Hyper-Calvinists, and in danger of deadly fatalism. This is no new charge. God forbid it should be true! We freely concede that an unbalanced emphasis may bend one dangerously to either Arminianism or fatalism, yet we believe a true perspective of the truths stated above will steer us between these dangerous gulfs, between which (as Joseph Hart says of two other extremes, dead sloth and pharisaic zeal), there is scarce a hair’s breadth.

The charge of Hyper-Calvinism reminds us of an incident in the early days of the late James Dickens, sometime pastor at Rotherfield. God was teaching him with a strong hand, and his Arminian friends with whom he had been brought up could make nothing of him. His mother

one day said, "James, I would rather follow you to the grave than that you should turn high-Calvinist." James knew nothing of theological terms, but he did know, and that very painfully and solemnly, that he was a lost, guilty, helpless sinner, powerless to contribute one iota towards his own salvation. His utter impotence to believe was also a dread reality to him, so that the "class leader's" exhortation, to believe and accept the free offer of salvation, rather exaggerated his trouble than helped him. God had killed him, and He alone could make him alive (Deut. 32. 39; Rom. 7).

When, on his enquiry, the high and the low Calvinist were explained to him, in his simplicity he said, "Then I hope I shall be one of those who must and shall be saved." And he was. Nor was James Dickens a "fatalist." Under what difficulties and with what anxiety he followed after the truth hither and thither until he was led in God's good providence to Redhill, where he received Christ into his heart under the ministry of the late Joseph Hatton, from whose lips he heard the blessed and discriminating gospel. He received the Lord Jesus Christ as a lost sinner, and ran into His name as into a sacred refuge. No moral suasion, but the demonstration of the Spirit and of power accomplishes that! An indelible impression was made on Mr. Dickens' heart of the glory and mercy and love of God in Christ. He and his Saviour were indissolubly united. His life, ministry and blessed deathbed proved that. Be that religion ours!

Our favourite Puritan, beloved John Owen, is quoted against us. We give place to none in our high esteem for that blessed man of God, but (with very much diffidence we say it) there are some expressions in the writings of the blessed Puritans and good Scottish writers of that period (as Owen, Goodwin, Bunyan, the Erskines, Boston, Rutherford and other spiritual giants), which seem to be capable, when taken alone, of an interpretation implying creature power, but which the general tenor of their writings will not admit. Moreover, a sacred unction, as a vitalising tide, distinguishes their teaching from the wretched, half-dead semi-Arminian do-and-live gospel which a degenerate age has produced.

It was from the latter that our spiritual forbears sought to dissociate themselves. Though not claiming to be skilled theologians, they were extremely tender of the honour of Jehovah.* They knew from experience as well as from the Word of God that it is not the will of man which decides the question of eternal salvation, not that God would save men if they first did their part, but that "salvation is of the Lord." In rebutting the God-dishonouring and soul-destroying theory, they may appear to

* The reference here is to the framers of the Gospel Standard Articles of Faith, particularly the so-called "added articles." See *What Gospel Standard Baptists Believe*, published by the Gospel Standard Societies and obtainable from Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and also Appendices B and C of *Today's Gospel and Apostolic Exhortations* by A.G. Randalls, published by The Huntingonian Press, 1997.

some to over-emphasise human helplessness. But can the impotence of spiritual death be exaggerated? We fully admit the delicacy of the point raised, and abhor the cold, dreary, soul-enervating heresy of fatalism as intensely as we do that of free will. We definitely hold that it is the duty of everyone to credit whatever God says: that, notwithstanding man's sinful inability and unwillingness, to disbelieve is still to disobey. Scripture declares that those who "have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom. 2. 12). Paul asks: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2. 3). Christ said: "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8. 24), plainly intimating that there is no deliverance from sin's woeful and eternal consequences, but through faith in Christ and Him crucified.

We may therefore warrantably conclude that such as have gospel privileges have a heavier accountability to God than those who have them not. So the Lord Himself explicitly taught when He told those of Capernaum that it would be more tolerable in the judgment day for Sodom than for themselves who had had the privilege of His personal presence and ministry among them. But the faith which alone delivers from a state of death in sins is the sovereign gift of God, as is also evangelical repentance. Of the elect, Paul declares, "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11. 32); that is, by giving them faith. The tremendous solemnity of this doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God in showing mercy to whom He will and hardening whom He will, drew from the apostle the exclamation: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (verse 33). Therefore we should stand in awe and tread, with extreme tenderness and caution, such delicate ground.

(To be continued)

THE SPIRIT'S CONVINCING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

By Richard Sibbes (1577-1635)

This righteousness is not our own inherent, but the righteousness of Christ a Mediator, God and Man.

The Holy Ghost convinces of righteousness in this order of a fourfold gradation.

First, That there must be a righteousness, and a full righteousness.

The second is this, that there is no such righteousness in the creature.

Thirdly, That this is to be had in Christ the Mediator.

Fourthly, That this righteousness is our righteousness.

1. *There must be a righteousness*; for we have to deal with a God who is righteousness itself; and no unclean thing shall come into heaven (see Rev. 21. 7, 8). Unless we have a righteousness, how shall we look God in the face, or how can we escape hell?

2. *That it is not in any creature, men or angels.* We have not a righteousness of our own; for there are divers [several] things to be satisfied, God Himself, and the law, and our own consciences, and the world. Perhaps we may have a righteousness to satisfy the world, because we live civilly [morally]. O but that will not satisfy conscience. And then there must be a satisfaction to the law, which is a large thing that condemns our thoughts and desires, but God is the most perfect of all. We may think we have righteousness of a good carriage among men; this will not satisfy God and the law; it will not satisfy conscience. Men are our fellow-prisoners. An awakened conscience will not be contented but with that which will content God, when conscience sees there is such a righteousness found out by the wisdom of God, that will satisfy Him, else conscience will be always in doubts and fears.

3. *This righteousness is to be had in Christ.* What is the righteousness of Christ? The righteousness of Christ is that righteousness which is founded upon His obedience: active, fulfilling the law; and passive, discharging all our debts, satisfying God's justice. The meritoriousness of both of them is founded upon the purity of His nature. All His sufferings and doings had their excellency from the personal union of God and Man; in reference to which union we may without blasphemy aver that God performed the law, God died for us.

4. *This righteousness is our righteousness.* The Spirit convinces that this belongs to all believers, for it is better than Adam had. His righteousness was the righteousness of a man; this righteousness is the righteousness of a Mediator, the righteousness of God revealed from heaven, and it is such a righteousness, that when we are clothed with it, we may go through the justice of God. We may have access with boldness to the throne of grace, and say, "Lord, I come in the righteousness of Christ, that hath appeased Thy wrath and satisfied Thy justice." This the Holy Ghost convinces of.

Patience to the soul is as bread to the body.... we eat bread with all our meats, both for health and relish; bread with flesh, bread with fish, bread with broths and fruits. Such is patience to every virtue; we must hope with patience, and pray in patience, and love with patience, and whatsoever good thing we do, let it be done in patience.

Thomas Adams

SANCTIFIED AFFLICTION

Walsall
October 7th, 1870

My dear Friend,

I have not willingly been so long silent, but many things have contributed to it, some of them perplexing and trying.

I find the path continues what it ever has been, one of "much tribulation," yet faith neither wonders at it, nor would have it altered, especially when the Lord graciously revives and strengthens it. I am sure trials are needed to make the promise sweet, and the Saviour precious. O what a Friend He is to the poor and needy! How sweetly He gave me to feel it this morning, adored be His holy name! I have been brought low; I seemed so lean and barren lately, save when in the pulpit, that my state saddened me, and I feared where I was going – such darkness, with such a lack of communion; so little meditation; much worldly thought and care, and time much taken up with the affairs of this life, and Satan taking advantage of every circumstance to distract, divert, and deaden, to hinder prayer, and strengthen my bonds. O wretched state, and wretched man! But this morning I could thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; yea, I could, and did say before my Lord, "Sing, O heavens; ... for the LORD hath comforted His people, and will have mercy upon His afflicted" (Isa. 49. 13). O my friend, how needful are afflictions! and when sanctified, what a blessing they prove! how sweet they make the Word of God; or rather, how they strengthen and sharpen the appetite. How much better we can digest after the bitters! as in the type – it is written of the paschal Lamb, "And with bitter herbs they shall eat it" (Exod. 12. 8) – so with the Antitype. Our infinitely-wise God has connected together "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. 1. 11). "If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (1 Pet. 1. 6). "If need be" – ah, there is a "need be"! I would humbly thank the Lord for heaviness, sweet heaviness, blessed temptation as needful to endear and make precious the Lord Jesus. The Lord forbid complaint, nor suffer me to murmur; save me from distrust; deliver me from the prevalence of infidelity and unbelief, and stay my mind upon Him; help me to cast all my care upon Him, being persuaded He careth for me.

O what mercy and grace to the worst of sinners, to base things of the world! "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11. 33).

Adieu for the present. Love to all friends; mercy and peace be with you, and with your unworthy friend and brother in the Lord.

Charles Mountfort

**LETTER TO ONE SINKING IN DESPAIR
WHO WAS RESTORED AFTER MANY YEARS**

Leicester
February 5th, 1898

Dear Miss H.,

I am going to preach a sermon to you, and my text is Ezekiel 16. 60. I am not going to divide my text into heads, but just go through it in a sort of word-by-word manner. To begin with the first word: "*Nevertheless.*" O what a quantity is contained in one word of God! O the amount, the depths, the heights of sin in the one word "*Nevertheless!*" It contains all the career before mercy reached the wretched creature, and after mercy had done so much. When dead in sin, when quickened to feel sin and cry for mercy, when betrothed to Christ, pardoned, washed, justified, anointed, blessed, when wandering afar off into a distant land, like the prodigal, when desiring to eat of the husks the swine did eat, when unable to get them. "Show Jerusalem her abominations." "*Nevertheless!*" Now does the Lord say, "Show her that all I have done was a delusion"? Very different! The devil did, I dare say, because he would desire to make her despair of cure, and perish.

Now don't you see your mistake? You say, no one but God could have shown you that your past was a delusion. But don't you see your want of logic? Suppose now it was all a delusion: then if God has shown it to you, what a mercy! There is surely mercy in the discovery; it reads, "Seek ye Him who has made you see your misery." But on the other hand, if it is not God who has shown it, who has? I should utterly distrust any other revealer but God. Either way then there is a mistake. But I believe God has shown you nothing of the kind. He no doubt has shown Jerusalem her abominations; but this is preparatory to establishing in a firmer knowledge of it His everlasting covenant, made known to you in the days of your youth.

When I was in sore trouble, on the borders of despair, yea, almost desperate in feeling, a *gospel* sinner as I thought, a backslider, a sinner beyond the bounds of mercy and divine forgiveness, I wanted to think the past was nothing, that I had not been visited and blessed of God; that I might be on the footing of an ordinary sinner under the law; but the Lord would not let me. No, He would save me as a backslider, a wretched wanderer from and forgetter of the Lord, who had visited me. Jerusalem must see her abominations, that she may drink in the *grace* of the everlasting covenant. Grace is an easy word to speak, but has a depth beyond the sounding of poor things like we are.

Yours still to pray,

Grey Hazlerigg

OBITUARY

Frances Curd, a member of the church at Station Road, Redhill, for sixty-five years, passed peacefully away on Monday, October 29th, 2018, aged 87 years.

The following narrative has been taken from the funeral address given by Mr. Stephen A. Hyde on Friday, November 16th, 2018, at Hope Chapel, Shaw's Corner, Redhill.

Frances was born in 1931, the eldest of three children. Naturally she had quite a sad life, her father dying when she was only five, and throughout her life not enjoying good health. Her mother struggled for four-and-a-half years after the death of her husband, and then married again a Mr. Wilkins, who I understand was partially blind. He had two children. The new marriage produced a further child, so there was a family of six children. There is little information of her childhood and indeed most of her working life. We know that in later life she worked in a pet shop called Cramphorns in Station Road, Redhill, and was also caretaker at Station Road Baptist Chapel for a number of years. She was a very faithful and hard-working member at the chapel, and often latterly she was the one who actually opened the chapel up in the week and also on the Lord's day. So she did all that she could very unobtrusively.

From her own writings, and we are thankful to have had her own writings, I have managed to put together that which she wrote.

She says she was brought up in a godly home, but it was not until she was nearly sixteen that she believes the Lord started a work of grace in her soul. Some of you may wonder what *grace* is. Well, grace is the unmerited favour of God towards us.

It was when Mr. Collier was taking the thanksgiving service at Station Road, Redhill. His text was 2 Samuel 23. 5: "Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He make it not to grow." She realised what a great sinner she was, and had to cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." She tells us that at that time her Bible was very precious to her, and she read it night and day. It is a good thing when the Bible becomes precious to us so that we read it night and day.

A little while after this, in the middle of the night, these words dropped in with power: "And you hath He quickened" – that means made alive, spiritually alive. "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2. 1). Well, we have all been dead, and it is a great blessing if we are not dead now spiritually. Her response to this was, "Lord, I am not worthy of such a blessing."

Another time she had to go into hospital for a small operation, and when she was coming round from the anaesthetic, she said she had a view by faith of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and felt that His way was much rougher than hers and that through His death all her sins were forgiven.

It was early in 1953 that she first became exercised about being baptized. It seems that every time she heard a sermon preached, baptism was mentioned, and also in the things that she read. On March 15th, 1953 she heard a sermon on Acts 25. 22: "Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him." It was obviously a word to her from God, and it is good if you and I have heard a word from God speaking to us. Every true believer does hear God speak.

She felt she must go forward to be baptized, and came before the church on March 30th with the words from 1 Peter 2. 7: "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." She was baptized by Mr. Reuben Mercer on April 13th, 1953, with three others. It was a period of great blessing for her. She said it was joy unspeakable for several days. She was received into the church on the first Sunday in May and Mr. Mercer gave her the words: "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48. 10), which she found in later life to be true.

On July 8th, 1953, the words, "Weep not, go in peace," came with power and were a blessing to her. In August she heard Mr. John W. Tyler preach at Burgess Hill from Isaiah 66. 2: "For all those things hath Mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word." As she listened in the afternoon and as John Tyler was preaching, she longed to be gone, and leave this world, and to be "with Christ; which is far better."

The last entry in her diary on 8th September, 1953, says that Gadsby's hymn 386 expresses where she was at that time.

"Weary of earth, myself, and sin,
Dear Jesus, set me free,
And to Thy glory take me in,
For there I long to be.

"Burdened, dejected, and oppressed,
Ah! whither shall I flee
But to Thy arms, for peace and rest?
For there I long to be.

"Empty, polluted, dark, and vain,
Is all this world to me;

May I the better world obtain;
For there I long to be.

“Lord, let a tempest-tossed soul
That peaceful harbour see,
Where waves and billows never roll;
For there I long to be.

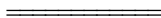
“Let a poor labourer here below,
When from his toil set free,
To rest and peace eternal go;
For there I long to be.”

Frances said that since that time of blessing she had been upheld. There had been many ups and downs and dark places, and sometimes so barren and hard, but the Lord had been good to one so unworthy of His mercy.

It is true to say Frances travelled much by night. There is little or no information of her spiritual life left on record after this. She was a woman of few words.

Thankfully, just a few days before she passed away, my wife and I visited her in the Bethesda Home, Harpenden, and she was alert and waiting in good hope.

We believe Frances is now in glory. She had a difficult life, a hard life, but now it is passed, and she is now, we believe, in that place where there is no more pain, no more sorrow and no more suffering, and that eternally. What a blessing it is if that portion be ours! May we be concerned and pray that it may be ours, and when the time shall come for us to die, as it will with each one of us, may it be to go and be “with Christ; which is far better.”



BOOK REVIEW

John Kershaw and Blessing Over the Moors, by B.A. Ramsbottom; clothbound with a beautifully-designed dust jacket; 200 pages; price £12.95 plus £3.50 postage; published by The James Bourne Society, and obtainable from Gable Hook Farm, Bethersden, Kent, TN26 3BQ.

When we first looked into this book, a number of things immediately made an impression: firstly, “What hath God wrought!” (Num. 23. 23); secondly, this is a profitable book in which the spiritually-exercised reader will find an echo from within his own heart; thirdly, that the author, Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom, found great delight in writing it and preparing it for publication. Mr. Ramsbottom is a direct descendant of some of the characters mentioned in this book. It is an excellent book, and lovers of Zion will find a sacred pleasure in reading it.

This is a most interesting book written in Mr. Ramsbottom's easily readable style. It is interesting for four reasons: historically, for the record of the wonderful works of God in the valleys and moors of Lancashire over 150 years ago; culturally, because we are given a little insight into the way of life of the godly characters recorded, both privately and in their social worship together; spiritually, because of the power and gracious savour of the gospel ministry of those times; and lastly and most importantly, the manifest effect of the gospel by the work of grace and its fruit in the hearts and lives of the hearers.

These believers had one object in their lives, that Christ might be glorified in all things; for they did not glorify themselves, but glorified their Saviour. We are reminded of the Lord's word through Jeremiah: "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer. 9. 23, 24). Many of these believers were from poor backgrounds, as they lived in hard times; but whether labourers, mill owners, housewives, young or old, rich or poor, they lived as the apostle exhorts: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1. 31).

The setting of the gracious accounts in this book, is to the east of the main highway (A56) running north from Manchester and Bury, to Haslingden, Rawtenstall and the Rossendale valley. This trunk road is joined at Edenfield by the main road that runs in a north-westerly direction out of Rochdale, and over the moors and close by the preaching posts of Limey Leach and Cheesden Pasture Mill, where John Kershaw preached for so many years.

After the introduction, Mr. Ramsbottom explains how he came to write this book. He had a childhood fascination with the poetical name of "Limey Leach," and all that he heard and saw as a child. Later in life he was provided with more interesting information, which triggered him to put pen to paper in the form of a pamphlet in 1974 for the Strict Baptist Historical Society. The substance of the book was given as the second annual lecture of the James Bourne Society in 2013, and the Society desired that the material should be published in a book.

The next sixteen pages are about John Kershaw, who was pastor at Hope Chapel, Rochdale for fifty-two years. John Kershaw was a most godly man, who had a kindly and gentle personality and who seemed to have a good perception of people's characters, especially discerning a tender work of grace. He must have been a robust man with a strong constitution, to walk so many miles and then to preach. He manifested much wisdom, prudence and sound judgment in all his affairs. This biographical section is concise, but also informative. The spiritual reader will be left with some warm feeling and a degree of heartfelt union to him, although he died just under 150 years ago.

We then come to the main body of the book which consists of two sections of approximately seventy-five pages each. The first section is as the title of the book, "John Kershaw and Blessing Over the Moors." We are given an insight into the lives of some of the godly believers who lived on these moors, and the worship at the preaching places. We are also favoured to read of the work of the blessed Spirit of Truth in their immortal souls. A variety of sinners from different

backgrounds were led to one place: to the feet of “Immanuel,” who is “God with us.”

A godly mill owner, George Ramsbottom, was a skilful writer, and his writings pleased John Kershaw. He even wrote in defence of believers’ baptism, although he hung back from the gospel ordinance himself. Upon a visit to “Old George,” as he was known, John Kershaw remarked how he liked his writings, and therefore would he write upon a text that he would choose for him. George Ramsbottom readily agreed. The pastor marked a place in his Bible, for George to write upon. After the pastor left, “Old George” looked for the text that his pastor had marked, the text being, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized!” (Acts 22. 16). The word came with power: “Physician, heal thyself.” It was not too long before George Ramsbottom was found knocking at the pastor’s door, desiring to be baptized.

John Kershaw’s wisdom and tender skill is also seen in the case of godly Sarah o’ Kay Barn. She was awakened by a solemn voice as she was lighting the fire one morning: “Thou art a sinner,” which was repeated with power. She walked under solemn condemnation, until she was delivered by hearing a sermon preached by a Church of England minister, Alfred Hewlett, from the text, “Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” (Heb. 7. 25). When the time came to give her testimony before the church at Rochdale, she was full of fear and trembling. The pastor found a hymn and told her just to quote it as her experience, and he would vouch for it, as her experience. When the time came to speak, the Lord opened her mouth, and she was able to testify of His great salvation. Another similar case was when an old man came before the church, and through fear his mouth was shut. As he was leaving without saying anything, John Kershaw remarked, while he was still within earshot, that it was a pity he did not love the Lord, which made him turn round and say, “I do that, and aboon [above] a bit.” This broke the snare, and he was able to testify of the love of Christ to sinners.

The second part of the main body of this book consists of 101 records from the Rochdale church book, giving some testimonies of the Lord’s dealings with its members. These gracious accounts were published in the *Gospel Standard* in 1996-7. They make good reading. We just mention one member named Betty Clegg. She was a next-door neighbour of John Kershaw when he lived at Lower Fold. She was a great persecutor of John Kershaw, and this continued some time after the pastor moved into Chapel House. Some years later the Lord called her by His grace, and then she loved her pastor, his preaching and the brethren. She eventually became a loyal church member at Rochdale.

At the end there is a spiritual and profitable chapter about Thomas Clough, a godly minister in the north of England.

This is an excellent book in every way, and we can give it a hearty recommendation to all our readers. In some books there is “little in much,” but in this book there is “much in a little.” In two hundred pages there is much spiritual wealth of sound Holy Ghost religion, in which Christ is glorified. “These all died in faith” (Heb. 11. 13)

We hope that this book will have a good sale.

BEHOLD, THE ACCEPTED TIME

God the Father saith to God the Son, "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured Thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6. 2).

Behold, now is the accepted time;
The Lord has sent His Son,
Who was from all eternity
His first elected One.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
God's Son has been on earth;
And by the Holy Spirit's power
Was born of humble birth.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
The Son of God and Man
Both in one Person hath appeared;
A great, mysterious plan.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
This Child has grown a Man,
And spent His life in sorrows here
To work salvation's plan.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
This Man has borne the weight
Of all the sins of God's elect;
The burden, O how great!

Behold, now is the accepted time;
This Man has stood the strife
For those He had engaged to save,
For them laid down His life.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
Salvation's work is done;
The Hero met the sinner's foe,
For them the battle won.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
He's risen from the dead;
And justified their souls, and shown
He is their living Head.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
The victory is gained;
The Conqueror unto heaven is gone,
With blood His robe is stained.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
Before His Father's throne

He ever intercession makes,
And pleads what He has done.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
The Mediator stands
And pleads the wounds which He received
In head, side, feet and hands.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
The Father hears His prayer;
For those who come to God through Him
They His beloved are.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
Jehovah hears His Son;
And Justice, too, with smiling face,
Accepts what Christ has done.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
Exalted high He is;
A Prince, a Saviour, King supreme,
To raise each saint to bliss.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
God's well-beloved Son
The sinner's cause now undertakes,
And never loses one.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
So long ago foretold;
The Father promised His dear Son
To succour and uphold.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
The promise is made good;
The Father heard His only Son,
As He declared He would.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
The gospel is proclaimed;
The love and power of God made known;
Backsliders are reclaimed.

J.B.

(To be continued)

NOTICE OF DEATH

Hedley David Cuthbert Taylor, the faithful pastor of Rehoboth Chapel, Bromley, for forty-five years, passed away to his eternal rest on Monday, May 20th, 2019, aged 83 years. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5. 9).

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

AUGUST 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

“HOPE THOU IN GOD”

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God” (Psa. 42. 11).

The sweet singer of Israel, here expresses so much of the exercise of believers as they press on in their pilgrimage. He continually expresses in the Psalms something of the daily conflicts of soul, and the fight of faith, under temptation and trial, in the daily warfare. While God’s dear people are given eternal life which is indestructible, and have given to them a God-wrought faith which is as a candle that can never be quenched, yet they come to places of consternation, grief, sorrows and tremblings. No doubt the psalmist could have said of Satan, as the Apostle Paul did later, “For we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2. 11). The psalmist was often “cast down,” and discouraged, yet he still hoped in God, by precious faith.

No doubt, many of our readers meet with a multitude of troubles, temptations and fiery trials which make them so cast down. Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16. 33). It was by true faith that “David encouraged himself in the LORD his God” (1 Sam. 30. 6) in his great distress at Ziklag; and in like manner the Lord instructs us poor pilgrims to “be of good cheer,” for He “has overcome the world.” In other words, the Lord was teaching that while His dear people are so troubled, they have, in their dear Redeemer, eternal safety, and therefore are called to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6. 12) so that they get to heaven and gain everlasting victory, and they must not quit the battlefield. Paul preached, “that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14. 22), which is true of every generation in Christ’s kingdom here below. The tribulations in this world are many and various, and each trial appears unique to the tried and troubled believer. So the dear saints are often cast down, and feel uneasy, disturbed or troubled within.

“Hope thou in God.” The believer’s hope is like an anchor let down into the precious, living Lord Jesus. The apostle expresses this hope, “as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which

entereth into that within the veil; ... even Jesus” (Heb. 6. 19, 20), who is such “a merciful and faithful High Priest” (Heb. 2. 17), for troubled pilgrims here in their wilderness journey. What an infinitely minuscule part of the vast ocean, the anchor of a ship is let down into, and in like manner the humble believer, although so small in faith and feeling such a lack in spiritual experience, lets down the anchor of faith into the eternal ocean of the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. It does not matter how poor, weak, feeble and sinful we know ourselves to be, because the Lord delights in mercy, and has promised to “be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee” (Isa. 30. 19). While to our natural judgment the trying of our faith is something too hard for us, and causes frettings and questionings, yet the Word of God tells us that it is “much more precious than of gold that perisheth,” that it “might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1. 7). The Apostle Paul says that these trials are “our light affliction, which is but for a moment,” and “worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” For surely, as trials are sanctified to us, “we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4. 17, 18). So under these afflictions faith lets down her anchor into those glorious and precious promises that cause us to hope as we draw near to Jesus seated upon the throne of grace.

“Huge sorrows meet us as we go,
And devils aim our overthrow;
But vile infernals can’t prevail;
The Christian’s hope shall never fail.

“Sometimes we’re tempted to despair,
But Jesus makes us then His care;
Though numerous foes our souls assail,
The Christian’s hope shall never fail.

“We trust upon the sacred word –
The oath and promise of our Lord;
And safely through each tempest sail;
The Christian’s hope shall never fail.” (H. 245)

What do we plead and hope in, as we draw near to Jesus at God’s right hand? We have to plead and hope in the blessed One who cannot lie, who has sealed His every word of grace by His own blood. How wonderful it is that God cannot lie! By nature we are children of lies and pretences, and live in a world where men believe every lie. We are under bondage and curse for believing and falling into the service of Satan, who “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). Jesus is “the **Way**, the **Truth**, and the **Life**” (John 14. 6). Jesus also said, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8. 32). The invaluable sacrifice and shed blood of the Lord Jesus speaks in the court of heaven above for every poor comer. Therefore may we truly *plead* and *hope* in God as we draw near to “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne” (Rev. 7. 17).

“Poor pilgrims shall not stray,
 Who frighted flee from wrath;
 A bleeding Jesus is the Way,
 And blood tracks all the path.
 Christians in Christ obtain
 The Truth that can’t deceive;
 And never shall they die again,
 Who in the Life believe.” (H. 130).

We also have to plead and hope in the victory of Christ over sin, death and hell. What a mighty Conqueror is the Lord Jesus! “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and He that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto Him: and He went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6. 2). How we so much need His sweet grace to conquer us! The sure promise to the church is, that regarding all the killings that we know: “For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter” that “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Rom. 8. 36, 37). Do we not have to pray,

“Do Thou my sins subdue;
 Thy sovereign love make known,
 The spirit of my mind renew,
 And save me in Thy Son”? (H. 471)

Surely, He who conquers within us, will conquer for us, and deliver us out of all our troubles.

Another thing that we have to plead and hope in, is the intercession of Jesus at God’s right hand in heaven. The Lord is a God of knowledge and also of infinite compassion together with power. Nothing is unfinished in the work of redemption, and nothing is too hard for the Lord to do, according to His good will. The Lord Jesus continually makes intercession on behalf of the saints as they draw near. What a tender and compassionate Priest and Prince is the Lord Jesus! He has infinitely more love, tenderness and compassion than any believer can show toward his brethren here below. His love and compassion are boundless to His bride.

“Jesus, Thou art all compassion;
 Pure unbounded love Thou art;

Visit us with Thy salvation;
Comfort every sinking heart.” (H. 1053)

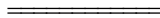
May we lay to heart the sweet lines from Isaac Watts:

“He ever lives to intercede
Before His Father’s face;
Give Him, my soul, thy cause to plead,
Nor doubt the Father’s grace.” (H. 121)

We also have to plead and hope in His tender mercy, as shown in the Word of God. “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 8. 12). It is a sacred truth that the Lord delights in mercy, and that His mercy endures for ever (see Mic. 7. 18 and Psalm 136. 1). We can see from the Word of God that although the Lord may chasten and correct His dear people, it is in a way of righteousness and peace toward them. We need His mercy to surround us every step of the journey. We shall often have to come back to the prayer of the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18. 13). It is a safe place to be in need of mercy, although so often a sad place. It is also a very safe prayer to pray, for it is attached by God to our free justification by faith.

We must plead the precious and all-prevailing name of the Lord Jesus in all our petitions, as we hope in God. The hope of a believer is a sweet hope in the glorious truth, that Jesus is the Christ, the Saviour of the world. “For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed,” and again, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10. 11, 13). David said, “I hope in Thy Word” (Psa. 119. 81), and also, “The eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy” (Psa. 33. 18).

May we therefore in all the changing scenes in our lives here, and in all the fiery trials, and the sorrows of this lower world, and especially as we see the day of our departure from this world fast approaching, “fight the good fight of faith,” and “hope in God” (Psa. 43. 5). It is the path of promise, and such who thus “hope in God” will prove the glorious truth, “For I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”



The titles of God are virtually promises, when He is called a sun, a shield, a strong tower, a hiding place, a portion. The titles of Christ: light of the world, bread of life, the way, the truth and life; the titles of the Spirit: the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of glory, of grace, of supplication, the sealing, witnessing Spirit – faith may conclude as much out of these as out of promises.

David Clarkson

JESUS THE ONLY FOUNDATION

*Sermon preached by Mr. Timothy J. Parish at Jireh Chapel,
Attleborough, Nuneaton, on Lord's day evening, October 7th, 2018*

Text: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3. 11).

Paul had experienced great success in preaching at Corinth. Nearly two years he had spent preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, and God had given a great increase. Jew and Gentile had been gathered together, and a church had been formed at Corinth. Paul had now left Corinth and was writing to them. We call it the "first epistle" because it is the first letter to them recorded in Holy Scripture, but it is not the first time Paul wrote to them. We read in chapter 5 of this first epistle that in verse 9 he says, "I wrote unto you in an epistle" – or a letter – "not to company with fornicators." So he had written to this church before. This is the first letter that forms part of the holy canon of Scripture, the inspired Word of God. Here Paul is writing to them having heard things reported to him, and he is also writing because he has received a letter from them. In chapter 7 he begins, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me." They have asked for his advice; they want his opinion; they want his direction – is it good for a man not to touch a woman? They are troubled; they have a grievous sin of fornication troubling the church.

Beloved friends, no church is perfect except that church which is the church triumphant in heaven now reigning. Ministers of the gospel in former days used to use those two expressions: church militant and church triumphant. The church militant is the church active here below; the church triumphant is the church in glory in heaven. The church militant is a company of sinners with grace in the heart, and we believe with the active Spirit of the Lord working in the heart, but there is still the old nature present, and this church at Corinth found it to be the case with them. They were plagued with fornication, and sins of a sexual nature, and this caused much grief, not only to the church, but also to Paul himself. May we be kept from such sins. May we ever be on our guard. I lay this before you this evening: you know the day in which we live is a day of immorality also. If you think of the church of Corinth, and you think of the church in our day and generation, how needful to be on our guard; how prevalent Satan is in spreading sin and infiltrating the church, the minds and the hearts of each one of us. "None can keep alive his own soul" (Psa. 22. 29). If any man or woman think they can keep themselves, they are walking a dangerous path. May the Lord keep us from these things.

But here in this particular part of the letter we are considering, there was partiality, there were divisions appearing in the church. Some were

saying, “We are of Paul” – we are setting up Paul as our minister; anyone else is wrong; and others were saying, “I am of Apollos,” and others, “I am of Cephas,” or whoever else it might be, and others were saying, “No, I am of Jesus Christ, and no minister should come and preach to me” (see 1 Cor. 1. 12). There was this partiality concerning the servants of the Lord, and where did it stem from? Paul puts it down to them being carnally minded. Although there had been great success in preaching the gospel and a church had been formed, there had not been much spiritual growth in the church since. Where was the building up – not just in numbers, but in grace and in knowledge of the truth? He had begun preaching simply to them. A newborn babe needs milk; it cannot take meat, cannot take solid food. It does not begin with food; it begins with milk, and so as newborn babes they cannot take the full meat of the Word of God; they need the “milk” of the Word – simple things.

After a time there is a weaning, there is a growing, there is a building up of knowledge, and there is the Lord’s working and teaching in their lives – the hunger for the Word of God, the private study, meditations, prayer and personal experiences in life. The Lord is building them up and they begin to grow spiritually. They begin as babes; as newborn babes they desire the simplicity of the gospel. But beloved friends, if we ever live on the simple, only simple things, then when the greater trials of our lives begin how do we fare? We need to be built up.

This life is a preparation. We cannot remain babes throughout it. If we are the Lord’s dear children, we must grow spiritually. We believe it – it is one of our fundamental beliefs – that there is a growing in grace. This is the concern, that “ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able” (see verse 2). When he was amongst them, they were not able to bear it, and the sad thing is that they were not able to bear it now. What was it causing? It was causing these minor factions within the church. One was saying, I prefer this man; one was saying, I prefer that man (see 1 Cor. 1. 12, 13). They were losing sight of the gospel that was being preached and they were seeing the preacher and not the blessed Saviour who was being preached unto them.

Paul lovingly reminds them, “I have planted” – Paul came; he was the instrument in the hands of God, used to plant a new church in Corinth. “I have planted,” but the Lord has called me away. I have been here to plant, but now I have gone, and I am to plant elsewhere, and “Apollos watered; but God gave the increase” (verse 6). It was not the power of Apollos; it was not Paul’s either; it is God’s work. Whether it is Paul, or whether Apollos, or whether it is Cephas or whoever it is that is there to preach the Word, it is God’s Word, God’s church and it is the power of God that must give the increase.

Paul sets himself, then, as nothing. He says, “Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (verse 7). How vital it is, beloved friends, for you and me not to lose sight of the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. “Whether it were I or they, so we preach,” says Paul in another part of Corinthians. “Whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed” (1 Cor. 15. 11). Receive the Word, receive the preaching of the gospel. It does not matter whether it is I or they; it is the Lord and His work, and His servants are instruments. They are labourers in His service. “For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building” (verse 9). This applies to us here as a church and people. We are God’s building. The vital need then, if we are God’s building, is to have a true and a sure foundation.

In the building industry today, we have learned some lessons from buildings that were built in the 1970s and 1980s. Some buildings developed all sorts of structural failings through shoddy, weak and inadequate foundations. Now we have regulations that have been put in place to ensure a good, solid, firm, sure foundation is provided. If a building is to stand the test of time it must be well founded; if not it will develop failures; it will develop fractures. It may not collapse, but you will find that cracking and subsidence will occur. There may be a parting. One part of the building will begin to move away from another. May the Lord prevent, by His mercy and grace, any fracturing of the building that we believe He is building here, as He builds the church here at Jireh.

May we prayerfully be concerned with this: “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder.” The Apostle Paul can rightly claim that he is a wise masterbuilder. What a masterbuilder, what an eminent apostle, one of the chief apostles. He says “I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon” (verse 10). He was to preach; he laid the foundation of the church in Corinth and others came along and laboured. “But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

“If any man build upon this foundation.” You see there is to be a building. Paul had laid the foundation; the church was to go on. His prayerful desire was that there would be a church to the end of time at Corinth, a church be established and that it would grow, that it would prosper and flourish, rising as a building in praise and honour and glory to God. The various stones and bricks in a building are chosen by the builder. So for this spiritual building, Paul’s desire is that souls out of the community around that church and from a wider area would be brought in, that the Lord would fit them, and shape them to fit into that church at Corinth, that they would be bonded together – as bricks are

with mortar, so they would be bonded together with love and that the building would rise and there would be this building upward.

“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones” (verse 12). That is it, isn’t it? If you are going to lay a foundation, then you intend to build. You do not lay a foundation if you are not to build anything. There is a purpose in it. You dig out the ground, you put the concrete in, you do it with a reason. There is an intent to build. “Take heed.” There is a warning to the Lord’s servants what to build on that foundation – “gold, silver, precious stones.” Then having begun building with these precious things, the precious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and then to add to it or rather to envelop that building in “wood, hay, stubble” – how foolish, how disappointing! It would be like building a nice, beautiful palace and then putting a thatched roof on it – it is madness. How foolish, how disappointing; it is not God honouring.

O this vital need, this prayerful need, a need, beloved friends, not just here at Jireh, a need throughout the churches of God in our country and wherever they are around the world, that the Lord would send forth faithful ministers of the gospel, faithful ones who put precious stones, gold and silver on this foundation, building something to the praise and honour and glory of God. May God prevent those who are seeking to bring in lighter things and preach a lighter gospel, that are bringing things that are of this world, and things that will not endure, things that will not stand. There is a warning, and may we be prayerfully concerned. We pray that there will not be those who are mingling and wrapping around and clothing over again these things of the earth, “wood, hay, stubble.” Because beloved friends it will be exposed.

This fire that is spoken of is not the last great judgment day. This is the trial of faith; this is the faith that is tried in church members and churches. The Lord sends forth trials. The Lord will send a storm. The Lord will send a fire to “try every man’s work,” and it “shall be made manifest,” or in other words it will be shown for what it is. If it is fancy words, things of man, the latest ideas and the new ideas of the gospel – man’s inventions and work – beloved friends, it will be swept away. “For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (verse 13). For every true sent servant of the Lord it is a concern: are we building, are we building on the foundation and what are we building? Are we building in our own strength? Are we building in our own wisdom? Are we building something for our own honour and glory? Or are we building entirely at the command of Jesus Christ and for His honour and glory?

But to return to the text, Paul says, “For other foundation can no man lay.” Paul laid a foundation. Not only naturally did he lay the

foundation of the church at Corinth – in other words he was used as an instrument to form the church and to build it – but he laid a foundation in preaching Christ Jesus and Him crucified. He did not lay a foundation and not build on it himself. He laid a foundation and he built on it himself. Paul says there is no other foundation that can be a foundation for the church of God other than Jesus Christ. Beloved friends, may that be the foundation for us as a church here at Jireh. But more than that, may you truly lay it to heart this evening. May God give you the grace and the wisdom truly to examine what you are standing on this evening, if anything. We have just sung:

“Jesus, engrave it on my heart,
That Thou the one thing needful art;
I could from all things parted be,
But never, never, Lord, from Thee.” (H. 1105)

That is the language of someone who is standing on that Rock. It is like the refrain of hymn 1106 that is absent from our hymnbook:

“On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

Well, are we? Are we?

Paul says, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” But, beloved friends, other men try and lay foundations that are not Jesus Christ, and your wicked heart and my wicked heart have a part in it. You know, we have our own foundation. By nature we stand on a foundation that says there is no God, and there is no heaven, and there is no hell, and there is no judgment day. That is the foundation we have for our life of unconcerned sin. We are totally blinded by the power of Satan and indwelling sin through our fall in Adam; we are corrupted by sin. We stand on this foundation by nature – that there is no God. I pray there is none amongst our congregation who are on that ground this evening. Should there be, may God in all His mercy bring them to see what is beneath their feet, which is a ground that will certainly and surely give way when that great trumpet sounds.

Beloved friends, what ground are we standing on? Paul warns of the need to have a foundation, for a church, for a person. How needful a foundation is for an individual to be a member of a church, if an individual is to be called by grace and brought into the everlasting kingdom of God and to live a life here in a body of sin but in an open profession. Some are called by grace and taken in the moment, but others are called to walk a long pilgrimage. How can they walk a pilgrimage in a sinful world, in a body of sin, except they be founded on this one true foundation?

The problem is man keeps building people up on *false hopes and false props and building people's religion on emotion, and things that come short of Christ Jesus and Him crucified and a knowledge of their own sin, their own worthlessness; without a knowledge or hope of their sins forgiven and the precious blood of Jesus Christ blotting out every sin*. And they are happy to build up men on this hope of heaven at last on such a sandy foundation which is not Christ Jesus, but one of emotion, or another gospel, or the delusions of a universal love to all mankind, and a preaching that says all that must be done is an accepting of Jesus Christ into the heart – without knowing who you are and what He is. *O to know what we are and who He is!* This one foundation – there is no other foundation like it.

Paul says regarding the foundation, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Who laid Jesus Christ as the foundation? Who chose Him? Who set Him as that stone? We read in Isaiah 28. 16, “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD” – He has chosen, God has laid the foundation – “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” God has chosen. The Father chose His own beloved Son, the only suitable foundation for the hopes of His people, the only suitable foundation for a poor, needy sinner to build upon, His own beloved Son. Why? Because He was perfect and is perfect, and for ever will be perfect. Because He was obedience in all its fulness. What a sure foundation stone for you and me if we feel the need of a Saviour, a need to be obedient unto God’s most holy law, when we find ourselves failing, coming short. What a mercy it is to find ourselves resting entirely upon Jesus Christ.

You see, you cannot rest on your own works, and you will not rest on your own works if you are a true child of God. You will do works as a fruit of the Spirit of God working in you. You will; it will appear, it must appear, the good must come out and evidence itself in your life. But you will not build up your spiritual health, you will not build up your hope of heaven upon your good deeds. Paul was not basing his hope of heaven upon his preaching, on the number of souls he had brought out of nature’s darkness, or on his success in building and planting churches. He rested entirely on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. He counted all other things as dross that he might win Christ. He had a single eye to “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3. 14).

Sadly, people will encourage others to build on their works, and what a “works religion” there is around at present – to be seen to be doing things for the wrong reasons, the outward form, and yet when you dive into the real motivation, what is there? Often, it is pride. Pride is that dreadful sin and it can lurk in some of the most unusual places. We

can be proud in our humility, if you understand what I mean, be proud in the opinion other people have of our humility and our grace. That is no foundation for a hope of heaven. All of these things will give way at last. Paul sets forth the foundation he preached, the foundation he laid, the foundation he believed was underpinning the church at Corinth. What underpins the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ Himself.

The obedience that is required – Jesus Christ is the foundation of it – His works, His righteousness, the way He lived His life. Poor sinners, when they find themselves coming short, maybe through weariness, unbelief, or fear of man – what a wonderful thing to have the Saviour of sinners to flee to, to pour out your heart, to ask for mercy, to ask for help, to ask for strength. O Lord, bring me into that knowledge of that one foundation, Thyself! When you feel to be buffeted, you feel the world is oppressing you, you feel things against you, what a wonderful thing if you feel beneath your feet the Rock Christ Jesus, standing on the Rock, and feel His unshakeable, unmovable resolve.

When you look at, and read, and study the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, unmovable, His resolve, He set His face steadfast and went up to Jerusalem knowing what was before Him. He drank that cup, all the bitterness, the wrath of it, the horrors of it. O what a comfort it is to the church when they find themselves with a fresh sense of the feeling of standing on that firm foundation. Beloved friends, it is there on the Lord Jesus Christ that poor, fearful, weak, timid children of God can build day by day. O what underpins it? The love of God. O the foundation stone given by the Father, the love the Father has to His church in giving them such a solid, such a stable, such an unmovable foundation, that will stand, that will endure till time is no more.

Paul says, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His” (2 Tim. 2. 19). O, you say, Seal it into my heart this evening, Lord. O seal it into my heart. Thou knowest, Lord, those that are Thine; let me feel it, Lord; seal it into my heart; show me that I am one of Thine.

“My worthless heart to gain,
The God who gave me breath
Was found in fashion as a man,
And died a cursèd death!

“Then may I sin forsake,
The world for Thee resign;
Gracious Redeemer, take, O take,
And seal me ever Thine!”

(H. 1050)

I did not quote the rest of that verse, did I? “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal the Lord knoweth them

that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” How can we? Beloved friends, we are poor sinners, but, “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” But you have fears, you have a fearful foe, you have your own sinful heart. You can pray – you can pray to the Lord to rid you from your sins that cling to you. What about those besetting sins? What about those things that seem to wrap around your feet? What about those things that you find you cannot shrug off? What about those things that plague you, and torment you, sins of your youth or sins that you have carried through your life, your besetting sins? We have each got them in this chapel this evening. Every one of us has besetting sins. Some of us will have the same ones, some of us will not, but we will all have them. Yours might be different from mine. How can we leave them?

“Take away the love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be.” (H. 1053)

The Lord is the beginning of your religion; He is the foundation of your religion. O He is to finish it at last in heaven. You cannot endure temptation on your own, but standing firm on that rock, seeking daily grace, the Lord to hold you fast, the Lord to hold you tight, the Lord to wrap His arms of love around you, to be that wall of fire round about you. Then on this one and only true foundation He can underpin the life of a poor, needy sinner right through his sinful life and into heaven at last. “He is able to keep,” says Paul, “that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 1. 12). He by grace and faith had laid his soul on that one foundation. He had that desire that the Lord would undertake for him. He knew his weakness, he knew his sinfulness, he knew his old nature, he knew what it was to have it warring within him, and he laid it all at the feet of Jesus, and pleaded that He would have mercy on him, and bring him through, and deliver him into glory at last.

O what a foundation! And this one foundation has proved sufficient, beloved friends, for the church of God here below from the beginning of time and it will be till the end of time. I ask you this evening, O will you prove it, and will I prove it? Will we prove it sufficient for us? He says, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12. 9). O may we prove it. May we each live to prove it. May we be concerned with our own souls, and our own standing, and those that we know and love, may we commit them into the hands of “Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Rev. 1. 5).

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Amen.

THE HUMILIATION OF MESSIAH

By John Newton (1725-1807)

“I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting” (Isa. 50. 6).

We may observe, from these words, that the humiliation of MESSIAH was *voluntary*, and that it was *extreme*.

I. *Voluntary*. With respect to His engagement, as the Mediator between God and sinners, a great work was given Him to do, and He became responsible; and therefore, in this sense, bound and under obligation. But His compliance was likewise *voluntary*, for He gave Himself up freely to suffer, “the Just for the unjust” (1 Pet. 3. 18). Could He have relinquished our cause, and left us to the deserved consequence of our sins, in the trying hour when His enemies seized upon Him, legions of angels, had they been wanted, would have appeared for His rescue (see Matt. 26. 53). But if He was determined to save others, then His own sufferings were unavoidable. Men, in the prosecution of their designs, often meet with unexpected difficulties in their way, which, though they encounter with some cheerfulness, in hope of surmounting them, and carrying their point at last, are considered as impediments; but the sufferings of MESSIAH were essentially necessary to the accomplishment of His great designs, precisely determined, and present to His view beforehand; so that there was not a single circumstance that happened to Him unawares. He knew that no blood but His own could make atonement for sin; that nothing less than His humiliation could expiate our pride; that if He did not *thus* suffer, sinners must inevitably perish; and therefore (such was His love) He cheerfully and voluntarily “gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair” (see Isa. 50. 6). Two designs of vast importance filled His mind, the completion of them was that joy set before Him, for the sake of which, He “made Himself of no reputation,” “endured the cross, despising the shame” (Phil. 2. 7, Heb. 12. 2). These were, the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners.

1. The highest end of His mediation was to display the glory of the divine character in the strongest light, to afford to all intelligent creatures the brightest manifestation they are capable of receiving, of the manifold wisdom of God (see Eph. 3. 10); His holiness, justice, truth and love, the stability and excellence of His government, all mutually illustrating each other, as combined and shining forth in His Person and in His mediatorial work. Much of the glory of God may be seen, by an enlightened eye, in creation, much in His providential rule and care over His creatures; but the brightness of His glory, the express and full discovery of His

perfections, can only be known by Jesus Christ, and the revelation which God has given of Himself to the world by Him (see John 1. 18, Heb. 1. 3). And, accordingly, we are assured, that the angels, whose knowledge of the natural world is doubtless vastly superior to ours, desire to look into these things (see 1 Pet. 1. 12); and that the manifold wisdom of God is super-eminently made known to principalities and powers in heaven, by the dispensation of His grace to the church redeemed from the earth.

2. Subordinate to this great design, closely connected with it, and the principal effect for which it will be admired and magnified to eternity, is the complete and everlasting salvation of that multitude of miserable sinners who, according to the purpose of God, and by the working of His mighty power, shall believe in this Saviour; and who, renouncing every other hope, shall put their trust in Him, upon the warrant of the promise and command of God, and yield themselves to be His willing and devoted people. Many are their tribulations in the present life, but they shall be delivered out of them all; they shall overcome, they shall be more than conquerors, “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Rev. 12.11); and then they shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of heaven. The consummation of their happiness is a branch of the joy which was set before Him. For their sakes, that they might be happy, that He may be admired in them and by them, to the glory of God, who is All in all, He voluntarily substituted Himself to sufferings and death. He endured the cross, and He despised the shame. “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting.”

II. *Extreme.* But are we reading a prophecy, or the history of His extreme humiliation? It is a prophecy; how literally and exactly it was fulfilled, we learn from His history by the evangelists. With what cruelty, with what contempt, was He treated, first by the servants in the hall of the high priest, afterwards by the Roman soldiers! Let us consider Him, who “endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself” (Heb. 12. 3). These words of the apostle suggest some preliminary observations, to prepare our minds for receiving a due impression from the several particulars here mentioned.

When the apostle would dispose believers by an argument or motive (which, if we fully understood it, would render all other arguments unnecessary) to endure sufferings and crosses patiently, He says, “Consider Him.” Compare yourselves with Him, and His sufferings with your own. Consider who He is, no less than what He endured.

In the apprehensions of men, insults are aggravated in proportion to the disparity between the person who receives and who offers them. A

blow from an equal is an offence, but would be still more deeply resented from an inferior. But if a subject, a servant, a slave, should presume to strike a king, it would justly be deemed an enormous crime. But Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, whom all the angels of God worship, made Himself so entirely of no reputation, that the basest of the people, the servants, the common soldiers, were not afraid to make Him the object of their derision, and to express their hatred in the most sarcastic and contemptuous manner. It is written that He “endured such contradiction of sinners.” So, perhaps, do we; but we are sinners likewise, and deserve much more than we suffer, if not immediately from the instruments of our grief, yet from the Lord, who has a right to employ what instruments He pleases to afflict us for our sins.

This thought quieted the spirit of David, when his own son rose up against his life, and his own servant cursed him to his face (see 2 Sam. 16. 11). But Jesus was holy, harmless, and undefiled; He had done nothing amiss; yet the usage He met with was such as has seldom been offered to the vilest malefactor. Their cruel and scornful contradiction was likewise expressly and directly against “Himself”; whereas His people only suffer from unreasonable and wicked men, for His sake, and for their professed attachment to “Him.” In the most violent persecutions, they who could be prevailed on to renounce His name and His cause, usually escaped punishment, and were frequently favoured and rewarded. And this is still the ground of the world’s displeasure. If we could forsake Him, their resentment would be disarmed, for they mean no more than to intimidate us from His service.

I do not think that they who make peace with the world upon these terms, are esteemed by them for their compliance, but they are seldom disturbed any longer. It is plain, therefore, that if we suffer as Christians, it is for His sake. He likewise suffered for our sakes; but how wide is the difference between Him and us! We, when the trial is sharp, are in danger of flinching from the cause of our best Friend and Benefactor, to whom our obligations are so innumerable, and so immense; whereas He gave Himself up to endure such things for us, when we were strangers and enemies! He was not only treated with cruelty, but with every mark of the utmost detestation and scorn, which wanton, unfeeling, unrestrained barbarity could suggest.

1. They began to “spit upon Him” in the high priest’s hall. The Roman soldiers likewise “did spit upon Him,” when they had contemptuously arrayed Him in a scarlet robe, and bowed the knee before Him, in mockery of His title of King. Great as an insult of this kind would be deemed amongst us, it was considered as still greater, according to the customs prevalent in the eastern countries. There, to spit, even in the presence of a person, though it were only upon the

ground, conveyed the idea of disdain and abhorrence. But the lowest of the people spit in the face of the Son of God. No comparison can fully illustrate this indignity. There is some proportion between the greatest earthly monarch, and the most abject slave. They did not spit upon Alexander, or Caesar, but upon the Lord of glory.

2. They buffeted and beat Him on the face (see Mark 14. 65), and when He meekly offered His cheeks to their blows, “they plucked off the hair.” The beard was in those times accounted honourable; and when David’s servants were shaven by the command of Hanun, they were ashamed to be seen (see 2 Sam. 10. 5). But Jesus was not shaven. With savage violence they tore off the hair of His beard, while He, like a sheep before the shearers, was dumb, and quietly yielded Himself to their outrages.

3. His back they tore with scourges, as was foretold by the psalmist. “The plowers plowed upon My back: they made long their furrows” (Psa. 129. 3). The Jewish council condemned Him to death for blasphemy, because He said He was the Son of God. Stoning was the punishment prescribed, by the law of Moses, in such cases (see Lev. 24. 16). But this death was not sufficiently lingering and tormenting to gratify their malice. To glut [satisfy fully] their insatiable cruelty, they were therefore willing to own their subjection to the Roman power to be so absolute, that it was not lawful for them to put anyone to death, according to their own judicial law (see John 18. 31); and thus wilfully, though unwittingly, they fulfilled the prophecies. They preferred the punishment which the Romans appropriated to slaves who were guilty of flagitious [heinous, atrocious] crimes, and therefore insisted that He should be crucified. According to the Roman custom, those who were crucified, were previously scourged. Thus when they had mocked Him, and made Him their sport, by putting a crown of thorns on His head, and a reed in His hand for a sceptre, in derision of His kingly office, He was stripped and scourged. It was not infrequent for the sufferers to expire under the severity and torture of scourging. And we may be certain that Jesus experienced no lenity from their merciless hands. The ploughers ploughed His back. But more and greater tortures were before Him. He was engaged to make a full atonement for sin, by His sufferings; and as He had power over His own life, He would not dismiss His spirit, till He could say, “It is finished” (John 19. 30).

And now, to use the words of Pilate, “Behold the Man!” (John 19. 5). Oh for a realising impression of this His extreme humiliation and suffering, that we may be duly affected with a sense of His love to sinners, and of the evil of our sins, which rendered it necessary that the Surety should thus suffer! Behold “the Lamb of God,” mocked, blindfolded, spit upon, and scourged! Let us add to all this the

consideration of His praying for His tormentors (see Luke 23. 34), and we have an example of perfect magnanimity.

Shall *we* then refuse to suffer shame for *His* sake, and be intimidated, by the frowns or contempt of men, from avowing our attachment to Him? Ah! Lord, we are, indeed, capable of this baseness and ingratitude. But, if Thou art pleased to strengthen us with the power of Thy Spirit, we will account such disgrace our glory. Then we will not hang down our heads and despond, but will rather rejoice and be exceeding glad, if the world revile us and persecute us, and speak all manner of evil against us, provided it be falsely, and provided it be for Thy sake (see Matt. 5. 11).

A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART

By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psa. 51. 17).

I am therefore come to show you how, and what the heart is when broken and made contrite; and this I must do by opening unto you the two chief expressions in the text.

1. What is meant by this word *broken*.
2. What is meant by this word *contrite*.

1. For this word *broken*, Tindal [Tyndale] renders it a *troubled* heart, but I think there is more in it. I take it, therefore, to be a heart *disabled*, as to former actions; even as a man whose bones are broken, is *disabled*, as to his way of running, leaping, wrestling, or aught else, which vainly he was wont to do; wherefore that which was called a *broken heart* in the text, he calls his *broken bones* in verse the eighth: “Make me,” saith he, “to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice.” And why is the breaking of the heart compared to the breaking of the bones? but because, as when the bones are broken, the outward man is disabled as to what it was wont to do, so when the spirit is broken, the inward man is disabled as to what vanity and folly it before delighted in. Hence feebleness is joined with this brokenness of heart: “I am feeble,” saith he, “and sore broken” (Psa. 38. 8). I have lost my strength and former vigour, as to vain and sinful courses.

This then it is to have the heart broken; namely, to have it lamed, disabled, and taken off, by sense of God’s wrath due to sin, from that course of life it formerly was conversant in; and to show that this work is no fancy, nor done but with great trouble to the soul, it is compared to

the putting the bones out of joint, the breaking of the bones, the burning of the bones with fire; or as the taking the natural moisture from the bones; the vexing of the bones (see Psa. 22. 14; Jer. 20. 9; Lam. 1. 13; Psa. 6. 2; Prov. 17. 22).

All which are expressions adorned with such similitudes as do undeniably declare, that to sense and feeling a broken heart is a grievous thing.

2. What is meant by the word *contrite*. A contrite spirit is a penitent one, one sorely grieved, and deeply sorrowful for the sins it has committed against God, and to the damage of the soul; and so it is to be taken in all those places where a contrite spirit is made mention of, as in Psalm 34. 18; Isaiah 57. 15; 66. 2.

As a man that has by his folly procured a broken leg or arm, is heartily sorry that ever he was so foolish as to be engaged in such foolish ways of idleness and vanity,* so he whose heart is broken with a sense of God's wrath due to his sin, hath deep sorrow in his soul, and is greatly repentant, that ever he should be such a fool as, by rebellious doings, to bring himself and his soul to so much sharp affliction. Hence, while others are sporting themselves in vanity, such a one doth call his sin his greatest folly: "My wounds stink and are corrupt," saith David, "because of my foolishness"; and again, "O God, Thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from Thee" (Psa. 38. 5; 69. 5).

Men, whatever they say with their lips, cannot conclude, if yet their hearts want breaking, that sin is a foolish thing. Hence it says, "The foolishness of fools is folly" (Prov. 14. 24); that is, the foolishness of some men is, that they take pleasure in their sins, for their sins are their foolishness, and the folly of their soul lies in their countenancing of this foolishness. But the man whose heart is broken, he is none of these, he cannot be one of these, no more than he that has his bones broken can rejoice that he is desired to play a match at football. Hence to hear others talk foolishly, is to the grief of those whom God has wounded, or, as it is in another place, "Their words are like the piercings of a sword" (see Psa. 69. 26; Prov. 12. 18).

This, therefore, I take to be the meaning of these two words, *a broken and a contrite spirit*.

As to this, I now come more particularly to give you some signs of a broken heart, of a broken and contrite spirit.

1. A broken-hearted man, such as is intended in the text, is a sensible man; he is brought to the exercise of all the senses of his soul. All others are dead, senseless and without true feeling of what the broken-hearted man is sensible of.

i. He sees himself to be what others are ignorant of; that is, he sees himself to be not only a sinful man, but a man by nature in the gall and

* There were not only ball games, but combat and wrestling were prevalent in his day. Ed.

bond of sin. In the gall of sin: it is Peter's expression to Simon, and it is a saying common to all men; for every man, in the state of nature, is in the gall of sin. He was shapen in it, conceived in it; it has also possession of, and by that possession has infected the whole of his soul and body (see Psa. 51. 5; Acts 8. 23).

This he sees, this he understands; every professor sees not this, because the blessing of a broken heart is not bestowed on every one. David says, "There is no soundness in my flesh" (Psa. 38. 3). And Solomon suggests that a plague or running sore is in every heart, but everyone perceives not this (see 1 Kings 8. 38).

He saith again, that his "wounds stank, and were corrupted; that his sore ran, and ceased not" (see Psa. 38. 5; 77. 2).

But these things the brutish man, the man whose heart was never broken, has no understanding of; but the broken-hearted, the man that has a broken spirit, he sees – as the prophet has it – he sees his sickness, he sees his wound: "When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound" (Hos. 5. 13). He sees it to his grief, he sees it to his sorrow.

ii. He *feels* what others have no sense of. He *feels* the arrows of the Almighty, and that they stick fast in him. He *feels* how sore and sick, by the smiting of God's hammer upon his heart to break it, his poor soul is made. He *feels* a burden intolerable lying upon his spirit. "Mine iniquities," saith he, "are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psa. 38. 4). He *feels* also the heavy hand of God upon his soul, a thing unknown to carnal men.

He *feels* pain, being wounded, even such pains as others cannot understand, because they are not broken. "My heart," says David, "is sore pained within me." Why so? Why, "The terrors of death are fallen upon me." The terrors of death cause pain, yea, pain of the highest nature. Hence, that which is here called "pains," is in another place called "pangs" (Psa. 55. 4; Isa. 21. 3).

You know, broken bones occasion pain, strong pain, yea, pain that will make a man or woman "groan ... with the groanings of a deadly wounded man" (Ezek. 30. 24).

Soul-pain is the sorest pain, in comparison to which the pain of the body is a very tolerable thing (see Prov. 18. 14).

Now, here is soul-pain, here is heart-pain, here we are discoursing of a wounded, of a broken spirit. Wherefore this pain is to be felt to the sinking of the whole man; neither can any support this but God. Here is death in this pain – death for ever, without God's special mercy, this pain will bring the soul to, and this the broken-hearted man doth feel. "The sorrows of death," said David, "compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow" (Psa. 116. 3).

Aye, I will warrant thee, poor man, thou foundest trouble and sorrow indeed; for the pains of hell, and sorrows of death, are pains and

sorrows the most intolerable. But this the man is acquainted with, that has his heart broken.

iii. As he *sees* and *feels*, so he *hears* that which augments his woe and sorrow. You know, if a man has his bones broken, he does not only *see* and *feel*, but oftentimes also *hears* what increases his grief, as that his wound is incurable, that his bone is not rightly set, that there is danger of a gangrene, that he may be lost for want of looking to. These are the voices, the sayings that haunt the house of one that has his bones broken. And a broken-hearted man knows what I mean by this: he hears that which makes his lips quiver, and at the noise of which he seems to feel rottenness enter into his bones. He trembleth in himself, and wishes that he may hear joy and gladness, that the bones, the heart, and spirit, which God has broken, may rejoice (see Psa. 51. 8).

He thinks he hears God say, the devil say, his conscience say, and all good men to whisper among themselves, saying. "There is no help for him in God" (Psa. 3. 2). Job heard this, David heard this, Heman heard this; and this is a common sound in the ears of the broken-hearted.

iv. The broken-hearted *smell* what others cannot scent. Alas! sin never *smelled* so to any man alive, as it *smells* to the broken-hearted. You know, wounds will stink; but no stink like that of sin, to the broken-hearted man: his own sins stink, and so do the sins of all the world to him. Sin is like carrion, it is of a stinking nature; yea, it has the worst of smells, however some men like it.

But none are offended with the scent thereof, but God and the broken-hearted sinner: "My wounds stink, and are corrupt," saith he, "both in God's nostrils, and mine own."

But, alas! who smells the stink of sin? None of the carnal world; they, like carrion-crows, seek it, love it, and eat it as the child eats bread. "They eat up the sin of My people," saith God, "and they set their heart on their iniquity" (Hos. 4. 8).

This, I say, they do, because they do not smell the nauseous scent of sin. You know, that which is nauseous to the smell cannot be palatable to the taste. The broken-hearted man doth find that sin is nauseous, and therefore cries out, "It stinketh." They also think at times the smell of fire, of fire and brimstone, is upon them, they are so sensible of the wages due to sin.

v. The broken-hearted is also a *tasting* man. Wounds, if sore and full of pains, of great pains, do sometimes alter the taste of a man: they make him think his meat, his drink, yea, that cordials have a bitter taste in them. How many times do the poor people of God, that are the only men that know what a broken heart doth mean, cry out, that gravel, wormwood, gall and vinegar, was made their meat (see Lam. 3. 15, 16, 19).

This gravel, gall and wormwood, is the true temporal taste of sin; and God, to make them loathe it for ever, doth feed them with it till their hearts both ache and break therewith. Wickedness is pleasant of taste to the world: hence it is said, They feed on ashes, they feed on wind (see Isa. 44. 20; Hos. 12. 1). Lusts, or anything that is vile and refuse, the carnal world think relishes well, as is set out most notably in the parable of the prodigal son: "He would fain have filled his belly," saith our Lord, "with the husks that the swine did eat" (Luke 15. 16). But the broken-hearted man has a relish that is true as to these things, though by reason of the anguish of his soul, it also abhors all manner of dainty meat (see Job 33. 19, 20; Psa. 107. 17-19).

Thus I have showed you *one* sign of a broken-hearted man: he is a sensible man, he has all the senses of his soul awakened; he can *see, hear, feel, taste, smell*, and that as none but himself can do.

(To be continued)

THE HOLY TRINITY

An extract from Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

The doctrine of the Trinity does not rest upon any one isolated text, but it is a ray of light that illuminates the whole Book of God from Genesis to Revelation. In fact, without it the Word of God would cease to be what it is – an inspired Book. Without this, instead of its pages being full of light and life, they would be full of darkness and confusion. Only take away the doctrine of the Trinity out of God's Word, and you would have no redemption, no pardon of sin, no justification, no sanctification, and you would have no salvation; and a revelation that does not proclaim all these blessings, what is it worth? It is of just as much value as the *Koran* of the Muslim or the *Shaster* of the Hindu.

Almost immediately in the opening of divine revelation, we find an intimation of the Trinity, when God in the creation of man said, "Let *Us* make man in Our image, after Our likeness" (Gen. 1. 26). But as I said before, we have not merely one or two or twenty passages to refer to, but it shines as a light through the whole. Therefore do not suppose that the Bible only enforces the doctrine of the Trinity in these expressive words, "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One" (1 John 5. 7); but the apostle seems as if he would collect in this verse a grand testimony of revelation, as if he would gather into one mass what covered the whole of the inspired Book.

When we come to look more closely at the truth, we find that the cardinal [chief, important, fundamental] doctrine of the Trinity is the grand, distinguishing feature of revelation and is, in fact, the basis on which it rests. As to the heathen, they had “gods many, and lords many” (1 Cor. 8. 5). Their debased minds, by inventing a multiplicity of idols, sought to combine the love and practice of sin with the worship of God. To recall man from these false deities, and the abominations connected with their idolatrous worship, God chose a people to whom He gave a revelation of Himself. Of this revelation, the fundamental feature was the Unity of Deity. “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut. 6. 4, Mark 12. 29). There can be but *one* Supreme Being. His very perfections and attributes constitute Him One. There can be but one eternal, underived, self-existent, omnipresent, omniscient Essence. We might as well think of two eternities, or two infinite spaces, as of two Gods. We must never, therefore, lose sight of the Unity of the Godhead; for, if we do, we fall at once into Tritheism, or the error that there are three Gods. But beholding the Unity of Jehovah fast and firm, we are prepared for a still further unfolding of the mystery of the divine Essence.

We can have read the Scriptures to little purpose, and with little profit, if we do not see that there are revealed there three distinct Persons in this divine Unity. Take, for instance, such a text as this: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28. 19). When we find the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost thus named together, is it not evident that there is some intimate relationship existing between Them? The “name” of the Son implies that the Son has a personal existence; the “name” of the Holy Ghost implies that the Holy Ghost has a personal existence, quite as much as the name of the Father implies that the Father has a personal existence; and that these three Persons should be thus associated in the performance of one solemn act as clearly implies that they are one in power, glory and being.

Look, again, at another passage – the well-known benediction: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13. 14). How distinctly are three Persons here spoken of, and heavenly blessings prayed for from each. And what is also remarkable, how the Lord Jesus Christ is here named before God, that is, God the Father – as if to show, in the beautiful and expressive language of the Athanasian creed, “And in this Trinity, none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal.”

COMMUNION TABLE ADDRESS

*By John Duncan (often known as Rabbi Duncan)
of Edinburgh (1796-1870)*

After distributing the elements

“Zealous Peter, loving John, you must have perished for evermore had I not intervened, and given Myself for you. God’s wrath was due to thee, Peter, to thee, John, to all you eleven who are with Me – as due to you as to Judas; but I gave Myself – My flesh and blood – for you to God (see Luke 22. 31, 32). And I give My flesh and blood to you to eat and to drink; that, according to the law of the priesthood, ye as priests may eat of the things whereby the atonement was made.”

“Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us **kings** and **priests** unto God” (Rev. 1. 5, 6). “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5. 3). Kings and priests. Hence this sacrament was called in the ancient church the Eucharist – the feast of the priestly offering of thanksgiving. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me” (Psa. 50. 23). “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13. 15). Not atoning priests, but eucharistic priests, offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Also intercessory priests, offering prayers and thanksgiving for all men.

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2. 21). The Apostle Peter dwells much on this “leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.”

And first in it let us think of the step of humility and obedience, of humbled obedience. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant” (Phil. 2. 5-7).

“The form of God ... the form of a servant” – what a stoop was that! The form of God is the form of independent majesty – Lord of all, servant of none. “He took upon Him the form of a servant,” being “made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal. 4. 4). The Lawgiver, Jehovah the Lawgiver – not under the law, although according to the law; for the law, so far as it is moral, at least is the expression of His holy nature – “made of a woman, made under the law.” Who shall stoop like that? However high you be, you cannot stoop from such a height; and however low you stoop, you can never stoop to so low a place – though a servant, yet not such a servitude. And not content with one stoop – low enough – to be a man and a servant. “He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2. 8). Humility and obedience – humbled obedience.

Secondly, love of the brethren. John teaches us that if Christ laid down His life for us, “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3. 16). Those for whom Christ laid down His life, we should be ready, if called on by God, to lay down our lives for them. We may not be called to the actual doing of that; but this exhortation comprehends all under it. What kindness! What washing of the feet, as the under part of that duty which reaches to the laying down of the life.

Thirdly, meekness and patience in suffering at the hands of sinful men. “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: ... who, when He was reviled, reviled not again” (1 Pet. 2. 21, 23).

And in general we are taught, that the life which we live in the flesh we are to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us (see Gal. 2. 20).

Now, we live this life by intaking and outgiving. All life is an intaking and outgiving; we respire, breathing in and breathing out; we live by the retraction and expansion of the heart. So we, living by Christ, are to live to Christ. He died for sin, that we might die to sin; and He lives again by the power of God, that “even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6. 4).

There are some who explain Romans 6 of justification, others of sanctification; I am convinced that it speaks not exclusively of either, but of that which includes them both – our union to Jesus Christ by faith, as symbolised by our baptism: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6. 3, 4). He died for our sins, that our old man might be crucified with Him; and He lives as our life of righteousness – He lives as the Source, as the Maintainer of our new life. And therefore in our union to Christ is the culminating point, and it branches into the unification of our justification and sanctification.

And now, “The redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come to God with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads” (see Isa. 51. 11).

The Redeemer is gone before. He who said “Come” (Isa. 55. 1), says “Abide – abide in Me” (John 15. 4); says, “Follow Me” (Matt. 9. 9) – through good report and bad report, through life, through death, follow Me. Ever the cry of the Shepherd here is, “Come,” and “Follow.” And then at last to the sheep shall be heard the voice saying, “Come,” and the world and time shall be left. And finally, at the right hand, it shall be “Come in, soul and body, come,” when, for the first and only time that ever to any child of man He said it, Christ shall say, “Depart” (Matt. 25. 41).

FREE GRACE, FREE WILL AND THE FREE OFFER

By John Hervey Gosden (1882-1964)

(Continued from page 222)

Those who are thoroughly convinced of their entire impotence to act faith or produce repentance, are heartily glad to know that these precious and necessary graces are *free gifts* to be asked of Him who is “exalted a Prince and a Saviour,” to bestow them “without money and without price.” We have known of convinced persons being driven almost to desperation when told by some “duty-faith” teacher they must act faith on Christ, they must turn to God, etc, or they will be lost. In other words, they must do something towards their own salvation, and the Lord will do the rest! But Holy Scripture declares that faith “stands in the power of God”; that it is “of the operation of the Spirit of God.” “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief,” manifests a truer attitude for a helpless sinner. Others, having a slight scratch in their conscience, have been slightly healed (Jer. 6. 14) by being argued into believing, persuaded to accept a nominal Christ as offered to all, with the result of either bitter disappointment or presumptuous confidence, ending in despair, proving that there never was genuine repentance or living faith. Solemn to be thus deceived! More solemn still, to be the deceiver of souls!

We well remember a most godly woman, now in heaven, telling us her pathetic case. With her husband and young family she had gone to Australia, where soon her husband became fatally ill. A so-called evangelist (a kind man) finding the sick man fearing death said, “You have only to hold out your hand of faith and receive eternal life, and accept Christ.” The poor wife, who knew well in her own soul the tremendous issues at stake, implored the visitor not thus to deceive her dying husband. He died, *apparently* without conviction, repentance or hope. The “free offer” was of no avail. We suppose had Martin Luther received an “offered Christ” he might have saved himself his long agony of soul when he could but cry out, “O my sins! my sins!” But as he possessed his guilt in awful reality, an imaginary Christ would not therefore suit his case. It was a *revealed Saviour* he needed and found.

Not far from blasphemy we consider the manner in which (we are informed) a popular “evangelical” proffered the gospel. Taking out his watch, he said: “It is now half-past seven. By eight o’clock tonight, each person here may be a believer (or Christian) if he will.” Some of our readers would shudder with horror at the thought of such an interpretation of their term, *the free offer of the gospel*. Such clap-trap in the name of religion must be nauseous to every sober-minded person.

In discussing this momentous question, and in attempting to prove that we do not seek to restrict the gospel, let it be clearly stated that we greatly deprecate the bald, harsh statement of truth, such as speaking to a bruised reed thus: “The Lord will not save you unless you are elected.”

Such ineptitude in presenting a profound truth, is inexcusable. It is doubtless no accident that in 2 Peter 1. 10 the Holy Ghost gives priority to “calling,” although in fact divine election was before time began. As if that gracious Teacher would so help the infirmities of a bruised reed who, through temptation, might be on the rack of uncertainty as to his interest in electing love, being unable to climb to heaven to see into the eternal decree – should say, Give diligence to ascertain your effectual calling, and through that you shall prove your election unto eternal life. Trace up to their source God’s merciful and gracious dealings with your soul, follow on to know the Lord, and to enter upon the experience and enjoyment of the blessings unto which you are predestinated, for you are called to no less than God’s eternal glory (see 1 Pet 5. 10), and destined to be filled with all the fulness of God (see Eph. 3. 19).

We do not find that the apostles offered the gospel indiscriminately, but that they first charged sin on the people, showing them their state as lost sinners needing mercy and salvation. When these warnings were evidently effectual, they then ministered the gospel, directing the distressed and awakened souls to its doctrine, invitations and promises. Thus they preached repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the crucified Son of God. Then, after they believed, they were baptized. So Paul appealed to the Ephesian elders that he had “kept back nothing that was profitable” to them, but had taught them publicly, “**testifying** ... repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20. 20, 21). If there is no felt need of a Saviour, what is the value of an indiscriminate offer of one? We must discriminate.

Nor do we consider that Acts 17. 30, 31, warrants a general and promiscuous offer of the gospel or command to repent, as if it were in the power of the creature of himself to perform either faith or repentance. We freely admit the passage has some appearance of justifying the terms *command* and *offer*, but not in the sense in which the gifts of grace are dependent upon the performance of the creature. Besides, we consider the chief intention of the place is to direct the attention of the Athenians to the fact that whereas formerly God had largely left the heathen to go on in his sin (winking at his ignorance, but not *condoning* his sin), *now* He would extend the gospel to all men, that is, to Jew and Gentile, Hebrew and Greek. To this end He would have all men warned of their need of repentance unto salvation, and that God would judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He had ordained, of which solemn fact He had given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead.

Similarly the phrase “all men” is used in Titus 2. 11, where the context shows that various stations in life are meant – husbands, wives, children, young men, servants, masters, etc, “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all,” or (*margin*) “that bringeth

salvation to all men hath appeared"; that is, the grace of God brings salvation to servants as well as masters, children and parents, old and young. None of all these are excluded because they occupy such and such a category, for in Christ Jesus such distinctions are unknown. Also 1 Timothy 2. 4: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." Plainly it is not God's will that all men should be saved, in the strictest sense, for evidently a very large proportion are lost and die ignorant of the truth. But all kinds of men, some kings, a few nobles, and rich men, but chiefly "the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom" (Jas. 2. 5; also see 1 Cor. 1. 26, 27). Of one point we are certain: that Paul in thus addressing the Athenians did not intend to violate the doctrines of particular redemption and divine election.

We allow that the doctrine of a sinner's impotence is strongly emphasised in our teaching. But we cannot admit the justice of the charge that we *formally* preach to the elect only. Insolently, some have not feared to caricature our ministry as manifesting a fear lest too many will be saved. Others have said we condemn all who "follow not us." We appeal in the sight of God to our consciences and solemnly declare that we endure the stigma of "narrow-mindedness" solely from a desire to be faithful watchmen, and with a dread of deceiving sinners into grasping the phantom of a helpless Christ desiring to save them if they will but permit Him to do so, or of encouraging the impenitent to hope for immunity. Toplady had not so learned Christ, or he could not have sung:

"Hail, mighty Jesus! how divine
Is Thy victorious sword!
The stoutest rebel must resign
At Thy commanding word.

"Deep are the wounds Thy arrows give;
They pierce the hardest heart;
Thy smiles of grace the slain revive,
And joy succeeds to smart. (H. 194)

"Whosoever will" is probably as discriminating a phrase, descriptive of a conquest of grace, as any in the whole Bible. Yet the Arminian founds upon this his noisy and frequently irreverent "gospel offer." "Freely," "without money and without price," are terms which suit none but bankrupts and thirsty people (Rev. 22. 17; Isa. 55. 1). No violence was offered Peter's will or affections when Christ said to him: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in Me." Love had conquered him. Free grace and free will met there in concord, but free grace the forefather: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Thus again Watts:

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin." (H. 440)

So we believe every child of God is conquered in will, affections and understanding. Christ must do all and be all. “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3. 30) is the Christian’s rule. Attraction and need meet when Christ is revealed to the sensibly-guilty sinner. He grudges not then to be indebted altogether to the grace of God in Christ for life and salvation. “Not unto us” – not to our good free-will or any other act or qualification in us – “but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake” (Psa. 115. 1). That is the Christian’s grateful song.

(To be concluded)

SECRET PRAYER, A VITAL WORK OF THE GOSPEL MINISTER

An extract from Charles Bridges (1794-1869)

But far more important is retirement for the minister’s communion with his God. We fear that Luther’s custom to give his three best hours of the day to this work, and Bradford studying on his knees, are more often alluded to than followed. Yet the diligent pastor will feel the importance, both to himself and to his people, of living in his study as well as in his parish;* not only for the necessary digestion of the subject-matter of his ministrations, but most chiefly for the cultivation of a nearer and more habitual access to God. How delightful is it to us, and how edifying to our people, to bring forth that Scripture as food to their souls, which the Spirit of God hath opened to our own hearts! Truths that are thus obtained and wrought out in prayer have a peculiar unction. “Waiting on the Lord” will never be an encouragement to indolence. In the habit of it, the weakest ministrations will be efficient – in the neglect of it the most powerful will be paralysed.

Indeed, the spirit of our ministry is a spirit of prayer. Prayer is the ornament of the minister, the leading feature of our character. Without prayer, a minister is of no use to the church, nor of any advantage to mankind. He sows; and God gives no increase. He preaches; and his words are only like “sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Cor. 13. 1). He recites the praises of God; while “his heart is far from Him.” It is prayer alone,** then, that gives the whole strength and efficacy to our different administrations; and that man ceases, if I may use the expression, to be a public minister from the time he ceases to pray. It is prayer, which supplies him with consolation in all his labours; and he celebrates the ordinances of religion, as the hireling performs his work – he considers them as a heavy task, or a severe imposition, if prayer

* Charles Bridges was a vicar in the Church of England.

** It must be understood that the writer has in view the spirit of prayer, which is by the Spirit of God. Ed.

doth not assuage [calm, soothe] its troubles, or console him for want of success.

If Solomon felt his need of heavenly wisdom to discriminate amongst his “great people,” and to devise and execute the best-conducted measures for their prosperity, do not we “go out and come in” before our people with far deeper responsibilities, and yet with the ignorance of “a little child” to “discern between good and bad”? The most eminent minister will be most ready to cry out, “Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart” (1 Kings 3. 7-9). For of how little avail are the most splendid talents, the most mighty eloquence, and the most devoted diligence, except the unction be brought down from heaven by frequent and fervent supplication!

Prayer therefore is one half of our ministry; and it gives to the other half all its power and success. Many can set their seal to Luther’s testimony, that he often obtained more knowledge in a short time by prayer, than by many hours of study. Living near to the fountainhead, we shall be in the constant receipt of fresh supplies of light, support and consolation – to assist us in our ministry.

COMFORT TO ONE “TOSSED WITH TEMPEST”

Extract from a conversation that Jane Gilpin had with Sukey Harley

A letter by John Bradford, the martyr, was read to her (Sukey Harley), inscribed, “A letter which he wrote to a faithful woman in her heaviness and trouble.” He says in it:

“How should God wipe away tears from your eyes in heaven, if now on earth you shed no tears? How would heaven be a place of rest, if you found it rest on earth? How could you desire to be at home, if in your journey you found no grief? How could you so often call upon God and talk with Him, if your enemy slept all day long? How should you elsewhere be made like Christ – I mean in joy – if you sob not with Him in sorrow? If you will have joy and felicity, you must have sorrow and misery. If you will go to heaven, you must sail by hell. If you will embrace Christ in His robes, you must not scorn Him in His rags. If you will sit at Christ’s table in His kingdom, you must first abide by Him in His temptations. If you will partake of His glory, forsake not His cup of ignominy.”

Sukey replied: “Oh! what a precious letter! Did you say that man lived three hundred years ago? Well, the Lord has had a people on earth from the beginning. When that dear man wrote the letter, the Lord knew how it would fetch comfort into my sorrowful soul so many years after. It was His doing, it was the Lord who instructed him, and taught him in the things in that letter; and it is He who sent it to refresh my soul.”

BOOK REVIEW

Letters of John Calvin; hardback, cloth with dust jacket; 316 pages; price £12; published by The Banner of Truth Trust and obtainable from Christian bookshops.

“Calvinism” is the label commonly applied to the systematic declaration of the doctrines of grace, and John Calvin is best known for his doctrinal works and his sermons. In addition he was a voluminous letter writer and The Banner of Truth also publishes Calvin’s *Tracts and Letters* as a seven volume set. This book gives a selected sample of Calvin’s letters, especially those related to the establishment of the Reformation in England. Calvin from his base in Geneva, Switzerland, wrote widely to statesmen and kings, to the nobility as well as to his friends and fellow reformers. He was a man deeply devoted to the cause of Christ, and the letters show his lasting affection and concern for his fellow Christians.

Letters which necessarily refer to other people can be difficult to follow when read years later by those unacquainted with the times in which they were written. This book very helpfully includes footnotes explaining all the characters mentioned, and circumstances relevant to the occasion, as well as a brief biography of Calvin at the beginning to put everything in context. It is very well presented.

What of the letters themselves? It is not easy for those of us brought up in a nominally Christian country with the privilege of freedom of worship, fully to appreciate the times in which the reformers lived, most of whom had been brought up as Roman Catholics, and where there was little toleration for those who differed from the “status quo.” In this light the deep concern of Calvin for the establishment of the reformed religion outwardly by kings and others in authority was understandable. His letters to the English King Edward VI, for example, and his regent, the Duke of Somerset, showed both his thankfulness at the apparent outward prosperity of the gospel at the time, and his pleas that more might be done for its increase. But as the Lord Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17. 21), and it does not often flourish in times of outward prosperity; the pleasing appearances were shattered by the early death of the king and the accession to the throne of the persecuting Queen Mary. This resulted in considerable numbers fleeing from England to avoid the dangers, with many settling at Frankfurt and Geneva. But these churches were often beset by dissension concerning outward issues, which caused Calvin no little concern. Interspersed with these were personal things close to home, and perhaps the best of the letters were written to those under sorrow and suffering – his letters about the death of fellow Christians, and those written to five young men imprisoned at Lyons and awaiting their martyrdom. Calvin’s letters to his fellow reformers show a deep concern for them, but often there was perplexity at the doctrinal differences which were apparent. And to us there were strange inconsistencies – in writing to John Knox, for example, on issues about baptism, there was much discussion which had nothing to do with what the Bible says on the subject.

Overall this is a well-produced book which gives interesting sidelights on a godly man’s life – one who was much used in the outward establishment of the truth. Those with a deep interest in church history and able to follow the progression of changes would find it captivating; others less interested in

historical details and looking more for spiritual profit might be put off with so many letters on more mundane issues.

John A. Kingham, Luton

BEHOLD, THE ACCEPTED TIME

God the Father saith to God the Son, "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in a day of salvation have I succoured Thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6. 2).

(Concluded from page 232)

Behold, now is the accepted time;
 These guilty souls may run
 For refuge from the wrath to come;
 The Refuge is but one.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
 Now is the gospel nigh;
 Through Christ they are accepted all
 Who at His footstool lie.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
 Salvation is complete;
 Through Jesus, righteousness and peace,
 And truth and mercy meet.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
 Now Israel's Holy One,
 The mighty God, united is
 To human flesh and bone.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
 He hears His people's groans;
 And to His Father He presents
 Their cries, desires and moans.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
 Salvation is brought nigh
 To those who feel their lost estate,
 Who are condemned to die.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
 These guilty rebels may
 Come to Him with their desperate case;
 He will turn none away.

Behold, now is the accepted time
 Of which Isaiah wrote;
 Let us hold fast the truth of God,
 For errors are afloat.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
But not as some men say –
Dead sinners unto Christ can come,
Believe, repent and pray.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
But many here mistake –
They think the Lord has offered grace,
If man will but partake.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
But not as some expect –
They can accept the heavenly call,
Or, if they please, reject.

Behold, now is the accepted time,
Which many men misplace,
Who say they first must come to Christ
To accept His offered grace.

Behold, now is the accepted time,
Which is misunderstood;
Some think they can come when they please,
And wash in Jesus' blood.

Behold, now is the accepted time,
Which but few understand:
Some think repentance, faith and grace,
Are all at their command.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
This time is known to few;
Some think they shall accepted be
For something they can do.

Behold, now is the accepted time,
But few the meaning know;
They think the Lord accepts their works;
Indeed it is not so.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
Christ's work accepted was,
His life, His death, His suffering sweat,
And death upon the cross.

Behold, now is the accepted time;
The soul that's blessed with faith
In Jesus' work accepted is,
And saved from second death.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
SEPTEMBER 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER

“Let both grow together until the harvest” (Matt. 13. 30).

Let both the wheat and the tares grow together in the earth until harvest. What is meant by the wheat and the tares? The good and the bad. The righteous and the wicked. The clean and the unclean. The Lord’s seed and the enemy’s seed. The real believer and the false professor. The parable certainly suggests that there are wheat and tares in the visible church of God here below.

We see this illustrated in the family of Abraham, with a mocking Ishmael, and in Isaac’s family a profane Esau. We read of the disturbance that Rebekah felt in her womb, as Jacob and Esau struggled together within her. We realise that movement in the womb is a common and cheering experience, and a sign of life. But this was abnormal and caused Rebekah “to enquire of the LORD.” The Lord answered, “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels” (Gen. 25. 23). Such a doctrine of truth is most offensive to proud, rebellious and unbelieving man, but a sacred and comforting truth to humble, seeking believers on the earth, who are called to go out on pilgrimage to the “celestial city” (a term borrowed from Bunyan), or as the Apostle Paul expresses, “a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Heb. 11. 16).

When we see the crops and fruits of the earth being safely gathered in at this time of the year, it is good truly to examine ourselves as to where we really are, and as to what our secret business is. “All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4. 13). Is there “a sowing in tears” so that there will be “a reaping in joy”? In the Song of degrees, it is definitely stated, “They that sow in tears **shall** reap in joy” (Psa. 126. 5). The Lord will bring us from time to time to search our own hearts, that we may be stirred up to be prepared for our own harvest. John Kent wrote in verse,

“How stands the case, my soul, with thee?
For heaven are thy credentials clear?
Is Jesus’ blood thy only plea?
Is He thy great Forerunner there?”

It is clear from God's Word, that a lukewarm condition is a condition that God hates. The Laodicean church was in such a condition. She said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," yet knew not that she was "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3. 17). What a solemn condition, and how so much more it is, *not* to know it. We can so easily be engaged with all our mind and natural skills in the outward or secular part of church activity, and never be brought down as a broken-hearted sinner to the feet of the Lord Jesus, pleading the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The Apostle Paul exhorted the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13. 5). The psalmist of Israel prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psa. 139. 23, 24). Jesus said, "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12. 40).

"Pause, my soul! and ask the question,
 Art thou ready to meet God?
 Am I made a real Christian,
 Washed in the Redeemer's blood?
 Have I union
 To the church's living Head?" (H. 698)

This solemn consideration of two sorts of people growing together began in the family of Adam and Eve. Among the antediluvian ancients there were the righteous and the wicked. Some, we are clearly informed by the Word of God, to be righteous, such as Abel, Seth, Enoch and Noah. Others are clearly shown to be wicked, such as Cain and Lamech. And this great divide among the sons of men is only perfectly known to Almighty God. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9. 13). So this tremendous and wonderful work of grace cuts right through families, churches and congregations, communities, towns and villages, nations and continents. When the angels reap the earth at the second coming of Christ, there will be no mistakes!

We must emphasise that the parable of the wheat and the tares really teaches us that both grow together in the church of God. What a solemn and searching teaching it is. One thing is so very noticeable, that the tares are so very self confident of being right with God. They have no thrusts or threats from the enemy of souls, neither do they really know what the spiritual trial of faith is, by the searching and humbling hand of God upon them. "The LORD trieth the righteous" (Psa. 11. 5). The tares scorn a tried believer who is being searched out as to the reality of his religion. The wheat know what it is to groan within themselves, as the

Apostle Paul did: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7. 24). In Romans chapter 7, the apostle reveals something of the conflicts that true believers know of today. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.... I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7. 18-23).

One characteristic of the wheat is that they are not left to think of themselves more highly than they should think, but think soberly according to the grace given (see Rom. 12. 3). They are by the teaching of God well acquainted with their real poverty of spirit, and with a tender conscience given to them, feel the grief of their great sinnership. They are ready to take the lowest place, in contrast to the tares who, being so pleased with themselves, expect to take the highest place.

"They're vile and poor in their own eyes,
But Jesus' love they highly prize;
They never think they're laid too low
If Jesus on them pity show." (H. 978)

Another characteristic of the wheat is that they are often anxious as to the reality of their religion. They see so much of the plague within, they begin to wonder whether they are tares after all. Yet, as they have to cry to the Lord in their distresses, He in tender love and rich grace sweetly confirms their souls that they are His dear children. It is often a great matter with the wheat to be confirmed that they are planted by the right hand of God. The Lord says through the prophet that they are "called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD" (Isa. 61. 3). Jesus, speaking of the tares, said, "Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15. 13). The wheat are greatly exercised to "be found in Him." The tares have no qualms, but are cocksure that they are among the righteous. Anne Steele expresses:

"Here let me search my inmost mind,
And try its real state to find,
The secret springs of thought explore,
And call my words and actions o'er.

"Be this my great, my only care,
My chief pursuit, my ardent prayer,
An interest in the Saviour's blood,
My pardon sealed, and peace with God." (H. 1085)

In spite of all the temptations and conflicts of the dear saints, they truly know in whom they believe, and are favoured with sure tokens of His love and mercy toward them. When the Lord blesses a man in his soul, he is indeed blest, and he dare not deny it, in spite of all the fiery trial that tries him. And so the dear saints who are the wheat have to press on toward heaven, calling upon the Lord Jesus, whom they firmly believe to be the blessed One. The sure work of God in their souls enables them to wrestle on, feeding and confirming them in the faith. Jesus makes Himself so very precious to them. They can come in with John Newton:

“’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
 And grace my fears relieved;
 How precious did that grace appear
 The hour I first believed!” (H. 198)

What a most amazing surprise awaits the wheat, as they are gathered safely into the heavenly garner above, and see Jesus face to face.

“Soon shall I pass the gloomy vale;
 Soon all my mortal powers must fail;
 O may my last expiring breath
 His loving-kindness sing in death!

“Then let me mount and soar away
 To the bright world of endless day,
 And sing with rapture and surprise,
 His loving-kindness in the skies.” (H. 9)

THE PURGING OF SINS

*Sermon preached by Charles Herbert Frost at Rehoboth Chapel,
 Swindon, on Thursday, June 23rd, 1955*

Text: “Who ... when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1. 3).

One great object that the apostle had in his heart in writing this Epistle to the Hebrews was to exalt a precious Christ, to lift Him up – knowing what Jesus had made Himself to be to him – to lift Him up above everything else, and to direct these Hebrews to the Lord Jesus. He warns them solemnly against apostatising from the faith; even tells them that there are some whom it is impossible to renew unto repentance (see Heb. 6. 4-6). He urges them to living faith in all its gracious actings upon a precious Christ. He does not leave them in ignorance as to what true, living faith is, or as to what it has accomplished and does accomplish.

It is no small mercy to be instructed in these things in our days, in these times – you and me – by the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit of God. I do believe that everything that we can possibly know or receive that can be saving at all we must receive by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit of the living God in our hearts. As you well know, it is not a notion of the truth that will do; it is not just merely having the knowledge in our natural minds that there is such a thing as apostatising from the faith; it is not merely being enabled to speak of what faith is and what it has accomplished and does accomplish in those who have it; but it is to be in possession of these things ourselves; it is for our hearts to be taken in hand, as it were, by the living God, and by the gracious power of the Holy Spirit communicating the truth as it is in Jesus to us, putting us into possession of the truth in its saving grace and power and nature. It is this that we stand in need of, and indeed it is this that we must have if we are going to get safely to heaven at last. To me it just seems to resolve itself of late in those words of the hymnwriter:

“An interest in the Saviour’s blood,
My pardon sealed, and peace with God.” (H. 1085)

What greater thing could there be? What greater display to sinners of the grace and mercy and salvation of God could there possibly be than this, that the unworthy, guilty, wretched sinner is drawn, constrained, and finds, not unwillingly, a place at the feet of Christ, beneath the droppings of His most precious blood? I say, really, if you gather up everything that you need or think you need, everything that God has done for you, both in providence and in grace, is not this the greatest blessing: to realise and feel that He has forgiven our sins and iniquities, blotted out our transgressions in the dear Person and finished work and wondrous atonement of His only begotten Son? I say, to the sinner humbled at the feet of God, to the believing heart blessed with a living realisation of an interest in Jesus, this is the greatest of all good; and possessing it he knows, and blesses God for it, that he has that in his heart which will never leave him, which will stand him in good stead through all the difficulties, afflictions and trials of the rest of the pathway, and stand him in good stead when he yields up his soul to God.

I know, and so do you, there are many of our fellow-creatures who do not understand, and do not want to understand, such words, many who are so blindly bold in the unbelief of their nature and the enmity of their carnal minds, as to say, “I neither know anything about it nor do I want to know. Give me my little world; let me have my pleasures; give me the things that will occupy my mind even though they must be renewed over and over again; but give me those things in which my carnal mind and natural heart can have full, unbounded and unhindered sway. And as for

Christ and salvation and heaven – plenty of time for that!” How solemnly will such be awakened one day if grace prevent not! How many there are who will call upon the rocks and the mountains to hide them from God! (see Rev. 6. 16). You think of this – how many there are who will seek death [annihilation] and never be able to find it!

How the apostle commences this Epistle by speaking to the Hebrews of God. It is a wonderful thing to know God. “This,” said Jesus, “is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17. 3). The apostle gathers up in a few words the mighty acts and wondrous words of God in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, as though we can seem to trace in these few words every act of God under the old dispensation toward His people, that it was God, the living God, the almighty God, who spake in time past thus unto the fathers. As we have said before, God’s servants, the prophets, came forth from the presence of God with His word, and came from God to the people; and this, largely, is how God spake unto the fathers.

But he says, He “hath in these last days...” (verse 2). This is, perhaps, rather a fleshly thought, but if it was so in the days of the apostles, if they were ready to conclude *they* lived in the last days, what shall we say? “In these last days.” We wonder sometimes, with all the awful things that happen and have happened in our days, whether God will not rise up and sweep us as a guilty nation from off the face of the earth with one stroke.* We wonder sometimes! His holy name is despised; His things are rejected; His day is desecrated; the world and the so-called pleasures of it, and the profits of it, too, are all set up in the place of, and before, God; and we do believe sometimes that we must be in those last days.

But doubtless the apostle felt how wonderful it was that even in those days God had spoken unto His people by His Son, and what wondrous condescension on the part of God that He should speak – and may we insert ourselves into this, as it were? – that He should speak, not only to them, but unto us *by His Son*? Here He is love, and here alone, and, as you know,

“Out of Christ, almighty power
Can do nothing but devour.” (H. 789)

O the mercy, the grace, the love, the compassion of God toward His poor people – and we hope, toward us – that He hath spoken unto us by His Son! My dear friend, have you a humble hope in your heart that you are not altogether out of this, but that you have heard something of the voice of God speaking to you, personally and individually, in and through His only begotten Son? It is a mercy of mercies to know it.

* This was preached over sixty years ago. What can we say of today! Ed.

In his desire to exalt a precious Christ, the apostle says, "Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things" (verse 2). Everything belongs to Jesus. Men say, "No." God says, "Yes." "Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things." "We see not yet all things put under Him. But we see Jesus" (Heb. 2. 8, 9). "By whom also He made the worlds." Christ was there, co-equal with the Father, speaking that creating word, exerting that creating power by which the worlds were made; and He was "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power." How great is this dear Son of God by whom we hope and believe God hath spoken unto us! Possessing, having all things; "upholding all things by the word of His power"; being co-equal and co-eternal with the Father; being very God and very Man. It is through this wondrous Person that God speaks to His people; and,

"Every grace and every favour
Comes to us through Jesus' blood." (H. 180)

If we know anything at all of God in a saving way and manner, we shall at times stand amazed that ever He should speak to sinners; that ever there could be such a Person as His almighty Son by and through whom He could speak to guilty worms of the earth. And this will be a greater marvel to us than that He should speak to His people, if He has spoken to us – poor, guilty, sinful you and me. I say, we shall stand amazed at it – wondrous grace, boundless mercy, everlasting love and compassion coming to us from the Father through the dear Person and finished work and Majesty of His dear Son! It will break our hearts, you know. It will bring us to be that broken-hearted, contrite sinner who creeps to the feet of the Lord Jesus and sees in Him all his salvation, his every hope of heaven, and of happiness for eternity. I say, we shall not keep a whole [unbroken] heart if we can feel within ourselves that God has spoken to us through this dear Person. It will endear Him to us; it will make Him to be more and more the Object of our first and greatest desire. We shall want to be found continually at His holy feet, drawing from His fulness, from the fulness that it hath pleased the Father should dwell in Him; drawing from His fulness grace for grace (see John 1. 16). And it will kill us for the world. We shall become "dead to the world by the body of Christ" (see Rom. 7. 4). He will have our hearts to some purpose if He speaks to us; and, remember, He never speaks in vain.

Were it not for the atonement and blood-shedding and salvation of the Lord Jesus, God could never speak in anything but judgment and condemnation to a sinner; but as He speaks through the dear Person of the Lord Jesus, He speaks something very different. You hear it often, how God comes to His people, in differing ways or means, or even by no

means, humanly speaking, God comes and speaks to His people. But He never would, neither could He, speak in mercy and in salvation to any sinner, were it not for the dear Person and sacrifice of His wondrous Son. I do feel that we do right – and we can do this only as we are enabled by the good Spirit of God – if we can receive from the Majesty of God the tokens of His love and mercy and of everlasting favour and kindness, and attribute it all to the mercy of God which can come to sinners only through the Person of His dear Son.

It is as though the apostle comes at once to this – at least regarding the salvation of our souls – this greatest work of the Lord Jesus: “Who ... when He had by Himself purged our sins.” Do you stand in need of purging? Do you sometimes go in all the honesty and tenderness of the fear of the Lord, and say with favoured David, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean”? (Psa. 51. 7). Night after night, as the days pass over us, do we feel our need of a daily cleansing of our souls? Are our garments always white? Do we never get them mudded up with sin and the spirit of the world and our own innate wickedness, and therefore have no need of cleansing? We cannot say that, can we? But the apostle seems as though he would attribute the speaking of God to His people to this great and mighty work of the Lord Jesus in purging our sins.

We are sinners. Some of you will say perhaps, in your minds, “You always tell us that.” Well, I feel it myself, you know. This is one of those things which are continually with me. Sin is mixed with all I do; “My all is nothing worth” (H. 959). We are sinners, and we are men of like passions with you. Do you feel your need daily? – sometimes taken by surprise, sometimes being overcome by the spirit of the world, and in your heart, leaving your dearest and best Friend, and going after your little idols until, maybe, the Lord stops you? O, I say, we are sinners! And God knows it, you see, and He will have us to feel it.

The fountain of Christ, the fountain of His most precious blood, stands ever open, full, and free. You may have said more than once,

“What shall I do, or whither flee,
To escape the vengeance due to me?” (H. 238)

There is one way and one hope of escape for the sinner.

Now we have often thought how kind it was in God to set up those six cities of refuge, three at one end of the land and three at the other,* and to lay the injunction upon the people that the road to these cities of refuge should be kept open so that the unwitting manslayer might flee to the city of refuge and find the refuge that God intended he should. And how much more a precious Christ! Ah, you and I poor sinners, needy, needy men and women, O how we should bless God – and we *do* bless

* There were three cities to the west of the River Jordan, and three cities to the east of the River Jordan. Ed.

God, that the fountain open stands. It is “a fountain filled with blood,” you know,

“Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.” (H. 160)

Do you know it? I say, *Do* you know it?

This was that which Jesus undertook to accomplish for His people, to save them with an everlasting salvation from their sins, and the ruin and eternal misery which was due to their sins, and which would be theirs but for Himself. As you know, there was a glorious covenant entered into, when the Father gave the church, individually and collectively, into the hands of His dear, co-equal Son; as though He said, “Now here they are; they are sinners, they are guilty, they are enemies to Me; there is nothing in them by nature that can give Me, the Creator, delight; but here they are, ‘a hardened herd, a rebel race’” (H. 153, second part) as Mr. Hart said. And Jesus took them. Christ entered into no blind bargain. He did not! He knew all that these people would be; He knew all the price that must of necessity be paid for their redemption, and was willing to give it. I say, He made no blind bargain. He came into this world. O the condescension of it! O the mercy, the love of it! He came into this world, very God and very Man. Ah, He stooped so low. If God has spoken to you and me, He will give us an understanding in our hearts in measure as to how low Jesus must stoop in order to pick us up. It was a low stoop, you know!

He came, and “offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9. 14). You know how He fulfilled the law and made it honourable, magnified it; how He was “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10. 4). You know how the prophet of old complained and said, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” – speaking of Christ “as a root out of a dry ground,” having “no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isa. 53. 1, 2); and yet speaking of His sufferings, of the stripes that were laid upon Him, speaking of how the Lord had caused to meet on Him the iniquity of us all. Does it attract your soul? Is there something in your heart that would love Him, if you could, for the great love wherewith you hope He has loved you? something in your soul that seems to bring you to want to lie, humbled and broken, at His holy feet, beneath His blessing, the manifestation of His love and kindness, and never to wander from Him any more at all? “Despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53. 3). But the government was upon His shoulder (see Isa. 9. 6). His dear name was “Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matt. 1. 23).

He came to do the work which His Father had given Him to do; and He could and did say, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17. 4). He came, as you know, to Gethsemane's garden and Calvary's cross, and there suffered as none ever could or did suffer, the Just for the unjust; and there, upon the cross, He opened that fountain that ever remains full, free, to the vilest, guiltiest sinner out of hell that lives to feel his need of it. There, by the shedding of His blood, by the emptying of Himself of life, He purged our sins, offered up that acceptable sacrifice to His holy Father on the behalf of all that He had given Him; and as He came to the bitter end – and it was a bitter pathway – He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19. 30). The work was done. The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And "the Saviour died, and by His blood brought rebel sinners near to God" (H. 984).

The cause of the greatest happiness of every living child of God is the application to them, in their very souls, of this precious, precious blood, and a realisation of their interest in this almighty and finished work of the dear Son of God, that their sins are purged with blood. You know what one said:

"Sprinkled with blood his conscience is;
He feels the sweets of sin forgiven;
While Jesus' spotless righteousness
Becomes his meetness now for heaven." (H. 908)

"When He had by Himself purged our sins."

Under the old dispensation, God laid down how and by what means He would be worshipped, and there were sacrifices and atonements and offerings for sin. None was excluded from the need of this under the old dispensation. But all these were types of this wondrous, almighty Son of God. If I may just say this for myself – I do not know how some of you feel about it, but I think one of the sweetest and most beautiful types of the Lord Jesus is the lamb. O what a dear Lamb of God He was! How favoured John was when he saw Jesus coming, and said to the people, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1. 29). Morning and evening, without variation, a lamb was offered, and on the Sabbath there were two lambs in the morning and two lambs in the evening. I believe by this God sanctified the Sabbath day above the other six days of the week. And O how wondrously it has spoken to some of us of this almighty, precious Son of God, the Lamb of God! "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9. 22). Almost all things under the law were purged by blood; and your guilty conscience and mine can never be purged from our sins, except by this precious blood. Do you say in your heart, "O may I have it? May I know it? O might it be mine?" Well, are you a poor, needy sinner, broken in heart and contrite in spirit? Are you one of whom the hymnwriter spoke when he said,

“Dear Lord, may I a mourner be,
Over my sins and after Thee”? (H. 263)

Well, not Satan himself will be able to keep you from Christ and His dear atonement when the time shall come that He will be revealed with power to your heart.

“When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” That is, He returned to His heavenly Father with the church in His holy hands, as it were, saved, saved from sin, death and hell, cleansed by His own blood-shedding, purged from all their guilt and sin by reason of what He accomplished for them. I say, He returned to His holy Father from whom He had come, and sat down, a triumphant, victorious, risen Saviour, having accomplished salvation, having brought in everlasting righteousness for every one that believeth; and, sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He sees “of the travail of His soul and is satisfied” (see Isa. 53. 11).

We live in the last days, but here and there a sinner is brought to repentance before God, and heaven rejoices, and I believe Jesus sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied – satisfied with His purchase, satisfied that He did not die in vain, satisfied that all the power of sin and Satan and hell is rightly, properly, triumphantly overcome; and the sinner, though dead, is quickened into divine life and brought to repentance before God.

And how is it with you and me? You see, we do want it to be personal, don’t we? I say, again, it is not the generality of religious things that will do us good. It is not the fact that we sit in our seats and look at one another of whom we comfortably believe that they are going to get to heaven. It is, are *our* sins purged? Does Jesus plead for us at the right hand of the Majesty on high? Do we come to Him for ourselves, by ourselves? and, pleading His dear atonement and finished work, are we able to feel and believe that He makes our cause His own, that there, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He *demand*s salvation for His people, and spreads His wounded hands?

“When He had by Himself purged our sins.” Ah, it was a proper purging. When the sinner is plunged beneath this sin-atonement flood, all his sin and guilt and shame is properly purged; he is cleansed from his iniquity; he stands then before the Majesty of God accepted, not for what *he* is – that can never be – but for what Christ has done for him; and in the realisation that this work of Jesus is applied to the benefit, the blessing of his soul, he is bold on occasion – I do not say you live here, but he is bold sometimes to say, “Jesus, I know, has died for me” (H. 96).

Can you forget, do you think you can forget the day when the forgiveness of your sins was sealed home to your soul, when you knew what the hymnwriter meant who said,

“Now I have found the ground wherein
 My anchor, hope, shall firm remain,
 The wounds of Jesus, for *my* sin
 Before the world’s foundation slain”? (H. 96)

I say, it is a proper cleansing. It is very effectual. We do not need it just once; we need it again and again. Satan may come to us, as he has often come to some of us, and say, “Now you have deceived yourself. The medicine is vain, because you are yet sick; you are a guilty sinner; you have been overcome; I have succeeded in my temptation; the spirit of the world has laid hold of you, and all that you said that you had experienced at one time regarding the forgiveness of your sins is only a cheat, and you have deceived yourself.” And what does that do for us? Why, it drives us to the fountain again. One said, “Its power may be proved again and again” (H. 155).

“When He had by Himself purged our sins.” Let us, you and me, give Him no rest day nor night if need be, and beg of Him that we might live – never mind what it may cost us – that we might live in a comfortable persuasion of our interest in His atoning blood and righteousness. We should live very near to Jesus then. We should be ever so much more like Him then. We should not be nearly so fond of ourselves then as we are now. O, I say, let us come to Him and beg of Him this special, this wonderful grace, that He would speak peace and pardon to our souls, purge our sins, and keep us in love at His sacred feet!

A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART

By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

(Continued from page 253)

I come now to another sign of a broken and contrite man.

2. And that is, he is a very sorrowful man. Thus, as the other is natural, it is natural to one that is in pain, and that has his bones broken, to be a grieved and sorrowful man. He is none of the jolly ones of the times, nor can he be, for his bones and his heart are broken.

i. He is sorry that he feels and finds in himself a pravity [depravity] of nature. I told you before, he is sensible of it, he sees it, he feels it; and here I say, he is sorry for it. It is this that makes him call himself, wretched man! it is this that makes him loathe and abhor himself; it is this that makes him blush – blush before God, and be ashamed (see Rom. 7. 24; Job 42. 6; Ezek. 36. 31).

He finds by nature no form nor comeliness in himself; but the more he looks in the glass of the Word, the more unhandsome, the more

deformed he perceiveth sin has made him. Everybody sees not this, therefore everybody is not sorry for it: but the broken in heart sees that he is by sin corrupted, marred, full of lewdness and naughtiness; he sees that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing; and this makes him sorry, yea, it makes him sorry at heart. A man that has his bones broken finds he is spoiled, marred, disabled from doing as he would and should, at which he is grieved and made sorry.

Many are sorry for actual transgressions, because they do oft bring them to shame before men; but few are sorry for the defects that sin has made in nature, because they see not those defects themselves. A man cannot be sorry for the sinful defects of nature, till he sees they have rendered him contemptible to God; nor is it anything but a sight of God, that can make him truly see what he is, and so be heartily sorry for being so. Now “mine eye seeth Thee,” said Job; now “I abhor myself.” “Woe is me! For I am undone ... for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6. 5). And it was this that made Daniel say, his comeliness in him was turned into corruption, for he had now the vision of the Holy One.

Visions of God break the heart, because by the sight the soul then has of His perfections, it sees its own infinite and unspeakable disproportion, because of the vileness of its nature.

This is the case: men by sin are marred, spoiled, corrupted, depraved, but they dwell by themselves in the dark; they see neither God, nor angel, nor saint, in their excellent nature and beauty; and therefore they are apt to count their own uncomely parts their ornaments, and their glory. But now, let such, as I said, see God, see saints, or the ornaments of the Holy Ghost, and themselves as they are without them, and then they cannot but be affected with, and sorry for, their own deformity. When the Lord Christ put forth but little of His excellency before His servant Peter’s face, it raised up the depravity of Peter’s nature before him, to his great confusion and shame, and made him cry out to Him in the midst of all his fellows, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5. 8).

This, therefore, is the cause of a broken heart; even a sight of divine excellences, and a sense that I am a poor, depraved, spoiled, defiled wretch; and this sight, having broken the heart, begets sorrow in the broken-hearted.

ii. The broken-hearted is a sorrowful man, for that he finds his depravity of nature strong in him, to the putting forth itself to oppose and overthrow what his changed mind doth prompt him to. “When I would do good,” said Paul, “evil is present with me” (Rom. 7. 21). Evil is present to oppose, to resist, and make head against the desires of my soul. The man that has his bones broken may have yet a mind to be industriously occupied in a lawful and honest calling, but he finds by

experience that an infirmity attends his present condition, that strongly resists his good endeavours; and at this he shakes his head, makes complaints, and with sorrow of heart he sighs and says, “I cannot do the thing that I would” (see Rom. 7. 15; Gal. 5. 17).

I am weak, I am feeble, I am not only depraved, but by that depravity deprived of ability to put good motions, good intentions and desires into execution, to completeness. Oh, says he, I am ready to halt, my sorrow is continually before me.

You must know, the broken-hearted loves God, loves his soul, loves good, and hates evil. Now, for such an one to find in himself an opposition and continual contradiction to this holy passion, it must needs cause sorrow, “godly sorrow,” as the Apostle Paul calls it. For such are made sorry after a godly sort. To be sorry for that thy nature is with sin depraved, and that through this depravity thou art deprived of ability to do what the Word and thy holy mind doth prompt thee to, is to be sorry after a godly sort; for this sorrow worketh that in thee, of which thou wilt never have cause to repent; no, not to eternity (see 2 Cor. 7. 9-11).

iii. The broken-hearted man is sorry for those breaches that by reason of the depravity of his nature, are made in his life and conversation. And this was the case of the man in our text. The vileness of his nature had broken out to the defiling of his life, and to the making of him at this time base in conversation. This, this was it that did all to break his heart.

He saw in this he had dishonoured God, and that cut him: “Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight” (Psa. 51. 4). He saw in this he had caused the enemies of God to open their mouths and blaspheme; and this cut him to the heart. This made him cry, “I have sinned against Thee, Lord.” This made him say, “I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin” (Psa. 38. 18).

When a man is designed to do a matter, when his heart is set upon it – and the broken-hearted doth design to glorify God – an obstruction to that design, the spoiling of this work, makes him sorrowful. Hannah coveted children, but could not have them, and this made her “a woman of a sorrowful spirit” (1 Sam. 1. 15).

A broken-hearted man would be well inwardly, and do that which is well outwardly, but he feels, he finds, he sees he is prevented, prevented at least in part. This makes him sorrowful; in this he groans, groans earnestly, being burdened with his imperfection.

You know, one with broken bones has imperfections many, and is more sensible of them too, than any other man; and this makes him sorrowful, yea, and makes him conclude, “that he shall go softly all his days, in the bitterness of his soul” (see Isa. 38. 15).

(To be concluded)

CONFESSION WITH ENCOURAGEMENT

Manningford Bruce,
Wiltshire
January 1st, 1970

Dear Friends,

I am a poor correspondent, but felt I desired to write a few lines. There are so few one can really write to with freedom, and I am so tempted on the point of correspondence.

Only as the Lord grants the welling up within can I put pen to paper, when like the psalmist I can say (within), "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Psa. 45. 1).

Although I cannot say anything good of myself, yet I would desire to exalt the Lord Jesus. In the midst of all that saddens, grieves and perplexes our spirit, there is at times a looking beyond, to see by the eye of faith, "The Lord reigneth." What a check it has been to my unbelief and peevishness. Like the fool, my heart sometimes says, "There is no God" (Psa. 14. 1), but O how the naughtiness of heart has to be brought down!

When we are reduced to beggary, then we feel our need, and cry for help to Him alone who can supply our needs (I mean spiritual needs). Till then, we rest satisfied in a name to live, while dead. It is, I feel, a most dangerous condition, to think all is well, when nothing is moving God-ward. I have felt like the man in the parable, who said, "I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed" (Luke 16. 3). But the Lord is determined His people shall importune, so He deals with their pride, and I would submit.

I am very stubborn, and need much correction, but would render praise to the Lord for taking me in hand, and not leaving me to my own heart's inclinations. I hope I can echo the words of the hymnwriter:

"For this correction render praise;
'Tis given thee for thy good.
The lash is steeped He on thee lays,
And softened in His blood." (H. 871)

We have been helped through thus far, and we often think and speak of you, and beg that you may be helped and strengthened in your labour of love, for I believe it is.* The Word of God says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. 25. 40).

Your needs will be many, but there is ever a fulness in the Lord Jesus Christ, to answer those needs. May He help you to seek and to

* This refers to their loving care of an aged church member.

find. I daily feel my weakness in this respect, so prone to look to self or something base.

We have just entered upon another year, and 1969 with all its ills, fears, sin and woe we cannot obliterate – no new year resolutions will help us. But what a mercy if we can look back and see a spot here and there where the Lord appeared for us, and granted fresh strength to continue, and we say with the poet,

“And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?” (H. 232)

May you both be helped and supported under all.
With Christian love,
Yours sincerely,

Elsie S.A. Kinderman

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

By Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

“The gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20. 24).

What does the word “gospel” signify? Gospel is a good old Anglo-Saxon word, sprung from that pure Anglo-Saxon stock which forms the bulk, as well as the most expressive and precious portion of our noble language, of that language of which the daily lengthening line is gone throughout all the earth, and its words to the end of the world, our mother tongue, in which God seems to have set a tabernacle for the Sun of the gospel, whose going forth is from the end of the heaven and its circuit unto the ends of it. Its literal meaning is either “God’s word” or message, or rather, “good news,” or “good tidings,” which is more agreeable to the original.

But if it be “good news,” it must be good news of something and to somebody. There must be some good tidings brought, and there must be some person by whom, as good tidings, it is received. In order, then, that the gospel should be good news, glad tidings, there must be a message from God to man, God being the Speaker, and man the hearer; He the gracious Giver, and man the happy receiver. But if the gospel mean good news from heaven to earth, it can only be worthy of the name as it proclaims grace, mercy, pardon, deliverance and salvation, and all as free gifts of God’s unmerited favour. Otherwise, it would not be a gospel adapted to our wants; it would not be good news, glad tidings to us poor sinners, to us lawbreakers, to us guilty criminals, to us vile transgressors, to us arraigned at the bar of infinite justice, to us condemned to die by

the unswerving demands of God's holiness. And as it must be a gospel adapted to us to receive, so must it be a gospel worthy of God to give.

This gospel then, pure, clear, and free, is good news or glad tidings, as proclaiming pardon through the blood of Jesus and justification by His righteousness. It reveals an obedience whereby the law was magnified and made honourable, and a propitiation for sin by which it was for ever blotted out and put away; and thus it brings glory to God and salvation to the soul. It is a pure revelation of sovereign mercy, love and grace, whereby each Person in the divine Trinity is exalted and magnified. In it mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. As revealed in it, truth springs out of earth in the hearts of contrite sinners, and righteousness, eternally satisfied by Christ's obedience, looks down from heaven (see Psa. 85. 10, 11).

If you love a pure, a clear, a free gospel, "the gospel of the grace of God," you love it not only because it is so fully suitable to your wants, so thoroughly adapted to your fallen state, but because you have felt its sweetness and power; because it not only speaks of pardon, but brings pardon; not only proclaims mercy, but brings mercy; not only points out a way of salvation, but brings salvation, with all its rich attendant blessings, into your heart. It thus becomes "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1. 16).

FREE GRACE, FREE WILL AND THE FREE OFFER

By John Hervev Gosden (1882-1964)

(Concluded from page 260)

Scripture most solemnly convinces us that none but the elect will be saved eternally. From the same source of all truth we are no less convinced that none but the elect are ever duly concerned about their sinfulness before and against a holy God, or possess (by free gift) that "repentance to salvation not to be repented of" (2 Cor. 7. 10), or that living faith which worketh by love and purifieth the heart (see Acts 15. 9; Gal. 5. 6). Yet in our preaching we ever desire to remember that it is God and God alone who infallibly "knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2. 19). "Secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children" (Deut. 29. 29). We are compelled, however, to bear in mind the rule of discernment given to the church: "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7. 20), and, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2. 19). It is consequently our bounden duty to point out the fruits and effects of divine election as seen in the invincible work of the Holy

Ghost in calling “not ... the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9. 13), and to warn those who have no such fruits, of their danger, and that dying impenitent in their sins, they will be justly damned for ever. “Whom we preach, warning every man” (Col. 1. 28).

The Holy Ghost alone makes either warnings or invitations effectual. The power being God’s, when it is displayed, there redounds to Him all the glory of salvation. Said the apostle: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1. 16). Unspeakably solemn also is the truth that God will be glorified even in the condemnation of the finally impenitent, their inability and unwillingness either to keep the law or to repent and believe the gospel being not innocent infirmities, but part of their guilt and condemnation (John 3. 5, 18, 19; Rom. 9. 22, 23). When the Lord of life and glory commenced His personal ministry, the people of Nazareth “wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth,” but immediately He spoke of God’s sovereign discrimination, they were filled with wrath and thrust Him out of the city in a murderous attempt to cast Him down headlong from the hill (Luke 4. 16-29). By the pure and guileless lips of Immanuel, sin-serving professors were severely castigated: “Ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matt. 23. 33). The same holy lips tenderly invite heavy-laden, weary sinners to come for rest to Himself. Christ discriminated! But being all-wise, He was not liable, like poor, faulty ministers, to make sad the heart of those whom God hath not made sad, or to “strengthen the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life” (see Ezek. 13. 22).

What are known to the Puritans as the “common operations” of the Holy Spirit, we cannot here discuss. As a body we perhaps have not held this doctrine prominently, though personally we believe that there are such operations. The matter requires much serious thought in submission to the Word of God. It is not, perhaps, fundamental. But we emphatically repudiate the suggestion of some that the will of the creature determines whether, and, if so, when, those “strivings” of the Spirit shall terminate in His invincible and saving operations which occur sovereignly in none but the election of grace (see Acts 7. 51; 1 Thess. 1. 4, 5; Eph. 1. 19). Supernatural is that choice of Christ and His blessed ways which the renewed will is inclined and enabled to make, a choice arising from the day of Christ’s power exerted by the Holy Spirit (Psa. 110. 3), in consequence of the divine will which alone is essentially and absolutely free and determinate (see Eph. 1. 11; John 1. 13).

We are sure our esteemed contemporary (Mr. Colquhoun)* would not intentionally infringe the work of the Holy Ghost, nor contradict John

* A godly minister from Scotland who criticised some of our articles of faith. Ed.

16. 8; 1 Corinthians 2. 14, etc., but we cannot quite follow him when he says: "When God sends His gospel to sinners He addresses them as sinners so plainly that *everyone in the congregation may know his or her standing before God.*" Is there no difference between the natural conscience and the renewed? Is not the difference one of immeasurable consequence, as between life and death, between natural light and spiritual? That would be a most remarkable congregation (however small) in which every person knew and felt in the conscience their sinnership in the sight of a holy God, and trembled before Him in consequence. It would be a sight to gladden the heart of many a sorrowing minister to find one in ten thus brought to know, feel and confess his guilty position before God. Such hearers have a wondrous influence on the pulpit, drawing out the breast of consolation from the ministry by the Holy Ghost: "If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul" (Isa. 58. 10). Sacred is the correspondence between the pulpit and the pew in such instances. But this is not the indiscriminate free offer!

We perfectly agree that God deals with His people as rational beings. Man's possession of a soul with rational faculties – will, affection, understanding – differentiates him from the irresponsible brute and entails his accountability. Nor does grace destroy these faculties, but renews them: enlightening the understanding with spiritual light (the "light of life"), engaging the affections, and inclining the will. But even when grace supplants the reign of sin, there remains a sinful nature which nothing but death will eradicate. Hence Paul: "To will is present with me; but ... when I would do good, evil is present with me" (Rom. 7. 18-21); and David: "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness" (Psa. 119. 36). There is more difference between a dead, calculating, religious theorist and a true Christian, than between a mechanical toy and a living creature, though the artificiality of the toy is easier to detect than that of the nominal Christian.

Unless God quicken the soul into divine life, what is known about the spirituality of the law? Are not saving faith and godly repentance of a definitely higher order than mere rationality? Whatever moral benefit amongst men may be incidental to a religious profession based on rational assent to the gospel, such professors (however orthodox) are, as before God, but "alive without the law" until effectual conviction comes, as it came to Paul, killing him (to his own merit and righteousness). Until then he was dead in religion. Now, being killed, he is made alive by the gospel, and he received, not a free offer, but the revelation of Christ in him and an assurance of redeeming love (Rom. 7; Gal. 1. 15, 16; 2. 20). May we, with him, be constrained to say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me!"

We might illustrate our subject by the case of the Israelites in the wilderness. Because they had sinned, “The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died” (Num. 21. 6). Did Moses at God’s command offer indiscriminately to all the Israelites the remedy provided for those who were bitten? Did he *offer* it to *any*? (We realise that the type must not be carried too far.) Scripture tells us that Moses set upon a pole the brazen serpent which God commanded him to make, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived (Num. 21. 4-9). It does not seem evident that any offer of the cure would have availed those of the people who had already died! And it is obvious that an offer to those not bitten would have met with scornful refusal, being not needed. We are not informed that he offered it even to those with the deadly venom in their veins, but that Moses set it up that they might look upon it.

Christ being lifted up in the holy Oracles and in the ministry, even as He was lifted up on the cross in His precious, sin-atonement death, is the sacred Antitype, drawing “all men” to Himself, that is, all classes of men: high and low, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, young and old: that innumerable multitude (numbered by, and individually known unto, God) which John saw (Rev. 7), a blood-bought, blood-washed holy company! Emmanuel’s own attractions are invincible to every sensible sinner to whom is granted a sight of Him in the gospel. He is so exactly suited to them, so entirely sufficient for them, that their whole soul goes out to Him in confession, prayer, trust and worship. Ah, a view by faith of the mystery of the cross is immeasurably more impelling to the sin-sick soul than the moral suasion of unconditionate [unconditional] offers of the gospel, however eloquently made. What to the dead and unconvinced is little more than a religious sentiment or cold theory, is to the broken-hearted sinner a very sacred and heart-moving spectacle. But, sad to say, few are experimentally stung to death; and the whole need not the physician, but the sick. We cannot refrain from quoting our favourite hymnwriter’s (Joseph Hart) striking lines on the subject; in them is more unctuous gospel truth than in hundreds of our poor preachments:

“When the chosen tribes debated
 ’Gainst their God, as hardly treated,
 And complained their hopes were spilt,
 God, for murmuring to requite them,
 Fiery serpents sent to bite them;
 Lively type of deadly guilt!

“Stung by these, they soon repented;
 And their God as soon relented;
 Moses prayed; He answer gave:
 Serpents are the beasts that strike them;
 Make of brass a serpent like them;
 That’s the way I choose to save.

“Vain was bandage, oil, or plaster;
 Rankling venom killed the faster;
 Till the serpent Moses took,
 Reared it high, that all might view it;
 Bid the bitten look up to it;
 Life attended every look.

“Jesus, thus for sinners smitten,
 Wounded, bruised, serpent-bitten,
 To His cross directs their faith.
 Why should I, then, poison cherish?
 Why despair of cure, and perish?
 Look, my soul, though stung to death.

“Thine’s alas! a lost condition;
 Works cannot work thee remission,
 Nor thy goodness do thee good.
 Death’s within thee, all about thee;
 But the remedy’s without thee;
 See it in thy Saviour’s blood.

“See the Lord of glory dying!
 See Him gasping! Hear Him crying!
 See His burdened bosom heave!
 Look, ye sinners, ye that hung Him;
 Look how deep your sins have stung Him;
 Dying sinners, look and live.” (H. 876)

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Berachah,
 64 Postley Road,
 Maidstone.
 1947

To Mr. J.H. Gosden

My dear Pastor,

The desire is upon me to tell you a little of my exercises on Tuesday evening and since. Never can I express my feelings under the ordinance. As you showed forth the awful majesty of Jehovah-Jesus, my soul fell prostrate at His feet. I saw by faith the Son Incarnate agonising on the cross under the wrath of God. I could scarcely bear the sight; it was too awful and glorious. Falling on my face in soul-feeling, I said, “Dare I put my foot on such holy ground!” Thanks be unto His glorious grace, I went forward with a conscience void of offence, but O with such a

trembling venturing faith. "Ashamed of Jesus?" seemed in no wise suitable to the spot my soul was in. When "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," burst forth, my heart burst forth in sacred harmony: "Yes, praise Him! praise Him for His tremendous stoop!" It seemed all too holy for a mortal to touch.

On returning home, my sister said, "What a beautiful service!" I said, "It was awful in glory and majesty." As I lay awake during the night with this sacred awe upon me, the words so sweetly dropped into my heart: "She touched the hem of His garment." The next day this was opened, unfolding more and more, discovering to me that this was my spot at the sacred ordinance at the feet of the glorious God-Man by faith in His precious atonement.

Yesterday morning when on my knees, the Lord brought again before me with fresh anointing His first visit to my soul. It was an abundant, ever-flowing blessing. In the afternoon dear Mrs. F. and Mrs. R. called, and I believe we enjoyed an hour's real uniting of spirit in the worship of God. When I mentioned to Mrs. F. the touching of the hem of His garment, she said with astonishment, "Why, that is where I was too!" I said, "We met at the feet of Jesus." We seem to be joined in heart very closely to each other. She said she felt that night: "We shall be in heaven together: two sinners saved by grace."

I believe it could be said in sacred solemnity, that God was in that place on Tuesday night. O how I do desire to live wholly to Him and upon Him! His goodness is unspeakable. The wonder of His bringing us to Maidstone and placing us under your pastoral care, seems to overwhelm one at times. The Lord does use you for His people's good. May He more and more bless you, and continue to pour in that you may pour out into our hearts.

With warm Christian affection.

Edith Oliver



God looks not at the elegancy of your prayers, to see how neat they are; nor yet at the geometry of your prayers, to see how long they are; nor yet at the arithmetic of your prayers, to see how many they are; nor yet at the music of your prayers, nor yet at the sweetness of your voice, nor yet at the logic of your prayers; but at the sincerity of your prayers, how hearty they are. There is no prayer acknowledged, approved, accepted, recorded or rewarded by God, but that wherein the heart is sincerely and wholly. The true mother would not have the child divided. God loves a broken and a contrite heart, so He loathes a divided heart. God neither loves halting nor halving.

Thomas Brooks

FRIENDLY COMMUNION

Lyndale,
Everleigh Road,
Haxton, Netheravon,
Salisbury, Wilts., SP4 9PT
September 18th, 1986

Tel. no: Stonehenge 70731

Dear S. and J.,

Thank you very much for your letter. It is really so kind and thoughtful of you. I am expecting my twin sister and husband, D.V., next week from Thursday to Saturday, to give me a hand and do some jobs, etc., which will be a great help. Also they will hope to be at Upavon on Friday evening for the service, if all is well, so that will be nice too. I will bear in mind your very kind offer and will not hesitate to ask you. In any case you are both very welcome to come and visit us whenever you like. I do not mind staying in with my dear William at all, but he likes me to go to the services, and of course I have the shopping to do, but I only pop down the village and occasionally to Pewsey. We have had some good services lately, haven't we? I know we ourselves do not always feel the same – and sad to say sometimes inwardly blame the ministers, instead of looking within!

The other Sunday morning before going to chapel, I read one of J.C. Philpot's sermons on "Brethren, Farewell" – you may have read it. It is a *good* sermon, it really is. My William is fond of reading, which is a blessing, although he mourns over his "poverty." I often think of dear old Miss Fortune, late of Studley. She used to say, "The Lord keeps me on short rations." She was *so* quaint, but a godly soul. These pillars removed are greatly missed amongst us. But we have to come to our own selves – no one can stand for us – and sure we are fast hastening to our eternal home – where will it be! O to endure to the end, as Mr. Kinderman used to say, to be brought *honourably* through. How far short *I* feel to come – *try* to pray, Lord, make *me* right and keep *me* right. But O, we would *desire* to honour Him in all we say or do. My nature opposes – what *can* we say!

Well, I wish I could convey better health news of my dear William. – he suffers so much pain – we do hope and pray there will be these trials sanctified.

He joins with me in love to you both.

Elsie and William Durnford

THE GOSPEL STANDARD TRUST
53RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Report of the Meeting held at Hope Chapel, Redhill, on Saturday
 afternoon, May 18th, 2019*

The well-attended meeting commenced with hymn 1005. The Chairman, Mr. D.J. Christian, then read John 1. 1-18 and Mr. S.A. Hyde engaged in prayer. The Secretary then introduced the 2018 Annual Report and Accounts. He explained the Trust's activities were divided into two parts, General and Publications, and 2018 had proved a very busy year on both sides. He expressed thankfulness to the Lord for the guidance and strength given to help over thirty chapels. The cost of professional advice required during 2018 had amounted to over £43,000. Much of that related to chapel sales, provision of pastors' houses, work relating to trusteeships and first registrations of land with the Land Registry.

He advised new trustees to ensure they obtained a copy of the trust deed and were aware of their responsibilities before they were appointed. Since January 2018, a further eight chapel trusts had appointed the Trust as Holding Trustee for Land Registry purposes. Sadly, chapel sales had continued, and in 2019 the sales of Haslingden, Canterbury and Providence Chapel, Croydon were completed. The Charity Commission's help in agreeing to make the sale proceeds fully distributable was much appreciated. The purpose of the Croydon Trust Fund was to "advance the Christian religion for the public benefit in accordance with the doctrines of the Gospel Standard Strict and Particular Baptists." So that purpose would permit other Gospel Standard charities as well as chapels to benefit. The Providence Chapel, Croydon Trustees would need to obtain and consider applications for help.

Primary responsibility for maintaining chapels in good order did rest with the occupying churches and congregations and they should really consider the funds available amongst themselves for necessary works before making application to Trust funds. The sale of Providence Chapel, Croydon, is particularly sad. Through the good hand of the Lord on Francis Covell and others, the chapel was opened in March 1848, at which he preached from Isaiah 66. 1, 2. Mr. Covell died in 1879, but the congregation still increased, and in 1890 the chapel had been enlarged to accommodate nearly six hundred people. The Secretary recommended any who had not read the life of Francis Covell to read the book *Six Remarkable Ministers*, which contains an account of his life.

He then turned to Trust Publications. The average number of books sold during the last two years had been around nine thousand. The *Miracles* series normally accounted for a good proportion of the sales,

followed by *Bible Doctrines Simply Explained*. He noted that J.C.Philpot's *Ears from Harvested Sheaves* and *Through Baca's Vale* had been sold for most of the Trust's existence, which showed what a help they were to the Lord's people. The four new books published in 2018 were listed on page 6 of the report and included the *Life and Ministry of Clement Wood*, sales of which were approaching five hundred copies. Alfred Dye's *Seeking the Mind of the Spirit* dealt with twenty-six difficult portions of Scripture. In the preface, Dr. M.J. Hyde had written, "The subject matter is vital – the correct use of the Holy Word of God We hope that the perusal of this book might prompt the reader to seek the meaning of what they read in the Bible more carefully. There is only one infallible Guide to the Scriptures – the Holy Spirit." It was noted that the market for our books is small, and with the discount given to booksellers, costs invariably exceeded income. However, the primary aim and desire was the profit of men's souls.

Mr. M.G. Bailey had retired from the Committee through ill health on September 7th, 2018, after twenty-two years of valuable service. His labour of love should not be forgotten, and the Secretary expressed the wish that he and his wife would know the Lord's presence during their remaining years.

Use of the excellent resources available at the Library was encouraged. The funds available were now down to only £7,029.

The Trust Committee would welcome new subscribers. The Trust was there to do what it could for the churches. Many different questions were raised from time to time and the Trust did its best to answer them.

One question was raised asking for further advice on the registration of churches' working funds with the Charity Commission. The Secretary confirmed the expectation that when the draft model constitution had been agreed with the Charity Commission, detailed instructions would be made available to the churches on how to make application and what was required.

The Report and Financial Statements were received by the Trust subscribers present. The three members of the Executive Committee retiring in rotation, Messrs. S.A.Hyde, T.J.Parish and J.A.Kingham, were re-elected. Additionally, the recent appointments of Messrs. E.R.C. Buss and R.A. Saunders to the Committee were confirmed.

The Chairman expressed sincere thanks to the Secretary for all the work he does, particularly with the amount of legal work and unusual cases that had arisen. He thanked the Publications Manager for all he did on behalf of the Trust and also thanked Mr. Kingham for all his help. The Chairman expressed appreciation to the pastor and friends at Redhill for their kind hospitality.

After hymn 20 was sung, Mr. H. Sant gave his address entitled, "Martin Luther on the Eternal Sonship of Christ."

Mr. Sant commenced by reading Psalm 2. In presenting his paper, he commented that the subject matter was most profound, touching on the two great mysteries of Holy Scripture – the mystery of God, that God is one, and God manifest in the flesh (see 1 Tim 3. 16). In his preparatory reading, Mr. Sant found true profit and proved, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet” (Psa. 104. 34). The doctrine of Christ’s Eternal Sonship is stated clearly in Gospel Standard Article 5. It is also stated in the fourth century Nicene Creed, from which he quoted. Some churches denied the doctrine in the mid-19th century, causing J.C. Philpot to contend so earnestly for the truth in his writings. With Mr. Philpot, this was not simply a matter of theological truth, but involved a real and vital experience of salvation such that in the closing words of his book, first published in 1861, he stated, “It is little to me what those may say and do who fight against the true and proper Sonship of the Lord of Life and Glory. It is not against us who seek to exalt His worthy name that they fight, but against Him whom the Father has set as King upon His holy hill of Zion, and to whom He has said, ‘Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee’” (Psa. 2. 7). Mr. Sant gave evidence that this doctrine is still causing controversy.

These references by J.C. Philpot to the second Psalm introduced us to Martin Luther’s writings on Christ’s Eternal Sonship. Mr. Sant began with Luther’s commentary on Psalm 2 and then moved on to his exposition of the Lord’s high priestly prayer in John 17. He read Psalm 2. 6, 7 and dwelt particularly on the words, “Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee,” and Luther’s comment on these words. The Apostle Paul quotes these words three times, two of which are in Hebrews. Then Mr. Sant read Hebrews 1. 5-8. In the light of this, Luther says of the second Psalm, “This Psalm is one of the most important Psalms of the whole Psalter, which is sufficiently proved upon the authority of the Apostle Paul, who when speaking of the divine generation says, ‘Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?’” He observed two things from Psalm 2. First, the proclamation of God in verse 6: “Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion.” It matters not that men dispute divine sovereignty, for all is settled; and that is the force of the word “yet.” God speaks, as in creation, or as at the raising of Lazarus, or into some poor sinner’s heart, and it is done.

Secondly, he observed the Person of Christ, and particularly the Eternal Sonship. In Psalm 2. 7 we have the Son’s response to the Father. Luther observes, “The words of the Father express an *only* (emphasised), an only begotten Son. He said unto Me *only* (again emphasised), saith Christ, not unto many, Thou art My *only* Son. Distinguishing most certainly by such remarkable and particular words this one especial Son

from all others, concerning which Psalm 89. 6 saith, ‘Who among the sons of God can be likened unto God?’” (note: the AV renders it differently). Luther said, “For Christ came to plant and establish that faith whereby men believe him to be the Son of God.” To Luther, the Eternal Sonship was a fundamental truth of the gospel. And from his writings we see his firm, sure and definite belief in the eternal generation of the Son of God. Here he identifies with the fathers of the early church. Luther declares, “How discerningly and worthily have all the holy fathers interpreted this passage, ‘This day have I begotten Thee.’ That is, say they, in eternity, for ... it is evident that ‘today’ is to be understood as God’s day, the day of eternity, which with God is all one day, a perpetual day.” Furthermore, Luther speaks of the “sum of Christ’s doctrine as the Lord saying ‘God the eternal Father begat Me from all eternity.’” Mr. Sant said that this is the highest article of our faith. This is the ground and chief article of the gospel and therefore it is that Satan so furiously attacks it.

He then turned to Christ’s high priestly prayer in John 17. In expounding verses 1-3 and specifically verse 3, Luther says, “Thus then you have this full and golden sentence as an article asserting that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Then on verse 5 Luther begins with, “Here again is a great and expressive text, concerning the divinity of Christ.” He then paraphrases the request that Christ is here making thus: “Dear Father, glorify Me who am Thine only Son from everlasting, of the same divinity, essence and glory with Thyself.” On verse 6, Luther speaks of Christ’s Eternal Sonship as a most difficult article of faith truly to believe, and one main reason is that Satan vehemently opposes it. We need to remember the temptations of the Lord and how Satan came with that question: “If Thou be the Son of God.” He also referred to verse 10 and then, in John 17. 24, observed how Christ does not make a request, but declares His sovereign will. He is equal with the Father and Their will is one and the same. In expounding this last clause, Luther paraphrases it thus: “They shall see this glory, that they may know that I am the Son; not as sent into the world, and born of a virgin, but as Thine only Son whom Thou hast loved from the foundation of the world...”

Mr. Sant then considered the people of God – “My holy hill of Zion” in Psalm 2. As King, Christ demonstrated His power by accomplishing the salvation of His people (see Daniel 9. 24) and by His Spirit effectually brings His redeemed to Himself (see Isa. 35. 10). Among those who have come to Zion (rather we should say, to whom salvation came) and experienced the blessings of salvation was Martin Luther. Mr. Sant believed that the secret of Luther’s greatness is to be seen in the way in which God worked the principles of the Protestant

Reformation into his soul's experience. As the historian Merle d'Aubigne makes plain, "Before ever the Reformation was unfolded in the history of Europe, it was rooted in the things that transpired in the heart of the reformer." Therefore, as with J.C. Philpot over three centuries after him, Luther's vehement contending for the truth of Christ's Eternal Sonship was not just a matter of orthodox doctrine, but was fundamentally experimental. He did also refer to Luther's commentary on Galatians and in particular 2. 20; also in 1. 16, the words, "To reveal His Son in me." Luther remarked, "It is an easy matter to say that the gospel is nothing else but the revealing of the Son of God, or the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and not the revealing of the law, but in the agony and conflict of conscience to hold this fast and to practise it indeed, it is a hard matter. Yea, to them also that be most exercised therein."

He realised that in the subject were things hard to comprehend, but it is precious truth concerning the doctrines of God and of the Person of Christ which Luther must have had in mind when he said, "Doctrine is heaven." He concluded with those final words of the second Psalm: "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." Amen.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Sant for his very able address. The meeting concluded with hymn 969 and the benediction.

D.J. Playfoot

Copies of Mr. Sant's full address are available from the Trust Secretary.

OBITUARY

Olive Winifred Ruth Perks, a member of the church at Hope, Stotfold, and formerly a member at Mount Zion, Watford and at Lakenheath, passed away on May 14th, 2018, aged 91.

Olive was born in 1926, the only daughter of Mr. F. Windridge, pastor of Ponsard Road Strict Baptist Chapel, North London, and his second wife Alice. Olive grew up under her father's ministry. She was very close to her father, and following his death she compiled and published the book, *His Great Goodness*, a biography of his life.

In her childhood years, Olive was a hater of discipline, but she learned Scripture texts which helped curb her natural exuberance. Ones she often made mention of were, "Thou God seest me" (Gen. 16. 13); "Even a child is known by his doings" (Prov. 20. 11); and, "Those that seek Me early shall find Me" (Prov. 8. 17).

When hearing her father talk with others, especially on the way home after a service, she considered them to be special people and desired to be like them. Yet she found the sermons irksome. She

continued like this until the age of nine years, when she had a vivid dream. It was a baptizing service and the words written over the pulpit were, "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3. 3). It had a great effect upon her and she awoke wondering what it meant. She kept a diary and wrote of the dream in it, concluding with the prayerful desire, "O that the Lord will bless me and call me by grace." This text never left her all her life and she desired to hear a sermon preached on it. That only came to pass in the latter years of her life and was most blessed to her.

When eleven years old, she had a fall at home resulting in a complicated fracture of her right shoulder. She regarded it a miracle that it healed. She was in hospital for many weeks. Yet it was a time which proved to be for the eternal good of her soul. After coming round after an operation and her parents had left her, she felt very alone. During the following days, the Lord showed her more fully her sins before a Holy God, and her fears were that if she would die, she would most certainly be lost. The devil tempted her that she was not one of the Lord's people. At this time, her Sunday school teacher sent her a *Little Gleaner* magazine. In it were the lines of a hymn based on the account of Queen Esther:

"I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try;
For, if I stay away, I know
I must for ever die."

It was a great encouragement to her. She prayed for the Lord to help her to seek Him and to save her.

In 1939, at the beginning of the Second World War, Olive was evacuated to Maulden (Bedfordshire) to live with Mr. E.J. Woodcraft and his family. The ministry of Mr. Woodcraft was greatly used by the Lord for the blessing of her soul. She referred to this time as "the golden days of my youth" when the "gospel was not in word only, but in the power of the Holy Ghost." She came to know the truth of the Scripture: "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21. 5). The Bible became a new Book. Many sermons of Mr. Woodcraft were blessed to her soul as she visited many chapels with him. Special times were had under such sermons on Psalm 38. 9: "All my desire is before Thee"; "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" (1 Sam. 17. 29); "Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4. 2). A sermon on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus was solemnly applied to her, especially on the "Great gulf, fixed" and the end of life.

Five years later, after the war ended, Olive went to St. Mary's Training College, Cheltenham, to train as a teacher. This college was

close to Providence Chapel where Mr. T.J. Lynch was pastor. They showed great kindness to her. After qualifying, she taught for eleven years until 1956 when she was married to Mr. Brian Perks by Mr. Woodcraft. At first she continued to worship at Ponsard Road Chapel with her aging parents who needed constant help, but later began fully to attend Mount Zion Chapel, Watford, with her husband and children (two sons and two daughters).

Olive had a long exercise regarding baptism. In 1950 (Easter Sunday) the words of Jesus to the woman of the city who washed His feet in Simon the Pharisee's house were powerfully applied to her: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." She said, "I was that woman and my heart was filled with love to my Saviour." Lines of hymn 212 (Gadsby's Hymn Book) were made very precious: "Now if we search to find our sins, our sins can ne'er be found." She also read similar lines in a hymn recorded in a *Little Gleaner* magazine and had marked it to be sung at her funeral. Each verse ended with the line, "Their sins cannot be found." She was much hindered in her exercise of baptism through trying circumstances at home, but was helped in coming before the church at Watford under the ministry of the late Mr. R.E. Sayers, the pastor at that time, through sermons on John 11. 36: "Behold how He loved him"; and Acts 8. 35, 36, especially, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" She was baptized in June 1970 at Mount Zion Chapel, Watford.

Olive and Brian had many a trying pathway in the continuance of the worship of God at the chapel in Watford where Brian was deacon. When Mount Zion Chapel closed, they moved to Lakenheath where an affordable bungalow, after much searching in many locations, became available for them. They joined in church membership at Lakenheath in 1992. Olive compiled a summary history of the church at Lakenheath. She expected to stay here for the rest of her life, but in the year 2000 she and her husband were affected by sermons by Mr. R.C.T. Warboys: "Ye have not passed this way heretofore" (Josh. 3. 4); and Mr. P. Warren (junior): "Go over this Jordan" (Josh. 1. 2), that gave them the exercise of "was there a move before them in this life?" After months of quite deep exercise, during which they had not spoken to anyone of it, I was asked to preach there on three consecutive Lord's day evenings. The Lord blessed His Word to them, especially through the text on a fourth occasion: "Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall" (Ruth 3. 18). Olive said, little did they know that I was to become their pastor for their final years.

Olive and her husband Brian returned to Hertfordshire to live in Letchworth in 2001, nearer their family. They began to attend Hope Chapel, Stotfold, and were led to join in church membership in the November. I proved Olive to be a most faithful, godly member of my

church, being a great prayerful support to me. She being a lucid letter writer, I received many an encouraging letter from her, especially when the preached Word had been made special to her. One such occasion was when the text was, "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (Dan. 12. 13). She was a true mother in Israel, having much prayerful concern for, and interest in, all members of the congregation, especially the younger ones.

Following the death of her husband, Brian, in 2015, her own health began to fail noticeably. In January 2017 she entered the Bethesda Home at Studley, Wiltshire, where she was lovingly cared for and benefited spiritually under the gospel ministry of Mr. G.D. Buss (pastor at Chippenham chapel). She spent a period of time in the hospital at Bath and was always ready for reading and prayer when visited.

I last visited her at the Studley Bethesda Home on May 3rd, 2018. She made very little conversation. She had lost all interest in this world. The reading of Psalm 103. 11, 12 was made a help to her: "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us." She became very poorly towards the end of the following week. Her family remained with her. In some agitation she often repeated, "Lord, I am ready now; I'm done with this life; let me go!" Towards her end, the Lord's servant Mr. H.A. Wallis, also a resident in the Bethesda Home, came into her room and read Psalm 73. He held her hand and prayed. She calmed down and fell asleep. It cannot be remembered if she spoke any more after this.

The evening of the next day (May 14th) there was a prayer meeting at the Bethesda Home. A senior member of staff asked if there was a hymn Olive would like to be sung. The hymn 212 was selected which contains the phrase: "Our sins can ne'er be found." She died shortly afterwards, called up higher to be for ever with her Lord. She came into the full realisation of the text given to her in her early years: "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3. 3).

She told me that she did not wish to have much said about her at her funeral service, her experience in general being summarised in Psalm 40. 5: "Many, O LORD my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." Her funeral was held at Hope Chapel, Stoffold, on May 29th, 2018 with interment at the cemetery of Clifton Strict Baptist Chapel in the grave of her late husband, to wait for the glorious resurrection, her soul being in eternal rest.

Graham E. Hadley

PARAPHRASE OF PSALM 136

Let us with a gladsome mind
 Praise the Lord, for He is kind,
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us blaze His name abroad,
 For of gods He is the God:
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

O let us His praises tell,
 Who doth the wrathful tyrants quell:
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

Who with His miracles doth make
 Amazèd heaven and earth to shake:
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

Who by His wisdom did create
 The painted heavens so full of state:
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

Who did the solid earth ordain
 To rise above the watery plain:
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

Who by His all-commanding might
 Did fill the new-made world with light:
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

And caused the golden-tressèd sun
 All the day long his course to run:
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

The hornèd moon to shine by night,
 Amongst her spangled sisters bright:
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, ever sure.

He with his thunder-clasping hand
 Smote the first-born of Egypt land:
 For His mercies aye endure,
 Ever faithful, over sure.

John Milton (1608-1674)

(To be concluded)

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

OCTOBER 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

THE GRACE OF JESUS FOR THORNS IN THE FLESH

“Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12. 7-9).

The Apostle Paul had been very favoured in his soul. Above fourteen years before, he had been blessed with an abundance of revelations, and had seen things that it was not lawful to declare to others. We are reminded of the word, “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2. 9). Although he had been so favoured in soul, he now proved the meaning in a spiritual sense of what Elihu said to Job: “Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge?” (Job 37. 16). The Preacher (Solomon) said, “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him” (Eccles. 7. 14). The Preacher also wrote something which is hard for us to receive and accept, that “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart” (Eccles. 7. 2). So both Job and Paul knew days of spiritual prosperity set against days of adversity, as the dear people of God also know in our own day and generation.

“A thorn in the flesh.” What the apostle’s thorn was, we simply do not know. We do not know whether the thorn was for life or if it was taken away later. It is wisely hidden from us. There has been conjecture throughout the ages, and many pronouncements as to what Paul’s thorn was. When the Scriptures are silent in detail, we likewise should be silent; for we are so liable to err, and may sin against the Lord by speaking things that are not true.

Here in England, where this piece is being written, we are familiar with the thorns of roses, the bramble (commonly called blackberry), the blackthorn and the hawthorn, and others besides. In the Levant (East-Mediterranean region) and other climes, there are numerous varieties of thorns, some large and some small.

The spiritual sense is the pain and inconvenience that thorns in our flesh cause us. Pilgrims here below have many thorns in their journey. Things that are so painful to them. Matters that are hard to bear. Things that are hard to live with and niggling worries. People can so often be a thorn. Troubles and worries in the business or workplace and afflictions that lay us low. Peculiar trials that are so debilitating and cast us down, and we wrongly judge that we would be more fruitful without them. Thorns can be a scathing ministry, a critical hearer, a watered-down gospel, a troublesome church member, a wayward son or daughter, a personal disability, or quarrelsome friends in Zion. In short, these are some of the many afflictions of the gospel, but the thorn is particularly felt when Satan takes great advantage of these afflictions, to add to our grief.

If we are enabled to keep our eyes on the Saviour when we feel our thorns, we are somewhat strengthened. But if we look at them in any other way than in gospel light, then they soon begin to rankle and fester into larger pains and sores. We then begin to complain and murmur, not recognising the hand of God. Festering sores begin to spread, and can soon become life-threatening. So a murmuring and complaining spirit, not recognising the good hand of God, begins to endanger our soul, as we grumble at God's hand upon us. O to recognise the good hand of God in our troubles, for nothing happens by chance in the life of a believer.

“All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please my heavenly Friend.” (H. 64)

“Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?” (Amos 3. 6). Elihu, reasoning with godly Job, said, “He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for His land, or for mercy” (Job 37. 13).

“The messenger of Satan to buffet me.” Satan is an inveterate, virulent and violent enemy to God's dear people. He is also the great destroyer of mankind in general. He is the cause of all evil. He takes great advantage of thorns sent by God, to stir up rebellion from within. Sadly and solemnly our fallen human nature is such fertile ground for his mischief. How he thrusts at and buffets the dear people of God in their sorrows: “If you were a child of God, this would not happen”; “Just look at your sins; surely God cannot help you”; “You are too wicked for the Lord to deliver you”; “It's no use praying, for you are beyond the Lord's help”; “Your religion is only emotion and imagination. Therefore you are a hypocrite, for the Lord sees the evil of your ways”; and many other thrusts and whispers they know and receive. We remember hearing how the first wife of the late Mr. Jabez Buss of Southill, Mrs. Mercy Buss, had ventured to tell a minister of a blessing she had received, and she said that afterward, “Satan gave me such a thrust.” Satan, in his pit, says

again and again of the people of God, “God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him” (Psa. 71. 11). No doubt, this was a prophecy of the sufferings of glorious Immanuel.

“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” It was good that Paul prayed about it, for Jesus said “that men ought always to pray.” The Lord did send a gracious answer, although it was not according to what would have been the will of the natural flesh of man. Here is gracious instruction to us in our day and generation. The Lord has promised to be gracious to us if we “ask any thing” in His name (see John 14. 14). We also are instructed to “ask any thing according to His will,” with the promise, “He heareth us” (1 John 5. 14). So may we be encouraged to ask according to the Lord’s teaching, believing that the Lord knows what is the best thing for us, and seek gracious submission to His good will for us. May we be blessed to judge Him faithful that promised according to the pattern of the faith of Abraham and Sarah (see Rom. 4; Heb. 11. 8-19).

“In all His holy, sovereign will,
He is, I daily find,
Too wise to be mistaken, still
Too good to be unkind.” (H. 7)

“And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” This must bring us to the place that Isaiah showed: “Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength” (Isa. 45. 24). The apostle confessed earlier in this Epistle, “But our sufficiency is of God” (ch. 3. 5).

“Power and love in Christ combine,
An able, willing Saviour too;
Is He a Sun? On thee He’ll shine.
Is He thy God? He’ll bring thee through.” (H. 1028)

What an everlasting fulness of all-sufficient grace is stored up in the Lord Jesus. Because He loves His people, He leads them in a path where they truly need Him, and He loves to hear their bleatings for His grace and help while they live here. He is indeed “the children’s bread,” and it is for dogs also (see Matt. 15. 22-28). What rich grace is in the Lord Jesus for poor, wretched sinners, with their various thorns. So may we truly call upon the Lord Jesus for all the help, mercy, strength, support and love that we so much need.

“Give me a calm, a thankful heart,
From every murmur free;
The blessings of Thy grace impart,
And make me live to Thee.
“Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine,
My life and death attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey’s end.”
(H. 1010)

FAITH'S ANSWER IN PERPLEXING TIMES

Sermon preached by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom, at Gower Street Memorial Chapel, London, on Friday evening, April 15th, 1977, at the Annual Meeting of the Gospel Standard Societies

Text: "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it" (Isa. 14. 32).

That beautiful hymn we have just sung (180) is the answer to all the questions that the messengers of the nation can ever bring. It is an answer to every question. It is the foundation: the dear Lamb of God, once slain, now risen, now exalted – Jesus Christ, our All in all. It is the answer to every question, whether from friend or foe, whether from sinner or from saint. "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation?" In the glorious Person of the Son of God, in His finished work, there is an answer to every question.

In this chapter two things are very clearly emphasised. One is that the people of God will always have enemies – great enemies, strong enemies. The other is that all these enemies shall at last be overthrown, and the people of God shall be triumphant. There is a resting-place here; and the reason why this shall be is made clear. Because our God is the LORD of hosts, because He reigns, because He is Almighty, because He is greater than all these enemies. His purposes shall stand, His purposes in love and mercy for His people, His purposes against all their foes. "For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (verse 27). We read of Babylon, that it was overthrown. We read of the Assyrians, and they were overthrown. We read of the Philistines, and they too were overthrown.

This beautiful verse which I have read to you is the conclusion of the whole chapter, and not just the conclusion; it is also the top-stone of the whole chapter. It is the summary of it all – the overthrow of all the enemies of God's people.

"What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it." There is first of all an historical fulfilment – that there would be times that would come when questions would be asked. Times when armies would surround Jerusalem, and the messengers of the nations would come and say, "How shall we do? How shall we fare? What hope of deliverance shall we have?" And the Lord here gives them the answer. There is a foundation – that He is on their side, that He is with them, that He will deliver them. There were also going to be times when insulting foes would come, the messengers of other nations, and in scorn ask them how they should do. But God's people here are being warned, and they

are given the answer that they shall return – which thing came literally to pass in the days of Hezekiah when Sennacherib's army surrounded Jerusalem: "What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?" (Isa. 36. 4). And the people knew the answer. They could answer the messengers of the nations. They could answer that insulting, ungodly Rabshakeh. They knew where their confidence lay. Then, there would be times when the people of God would be victorious, when their enemies should lie defeated, and people ask the cause. How could this be that this seemingly weak nation should overthrow such mighty adversaries? The enemies of God would come and enquire, and this was to be the answer: "Not by our might, nor by our power, but it was the LORD of hosts who did it. It was His work from first to last" (see Zech. 4. 6).

"What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it." Beloved friends, this word looks forward to gospel days, to those blessed days of the gospel when the "firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety" (verse 30). "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation?" We can take this in so many different ways, but the blessed point is this: that the Word of God has the answer, that the gospel has the answer. And it is the *same* answer. This short, sweet, simple word answers every question. There is a foundation here, there is a refuge here, there is a ground of confidence here, there is an answer to every question.

Some people may ask us why we meet in this chapel today, why in this day when so many things are taking place all around we meet together in this chapel. They may say, "What are the things you hold so dear? these things you value? these things that are so precious to you? Is there anything in them? Do you not think you are deceived?" Beloved friends, we have an answer: "But, though the world may think it strange, we would not with the world exchange" (H. 992). We have an answer, and that answer lies in Christ, our foundation, our confidence, our hope. My mind goes back to twelve months ago this evening, and the closing hymn of the service. It was that beautiful hymn, "Rock of Ages." As we were singing it, it seemed to me that this was the very foundation of our hope. This is the standard that needs to be raised in our churches. This is our glory. These are the things we hold dear. This is our strength. If anyone were to say, "What is this religion that you contend for in the *Gospel Standard*, this religion that this assembly in Gower Street contends for today?" this is the answer. This is our gospel, this is our hope:

"Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;

Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

“Not the labour of my hands,
Can fulfil Thy law’s demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.” (H. 143)

Beloved friends, this is our answer to the messengers of the nation. This is our foundation, our confidence, our hope.

Sometimes our young people come with their questions, and they ask so many things. Our young people today have so many perplexities, difficulties and trials, and so many temptations. Have we an answer to them? Is there any answer laid down in the Word of God? Is there any answer in the gospel? Blessed be God, we have an answer. It is all revealed here in Christ, in His holy Word, in His great salvation, in His power to save unto the uttermost.

“What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation?” Blessed be God, we have an answer. The world has not the answer. The world has its problems and perplexities and hard questions; but the world has not the answer. The world tries a multitude of answers to this question, all kinds of social reform, all kinds of improvement; but it has not the answer. Then the world tries pleasure, and sport, and entertainment; but that is not the answer. The world tries fulfilling its ambitions and plans; but that is not the answer.

“Whatever the wicked may say,
And they who religion despise,
Although they seem happy and gay,
They know not where happiness lies.”

If the world comes to us, “What shall we then answer the messengers of the nation?” We have an answer that God has revealed in the gospel. You see, all these answers that the world gives are just like some sort of sugar-coated pill. The outside seems sweet and pleasant, but everything is bitter within; and the sad thing is that these sugar-coated pills do not cure. What a mercy that there is an answer! The Word of God tells us where real happiness lies, where true peace is to be found, where satisfaction is to be known.

But there are other messengers. There are others who come with their questions, sinners under a sense of their guilt, and they ask different questions. They say, “Is there any hope for such a sinner as me? I feel so unworthy, so guilty. I have no hope at all in myself. Is there any hope for such a sinner as me?” “What shall we then answer the messengers of the nation?” What shall we say to these sinners who feel their guilt? O there is an answer in the gospel:

“The blood of Christ, a precious blood!
 Cleanses from all sin, doubt it not,
 And reconciles the soul to God,
 From every folly, every fault.” (H. 859)

O that precious, precious blood! “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1. 7).

What shall we answer seeking souls who come enquiring their way to Zion with their faces thitherward, who want to be right, who want to be prepared for death, who want to be real Christians? The gospel “points out the place ... and directs them to the bleeding wounds of our incarnate God” (see H. 29). Sometimes we feel we preach poor sermons, but we do not preach a poor gospel. I believe this: that although there are so many faults amongst us, and amongst our churches, there is nothing amiss in the gospel. “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ” (Rom. 1. 16). We have much to be ashamed of in ourselves and in our churches; but “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.”

Then there are those who are so perplexed because these are such troublous times, and men’s hearts fail because of fear. The unrest in the country, the violence, the awful happenings in the earth; and men and women begin to wonder whatever may be tomorrow, and whatever may be in the unknown way with all this uncertainty – and all these calamities, political, economic and financial; and then the awful moral landslide. This is the year of the Queen’s Silver Jubilee. It is forty-two years since the last Silver Jubilee, that of George V. Many of you will remember it. But O the awful changes since then! The moral landslide, the evils that have come into our country, the iniquity that sweeps through our streets! Is there any answer? Blessed be God, there is an answer, and that answer is in the Lord Himself. He still lives. He still reigns. He is still on the throne. He accomplishes His purposes, and none of them can ever be overthrown. It is not wicked men who reign. It is not Satan who reigns. “The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever” (Psa. 29. 10). Blessed be God, whatever questions these messengers of the nation come with, there is an answer; not our answer, but God’s answer; an answer given in His Word, an answer in the gospel of His Son.

The wonderful mystery of it all is that these questions seem so diverse, so different; no two of them seem to be the same; but there is *one answer* and that is sufficient for them all – whether you take them one by one, or if you take them together; whether you think of the earth, or whether you think of our country; whether you think of our churches, or whether you think of your own souls. There is an answer, God’s answer, a perfect answer, an answer made known in His Word, an answer revealed in the gospel of His beloved Son, and this is the answer:

“That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it.”

There is a foundation for faith. In a general sense this foundation is that God is almighty, that He is ever with His people, that He has promised to bless them, that He will never leave them nor forsake them, that He is mightier than Satan, that all His purposes shall be accomplished.

What is it in a more particular sense: “That the LORD hath founded Zion”? “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste” (Isa. 28. 16). The Lord laid this foundation eternally in the covenant of grace. It has been from everlasting in that union that binds the church to Christ. But it was actually laid in time. When was that? At Calvary in the sin-atonement sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus, when the Lord Jesus shed His precious blood, when He paid the ransom price, when He opened the fountain for sin, when He cried with a loud voice, “It is finished,” and died. Then the foundation was actually laid. O how deeply laid this foundation is! This is our answer: “That the LORD hath founded Zion,” and the people of God are built upon this foundation. That is their security: “Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16. 18).

We live in a world of change, a world of chaos, a world of confusion. Blessed be God, this foundation can know no change. “The foundation of God standeth sure,” child of God. You can never get beyond that, you can never sink beneath it. You may shake and tremble *on* the foundation, but you can never be shaken *off* it. *You* may shake on the foundation but the *foundation* can never be shaken, for “the foundation of God standeth sure” (2 Tim. 2. 19). “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13. 8). How many sinners have built their only hope of heaven on this foundation, and it has not given way, it has not been shaken! It has been sufficient to take them to heaven, to land them safe in glory.

Then there are all the multitude of blessings that flow from the death of Christ, and these are so many answers to the messengers of the nation. The precious promises, the Lord’s presence with His people, His wonderful love towards them: “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love” (Jer. 31. 3). The wonderful way in which He has promised to supply all their needs: “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4. 19). The wonderful way in which He never can forget His people. “Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.” *Zion* said it. What was the answer to it? “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet

will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me” (Isa. 49. 14-16). This is the answer; this is the foundation. It is the answer to a poor, tried, trembling sinner who says that the Lord hath forsaken him. Blessed answer to the messengers of the nation, whoever they are, whatever the questions may be. “The LORD hath founded Zion.” There is a sacred truth here – unchangeability. It knows no change with changing time.

“The LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it.” There is something so sweet in that simple word: “His people.” It comes in that well-known verse: “Thou shalt call His name JESUS.” Why? “For He shall save **His people** from their sins” (Matt. 1. 21). It means they belong to Christ. It means they are His. It means: “Ye are bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6. 20). It means: “Where Jesus is, there they must be” (H. 596).

It means all the poor of His people. Some of them are poor in health; some of them are poor financially; some of them are poor in their minds; some of them are poor in their circumstances; all of them are poor in spirit – “the poor of His people.” You know, there are some times when the people of God really feel their poverty, when everything seems to be against them, and when there are all these messengers of the nations coming with their questions; and Satan asks a few questions, too! What is the answer? They have a ground of confidence. “The poor of His people shall trust in it.”

Now let us be clear. That does not mean they shall trust in Zion. It means that they shall trust in Zion’s one foundation. They shall trust in Zion’s God. They shall trust in Him. Amidst all the calamities that take place, amidst all the many fears, amidst every temptation, they have a refuge, they have a foundation. They shall trust in it, and they shall never be put to shame. Listen to the language of one of the poor of His people who was trusting in Him: “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in Thee: yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast” (Psa. 57. 1). His trust was not ill-founded; it was not in vain. There is so much in the Word of God concerning trusting the Lord: so many encouragements to trust, so many exhortations to trust, so many promises to those who do trust. And did any ever trust in the Lord, and were put to shame? “The LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it.”

The margin has an attractive rendering: “And the poor of His people *shall betake themselves unto it.*” Whatever calamities, whatever dangers, whatever may take place in the earth, whatever trials may come, there is a refuge here, a refuge that is sure, and the poor of His people shall trust in Him, they shall betake themselves to Him. Like the feeble conies: “The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the

rocks” (Prov. 30. 26). It does not matter how feeble they are, it does not matter how poor they are, the strength is not in them, the strength is in the foundation, the strength is in the refuge, Christ the eternal Rock. It is nothing but weakness, helplessness, poverty and insufficiency in the sinner; it is nothing but divine power and grace in the Saviour. O what a suitability there is in the gospel! An almighty Saviour and a poor, helpless sinner! “And the poor of His people shall betake themselves unto it.” O how welcome they are, despite all their unworthiness, all their sin and guilt! He says, “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6. 37).

We know not what troublous times there may be in the coming year, before we shall ever meet here again on this occasion, but we know that the foundation is sure, we know that the refuge is sure. “Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (Isa. 26. 20). Blessed be God for this answer to every question, this answer to the messengers of the nation. Blessed be God for this refuge in troublous times. Here the people of God are safe, here they are secure. “What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it.”

A BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART

By John Bunyan (1628-1688)

(Concluded from page 278)

3. The man with a broken heart is a very humble man; for true humility is a sign of a broken heart. Hence, brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, and humbleness of mind, are put together. “To revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57. 15).

To follow our similitude. Suppose a man while in bodily health, stout and strong, and one that fears and cares for no man; yet let this man have but a leg or an arm broken, and his courage is quelled; he is now so far off from hectoring it with a man, that he is afraid of every little child that doth but offer to touch him. Now he will court the most feeble that has aught to do with him, to use him and handle him gently. Now he is become a child in courage, a child in fear, and humbleth himself as a little child.

Why, thus it is with that man that is of a broken and contrite spirit. Time was, indeed, he could hector [bluster, bully], even hector it with God Himself, saying, “What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him?” (Job 21. 15); or, “What profit shall I have if I keep His commandments?” (see Mal. 3. 14).

Aye, but now his heart is broken, God has wrestled with him, and given him a fall, to the breaking of his bones, his heart; and now he crouches, now he cringes, now he begs of God, that He will not only do him good, but do it with tender hands. "Have mercy upon me, O God," said David, yea, "according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions" (Psa. 51. 1).

He stands, as he sees, not only in need of mercy, but of the tenderest mercies; God has several sorts of mercies, some more rough, some more tender. God can save a man, and yet have him a dreadful way to heaven. This the broken-hearted sees, and this the broken-hearted dreads, therefore pleads for the tenderest sort of mercies; and here we read of His gentle dealing, and that He is very pitiful, and that He deals tenderly with His. But the reason of such expressions no man knows, but he that is broken-hearted, he has his sores, his running sores, his stinking sores. Wherefore he is pained, and therefore covets to be handled tenderly. Thus God has broken the pride of his spirit, and humbled the loftiness of man. And his humility yet appears,

i. In his thankfulness for natural life. He reckoneth at night when he goes to bed, that like as a lion, so God will tear him to pieces before the morning light (see Isa. 38. 13).

There is no judgment that has fallen upon others, but he counts of right he should be swallowed up by it. "My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee; and I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Psa. 119. 120).

But perceiving a day added to this life, and that he in the morning is still on this side hell, he cannot choose but take notice of it, and acknowledge it as a special favour; saying, "God be thanked, for holding my soul in life till now, and for keeping my life back from the destroyer." Compare Job 33. 22; and Psa. 56. 13; Psa. 86. 13.

Man before his heart is broken, counts time his own, and therefore he spends it lavishly upon every idle thing. His soul is far from fear, because the rod of God is not upon him; but when he sees himself under the wounding hand of God, or when God like a lion is breaking all his bones, then he humbleth himself before Him, and falleth at His foot. Now he has learned to count every moment a mercy, and every small morsel a mercy.

ii. Now also, the least hope of mercy for his soul, O how precious is it! He that was wont to make sport of the gospel, and that valued promises but as stubble, and the words of God but as rotten wood: now, with what an eye he doth look on the promise! Yea, he counteth a peradventure of mercy more rich, more worth than the whole world. Now, as we say, "He is glad to leap at a crust"; now, to be a dog in God's house is counted better by him than to dwell in the tents of the wicked (see Matt. 15. 26, 27).

iii. Now he that was wont to look scornfully upon the people of God; yea, that used to scorn to show them a gentle cast of his countenance; now he admires and bows before them, and is ready to lick the dust off their feet; and would count it his greatest, the highest honour, to be as one of the least of them. “Make me as one of thy hired servants” (Luke 15. 19).

iv. Now he is in his own eyes the greatest fool in nature, for that he sees he has been so mistaken in his ways, and has yet but little if any true knowledge of God. “Every one now,” says he, “has more knowledge of God than I, every one serves Him better than I” (see Psa. 73. 21, 22; Prov. 30. 2, 3).

v. Now, may he be but one, though the least in the kingdom of heaven! Now, may he be but one, though the least in the church on earth! Now, may he be but loved, though the least beloved of saints! How high an account doth he set thereon!

vi. Now when he talketh with God or men, how doth he debase himself before them! If with God, how does he accuse himself, and load himself with the acknowledgments of his own villainies, which he committed in the days wherein he was the enemy of God! “Lord,” said Paul, that contrite one, “I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him” (Acts 22. 19, 20). “I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Acts 26. 11).

Also when he comes to speak to saints, how doth he make himself vile before them! “I am,” saith he, “the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle; I am less than the least of all saints; I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious,” etc. (see 1 Cor. 15. 9; Eph. 3. 8; 1 Tim. 1. 13).

What humility, what self-abasing thoughts, doth a broken heart produce! When David danced before the ark of God also, how did he discover his nakedness to the disliking of his wife? And when she taunted him for his doings, says he, “It was before the LORD ... And I will be yet more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight” (2 Sam. 6. 21, 22).

Oh, the man that is, or that has been kindly broken in his spirit, and that is of a contrite heart, is a lowly, a humble man!

The broken-hearted man is a man that sees himself in spirituals to be poor: therefore as *humble* and *contrite*, so *poor* and *contrite* are put together in the word: “But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word” (Isa. 66. 2).

THE GOSPEL WORKING REPENTANCE

By Thomas Cole (1627-1697)

How repentance unto life is wrought by the gospel.

1. Because God hath appointed the gospel to be the means of repentance (see Luke 24. 47; Rom. 16. 25, 26) to the glory of His free grace. As justice is glorified in the damnation of an impenitent sinner, so grace is glorified in his conversion. Evangelical repentance is from a discovery of God's love and free grace. His goodness leads us to repentance (see Rom. 2. 4; 2 Pet. 3. 9; Psa. 130. 4). A true penitent fears lest he should miss of mercy, and come short of it; he rejoices at the good news of the gospel, begins to lift up his head in some expectation of a blessed redemption; he serves God cheerfully, being persuaded that all things done by faith will be pleasing to Him, and accepted by Him for Christ's sake (see Hos. 6. 1, 2). A sense of love and mercy quicken up a drooping, trembling sinner to return unto God. The prodigal remembered what a kind father he had (see Luke 15. 18). It was Paul's argument (see Rom. 12. 1, 2; 2 Cor. 7. 1). It is a sad thing that the grace of the gospel, which is intended to keep men from despair, should by some be made an encouragement to presumption. God forbid we should continue in sin, because grace abounds.

2. The grace of the gospel is not only an appointed means, but is, in its own nature, a fit means to work repentance, suited and adapted to that end. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. The schoolmen tell us that love is congregative [a uniting force], and they give this reason for it, because it does congregate and gather in our roving, scattered thoughts from those various lesser objects after which they go, fixing our minds upon God, the only soul-satisfying Object. Love is conciliative [reconciling]. When God doth, through faith, let in any sense of His intended grace towards sinners, the heart melts under it. A sinner does not repent that he may believe, but *because he does believe*. Something of the love of God to sinners in Christ Jesus, some news of this, is come to his ear, hath touched his very heart, before ever he sets upon repentance; and now he can hold no longer; the love of Christ constrains him. Great is the power of love, when it commends itself to us in some signal expressions of kindness to our visible advantage and benefit.

3. Because Christ gives repentance (see Acts 5. 31). He purchased this and all other graces for us, by dying for us. He not only obtained pardon of sin in our justification, but all inherent graces in the saints come from Christ: He procured them for us; He works them in us; His sufferings being not only satisfactory for sin, but meritorious of grace to be bestowed upon us. Though the law cannot sanctify a sinner, yet Christ can, and it is an act of special grace towards us when He doth, but

He will first satisfy the law and justice of God, that, being brought under grace by our free justification, we may answer to the law of grace in our sanctification, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, living soberly and righteously here below, as the redeemed of the Lord ought to do. The law commands perfect obedience, but, because of failure, the gospel promises faith and repentance (see Zech. 12. 10; Acts 11. 18).

4. Because God hath annexed a quickening spirit to the gospel, to make way for His grace, and to give it a prevailing efficacy in the hearts of men. They are drawn by the loving-kindness of God, and cannot resist it. The Spirit opens the mystery of the love of God in Christ, and so charms the soul with it, that it is impossible to withstand the allurements of it.

5. Because the ways and means of bringing a sinner to life are all supernatural. The law speaks nothing of this; the law never puts us upon anything that is supernatural. I mean that originally was so to man in his perfect state; for then it had been quite above the reach and capacity of man's understanding, but God suited His law to those inbred notions and principles of truth, that were concreated* in us, the way of salvation through faith and repentance being supernatural. We must apply ourselves to the gospel to know this.

KNOWING AND CALLING UPON GOD

By Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

“He hath known My name” (Psa. 91. 14). Now this leads him to love – to love God – to set a love upon Him. And we see the cause. “Because God first loved us.” Therefore it was we were brought to set our love upon Him. Yes, we do not love we know not what! When Paul went to Athens what did he see? An altar with this inscription: “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” (Acts 17. 23.) Ah! God is in some measure known – the God that the child of grace is brought to worship, and it is this knowledge of God that causes us to love Him – and mark you, it is the knowledge of God by the remission of sins. What a striking word this is to give unto His people, to give to them this knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins! As much as to say you will never know God – not really, not satisfactorily – till your sins are pardoned. Then will the mystery be opened. Then it will not be a speculative point, a mere matter of opinion; you will know it – for yourself you will know it; feelingly, by the remission of sins.

This is how God gives to His people this knowledge of salvation. It is not God's way to give the knowledge of salvation, and afterwards

* This refers to conscience placed in us at our creation. Ed.

the remission of sins, but actually by it – by *it* – through the remission of sins. Because then we have a knowledge, then we know it. And does not the prophet Isaiah say, “Butter and honey shall he eat” – and what is the result? – then he knows and can discern between the evil and the good, so as “to refuse the evil, and choose the good” (Isa. 7. 15).

Now there are some people that are in legal bondage, and have never been brought to the knowledge of the truth, yet they are set up as critics in the church, and they will find fault with this and that. But does not the prophet say, “And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things” (Isa. 25. 6), evidently writing of the blessed gospel – the gospel of the grace of God. He shall feast upon the gospel. Then he shall discern, then he shall have a right knowledge of things, he shall know how to refuse the evil and how to choose the good, when he has had this gospel feast.

“He hath set His love upon me.” Yes. This is the result of the knowledge with which he is favoured. We cannot know the Lord and not love Him. It is a contradiction. It is impossible to know Him and not to love Him. Our blindness, our ignorance, our unbelief often prevail, and our love waxes cold. But when this knowledge is communicated, and when our eyes are opened to behold Him, we see Him and we are ravished with His beauty. “He hath set His love upon me.”

“He shall call upon Me” (Psa. 91. 15). “He shall.” What, after all this that he has done? We may well suppose that he calls upon God that he may know Him and have his heart’s affections set upon God. Yes, and he shall call upon Him after that; and it is here plainly intimated when it is he calls, or “**shall call**” upon the Lord. Even in trouble. What! shall he be brought into trouble? Yes, he shall; his heart pants, when his pardon is signed, and his peace is procured, but from that moment his conflict begins (see H. 309), and a conflict it is. He finds fresh troubles coming in upon him constraining him to ask God that God would help him, that God would appear for him, and give him a fresh token for good. Like the poor woman who said “Lord, help me” (Matt. 15. 25). Every fresh case of distress that he is made acquainted with, every trouble he is brought into, gives him an errand to the throne of grace.

“He shall call upon Me.” And this is the result of knowing and of loving God. “Because he has known My name, he knows I am able to deliver him, and, therefore, it is in his heart to look to Me; for none else can help but the Almighty God. He knows My name, he knows I am a God of love, that I sympathise and feel compassion for My children, and this encourages him.” We have not an high priest to go to that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmity (see Heb. 4. 15). No; but He was made acquainted with these things, He has borne our cross, He has carried our sorrows, He has been tempted in all points like as we are, and

He is so gracious and so merciful, He never forsakes the poor and needy sinner that calls upon Him.

How this encourages us to go unto Him! Where shall we go? To whom shall we look? “Lord ... Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6. 68). He is encouraged by this knowledge. But if he has not all this encouragement, if he has not sufficient life in the exercise of prayer, he shall be urged on by the pressure of his trouble. Partly, as it were, driven, partly drawn. This is how God’s people are made to call upon Him. The urgency of the case is one thing, the absolute necessity of the matter in this time of need, and then we have to be drawn by what God has done for us in former days, and this encourages – He *has* delivered, He *does* deliver, and I trust He *will* yet deliver (see 2 Cor. 1. 10). Is He not the same God? Is He a fickle and changeable being? No, and, therefore, he rests upon Him. He is ever the same; therefore, cast all your care upon Him; for He changeth not.

JESUS IS WORTHY TO BE PRAISED

Ebenezer Cottage,
Heathfield.
June 23rd, 1886

My dear Miss F.,

I know you are anxious about my health, and am glad to tell you that I am no worse; the medicine Dr. Philpot prescribed for me does me good. I have not been able to leave home yet, but ride about, and rest all I can. I hope to leave home tomorrow for a time.

I trust you are well, and have been favoured to hear the Master’s voice through the ministry of our friend, Mr. Warburton. I know you delight to be enabled to say with the church, “The voice of my Beloved! behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills” (Song. 2. 8). The hills flow down at His presence, and the mountains become a plain. Indeed, when He comes, He makes *all* right, because our wills are brought to lie straight with His. All that He *hath done* is right, what He *is doing* is right, and we can *trust* Him with the *future*. O what cause we have to speak well of Him! He “is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble” (Nah. 1. 7). Yes, such a *strong hold*, that neither Satan nor all our enemies combined can break through. I feel sometimes that,

“When I see Him as He is,
I’ll praise Him as I ought.”

Don’t you? He is worthy to be praised. I hope you may be often favoured with His love shed abroad in your heart, so that you feel

constrained to weep tears of joy, and feel “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4. 7).

I thank you very much for all your kindness. I have spent some sweet times in your house. My wife was quite at home with you; she desires to be remembered to you. Accept my Christian love, my dear friend; also to those that love our Lord Jesus Christ with you.

I remain, in gospel bonds, yours sincerely,

George Mockford

JESUS COULD NOT BE HID

*By Alice Ashby (1906-1987), a member of the church at
Zoar Chapel, Lower Dicker*

“But He could not be hid” (Mark 7. 24).

What a precious truth this is that the Friend of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ, our precious Redeemer, cannot be hid. It is a truth abounding with the love and mercy of a faithful, unchangeable God to poor, tempted, tried, guilty worms of the earth. Many, many things will seem to hide Him from a sinner’s view, but withal that may oppose, “His word shall stand, His truth prevail, and not one jot or tittle fail” (H. 352), so that He will appear because He cannot be hid. Satan may try his hardest to darken the eyes of a child of God, but our blessed Lord overcame Satan so that he cannot finally succeed in his devilish designs, although for a time he may appear to have a measure of success. The Lord reigneth, not only over mankind, but over Satan as well, so being supreme, He cannot be hid. Sins may rise as high as mountains, filling the soul with fears and dismay until the poor, distressed sinner cries out in his agony, “Can ever God dwell here?” (H. 310). Yes, poor soul, He can, because the mountains flow down at His presence (see Isa. 64. 1). They cannot hide Him, because He cannot be hid.

“But,” says a bewildered, perplexed believer, “I cannot see Him whom my soul longs after. I have sought and cannot find Him. Clouds of fears, mistrust and unbelief obscure Him from my view.” Yes, child of God, and they will do too. Look for a moment at nature – that grand expression of God’s almightiness. The clouds gather – first a few straggling, light, fleecy ones. Then they increase in size and number till masses float across the azure sky. Then they get thicker, heavier, darker, until the whole heavens and the glorious sun are obscured from the eyes of mortal man. It may be as it was with Paul, that “neither sun nor stars in many days appeared” (Acts 27. 20). Yet herein is mercy. The clouds

are never still. The Lord “causeth His wind to blow” (Psa. 147. 18) – the clouds move on and on until the anxious watcher has a tremulous thrill, for lo and behold, there is a break in the clouds. A beam of light, faint at first, pierces through the slight rift. As the clouds continue to part, so that precious, cheering ray of light grows stronger and brighter. Then the clouds are dispersed and the sun shines again in all its resplendent glory.

Thus it is with the soul. The Spirit of the Lord enters, no man knowing whence it comes or whither it goeth. It enters the heart, bringing light with it. As the sun shines upon the night until the darkness flees and day appears, so does the Spirit of the Lord work in the heart of a child of God. That is, the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings (see Mal. 4. 2), because He cannot be hid.

In the dark ages before the Reformation, Satan, his agent the pope and their emissaries did their utmost to destroy God’s holy Word and His people from off the face of the earth. (Alas, they are doing it subtly in these evil days.) Yet they failed. They could not destroy the Almighty. We read, “And the Word was God” (John 1. 1). Then how could they destroy God and His Word? It shone the brighter, because God cannot be hid? He is the Light of the world. If it please the Lord, may the same effect be seen in these dark days.

If we study the Bible, God’s holy Book of truth, we find that from the beginning of mankind until now, Jesus Christ has not been hidden. God revealed Him to Adam and Eve in that blessed promise He gave them when He said to the serpent, “It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Gen. 3. 15). Here was the blessed Saviour of mankind revealed to this sorrowing man and woman. Abraham saw His day and was glad (see John 8. 56). Jacob saw the Son of God when he had his wonderful vision of heaven. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, saw Him and sang His praises. The prophets were instructed concerning Him and prophesied many an event that was to take place when He dwelt with men on the earth. Thus, ere the day of His nativity, mankind saw Him by faith and believed in Him. “He could not be hid.”

Now the time came when that Second Person in the Trinity, the Holy Son of God, must leave His dear Father and His heavenly home to become a tiny Babe, born of His virgin mother. He was born amongst the millions and millions of the human race scattered throughout the world. He came down to earth in the humblest form and lowliest place imaginable – yet His glory was not obscured. He could not be hidden. No, the angels themselves descended from heaven to proclaim His human birth to mankind. The heavens declared His birth, for a new star appeared in the sky. The shepherds and the wise men sought Him and found Him because He could not be hidden in obscurity.

He was one among many who went with their parents to keep the Feast of the Passover at Jerusalem. When they returned, they supposed Him to be in the company (see Luke 2. 44) like every other ordinary person. No, He could not remain in such obscurity. He was the Light of the world (see John 8. 12 and 9. 5), and He must shine among men; so they found Him glorifying God in the temple in the midst of learned men. "He could not be hid." When He was baptized, the heavens opened and there was seen the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him. "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3. 17). "Again the next day after John stood, and two of His disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" (John 1. 35, 36). How could He be hid?

During His life on earth, many people sought Him and found Him. He "went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but He could not be hid." The Syrophenician woman had heard of Him, and she persisted in her search until she found Him. She persisted in her request, and the Lord granted her desire. So He does to all who press through the crowd and touch the hem of His garment.

He said of Himself, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (John 12. 32). He was lifted up on Calvary and made to be a spectacle before men and devils.

"They nailed Him to the accursèd tree;
 (They did, my brethren; so did we);
 The soldier pierced His side, 'tis true,
 But we have pierced Him through and through." (H. 153)

What a solemn, agonising scene; but it could not be hidden. Angels, men and devils viewed it. Friends and foes alike beheld it. What a scene! The Father hid His face. All nature was moved.

"When rocks and mountains rent with dread;
 And gaping graves gave up their dead;
 When the fair sun withdrew his light,
 And hid his head, to shun the sight;
 "Then stood the wretch of human race,
 And raised his head and showed his face,
 Gazed unconcerned when nature failed,
 And scoffed, and sneered, and cursed, and railed." (H. 153)

"He could not be hid."

When they laid Him in the tomb and rolled the stone over the mouth of the grave, could He be hidden? No, the grave could not hold Him. Death could not hold Him. He burst the bands of death and rose

triumphant from the grave. If it had been the will of Jehovah, He could have gone straight from the tomb to His blessed home in heaven. But no, He must show Himself first to His beloved disciples. What an unspeakable mercy that was. Those poor, suffering disciples were much perplexed when their Lord and Master was crucified. No doubt they felt as though their life, their light and religion were cut off, and what were they to do?

Ah, but see the love and pity of an ever-loving, precious Jesus. He soothed their sorrows, healed their wounds and drove away their fears (see H. 135). How did He do it? By revealing Himself to them, for forty days after His glorious resurrection. At first they knew Him not. Before His death, His face was more marred than any man's (see Isa. 52. 14), but after His resurrection, at His ascension, it shone with heavenly light and love. Had He not triumphed over sin and Satan, had He not fulfilled His holy mission, had He not completed the salvation of all the chosen saints of God? Yes, it was finished, and when He arose from the tomb, He was crowned with glory and majesty. When the disciples cried out in fear, supposing that they had seen a spirit, He showed them the wounds in His side, His hands and His feet – those unmistakable evidences of His sacred humanity. Then were they filled with joy and wondered. "He could not be hid."

Then came the day of His ascension into heaven. He led His disciples out as far as Bethany and there was parted from them. He was gone, but not for ever. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1. 11), which promise was confirmed when the Holy Ghost descended upon them on the Day of Pentecost. By the operation of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of poor sinners, does Jesus still reveal Himself, for He cannot be hid.

Why cannot Jesus be hid? Why must He reveal Himself? It is an unspeakable mercy that it is impossible for Him to be hid. On that impossibility hangs the hope of our salvation. They that seek shall find. Whom shall they find? Why, this blessed Lord Jesus, because He cannot be hid. But why? To find the answer to that question, one must go back to eternity, to that time when "the earth was without form, and void" (Gen. 1. 2). If the veil is lifted for a moment, what is to be seen by looking back? There one beholds a triune Jehovah – three Persons in one Godhead – holding a solemn and deliberate council. The chosen saints of God were the subject of those deliberations which are far beyond the scope of man's comprehension and imagination. God chose a people to be His people – to love and serve Him, to live to honour and praise Him. He foresaw how they would be overcome by Satan and so fall headlong into ruin; and at that solemn council He worked out the plan for their

complete salvation. The only way was to send His dearly-loved and only-begotten Son to dwell with sinful mortals – to partake of their humanity without sin – to be subject to the laws of God – so that He could work out a righteousness for those poor, fallen creatures who were elected to live and reign with God in His holy heaven.

The blessed Redeemer willingly undertook to execute the plan. He left His Father's home and came down to dwell on earth where He could be seen by mortal men. He had to. It was determined by God that He should do so. What an unspeakable mercy it is that He had to reveal Himself in such manner. And where it is impossible for the naked eye to behold Him, He sends His Holy Spirit to reveal His sacred Person to the eye of faith. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20. 29).

O Lord, come and reveal Thyself to Thy people again and yet again. Turn their darkness into light so that they may see Thee as Thou art. Thou hast not said to the seeking seed of Jacob, Seek ye My face in vain (see Isa. 45. 19). Hide not Thy face for ever. O Lord, help Thy people to press through the crowds of unbelief, sin and woe, so that in due season they may find their heavenly Friend who cannot be hid.

GOD'S PROMISE TO CARRY HIS PEOPLE TO THE END

By Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

It is my mercy that the infirmities of age, which most men, even in perspective, shrink from, and in the earlier periods of life are apt to paint to their imagination as brooding with numberless evils, have dwindled into nothing, comparatively speaking, in my view. Now I am arrived in the midst of them, softened as they are, and more than softened, with the grace of God. True indeed, it is winter with me, but it is a kindly winter. Like the tree of the forest long rooted, many a year in the succession of cold and heat have passed over me. I cannot expect, neither do I desire, any of the foliage of nature's buddings, in vernal [spring] seasons; for little more is now left, either stem or branch, than the mere trunk. Nevertheless, the Lord that tempers all states and all events to His people, will graciously order all that remains to be filled in here below, in my eventful life; and as the prophet describes it, He will "stay His rough wind in the day of the east wind" (see Isa. 27. 8).

I can and do enter into all the enjoyment of that precious scripture, in which the Lord calls upon His redeemed ones to notice His unremitting care and watchfulness over them. "Hearken unto Me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by Me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even

to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you" (Isa. 46. 3, 4). What an everlasting security is here for the aged ones of the Lord's family! What shall arise to counteract divine bearings? What shall break down the security of them who have the eternal God for their refuge, and underneath whom are the everlasting arms? (see Deut. 33. 27). Borne by the Lord from the womb, and carried from the belly, when in themselves they had not even the consciousness of their wants, much less the ability to help themselves! and in the experience of past mercies, what confidence is thereby induced for all that is to come, when the same power which hath hitherto done all that was needful, hath engaged to the close of life, and said, "I will deliver you."

Neither is it the smallest consideration in this charter of grace, when we take into the account the *distinguishing* nature of it. For when I look round, to seek for the contemporaries with whom I spent my youthful days, and find them for the most part gone, scarce one remains, distinguishing grace marks the mercy in double characters. Their images, whose faces and manners were once so familiar to me, and are now no more, seem to arise to my imagination; and having long since been gone to rest, express their surprise that my candle of life is still allowed to burn, and that I am left behind.

But in the right appreciation of the privilege of the Lord's ancient ones, we must not stop here. Old age, and with the kindest winter, in *natural* things, if these were all, would be but a negative kind of happiness. It is in *grace*, personal, distinguishing grace, where are discoverable the highest manifestations of divine love. Here, in a vastly superior sense, it is that the Lord carries His redeemed from the womb, to hoar hairs and the grave. And as the Lord adopts the tender and affectionate similitude of the mother, to represent upon numberless occasions the solicitude He is for ever manifesting to His people, so we may in a very particular manner make application of it to His aged children. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Isa. 66. 13). And as the infirmities of old age are second childhood, here that blessed scripture meets the hoary believer with special signification. And how is the tender affection of a fond mother marked to her little one! Surely, in causing her babe to lie all night on her breast; to soothe him in all his sorrows; to guard and keep off all approaches of evil from him; to watch, night and day, that nothing hurt him. And such, in an infinitely higher degree, doth the Lord by His, in their infirm seasons. And by causing the sense and apprehension they have of their own imbecility [weakness in body or mind], from a consciousness of creature weakness, to lean the more on divine strength, and to rest wholly on the Lord, as the infant hangs upon his mother's breast.

OBITUARY

Seth Mercer, pastor at Grove Road Chapel, Eastbourne, for forty-one years, passed away on Saturday, June 20th, 2017, aged 86 years.

My father was born the third son of Jabez and Emily Mercer on July 30th, 1930. The night he was born was said to be unusually windy for late July, and some spoke of the wind as a “Euroclydon.”

Father lost his mother when he was a few months over six years old, and this sad providence of God left its mark on him for the remainder of his life. It was a matter of some consolation to him when Mr. A.S. Offer, who lived to see Father take up the pastorate at Eastbourne, could speak of remembering his mother, and how Father reminded Mr. Offer of her.

On November 29th, 1945, Dad’s older brother Matthew died at the age of 19 whilst on army service, leaving Dad as the only surviving son (the second son having pre-deceased him). I mention these things because the Lord used them, and sanctified these distresses in my father’s life more than we shall ever know.

In writing of his experiences, and the Lord’s dealings with him, Father refers to the time of his unregeneracy and how the hand of death was known in the family, “yet none of these solemn things ever had any effect upon me.” As he went on in his teenage years, he became very much taken up with motorcycles and sport, often watching the local football team on a Saturday afternoon. Then a friend introduced him to the cinema and, for about a year, he went twice a week, although against his father’s wishes. However, he was kept from leaving chapel, and said in after years that he only then continued going to chapel out of love to his dear father. Nevertheless the Lord’s time came when he was just twenty years old. He went “one Sunday evening to Stone Chapel, without any concern or regard for my soul. The late Mr. H. Dawson was the minister that evening; he took for his text, ‘Can two walk together, except they be agreed?’ (Amos 3. 3). I cannot remember anything he said, but the text was fastened upon my mind, and I could not forget it. I began to feel my need as a sinner, and I believe that evening, when I had returned home, was the first time in my life that I began to pray, and the substance of my prayer was, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’”

Soon he “began to lose all ambition regarding the things of this life,” although through this time the Lord led him in providence, with “much prayerful concern” to become engaged to his future wife in 1952. He was also brought low in body and mind and “was then trembling in my feelings on the borders of eternity.”

It was in March 1953, when in this state, that a local, worldly person suddenly died. An uncle of his said to Father, “You know this is a warning to us: ‘Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the

Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24. 44). Father wrote, “This was like a sword put in my heart.”

It brought him to plead earnestly for a “Thus saith the Lord,” and at Jireh, Tenterden, Mr. P.O. Laver of Rotherfield preached that very evening from Job 7. 1: “Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?” Father writes, “I believe that the Lord favoured me that eve with a felt sense of the mercy of God in Christ for me. I went out of the chapel feeling a different person. How I believe the Lord’s servant preached Christ to my soul.”

His pathway over the next two months is best described in his own words: “I was then brought into an acute exercise regarding baptism and the Lord’s supper. Some years before, I had said in my heart that I would never be baptized; there was that in it that I shrank from, and yet this exercise became mine day after day. I began to ask the Lord to send His servants with words of direction, which He often did, and yet at the same time I was often searched and tried. I remember hearing the late Mr. Hickmott at Stone on the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and did feel an interest in a risen Christ. I opened my Bible one day on the second Psalm and read these words: ‘Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way,’ etc. (verse 12). I went out into our living room at home, and there were the same words on the calendar. I went into the hairdressers the same day and picked up a newspaper to look at, and there I saw the same words.

“The pressure upon my spirit became such that I had to venture before the church. During the time that I waited to come before them, the Lord sent Mr. J.C. Burgess of Bournemouth with this text: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6. 19, 20), and O what a help that word was to me! The morning that I went before the church, I awoke with a sense of the goodness of God, and verse 4 of Gadsby’s hymn 554 came to my mind with power. I then had to read Exodus chapter 33, and my prayer was indeed found in verse 15: ‘And he said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.’ I did not feel the freedom that I desired in speaking before the church, and yet was unanimously received by them, and was baptized in May 1953 by the late Mr. W. Gibb.”

My parents were married on September 16th, 1953, Mr. H. Dawson officiating.

My father had a special hearing under Mr. Stanley Delves in July 1956, his heart having been softened “as one of the friends engaged in prayer” at the early morning prayer meeting. The text was Exodus 12. 13: “And when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” He writes:

“What a service that was to me. The doctrine of the atonement I believe was applied with power to my soul, and was made exceedingly precious.”

His exercise regarding the ministry began when his eldest son was about a year old. Other things had conspired to weigh him down in “a very trying path,” and he was “not feeling at all well.” It was thus he went “for a walk one Sunday evening” (they had morning and afternoon services at Jireh, Tenterden) “in deep distress of mind, when it seemed as I walked down Tenterden High Street” (their first home was over a shop in the High Street) “that an inward voice said to me, ‘The Lord is either preparing you for the ministry or for the grave,’ and I thought it must be for the grave.”

He heard Mr. F.L. Rowell preach at Cranbrook from Song of Solomon 1. 8: “If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents,” and Mr. Haggerty at Jireh from Isaiah 52. 11, 12: “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward,” still at the time hearing the word preached as indicative of his end here below. He writes also of one morning at work at this time when “these words kept coming into my mind: ‘The voice said, Cry,’ and I feelingly said, ‘What shall I cry?’” (Isa. 40. 6).

The exercises continued from the autumn of 1954 until December 1961, when Mr. G.T. Jempson was sent out to preach by the church at Jireh. Father writes, “It seemed that this brought the burden of the ministry upon me with a weight that I had not known before; it was constantly with me.”

During this time he was often very low in health, and early in 1958 he had flu, then about a month later flu and bronchitis together. He tried to pray that the Lord would make a way out of his providential path (employment), which he felt did not allow his health to improve. The Lord sent Mr. C.A. Smith one Sunday morning with the word in 2 Corinthians 4. 11: “For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” Under this sermon he was given submission “to stay where I was, and bear the cross.” However, on the following day, a new path of employment began to be opened up, and the Lord applied much of Isaiah 58 to his spirit, including verse 8: “And thine health shall spring forth speedily,” so that in February 1970 he could write that his “health did improve until this present day,” although “in this new path the exercise of the ministry increased.”

In early 1962, the exercise intensified, the Lord using the ministry of Mr. B.J. Honeysett, pastor at Tenterden at that time, on several

occasions (Father mentions five in all). In May 1962 Dad went to Heathfield services, it being his day off work. He went with prayer: "If my exercise regarding the ministry was of Him, O that He would give me a word concerning it." He had never been to the chapel before, and Mr. F.L. Gosden was standing in for his brother John, who was ill. The morning text was Daniel 12. 13: "But go thou thy way till the end be...." In the dinner hour he sat on a seat in the graveyard, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt make the way, I will go." He then walked round the graveyard, coming face to face with the tombstone of the late Mr. W. West, where his eyes met with Isaiah 58. 10: "And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday." Again that word was applied with power.

Thus in August 1962 he went to see his pastor, but after prayerful consideration with the deacons they asked him to wait. Two-and-a-half years passed by, and Father says of it that he "wondered where the scene would end, and yet I do believe this was in the Lord's hand for good, though painful." He heard Mr. John Tyler in this time at Stone, first from Joshua 3. 13: "And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap," and then from John 12. 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He often mentioned this latter occasion in later years, and in writing of it he says, "He (Mr. Tyler) seemed to look right through me and it was as though he knew all my exercises. I felt nearly to sink through the floor; it was as though the Lord said, 'You have got to die before you can bring forth fruit' – painful but profitable." He also heard Mr. Tyler, again at Stone, preach from 1 Peter 5. 6: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time," which spoke to him regarding the ministry.

In January 1965 the church at Tenterden (after father had again gone to their pastor) were led to call a meeting to hear his exercises regarding the ministry. A further meeting was arranged for the church to hear him preach. However, after reading, praying and giving out his text, after a few moments his mind went blank and he had to sit down. So he was again asked to wait.

At the next church meeting in early May, the minutes of the previous meeting were read, "and O how I sank as I listened to them, but when I went out of chapel that evening a letter was given to me, an invitation to preach at Redhill, Station Road, on the morning of July 11th, 1965."

He was greatly helped in preaching from Haggai 1. 13: "Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD," that July morning, and invitations from other causes soon came along. In particular he preached one service the following Lord's day at Matfield where the aged Mr. Bradford was a hearer, who said, "I want this young man to come and preach again." So his third engagement was also (both services) at Matfield. A few weeks after his going to Redhill, a church meeting was held at Jireh when the church sanctioned his going forth in the Lord's name. Father could write, "The Lord was pleased to bless that meeting in a remarkable way to a number of the friends," including his mother-in-law.

Much of the above material was gleaned from Father's writings which were submitted to the Gospel Standard Committee prior to his being accepted and added to the list. This was in early 1970, when he had just commenced the pastorate over the church and congregation meeting at Grove Road Chapel, Eastbourne.

In April 1968, Mr. David Mulvey passed away, and Father writes, "I could take you to a spot in Halden House garden where I was a gardener where I had to plead that the Lord would sanctify David Mulvey's death to me, not knowing what it would mean." He felt unusually constrained to attend the funeral. Again Father writes: "What I didn't know was that Mr. Hedley West, a deacon at Grove Road Chapel, Eastbourne" (whom the Lord had exercised regarding Father becoming the pastor at Grove Road) "had prayed that, if it was His will, the Lord would constrain me to come to Mr. David Mulvey's funeral.... I went in and sat about two seats in front of Mr. West." Later that day, Mr. West asked Father how he would feel if he were given a call to Eastbourne, and he answered, "Mr. West, the Lord has laid this burden of being a pastor upon me, but I have yet to know where it is to be." The following day, Father received a call to the pastorate of another chapel and writes, "O what a path I was now in." He was engaged to preach at Eastbourne on Lord's day evening, May 5th, 1968, knowing that the following Wednesday his name was to be brought up for consideration about the pastorate at a church meeting. He writes, "O how burdened I was in going. The Lord gave me His word in Ruth 2. 4: 'And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee,' and then gave me special help in preaching." After the appropriate church meetings, a letter was sent inviting Father to go among them at Eastbourne for the first six months in 1969. During the latter part of 1968, the Lord laid Genesis 24 upon Father's heart in connection with his commencing the period of probation. It transpired that he preached no less than fifteen times consecutively from Genesis 24. 27: "And he said, Blessed be the

LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren," through the whole of January and to the second Lord's day in February, "when the outcome of divine leading was precious worship O how wonderful it was; I believe it brought us together in Christ." He received the invitation to the pastorate in June 1969, which he accepted within five days as there had been the witness of the Spirit in many hearts concerning this matter. He commenced the pastorate in January 1970 and resigned in December 2010, having served for forty-one years.

Father was admitted to King's College Hospital, London in September 1995 for a triple heart bypass. Prior to his admission, the late Mr. Clement Wood, who underwent a similar operation in 1991, told him how blessed he had been at the time of his operation. Father so hoped he would be blessed at this anxious time, but felt rather to be left to the assaults of the enemy of souls, although Mother, sitting by his bed in the hospital when he was in distress, felt that the Lord was there. During his recovery period, he was first able to attend chapel again (sitting in the vestibule) for the morning service on Sunday, November 5th, when the text was from Luke 22. 53: "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness," and this was made good to him. Father was enabled to preach again for the Lord's day mornings in December, his first service being one of thanksgiving for his recovery. One friend, however, well remembers the second Sunday morning service he took, the text being Luke 22. 31, 32: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you.... But I have prayed for thee." During the sermon, he quoted verse 5 of hymn 297 as being his path during this time:

"The tempest shall blow, the billows shall swell,
Thy soul, full of woe, shall pass as thro' hell;
And all this to prove thee, to stain thy cursed pride;
Yet still He will love thee; but grace must be tried."

In February 2010 the fortieth anniversary services were held, and many friends gathered in token of the affection and esteem in which he was held. Mr. Gerald Buss preached from, "And He said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee" (Exod. 33. 19), and, "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord" (John 20. 20). A cheque for £1000 from the church and congregation was presented during the tea interval, and the collections taken on the day amounted to £961. I noted in my diary: "God was merciful to my dear father in many instances this day."

He preached at Grove Road for much of 2011 and again in the latter part of 2012. From then he took engagements locally as able, until in 2015 it was evident his health was failing. He preached his last Lord's day morning and evening at Eastbourne on August 9th, the text both

services being Acts 20. 32: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." He took part in the prayer meeting on September 7th and preached his last sermon on Wednesday, September 16th, from Psalm 23. 1, 6: "The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want.... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." This day was also the sixty-second wedding anniversary for Father and Mother.

After this, his health deteriorated rapidly, and in October he entered into the Hove Bethesda Home and his health declined further, he being admitted to the Royal Sussex Hospital on November 10th, 2015. There he received excellent treatment and a thorough review of his medication so that he was able to return to Bethesda. Throughout 2016 his health held up, and it was not until early 2017 that he really began to decline.

I remember having breakfast with my parents in October 2015, shortly before he went into Bethesda. They were reading through the Bible (again) and had come to the Acts of the Apostles. It fell to me to read the portion in Acts 23 where we read: "And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome" (verse 11). Thus it proved to be that for about twenty-one months dear Father did bear witness of his Lord and Saviour to all who cared for him, and came to visit him.

At the end of May 2017, Father was taken with an infection into the Royal Sussex Hospital where he spent just under two weeks before he died on June 10th, 2017.

On Thursday evening, June 8th, I visited him twice, both before and after preaching at Shoreham. He said on my first visit that he had never felt so ill before in his life, but quoted the whole of the first verse of hymn 1003, also, "Lord, help me." On my second visit I began to quote, "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God..." Upon my faltering, Father carried on, "but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psa. 73. 26). He then repeated: "for ever" in a way that I trust I shall never forget.

Family and friends visited through Friday, June 9th, but his medication prevented him from saying much, until he passed away just after midnight in the early hours of June 10th. "Well done, good and faithful servant; ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25. 23).

In an account such as this, much has to be left out, but I return to the beginning – the strong wind, Euroclydon. It was indicative of the path my father often had to walk; he had many things which came against him, and buffeted him. There were the sad church troubles at Tenterden just after the mid 1960's, and then again, thirty years later in his own church

at Eastbourne. In and through it all Father was given much patience and grace to bear many grievous things, and in this “the life also of Jesus” (2 Cor. 4. 10) was made manifest in his mortal flesh.

“What though they fear each dread alarm,
Tried, and severely tossed?
Held by the Saviour’s mighty arm,
None, none can e’er be lost.” (H. 772)

The funeral service was held at Grove Road, Eastbourne, on June 29th, 2017, conducted by Mr. Gerald Buss. The chapel was somewhere near full, with friends from far and near. The committal at Zoar Chapel, The Dicker, again conducted by Mr. Buss was attended by many, together with some friends who came to witness the interment. Hymn 468 (Gadsby’s) was sung around the grave.

We mourn our loss still, but with our dear father it is indeed, “For to me ... to die is gain” (Phil. 1. 21).

“Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa. 12. 1).

Brian P. Mercer

BOOK REVIEWS

An Exposition of John Seventeen, by Martin Luther, translated by Henry Cole; 157 pages; price £9.50 plus £1.72 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom and agents.

Martin Luther is a household name among Protestants. Who could have foreseen the far-reaching effect of that little event of an obscure monk nailing his theses on the church door at Wittenberg on October 31st, 1517? Why such an earthquake in the spiritual affairs of Europe? It was the good hand of the great God in heaven. The Lord revived His work that had diminished into glowing embers. He raised them to a sacred flame. The blowing of the Holy Ghost upon the sons of men brought about the Glorious Reformation, that followed that seemingly small event at Wittenberg in Saxony. The Lord prepared Luther by working mightily in his soul, in laying him low under the curse of the law, and then lifting him up in a precious Christ; with the power of the Word, “The just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3. 11). How the Lord blew by His Spirit upon the sons of men, and once again the gospel expanded so that it can be said, “Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world” (Rom. 10. 18).

After a foreword by Henry Sant, and a short preface by Luther, the exposition is opened up verse by verse, therefore making twenty-six concise chapters. They are full of profitable matter, in which Christ is exalted. Luther’s writings are lively, homely and sound in doctrine. We always find a warmth in Luther’s writings. We believe that the spiritual reader will find his heart warmed to the Word of truth as he reads this exposition.

One weakness, which the publisher points out, is that Luther did not come to a full understanding of the words of Immanuel when instituting the Lord’s

supper: "This is My body." He did not hold Rome's error of transubstantiation, but could not completely break from Rome's erroneous views on that part of the Lord's supper. A brief footnote is made with verse 19.

This is a book well worth reading, and we heartily recommend it to our readers.

Mordecai – The Man with a Secret; hardback; 36 pages; price £5 plus £1.72 postage; published by Gospel Standard Trust Publications, and obtainable from the Harpenden bookroom and agents.

This is another beautiful book for children in the "Faithful Footsteps" series, written by Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom. The lavishly illustrated pages are packed with scriptural truths that are written with a desire for the soul profit of young readers. The brightly-coloured illustrations by Mark Philpott are certainly eye-catching and will engage the children's attention. There is much gracious instruction for our young folks.

Mr. Ramsbottom's writings for children need no commendation from me, because his many children's books are truly commended throughout the churches, both in this nation and other nations. His plain, simple, clear and easy style of writing is so suitable for younger folks. We could almost call this book, "a children's commentary on the Book of Esther"! As we look back to our childhood years, we would have been very pleased to have read a book like this.

We would also mention the companion colouring book, which accompanies this series, which has not been sent for a review. It consists of 32 pages and is soft covered, the price being £2.50 plus £1.32 postage.

We can warmly recommend these books to parents who wish to give their families good scriptural reading materials.

PARAPHRASE OF PSALM 136

(Concluded from page 296)

And in despite of Pharaoh's fell [destructive blow],

He brought from thence His Israel:

For His mercies aye endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure.

The ruddy waves He cleft in twain,

Of the Erythræan main [Red Sea]:

For His mercies aye endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure.

The floods stood still like walls of glass,

While the Hebrew bands did pass:

For His mercies aye endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure.

But full soon they did devour

The tawny king with all his power:

For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

His chosen people He did bless
In the wasteful wilderness:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

In bloody battle He brought down
Kings of prowess and renown:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

He foiled bold Seon [Sihon] and his host,
That ruled the Amorrean coast [land of the Amorites]:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

And large-limbed Og He did subdue,
With all his over-hardy crew:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

And to His servant Israel
He gave their land therein to dwell:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

He hath with a piteous eye
Beheld us in our misery:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

And freed us from the slavery
Of the invading enemy:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

All living creatures He doth feed,
And with full hand supplies their need:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us therefore warble forth
His mighty majesty and worth:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

That His mansion hath on high
Above the reach of mortal eye:
For His mercies aye endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD

NOVEMBER 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

**JOY IN HEAVEN OVER
REPENTING SINNERS HERE BELOW**

“I say unto you, ... joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15. 7).

“I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15. 10).

These are the pure words of Immanuel. They are verily true. We sinful folk upon earth may not understand this glorious mystery, but it behoves us to believe the glorious truth of it, for it has such blessed import. Without prying or intruding into the glories and wonders of the presence of God in heaven and the joy of that world, it is good to ponder prayerfully and carefully this divine statement. As we may read these things in awe and wonderment, may our hearts be touched to go privately upon our knees and pray to the Lord Jesus, that such awful sinners as we are may be among those who thus repent and weep over our sins against such a good God, that it causes joy in heaven’s happy court above.

In these two parables the Lord Jesus uses illustrations from every day life, a lost sheep and the loss of a household valuable, to instruct us of the great joy in the kingdom of heaven above, when poor, lost sinners turn to Christ in repentance and faith. He spoke of a shepherd who lost a sheep, and a woman who lost a piece of silver in her home. They very naturally seek and search to find that that they had lost. When the sheep is found, the man calls his friends and neighbours together and says, “Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost” (verse 6). Likewise the woman calls her friends and neighbours together, saying, “Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost” (verse 9). We ourselves naturally rejoice when we find something that we have lost which was valuable or very useful to us, and we may tell our friends or family. May we also remember to give thanks to the Lord for His goodness in helping us to find our lost possessions.

The dear saints, living by faith in the kingdom of God here below, truly rejoice when they hear of a poor, wayward sinner coming to Mount Zion with weeping and supplications. How church members feel great joy inwardly when they notice or hear of one in the congregation, or of one who comes in from the world outside, feelingly in need of God’s forgiveness and rich blessing in their soul. Such intelligence makes glad

the hearts of exercised church members who pray for spiritual prosperity. So there is rejoicing in the kingdom of God here below over one sinner that repents of his sins and turns from darkness toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus plainly teaches, that “joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance,” and again, “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” This glorious truth is beyond our understanding, yet nevertheless it is written for our instruction. We know so little of the tremendous eternal ecstasy and rapturous joy, satisfaction, peace and love in the world of the “presence of God” above, with the “altogether lovely,” holy, shining Lord Jesus on the throne of glory. But Jesus has told us that repenting sinners upon earth are truly joyed over in heaven. Therefore it is not presumption to believe that blessed Immanuel proclaims these wonderful tidings to angels, and “to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12. 23). As blessed Immanuel’s victories are heralded in heaven, we are told that there is joy in that holy, happy place.

“Jesus our heavenly Warrior is,
He fights *our* battles well;
His wisdom, love, and power displays,
And conquers death and hell.

“O for a living faith to view
The victories of the Lamb;
And sweetly lean upon Him too,
Nor fear to trust His name.” (H. 561)

The Lord Jesus spoke this wonderful truth that we poor sinners might be cheered and strengthened in our many confessions unto Him. We read, “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5. 31). The Lord Jesus said that He would not send any away that came unto Him: “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6. 37).

May we be favoured to see many prodigals and sinners in Mount Zion, turning and repenting toward the Lord Jesus on the throne with “weepings and supplications,” and “with their faces thitherward” (see Jer. 31. 9, 50. 5).

“Returning prodigals shall find,
Though they are base, their Father’s kind.” (H. 806/2)

We realise that it is generally thought that the Lord is referring to sinners in the early days of their call by grace as they repent and “turn to

the Lord.” Yet surely, God’s dear people know many returnings from, and repentings of, all their wanderings and departures from their “first love.” They are brought to feel so desperate about their backslidings. William Gadsby, in setting forth the everlasting love of God, wrote:

“Love cannot from its post withdraw;
Nor death, nor hell, nor sin, nor law
Can turn the Surety’s heart away;
He’ll love His own to endless day.

“He loves through every changing scene,
Nor aught can Him from Zion wean;
Not all the wanderings of her heart
Can make His love from her depart.” (H. 633)

Poor Peter sinned against light and knowledge in spite of the Lord’s warning to him. Yet when the dear, suffering Saviour turned and looked upon him, “He went out, and wept bitterly” (Matt. 26. 75).

For the encouragement of poor sinners John Newton penned:

“Why art thou afraid to come?
Why afraid to tell thy case?
He will not pronounce thy doom;
Smiles are seated on His face.

“Though His majesty be great,
Yet His mercy is no less;
Though He thy transgressions hate,
Jesus feels for thy distress.

“Raise thy downcast eyes and see,
Numbers do His throne surround;
These were sinners once, like thee,
But have full salvation found.

“Yield not, then, to unbelief;
Courage, soul; ‘There yet is room!’
Thought of sinners thou art chief,
Come, thou burdened sinner, come.” (H. 956)

May we each be encouraged to confess *our* sins as we read that there is joy in heaven as sinners turn to Christ and repent of their sins.

We must not only examine whether we have a wedding garment, but also whether it be well kept and brushed; whether no moths be got into it, no new spots dashed upon it.... Graces are to be purified, as well as sins purged out; grace, as well as metal, for want of rubbing and exercise, will gather dust.

Stephen Charnock

BELIEVING IN THE LORD

*Sermon preached by James Kidwell Popham at Galeed Chapel,
Brighton, on Lord's day morning, March 19th, 1933*

Text: "And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him" (John 9. 38).

This interesting chapter sets forth the Lord Jesus in a typical way. That is, His going about doing good. And in this instance doing good to a blind man by opening his eyes is just typical of the spiritual mission on which His Father sent Him, to open the eyes of the blind, to preach good tidings to the meek. Every child of God here to whom the Holy Spirit has given faith owes to Him everlasting praises for so great a mercy. With the Bible in our hands as the Jews with the Old Testament in their hands, we are blind as they were blind, and we are proud as they were. "Are we blind also?" (verse 40). And people without grace think they know; that they see, they have no doubt; that they can form a judgment of what God ought to be, and what He ought to do, and what He ought not to do, they have no doubt at all. But because they see, as they say, therefore their sin remains in rejecting Christ and trampling under foot His Word. But when the Spirit of Christ comes and gives to any sinner the seeing eye, the believing heart, then that sinner sees Christ, when He is manifested to him; and when Christ said to this man, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" he answered honestly, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" This shows that there must be, preceding believing, some knowledge of the Person to be believed in. And Jesus said unto him, "Thou hast both seen Him" – just as you may see Him now in reading the Scriptures, and yet *not* see Him – "Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with Thee," and as a gracious and necessary consequence he said, "Lord, I believe." And again, as a necessary consequence, "he worshipped Him."

There are two great points in experimental religion before us: believing, and worshipping. "Lord, I believe," which is to say, "I believe in Thee. Thou hast opened mine eyes, Thou hast taught me, Thou hast found me out," when men had excommunicated him, cast him away from worshipping Him under the Mosaic law. What does the Holy Spirit cause believers to believe concerning Christ? This is a question, what do we believe concerning Christ?

If we have real faith, the faith of the operation of God, we first of all believe in the Deity, the eternal Godhead of the Lord Jesus. We believe that He is the Son of God. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" This turns the eyes to Him; allures the affections to Him; draws the powers of the soul after Him; causes the sinner to say, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God"

(Psa. 42. 1). Are we settled on that point? Have we faith in the Lord God incarnate, in the Son of God from eternity incarnate? Here is an object. Vital religion has two parts. First it is objective. This is the object. Second it is subjective. That is an inward work. And they both meet at this moment; that is to say, when they see Jesus Christ and say to Him reverently, humbly, "Lord, I believe Thee to be what holy Scripture declares Thee to be." That is a point. Now, that is a saving faith. It kills idolatry. It deeply humbles a soul. It puts out of court human judgment concerning God, and it settles the soul on this foundation. "I believe Thee to be Almighty God."

There were evidences sufficient before the eyes of the Pharisees and scribes of the Deity of the Lord Jesus by His omnipotent actions, miraculously healing the sick, quickening the dead, commanding the storm to be a calm, feeding thousands from a few loaves and fishes (see Matt. 15. 31; Luke 7. 14; Mark 4. 39; John 6. 11); and yet, though they said they saw, they never saw. But if this is our case by the teaching of the Spirit, then we have a saving faith, a faith that will embrace the Saviour, that will never be content without Him. Let us, God helping us by the Holy Spirit's grace, look at this point very steadfastly and carefully. Are we settled on this point? How much religion there may be without this, God alone knows, but very much corruption, unbelief, hardness of heart, ever so many streams of vile imaginations and abominable things may the corruptions of our nature send into our souls.

This faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus will prove, more than all other things, to be a life to overcome our death, a steadiness to preserve us from stumbling into error, keep us with our eyes on God, and bring us to look to Him to be supplied with all that we need for soul and body, for time and eternity. A grand point this, deserving of our closest and most prayerful attention, that we may be settled here; "for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid" (1 Cor. 3. 11), even the stone, the tried stone, the precious corner stone – Jesus Christ. This faith will make Him precious. "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious" (1 Pet. 2. 7). Sometimes this belief in action in the soul constrains it to say to Him,

"Yes, Thou art precious to my soul,
My transport and my trust;
Jewels to Thee are gaudy toys,
And gold is sordid dust." (H. 138)

And this preciousness of Christ, realised by the gracious teaching of the Spirit, moves the soul after Him with ardent desires. If you do not feel His presence, you will seek it. If you feel His presence, you will embrace Him and draw by faith from Him the supplies that you need. "Lord, I believe Thee to be a substitute for sinners."

This is another point. The substitution of Jesus Christ in the place and stead of His church is a fundamental doctrine, and the experience of it is sweet. When you can say,

“’Tis He, instead of me, is seen,
When I approach to God.” (H. 119)

you have a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a humble confidence that it is well with you.

If we consider for a moment in the light and teaching of the Holy Ghost what a substitute means, we may see the abundant grace of God, the great wisdom of God, the infinite kindness of God in sending His Son and laying Him for a foundation for the church. Everything necessary for the escape of man from the wrath to come, necessary to fit and prepare sinners for the blessed dwelling of God in heaven, everything necessary for the perfect justification and the holiness of sinners, the substitution of Christ ensures. It embraces them all. A substitute for another person is one who takes the position, the responsibilities, the liabilities of the person for whom, with open eyes as to all that is necessary, he is to be a substitute. Do you feel a sinner? Do you feel a rebel? Do you feel that that is true of your heart, that it “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”? (Jer. 17. 9). Do you feel the streams of sin boiling up from that depth of corruption that you have in you, covering your heart and mind and carrying away your thoughts into every foolish and wicked thing? Do you feel your nakedness before God, your awful guilt before Him, your constant disposition to sin and turn away from righteous things? Now all this sin, this guilt, this wickedness, Jesus Christ saw and knew fully when He consented to be your Substitute. He took on Him the form of a servant, that is, to serve His people. “The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20. 28).

Now, when the Holy Ghost comes and gives you to believe that Jesus Christ was a substitute for you, and you can say in this particular to Him, “Lord, I believe,” you have a real experience of God’s love and goodness; you have a real ground for hope and rejoicing and praising. Everything that God saw you would need, He sent His Son to be for you, a Substitute in your place as a sinner, and thus took away all your liability to wrath, paying all your debts and receiving penal wrath, divine curse, into His soul in your room and stead. “Lord, I believe.” O the happiness arising from this faith! God has given to this faith a singular position in respect of salvation. This faith in the substitutionary work of Jesus is that that brings justification; being justified by faith. God delivers His people from the wrath to come by faith in Christ Jesus.

They are manifested to be the people of God by faith. Look then at this point. Has your faith received this doctrine by the Holy Spirit? Have you felt that divine Spirit moving in your heart and directing you to this alone source of goodness, this only way of escape from the wrath to come? If so, you have, I say, a real religion and great cause for thankfulness and praise to God.

“Lord, I believe” – that Thou art a Prophet. This man, in answer to the sceptical question that the Pharisees and scribes put to him, “What sayest thou of Him?” said, “He is a Prophet” (verse 17). Jesus is a Prophet. Of Him Moses said, “A Prophet will the Lord your God raise up unto you ... like unto me; Him shall ye hear” (see Deut. 18. 15). Have we heard Him? A prophet was called a seer in old time. A prophet was one who received instruction from God and authority to go with that instruction to the people. The prophet was to tell them about God, about themselves. Has the Lord Jesus ever told us about God? about His love to sinners? His much mercy in raising us up and giving us again that blessed hope? Hope, as the Apostle Peter says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1. 3). Good news from a far country; a country we could never reach, a country of which we are naturally, through sin, absolutely ignorant; where God dwells, where the Trinity held council, and where the Trinity holding council decreed that the second Person in the Trinity should come and take our nature and be a Prophet and tell us of the love of God, of the love of the Son, of the love of the Spirit.

O, if the Holy Spirit comes and opens this work of a Prophet to us, we shall see that the Lord God hath anointed Him is a great truth. What for? “To preach good tidings unto the meek; ... to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn” (Isa. 61. 1, 2). The Spirit does comfort mourners. Jesus sends Him for that. He preaches Christ, and Christ pours the oil of joy into the soul of mourners. So He is a Prophet of good things, good news, a Father in heaven for vile rebels, adopting them into His own family. A Father to teach His children: “Whom shall He teach knowledge?” (Isa. 28. 9). A Father to take care of them. Ah, He will educate us if we are His children, and we shall often show that we do not want to learn; but He is determined. O by the way, did you ever thank God that He has been determined with you, determined you should learn some lessons, and would not let your vile, run-away heart prevail? But that is by the way.

Now this blessed, holy Lord Jesus made known by Himself, and by His Spirit, is received as a Prophet; a Prophet in the understanding, making that good: “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling” (Eph. 1. 18). Hope that predicts good in days to come. Hope that says to a despondent soul, “Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him” (Psa. 42. 11). “Lord, I believe.”

Then this will be a point with you: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (Jas. 1. 5). If you believe that Jesus Christ is a Prophet and knows the counsel of God, and was sent, as this gospel particularly tells us, sent to work the works of God and to speak the words of God which were given to Him; believe that He can say nothing but what the Father has told Him to say, and do no work but the works which He saw the Father do; then, I say, you will go to Him. And the Spirit will show this: the willingness in this Prophet to open divine secrets to sinners, to tell them which way to go, what to flee from, what to run to, to tell them that there is all in God they need.

“Lord, I believe” – that Thou art a King; King of kings and Lord of lords. Are you in a storm; do the waves roar? He sitteth on the waters. He sitteth King for ever (see Psa. 29. 10). He bindeth the floods from overflowing. Are you tempted of the devil, the god of this world? Jesus is the King of kings, and all He has to do when He sees it needful for you, when your strength is gone, is to rebuke Satan the adversary. Are your circumstances painful? Are you tried? Can you not manage? Happy the soul that says, “I do not know what to do, but I go to God.” Happy the man who cannot manage for himself, but who is obliged, and is not only obliged but, by the grace of the Spirit, led to this King.

“Reign o’er us as King, accomplish Thy will,
And powerfully bring us forth from all ill.” (H. 129)

He is a King!

“Lord, I believe” – that Thou hast all fulness; all that I need Thou hast. “Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1. 16). We need much; we are very poor people, and everyone to whom the Holy Ghost has made known his native poverty, his sinful strength, will be thankful whenever he gets a sight of the fulness of Christ, fulness of life, fulness of mercy, fulness of pardons, fulness of righteousness, fulness of power, fulness of pity, fulness of compassion, fulness of faithfulness. O what a Christ we have! What a Christ the Holy Ghost has caused us to believe in! We need not be troubled, but we are troubled. An empty cupboard is a troublesome thing, an empty purse, but

more painful and troublesome is an empty soul, empty of good, full of ill. Who can supply the need of such a soul? Turn your eyes to the Lord Jesus (see Col. 1. 16-19). The Holy Spirit open to you what He possesses. All the fulness of the Godhead bodily. All the good will of God. All the gospel, all the grace, all the covenant, all the power, all the love that can possibly be needed and desired and sought, this blessed Lord Jesus has. Happy the man who has a place in himself for this fulness. He must be emptied from vessel to vessel. A Christian really taught of the Spirit is never far from doctrine, and never far from experience, as he is blessed to have within him the Holy Spirit. The two are so intimate that you cannot separate them in the Scriptures, and they are so intimate in the soul that you cannot separate them for long. A dead Calvinist separates them, having no life and no experience; but a live child of God sees as a divine truth or doctrine the fulness of Christ and by his faith, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, draws from that fulness. "Lord, I believe."

"Lord, I believe" – that Thou art the only rest for my soul. Beautifully, Rutherford is made to sing:

"My nest hung in no forest,
Of all this death-doomed shore."

The only rest is this blessed, holy, glorious Lord Jesus Christ. If you think you rest in a circumstance that is very pleasing, you will probably provoke God to put thorns into it, or to take it away altogether. "Build," says Rutherford, "build no nest in any tree of this death-doomed forest." But we are very apt to do it. Naturally we want to do it. I have had plenty of experience of that disposition. "O but," says Christ, "you shall need Me," and when the Spirit brings the need to our knowledge and feeling, then comes the kind, merciful invitation: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11. 28). "My blood shall give rest to your conscience; My love shall give rest to your affections, My knowledge shall give rest to your understanding, and My power shall support you under every burden; yea, My wisdom and goodness shall be with you to preserve you in every fiery trial." Great was that Glorious One who, when three professors and confessors of Him were cast into the burning fiery furnace, walked with them. Ah, I have often thought and said to you, I suppose that the air of that furnace was the pleasiest atmosphere those three men had ever breathed. O the Rose of Sharon was there! The goodness of God was there, and they proved that there was a bed in the fire, a rest in the furnace, as every child of God, more or less finds when in some fiery trial. "I will give you rest. I am that rest. My Person is the rest." There is nothing but mire and mud in the whole world. He is the rest of His people. Sweet

rest. Change and decay we have in our persons, in our friends and friendships. God takes one and another away from us. He is the same, yesterday, today and for ever (see Heb. 13. 8).

“I believe, Lord, that Thou art the only beauty and perfection that the church shall ever have, either here or hereafter.” Beauty? God is the judge of what is beautiful. What is beautiful in God’s eye? Perfection, nothing short. If you have not perfection, you will never be in heaven; perfection, before you leave this world. “Now,” one says, “how can I be perfect with this sin?” There is a perfection in Christ which is expressed in one epistle: “Ye are complete in Him” (Col. 2. 10). All holiness, all the loveliness, all the purity, all the beautiful form that church shall have through eternity, she is to have from Jesus Christ. Poor sinner, when you see yourself to be without form and void, huge, shapeless, except as to be shaped in sin and born in it; I say, when, by the Holy Spirit you get a sight of yourself, how sick of yourself you are. How you mourn. O what salt tears trickle down your cheeks sometimes as you feel yourself to be so utterly bad. But then the kind Spirit of Christ comes and says, “Turn your eyes to Christ. See in Him the perfection you desire and must have. See in Him everything that is good.” Then you say, “Lord, I believe,” and you do not fumble into your own heart to find a bit of goodness there. No, you are content to be a sinner, to be “saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation” (Isa. 45. 17).

“Lord, I believe” – that Thou art all the victory that I need. You must be victors if you go to heaven. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with My Father in His throne” (Rev. 3. 21). “I ask them whence their victory came” (H. 477). How did you come through these tribulations? Great tribulations. How did you get along? How came you to stand when there were floods? How came you to live when you were in a fiery trial? How came you to live when death spread itself over your spirit through the corruptions boiling up in your nature? O, they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of His testimony. They overcame by Jesus Christ. Yes, and the Holy Spirit comes and says,

“Christ, who conquered for *you* once,
Will in *you* conquer too.” (see H. 779)

Then you will rest there. Then you will say, “Lord, I believe I am not to get the land in possession by my own arm, or by my sword. I am to get to heaven by this: I am to lose myself in Thee; I am to lose my sins and my sinfulness in Thy atonement; I am to lose my rags in Thy beauteous righteousness, and I, in my weakness, am to prove that Thou art strong.” All victory is by Jesus Christ.

This then, as I view it, is a large word. "Lord, I believe," stretches itself over people, poor believers, who feel so much unbelief. It stretches itself over all their needs, and it says, "Live!" Yea, more, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14. 19); and more, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be" (John 12. 26). O what a word that was to me once, and has been since. "Where I am." Where is He? In the land which is very far off. "Lord, I believe."

"And he worshipped Him." Necessarily, comfortably, humbly, believingly, he worshipped Him. Worship is the prostration of a sinner before God, the moving of his passions and powers and pouring out of them all as a libation [pouring, drink offering] before Jehovah Jesus. Worship is the movement of all the affections of the soul to Him. It is the giving up of yourself, the losing of your life, the hating of your life, and you then find it. "And he worshipped Him," as his God, as God Man. The Socinians accuse us of idolatry because we worship Him who is a Man. They do not know that Deity is in that Man. We, by the Spirit's grace, do know it. Yes, Eternal God, Jesus, possessing all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is worshipped, being God.

It is a beautiful action of the soul, this worship, this prostration of self. An inferior, infinitely inferior, bowing his whole soul before the infinitely Superior. An empty creature worshipping a full Saviour. A vile sinner worshipping a holy Jesus. We have worshipped Him, have we not? The other night on my bed this word came to me: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and I humbly said, "Lord, I believe," and I worshipped Him, and I am sure you will do the same whenever you get a view of Him. You will not be gadding about after a hundred bits of vanity when you see Jesus. You will leave everything. You will leave everybody and you will leave yourself, and that is the greatest of all things to leave. The devil was true when he said to God, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2. 4). But then this life which you part with, you will leave, you will hate, when Jesus is near you. In the light of the teaching of His good Spirit, "infinite" self goes, lustful self goes, covetous self goes, proud self goes, and the humble soul, humble because having been humbled, worships Him. May the Lord cause us to do this. I have just skimmed hardly the surface of this. God the Holy Spirit lead us into it. Amen.



For notwithstanding this rest and cessation from labour which is required on the Lord's day, yet three sorts of works may and ought to be performed.... These are works of piety, works of necessity and works of charity.

Ezekiel Hopkins

A VISIT FROM THE LORD

London
December 14th, 1844

To Mr. Bernard Gilpin

My dear Friend,

How glad I was to receive your letter and to hear the comfortable contents! I had a sweet evening last Sunday in speaking to your people at Hertford, and had a good journey home the next day. You know I am continually involved in fresh difficulties every day. I believe it is to keep me low. How frightful is the discovery of a complaining thought, at the sight of which I am made to cry, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord" (see Psa. 143. 2). and then He is pleased to still that tyrant.

On Monday last I went mournfully and heavy laden into my own room at home, and said, "O Lord, how can I expect such repeated tokens of Thy mercy and favour, amidst such continual backslidings! O how many times Thou hast healed me, and how much Thou hast done for me, and I am yet coming again and again!" Though very sorrowful, I opened the Bible, and to my surprise the Lord led my eyes to these words: "He shall cover thee" (Psa. 91. 4). I did not feel any power, but a sweet inviting still to look to Him, and the meditation on the words was sweet the whole of the day.

The next morning I turned to the same words, and the rest of the verse was added with a divine power that I am unable to express. O how it melted my heart down into godly sorrow and sweet contrition of spirit, and clean removed all my fears and all my sorrows for a while! But alas! I perceive the clouds return quickly after the rain, and many mountains rose up before me, but these things led me to prayer, and I again returned to the same Psalm: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." I felt assured I knew the secret place which was the bosom of Christ's everlasting love, open to all believers; and here the fire kindled once more, and the Lord returned with double comfort, and what I have so often written lately came again with such heavenly sweetness that it broke my heart to pieces with the feeling sense of His tender love. I am scarcely able to proceed while I tell you the effect of this upon my heart, the divine impression it has made, and the sweet tenderness it has left. My morning readings were very sweet, and two or three visits from the Lord every day kept my spirit calm and still, though often trembling. This led to many secret prayers with much watchfulness, and the Lord heard, and granted both bodily and spiritual strength equal to my day.

James Bourne

VISITATION OF THE DAYSPRING

Extract from a sermon by Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

“Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us” (Luke 1. 78).

What is meant by the expression “dayspring?” By “dayspring” is meant the day-dawn, the herald of the rising sun, the change from darkness to light, the first approach of morn; in one word, *the spring of the day*.

But what is this “dayspring” spiritually? It is the intimation of the rising of the Sun of righteousness. It is not the same thing as the Sun of righteousness, but it is the herald of His approach, the beams which the rising sun cast upon the benighted world, announcing the coming of Jesus, “the King in His beauty” (Isa. 33. 17). This expression was singularly applicable in the mouth of Zacharias. The Lord of life and glory had not then appeared; He was still in the womb of the virgin Mary. But His forerunner, John, had appeared as the precursor, the herald of His approach, and was sent to announce that the Sun of righteousness was about to arise. “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light” (John 1. 6-8). All nations at that time lay in darkness. “Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people” (Isa. 60. 2). But when the Lord of life and glory was about to appear upon earth, when He had already taken the body which was prepared for Him (see Heb. 10. 5), the very flesh and blood of the children (see Heb. 2. 14), which He was to offer as a propitiation for sin, “the dayspring from on high” had begun to dawn. God’s mercy, in the face of His dear Son, was just visiting the benighted world.

But there is another, an experimental meaning, connected with the words. “The dayspring from on high” is not to be confined to the approach of the Son of God in the flesh, but it may be extended to signify the appearance of the Son of God in the heart. I cannot be benefited by the appearing of Jesus in the flesh eighteen hundred years ago, unless He come and dwell in my soul. “The dayspring from on high” which visited the benighted Jewish church will not profit us, except that same dayspring visits our benighted heart. “The dayspring from on high” is the manifestation of God’s mercy in the face of the Saviour. And when this “dayspring from on high” visits the soul, it is the first intimation, the dawning-rays of the Sun of righteousness in the heart.

Now, “the dayspring from on high” visits the soul with the very first divine intimation dropped into the conscience respecting the Person, work, love and blood of the Son of God. Until this day-dawn beams

upon the soul, it is for the most part ignorant of the way by which a sinner is to be saved. It has tried perhaps works of righteousness, and has toiled and striven to produce such a holiness as God may be pleased with. But what has been the success of these endeavours? Have they issued in peace to the soul? Have they not rather plunged it more deeply into guilt and shame? Have they not proved the spider's web, the hypocrite's hope, a garment too short, and a bed too narrow? And yet this very striving and toiling to work out a righteousness has wrought a profitable effect; for being fully convinced by painful experience that it has none of its own, the soul is prepared to receive with faith the righteousness of the Son of God.

But the first "dayspring from on high" which usually visits the soul is from a view by precious faith of *the glorious Person* of Immanuel. Until we see by the eye of faith the glorious Person of "Immanuel, God with us," there is no day-dawn in the heart. Now we may see the doctrine of Christ's Person in our judgment long before we see it in our soul. There is a peculiar teaching of the Spirit in making the Person of Christ inwardly known. There is a holding up of His beauty and loveliness to the eye of the spiritual understanding; a removal of the veil of ignorance and unbelief which by nature covers the heart; a raising up of a living faith to go out of itself unto Him; a heavenly affection breathed into the soul whereby it clasps Jesus in the arms of a holy embrace, and says, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psa. 73. 25). This will be attended with meltings of soul at the solemn sight, with admiration of His beauty, with adoration of His glorious Person, with the confiding of body, soul and spirit into His keeping with a solemn committal of all we are and have into His gracious hands, as able to keep that which we "have committed unto Him against that day" (2 Tim. 1. 12), the day of His appearing. When the heart is thus opened, the affections thus drawn forth, the spirit thus softened, and the whole soul thus melted at a believing sight of the glorious Person of the Son of God, "the dayspring from on high" hath visited the sinner.

But, in looking at the glorious Person of the Son of God, we catch a faith's view of His *atonement blood*, and see it to be of infinite dignity. We see its unspeakable preciousness, that it is the blood of the Son of God; that it is holy blood, precious blood, sin-pardoning, conscience-cleansing blood; that it is the only sacrifice offered to, and accepted by God the Father; that it is the only propitiation for sin; that there is no other way of salvation, and no pardon for sin, or true peace of conscience, but that which flows from its personal application. This leads the soul to look to, hang upon, trust, and confide in it, and to seek more and more after a spiritual manifestation and experimental sprinkling

of it. We thus discard our own righteousness, trample upon our own doings, go out of self, and cast a longing, languishing eye towards that blood which "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1. 7).

So also with respect to *the glorious righteousness* of Immanuel. When we can see by the eye of faith that it is "the righteousness which is of God" (Phil. 3. 9), because the righteousness of Immanuel, God with us; when we can realise how perfectly and completely Jesus has fulfilled the law, what a spotless obedience He has rendered to it, that He has magnified it and made it honourable, fulfilled all its holy requisitions and spiritual demands; when we can catch a glimpse of this righteousness as "unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3. 22), and lay hold of it as all our justification in the eye of a holy God: when this is seen and felt, the "dayspring from on high" hath visited us.

Every manifestation of mercy, every testimony from God, every mark and sign in our favour, every evidence that our spot is the spot of God's children, every promise applied with power, every holy affection, every tender sensation, every filial dependence upon God's faithfulness, every breathing out of the heart at the footstool of mercy, either is, or is connected with, the visiting of this "dayspring from on high." Every ray of spiritual light, every sensation of divine life, every feeling of humility, every emotion of godly sorrow, whatever there is in the soul heavenly, holy, and God-like, all arise from "the dayspring from on high" that hath visited us.

But what a sweetness there is in the expression, "**visited** us!" What is conveyed by it? One idea contained in it is, that it is *the act of a friend*. If I have a friend, and I visit him, my visit is a mark of my friendship and affection. Thus the word implies that there is a tenderness and affection in "the dayspring," that it comes to us in a friendly manner, that it is not the wrath of God to destroy, but the mercy of God to save.

But another idea connected with the word "visit," is that of *unexpectedness*. Is it not so sometimes naturally? We have an unexpected visit. We may have been looking for our friend to call, but the time passes away, and no well-known rap is heard at our door. We wonder why our friend delays his coming so long. But, perhaps, when we are least expecting it, the form of our friend appears. So spiritually. We may be longing and languishing, hoping and expecting the visit of "the dayspring from on high," but it does not appear; the Lord delayeth His coming; there is no intimation of His appearing, no putting in of His hand by the hole of the door, no looking in through the lattice, no glimpse nor glance of His lovely countenance. But, perhaps, when least expected, and least anticipated, when the mind is so deeply sunk as scarcely to dare to hope, so shut up in unbelief as hardly able to vent forth a sigh, "the dayspring from on high" will visit the soul, and be all the more precious for coming so *suddenly and unexpectedly*.

STANDING UPON OUR WATCH

Extract from John Rusk (1771-1834)

Reader, it is not a careless, loose profession of Christ that will do. All this will bring the rod upon us, procure much furnace work, and cause us to go with our heads bowed down, and crying, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" (Isa. 24. 16). The prophet Habakkuk went in quite a different way from such careless, carnal professors as I have been treating of. Hence he says, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved" (Hab. 2. 1). The prophet was no stranger to his own heart. He was well taught to feel how bent to backslide he was, as we all are, so that after examination he is led by the Holy Spirit to watch unto prayer, and he did not watch in vain. Hence he says, "And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." And it was this: "The just shall live by his faith" (verse 4).

WAITING FOR THE SET TIME

South View Cottages,
Chessington,
Surrey.
June 8th, 1914

My dear Lyd,

I have promised you a letter, but I don't know what to write. I feel empty and undone; my thoughts are often far from anything that is really good. I did not always feel what I feel now. What a mercy it is if the Lord has stopped our feet from going the road of death. There are many temptations and snares we find when we have to go out into the world; how we need the Lord to keep our feet that we slip not, and keep the door of my lips that I sin not with my tongue, but alas we oftentimes have to confirm that we sin in thought, word and deed every day. How I do need my many sins forgiven. What low places we do seem to get into at times – I feel I am now. I feel I can't go on much longer without some token of the Lord's love to me a sinner.

"When by temptations sore oppressed,
Distressful anguish fills my breast!
All, all is grief and misery,
Till Jesus is revealed to me." (H. 399)

Dear Lyd, I know this is what you want too, but the Lord has said there is a set time to favour Zion. I hope the set time will come soon. I

wish I could say more to Henry, but I feel such a poor thing to say anything to him. This is all I can write this time; I hope if spared another time to write something better.

Do forgive scribble.

Your ever-loving cousin

Ebb

Ebenezer Sayers (junior)

BELIEVERS: THE HOUSE OF GOD

Extract from John Owen (1616-1683)

Christ's church of saints, of believers, is God's house.

By the church of Christ I understand, *primarily*, the whole multitude of them who antecedently are chosen of His Father, and given unto Him; consequently, are redeemed, called and justified in His blood – the church which He loved, and gave Himself for, “that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5. 26, 27). And, *secondarily*, also every holy assembly of mount Zion, whereunto the Lord Christ is made beauty and glory – every particular church of His saints, inasmuch as they partake of the nature of the whole, being purchased by His blood (see Acts 20. 28).

That this church belongs unto God, I shall only leave evidenced under the claim whereby He here appropriates it to Himself; He calls it His: “**My** house.”

That it is His *house*, I shall farther demonstrate. Three things are required to the making of a house: first, *a foundation*; secondly, *materials for a superstruction*; thirdly, *an orderly framing of both into a useful building* – and all these concur to the church of Christ.

First, it hath a foundation. “I have laid the foundation,” saith Paul, and, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3. 10, 11). That which Paul laid *ministerially*, God Himself laid *primarily* and *efficiently*. “Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation” (Isa. 28. 16). Now, this foundation is no other but the rock upon which the church is built (see Matt. 16. 18), which makes it impregnable to the gates of hell, communicating strength and permanency continually to every part of the building.

Secondly, a foundation only will not make a house – there must also be materials for a superstruction. Those you have, 1 Peter 2. 5: “Ye ...

are,” saith he, “lively stones.” All God’s elect are stones, in due time to be hewed and fitted for this building.

Thirdly, materials themselves will not serve: they must be fitly framed, and wisely disposed, or they will be a heap, not a house. This, then, is not wanting. Ye “are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2. 20-22). There is much spiritual and heavenly architecture in these three verses. I shall only touch on some particulars.

I. The foundation of this house, this temple, is laid; and that is Jesus Christ: “Other foundation can no man lay.” He is here called, “The chief corner stone,” and, “The foundation of the apostles and prophets.” It is not, which they were, but which they laid.

II. The materials of this building – elect, believers; said in the former verse to be “fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph. 2. 19). They alone are built on Christ, and thereby have union with Him; not one dead, rotten stone in all this building, as shall be declared.

III. The architects or builders are of two sorts.

1. Principal: “The Spirit” – we are “framed ... for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” He is the principal workman in this fabric – without Him is not one stone laid therein.

2. Secondary and instrumental: “The apostles and prophets.” And this they were two ways.

i. Personally, in their several generations; this was their work, their labour, to lay the foundation and carry on the building of this house.

ii. Doctrinally; so they labour in it to this very day; their doctrine in the Scripture holds out the only foundation, and the only way of building thereon.

IV. The manner of the building: it is “fitly framed together,” closely jointed and knit in together, sweetly closed together with Christ, “the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2. 19).

V. What kind of a house it is. It receiveth here a twofold title: “an holy temple,” and “an habitation,” or tabernacle; because of its allusion to both those holy places of the worship of God, fulfilling the types of them both. Hence it is most evident that this church of Christ is a house, and being appropriated unto God, God’s house. To make this the more evident, I shall show you what are the chief properties of this house.

1. For the properties, or chief qualities of this house, they are three: i. It is a living house; ii. It is strong; iii. It is glorious.

i. It is a *living* house: “To whom coming, as unto a living stone ... ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2. 4, 5). Christ, the foundation, is a living stone, and they that are built upon Him are lively stones. Hence they are said to grow together into a house. Growth is a sign of life, growing from an inward principle. Such as the growth of any thing is, such is its life. The growth of this house is spiritual, so therefore also is its life. It lives with a spiritual life, a life whose fulness is in its foundation. He “hath life in Himself” (John 5. 26), and they from Him: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live,” yea, it is Himself in them: “Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2. 20). It is true, those stones are dead in the rock as well as others: “By nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph. 2. 3); being “dead in trespasses and sins” (verse 1). He who hews them out gives them life; He quickens them when dead in trespasses and sins. There is not one rotten, dead stone in all this building. However some such may, by the advantage of their outward appearance, crowd in, yet they are not of the house itself.

ii. It is a *strong* house: “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16. 18). Though the rain descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow upon this house, yet it will not fall, because it is founded on a rock (see Matt. 7. 25). We were all once a house built upon Adam; and when the wind came, and beat upon us, we fell; and the fall of that house was very great. He in his best estate was found to be but sand; now we are built upon a rock that will abide all trials. The waves may make a noise, and dash themselves against Him, but it will be to their own ruin.

But you will say, May not weak and inconsistent materials be built upon a rock, which yet may have never the more strength for their foundation?

It is not so here, for the whole building is framed together in the foundation; not only on it, but also in it, and so not to be prevailed against, unless the rock itself be overthrown. And it is a living rock that this house is built on – a rock continually communicating strength unto every stone in the building, that it may be enabled to abide in Him. I should proceed too far, should I go to declare the mighty defence and fortification of this house. What hath been spoken from the foundation is enough to demonstrate it to be a strong house.

iii. It is a *glorious* house, and that in a threefold respect.

a. It is glorious in respect of inward glory, brought unto it of God in the face of Jesus Christ, being beautiful through the comeliness that He puts upon it. Hence Christ speaking of it says, “How fair ... art thou, O love, for delights!” (Song 7. 6), and, “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee” (chapter 4. 7). And how, I pray, comes that about? Why, Christ washeth it in His own blood, that it might be wholly “a

glorious church” (Eph. 5. 27). And farther, He being “the branch of the LORD ... and the fruit of the earth,” is made beauty and glory, excellency and comeliness, thereunto (see Isa. 4. 2).

It hath the beauty and glory of justification, which doth not only take away all filthy garments, causing iniquity to pass away, but also gives fair “change of raiment” (Zech. 3. 4), even the “garments of salvation,” and the “robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61. 10). And then it hath the glory and beauty of sanctification; whence “the King’s daughter is all glorious within” (Psa. 45. 13). The comeliness and beauty that is in a sanctified soul is above all the glory of the world. This house is all overlaid with gold within; Christ is unto it “a Head of the most fine gold” (see Song 5. 11). His house is not like Nebuchadnezzar’s image, that the head should be of gold, and the members some of them of clay; they all partake of His nature, and are very glorious therein.

b. In respect of its outward structure, which it eminently hath in all the peculiar assemblies thereof: “O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones (Isa. 54. 11, 12). So, also, where it is called the new Jerusalem – a city, from its laws and polity [order or government] – this “city” is said to be of “pure gold” – not dross and mire – “the building of the wall of it was of jasper ... and the foundations of the wall ... garnished with all manner of precious stones” (Rev. 21. 18, 19). This is that which the psalmist calls, “The beauties of holiness” (Psa. 110. 3). The glory of the ordinances of the gospel is their vigour and purity. There is nothing so glorious as our King on His throne, Christ in His court, this house reigning in the administration of His ordinances. Then, “All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad. Kings’ daughters were among Thy honourable women: upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir” (Psa. 45. 8, 9). His goings are seen, the goings of our God and King in the sanctuary (see Psa. 68. 24). The apostle exalteth the glory of gospel administrations exceedingly above the old tabernacle and temple worship – which yet was exceeding pompous and glorious. “If,” saith he, “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious” (2 Cor. 3. 7-11). Let men think as meanly as they please of

the spiritual service of God amongst His people, all glory that ever yet appeared in the world was but a bubble to it; all that God ever instituted before came exceeding short of it. He delights in it who beholds the proud afar off.

c. It is glorious in respect of the exaltation it hath above and the triumph over all its opposers. To see a house, a palace, hung round about with ensigns, spoils and banners taken from the enemies that have come against it, is a glorious thing. Thus is this house of God decked: "Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil" (Psa. 68. 12). She that tarries at home: the mother of the family, the church of God, she hath all the spoils. The Lord hath affirmed that not only everyone that opposeth, but all that do not serve this house, shall be utterly destroyed (see Isa. 60. 12). There you have the spoil of Pharaoh, and all his host, gathered on the shore of the Red Sea, and dedicated in this house (see Exod. 15). There you have the robes of Nebuchadnezzar, reserved when himself was turned into a beast (see Dan. 4). There you have the imperial ornaments of Diocletian* and his companion, casting aside their dominion for very madness that they could not prevail against this house. There is the blood of Julian,* kept for a monument of vengeance against apostates. There you have the rochets [clerical garments] of the prelates of this land, hung up of late, with other garments of their adherents, rolled in blood. There is a place reserved for the remaining spoils of the great whore, when she shall be burned, and made naked, and desolate (see Rev. 17, 18). Never any rose, or shall arise, against this house, and go forth unto final prosperity. Let the men of the world take heed how they burden themselves with the foundation stone of this house – it will assuredly break them all in pieces (see Luke 20. 18).

PRECIOUS PROMISES THAT ALL WORKS FOR GOOD

*A meditation by James A. Tallach (1896-1960),
pastor at Kames (1931-1952) and Stornoway (1953-1960)*

How rich is promise in the inheritance of every believer! Even in this life, he possesses riches of grace from which he may draw much present joy and comfort, but by far the greater part of his inheritance is held for him in promise, and is received by him in faith. "Faith," we are told, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11. 1). One of the most wonderful of these promises, and one that is perhaps most often quoted, is that in Romans 8. 28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." The

* Roman emperors.

range of this promise is very wide, embracing as it does “all things,” and under the all-wise and all-powerful control of God, the promise operates with a certainty which never fails to result in the highest good to those concerned. Nevertheless to many of these there is a very real difficulty. That all good things work together for good they are disposed to believe, but in the stern facts of life in this world many things operate which are not good; as, for instance, sickness, disease, accident, grief, death, bereavement. When the “all things” of the promise include such things, how can we be persuaded ourselves that they work together for good? And yet there it is written in the Word of eternal truth. “All things work together for good to them that love God,” and the apostle is so assured on the matter that he says, “We know.”

No doubt, in the case of many, much of the difficulty arises from their giving a carnal interpretation to the “goodness” promised here. Even the true believer may confound worldly, carnal good with spiritual and heavenly good. Insofar as he does so, he cannot fail to get into difficulties with this promise and to lose much of its comfort and sweetness. Let us then, in a very brief way, consider the nature of the “goodness” here promised; it may help.

1. The “good” here promised is undoubtedly *spiritual* good and not worldly good, that goodness which consists in the deliverance of the soul from sin. The salvation of the soul from the dominion, guilt and bitter fruits of sin is the scriptural idea of all good, and it is in the originating, the promoting and the realising of this good that all things work together. In the work of salvation from sin, the soul of a sinner is as gold in which there is much dross; as fire is one of the chief things necessary to purge the dross and purify the gold, so the fires of pain, sorrow, trial and need, are among the “all things” which work together to ensure the saving of the soul. “Now 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). Due regard to this will go a long way in resolving the difficulty indicated. Further,

2. The goodness here promised is *eternal* good, not temporal good. How easily and often mistaken we are in this: we judge goodness according to the present, transient effect upon our lives, but that is the world’s estimate of good – as they say, *good* fortune, a *good* time, a *pleasant* evening, *good* company. When the evening is past, when the time is spent, when the company is dispersed, when finally death comes, where then is the goodness, and how much of it is left? “The laughter of fools is as the crackling of thorns under a pot” (see Eccles. 7. 6) – a great deal of noise, an intense flame, a momentary blaze of light – then blackness and ashes. The goodness designed by the Redeemer for His redeemed is of quite another quality – it is that substantial and enduring

goodness inherent in life that shall never end. In attempting to look into the future, even with the enlightenment of faith and Scripture, our vision still is but as a looking through a glass darkly; and how restricted our view must be! But the Lord is not restricted. His view takes in the whole extent of our future requirements in this world; it takes within its range the great day of judgment, and an endless eternity – an eternity of torment to be delivered from, and an eternity of glory to be prepared for; it takes into account the body of sin and death which is still to be destroyed, and the perfection of holiness yet to be realised in order to *the enjoying of God to all eternity*; and with all this in view, He so orders and so controls all things that they work together in the production of a goodness fully adequate to meet all demands and to abide forever. To this view the apostle refers when he says, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal: but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4. 17, 18).

3. No doubt the good promised is also a holy, sanctified, gracious goodness. It is a quality of holiness which secures the happiness of the gracious soul – apart from it there can be no true good. It is such a goodness as has in it, in some measure at least, a holy and willing obedience to the Master’s will. In this Jesus Himself provides an example which should never fail to call forth our deepest wonder and admiration. “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5. 8), and, “For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2. 10). This discipline of learning obedience, this writing of the law of the covenant upon the heart, this “O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119. 97), becomes a mark of sonship, a necessary and very precious mark; a mark, moreover, which shows our kinship with the Son and with the *Captain of Salvation*; could there be greater good than this? Who would quarrel with those things – any of these “all things” – which in the Lord’s mercy and wisdom work together to produce that highest form of all good which consists in conformity to the image of Jesus? Is this not the fulfilment of all gracious desire, and the answer to all true prayer? And is it not to this highest of all possible good that those who love God are predestinated?

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow, **He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

SPIRITUAL SEASONS

By John Newton(1725-1807)

If, as you observe, the Song of Solomon describes the experience of His church, it shows the dark as well as the bright side. No one part of it is the experience of every individual at any particular time. Some are in His banqueting house, others upon their beds. Some sit under His banner, supported by His arm, while others have a faint perception of Him at a distance, with many a hill and mountain between. In one thing, however, they all agree: that He is the leading Object of their desires, and that they have had such a discovery of His Person, work and love, as makes Him precious to their hearts. Their judgment of Him is always the same, but their sensibility varies. The love they bear Him, though rooted and grounded in their hearts, is not always equally in exercise, nor can it be so. We are like trees, which, though alive, cannot put forth their leaves and fruit without the influence of the sun. They are alive in winter as well as in summer, but how different is their appearance in these different seasons!

Were we always alike, could we always believe, love and rejoice, we should think the power inherent, and our own; but it is more for the Lord's glory, and more suited to form us to a temper becoming the gospel, that we should be made deeply sensible of our own inability and dependence, than that we should be always in a lively frame. I am persuaded a broken and a contrite spirit, a conviction of our vileness and nothingness, connected with a cordial acceptance of Jesus as revealed in the gospel, is the highest attainment we can reach in this life. Sensible comforts are desirable, and we must be sadly declined when they do not appear so to us; but I believe there may be a real exercise of faith and growth in grace, when our sensible feelings are faint and low. A soul may be in as thriving a state when thirsting, seeking, and mourning after the Lord, as when actually rejoicing in Him; as much in earnest when fighting in the valley, as when singing upon the mount; nay, dark seasons afford the surest and strongest manifestations of the power of faith.

To hold fast the Word of promise, to maintain a hatred of sin, to go on steadfastly in the path of gospel obedience, in defiance both of the frowns and the smiles of the world, when we have but little comfort, is a more certain evidence of grace, than a thousand things which we may do or forbear when our spirits are warm and lively. I have seen many who have been, upon the whole, but uneven walkers, though at times they have seemed to enjoy, at least have talked of, great comforts. I have seen others, for the most part, complain of much darkness and coldness, who have been remarkably humble, tender and exemplary in their spirit and conduct. Surely, were I to choose my lot, it should be with the latter.

SALVATION FROM DEATH

By William Gadsby (1773-1844)

This salvation of which I speak is a complete salvation from that enemy who has conquered the whole universe and every human being. This is a complete salvation from that monster sin, so that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Hence the Lord Jesus Christ is said to have finished transgression, made an end of sin, and redeemed His people from all iniquity.

This salvation is not only a salvation from sin in all its bearings, but it is a salvation from the curse of the law. The law cannot curse the sinner that is saved, because he has become dead to the law by the body of Christ. What adds to the blessedness of this salvation is, that it is a salvation of manifestive union to the Son of God. Those who are killed to the law are married to Christ, and are manifestly one with Jesus; they are bone of His bone, body of His body, flesh of His flesh, and spirit of His spirit. Then what a glorious salvation that is which the Lord has accomplished for poor sinners.

I have often thought of what Paul says: "For when we were in the flesh, the motions [impulses or passions] of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom. 7. 5). Have you not found it so? When in the flesh, working such abominable things, sometimes it has brought forth legal vows and promises; at other times working wrath and rebellion; so that in the end it brings forth fruit unto death. This is all that ever the law can do for a sinner. All its workings in a poor sinner's heart only make it fruitful unto death. But, being delivered from the law by the blessed body of the Lord Jesus Christ, we bring forth fruit unto God; we bring forth fruit unto holiness. Thus it is a salvation that raises a sinner from the most awful state of degradation and ruin to the blessed, solemn, glorious state of manifestive union to Christ, to oneness with Him. They therefore bring forth fruit unto the praise and glory of His name.

This salvation is a salvation from death in all its bearings. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6. 23). This is a salvation from death. Say you, "Will not the Lord's people die? Shall we not all die?" I will tell you how it is. The Lord's people go to sleep; they sleep in Jesus. That is what the Holy Ghost declares: "They fall asleep in Jesus" (see 1 Cor. 15. 50-58; 1 Thess. 4. 13-18). Death to the child of God, who is saved by the grace of God, is no worse than a gentle nurse coming and rocking a peevish child to sleep. They are rocked asleep in the cradle of the love and blood of the Son of God. They that "sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." They shall be eventually raised from this sleep. It is a

salvation *from* every appearance of death, a salvation *to* all the glorious appearances of divine life and love. This is the salvation the Lord accomplishes for His dear people. You know what the Lord says concerning this people with the rest of mankind, that they are all dead in trespasses and sins: “You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2. 1) Then, whether you know it or not, if the Lord has not quickened your soul, you are as dead to spirituality as a dead corpse in the grave; and it has as much power to come out of the grave and work as you have to quicken your own soul. This salvation is a salvation that brings quickening power, and makes the dead soul alive to God; brings the soul that was spiritually dead up into life in the Lord.

That soul that is made a partaker of this salvation is brought to cry, sigh, groan, pant, pray and wrestle again and again, day by day, and will never rest till the Lord manifests to him Christ’s salvation. There being living movements in all his ways, after the Lord makes him alive, he has living movements towards God. It is as that blessed portion of the Word of God says: The Spirit “maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8. 27). That poor soul in which the Lord has begun salvation – at times he cannot talk; he cannot speak in prayer to the Lord. Perhaps some poor soul may be here tonight who is so bewildered, who is so confused, when he is on his knees he has not words to speak. “But,” say you, “if he cannot speak, he should use the prayer book.” You might as well count twenty. There is no prayer book that will touch your case, or come to the core of your disease.

Now, mind what the Lord says. The Spirit helpeth the infirmities of the saints: “For we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8. 26). The Spirit maketh intercession according to the will of God. Is there a soul here groaning, sighing and panting for the living God? There is the inditing of the Spirit of God in your soul. He has commenced His divine life, seating Himself there; and you may rest assured of this: He will maintain the life He has commenced. This salvation brings peace to the conscience, and is a salvation from death to life. That poor soul is alive that is in such a state that he sighs and groans to God to have this salvation brought down to his conscience. Once there was a time when he had no desire to groan; he had set his eyes, his ears, and his heart on pleasure; when he took his fill of sin, saying, “What is it to anybody? We are to do as we like. Come, let us have another glass to drive and drink away sorrow.” Many thousands drink away sorrow, till they drink themselves into the wrath of God in black despair. It is through the mercy of the Lord He does not leave you to say this.

When this salvation is made known and manifest, it leads the soul to plead with God. Sometimes there is such a blessedness in it, the man feels such fellowship between God and his conscience, that he is led to follow the Lord from Bethlehem to the wilderness, from the wilderness to Gethsemane's garden, from the garden to the cross, from the cross to the grave, and from the grave to the right hand of God, who has raised His people up together with Christ, and makes them sit together with Christ (see Eph. 2. 6). Thus He raises the soul up to have holy converse with God. Thus he can plead with God as a man pleads with his friend. This is the nature of this salvation; it takes away his filth and gives him Christ's holiness. Christ is made to such a sinner, sanctification. It takes away his unrighteousness, and gives him the righteousness of Christ. Christ is made of God unto him righteousness. He delivers him from all his foes, internal, infernal and external. In the end, it raises him up to have intercourse with God in glory. He shall reign with Him and Christ for ever and ever.

What a blessed salvation this is! Talk about doing our best, and the Lord will do His part, is all foolishness, mere lumber. When the Lord, in the riches of His grace, comes into the soul and raises the sinner up to God, and brings God and heaven down to the sinner, then God and heaven meet in the sinner's heart. Here is immortal glory not to be described by all the powers of men and angels.

"Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation" (Psa. 35. 3). You sometimes talk about the glorious body of Christ. Did you ever give it a thought what is intended by the glorious body of Christ? See the Lord Jesus Christ travelling in the desert; we do not see His glory. I have often thought of one thing that eclipsed His glory, and an awful thing it was – the sins of His people. They were all imputed to Him and put upon Him. If only yours and mine are so great, what must all the sins of God's people be? Do you wonder the people saw no beauty in Him? It was no wonder when He was covered with such an awful garment as your sins and mine. There was one place where His solemn Majesty appeared in His glory. That was on the mount of transfiguration. Peter, and James, and John were with Him, and said, "It is good to be here." Peter wanted to stop there for ever. Poor creature! He was for setting about building three tabernacles, but the Lord had better work for him to do.

This salvation our God has accomplished – a salvation from death in all its bearings, and which shall issue in life in all its matchless glories. By this salvation He will raise the bodies of His people and fashion them like to the glorious body of Christ. Body and soul be together glorified with Christ.

DESIRING TO ENTER IN

Letter to Ebenezer Oliver by Frank Luther Gosden. This is probably the last letter that he wrote in very late December 1979 or very early January 1980.

Bethesda
5 Hove Park Gardens,
Old Shoreham Road,
Hove. BN3 6HN

Dear Friend,

I thank you for your long and interesting letter dated December 24th last. I have been ill and my dear wife has died, so that I feel unable to write letters, but please accept this scrap; there is more in it than appears.

I am weary of earth, myself and sin. I think we are the same age, but I feel to be near my end. O to be brought safely to the desired haven.

With Christian esteem,

Frank Gosden

This was found in his desk but not sent as he died shortly after.

THE MEMORY OF THE JUST

Gracious account of Charles Herbert Collins, of Grove

Charles Herbert Collins, of Grove, near Wantage, Berks, died January 22nd, 1929.

He was born, July 13th, 1849, of poor parents, and brought up to attend church. Being of a lively disposition, he was very fond of gaiety, and indulged in all the sinful pleasures of this world, as far as circumstances would allow, until the end of January 1871. He was then employed by a Strict Baptist, when an argument arose regarding infant sprinkling. To try to prove his argument right, he went to an old box where he had seen a Bible, which he opened on John 3, which he read. On coming to the words, "Ye must be born again," they seemed to point at him; also, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" This seemed to him to refer to the clergy, and to point out that they were ignorant of the way of salvation. It also made him feel he was wrong, and from that time he was brought into deep soul trouble.

The first time he went to Grove chapel was to the jubilee services in April 1871, when Mr. A.B. Taylor, of Manchester, preached from Revelation 22. 17. He had such a feeling while there that these were the right people, and the effect was to bore his ear to the doorpost of the

house of God, to which he would walk six miles. He suffered much ridicule from his former companions and relatives. On one occasion, when returning home from Grove, he was jeered at and shouted after, which he felt very much. He had to pass near a brook, and was sorely tempted to drown himself “to save further trouble,” as it was suggested to him. Being almost beside himself, he leaned over a gate, when it was as though someone spoke the words: “No man that hath left father, mother, brothers, sisters, houses, or lands for My sake and the gospel’s, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (see Mark 10. 29, 30), which raised a little hope in his soul.

He sank very low at times afterwards, and would say to himself, “Shall I be in hell for ever? Yes, for ever.” He would tell the Lord he was willing for his body to rot on a dunghill, if He would but pardon his sins. After two years of deep soul exercise, he was set at liberty. He went to hear the late Mr. Mattingly preach at Faringdon. During the service, it was as though streaks of gold shone into his soul, and he was carried in soul-feeling to heaven. When he came to himself, they were singing hymn 265, the third verse:

“While such a scene of sacred joys
Our raptured eyes and soul employs,
Here we could sit and gaze away,
A long, an everlasting day.”

He could not describe the holy joy he felt; all his sins were gone. Some little time after, three persons came before the church with a view to being baptized, his wife being one of them, and it was hoped our late dear friend would come forward also, though he was determined he would not. In the week previous to the baptism, a member of the church had these words given him: “I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth” (Isa. 43. 6), which he was persuaded referred to our late dear friend. When the time came for the baptizing, his wife brought a change of clothes for him, as she felt he would be constrained to be baptized; and while hearing Mr. Tutty in the morning, the Lord so blessed his soul that his fetters were broken, and he felt the power of Christ’s love constrain “his willing feet in swift obedience” to move in the way of His commandments. He gave in his experience midday, and was baptized with the other candidates by Mr. Tutty, April 15th, 1881, and he remained an honourable member till his death, also a pattern of regularity and punctuality in his attendances at the services there.

Thus the Lord made and fashioned this rough diamond to be a pillar and ornament in the house of God. Being naturally of a quick temperament, he often had to mourn with poignant grief the conflict

between the powers of grace and sin, but when the spirit of grace reigned in him, his conversation was savoury and edifying, so much so that one felt it was a privilege to know him.

When the time came for his dissolution, it was remarkable how the power of the Spirit of grace loosed the bands of earthly and natural ties, and enabled him calmly to lie down in the arms of covenant faithfulness, till his willing spirit took its flight to stand before the throne, January 22nd, 1929. The funeral took place at Grove, when a large and representative company gathered to pay their last tribute of love and respect to a sinner saved by grace; the service being conducted by Mr. Albert White, of Abingdon, and Mr. Jacob Pocock.

His removal has left a gap. We miss him much, as we believe it could be said of him that he was, in his position as deacon, one of Solomon's valiant men, holding a sword in the defence of truth.

J.P.

BOOK REVIEW

Preparing for Eternity, by Alexander Nisbet (1623-1669); paperback; 88 pages; price £6.30; published by Reformation Press and obtainable from www.lulu.com, www.amazon.co.uk and from Christian booksellers.

This book is an exposition of the 12th chapter of Ecclesiastes by a Scottish minister who was contemporary with many of the Puritans. The chapter begins with Solomon's exhortation, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Eccles. 12. 1). Solomon then speaks of the frailties of old age in metaphorical language, emphasising that the weakening of our faculties will make reasoning and concentration more difficult in old age. He summarises our duty with the words, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccles. 12. 13, 14). This is indeed our duty. As our Creator, God has every right to demand our worship and to command that we walk according to His Word – but this is not salvation. Our fallen, sinful nature mars everything, and if God were to judge us on how we keep His commandments, we must all perish.

We were deeply perplexed by this book, because the author seemed to contend for the truth of what Solomon says, *as though it were the way of salvation*. So man's duty is to remember his Creator, to seek to walk in His commandments and to be aware of the vanity of everything here below, and the solemnity of the Day of Judgment. And by a studious attention to this, "these considerations also have great influence in inciting men early to make their peace with God, that He may favourably entertain their spirits at death, and they may lay down their bodies in the dust in hope of a glorious resurrection" (page 53). On what ground does God view these men favourably? "His people ... aim at

what is well-pleasing in His sight (Phil. 2. 12), in humble confidence making use of Christ's merits to cover their imperfections and make them acceptable to God (Psa. 5. 7)" (page 82). What is the end of preaching? "The Word of the Lord faithfully preached and accompanied with His blessing will give men no ease in their security and neglect of necessary duties, but will be still goading them to these things by serious exhortations and earnest supplications" (page 73). Alas, this is "stumbling at that stumblingstone" which the Apostle Paul speaks of in Romans 9. 32. The "preparation for eternity" described here is declared to be in our hands, so that by diligent study of the Word of God, by keeping God's law and looking to Christ to make up where we come short, we will "make our peace with God." We never will – we never can! If the Lord Jesus has never "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1. 20) for us as His own elect, all our own works will leave us exposed to His solemn judgment at the last day. There is no exposition in the book about the necessity of the new birth, about the solemn need for godly sorrow over sin, about the need for the gracious teaching of the Holy Spirit to convince of sin and to reveal the way of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus. There is nothing about sovereign, discriminating and abounding grace.

God's preparation for eternity (see Rom. 9. 23) and that described here are vastly different. If we are to be prepared for eternity, the work is all in God's hands, and He will have the glory of it all. He will have "mercy on whom He will have mercy" (Rom. 9. 18). The preparation began in eternity before time, in the choice of His own people; they are all "born in sin" as all others, but for them the Lord Jesus came to this earth, fulfilled the law which they have broken, and put away their sin by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. But we are all "dead in sin" and need God to give us a new nature, a nature which loves holiness, and abhors sin against God, which receives the truth in love, and in which there is a gracious attraction to the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour of sinners. We need the gracious teaching and power of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to our lost condition, to the preciousness and suitability of the Lord Jesus as the only hope of such sinners, and grace to enable us to flee to Him and trust in Him alone. The preparation described in this book is to enforce the law, to goad people into duty and to use the merits of the Lord Jesus as a makeweight to cover our shortcomings. God's preparation is to bring the sinner down to feel utterly lost, to cause him to flee from the law which can only condemn us for the least misdemeanour, and to reveal complete and full forgiveness for our sin and a righteousness to cover our shame, in the Lord Jesus alone. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10. 4). And where this is known and felt, there will be some knowledge of what William Cowper wrote:

"To see the law by Christ fulfilled,
 And hear His pardoning voice,
 Changes a slave into a child,
 And duty into choice." (H. 188)

Christ will have all the glory of salvation; He will be a complete Saviour – or none at all. We need hardly add that we cannot recommend this book.

John A. Kingham, Luton

THE BEST ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Isaiah 61. 10; Luke 15. 22

Of all the creatures God has made,
 There is but man alone
 That stands in need to be arrayed
 In coverings not his own.

By nature, bears, and bulls, and swine,
 With fowls of every wing,
 Are much more warm, more safe, more fine,
 Than man, their fallen king.

Naked and weak, we want a screen;
 But when with clothes we're decked,
 Not only lies our shame unseen,
 But we command respect.

Can sinful souls, then, stand unclad,
 Before God's burning throne,
 All bare, or, what is quite as bad,
 In coverings of their own?

Rich garments must be worn to grace
 The marriage of the Lamb;
 Not nasty rags to stink the place,
 Nor nakedness to shame.

Robes of imputed righteousness
 Will gain us God's esteem;
 No naked pride, no fig-leaf dress,
 How fair soe'er it seem.

'Tis called a robe, perhaps to mean
 Man has by nature none;
 It grows not native, like our skin,
 But is by faith put on.

A sinner clothed in this rich vest,
 And garments washed in blood,
 Is rendered fit with Christ to feast,
 And be the guest of God.

Joseph Hart (1712-1768)

He that is contented with just grace enough to get to heaven and escape hell, and desires no more, may be sure he hath none at all, and is far from being made partaker of the divine nature.

John Janeway

THE
GOSPEL STANDARD
DECEMBER 2019

MATT. 5. 6; 2 TIM. 1. 9; ROM. 11. 7; ACTS 8. 37; MATT. 28. 19

SEEKING THE KING OF THE JEWS

“Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” (Matt. 2. 2).

This gracious, and to us, a vital question, was asked by the wise men of the east, when they came to Jerusalem, seeking the “King of the Jews” (see John 18. 33-39). Who these wise men were, or how many there were, we are not able fully to ascertain. Some feel that they were descendants from a residue of the Jews that were carried away in the captivity to Assyria or Babylon. Some judge that there were three of them, as they brought three gifts. While these points of view could be true, yet as the Scriptures are silent on these points, it is safer not to come definitely to those conclusions. We do not really know.

One thing that we can safely say, is that they feared God, and that they had intimation from God that the blessed One, the “King of the Jews,” was born. They saw a special bright star suddenly appear in the night sky, which they believed by faith signified that the King of the Jews was born. They perceived that this was the fulfilling of Isaiah chapter 9 verse 2: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” It does not appear that Herod or his court, or any other people saw this brilliant star. The wise men saw it the second time after they left Herod, and were led by it to the house in Bethlehem where Jesus was. They fell down and worshipped the Lord Jesus, and gave Him their gifts, “gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” After this, God instructed them not to return to Herod, but to return “into their own country another way.” As these wise men appear to be the only ones who saw the star, first in their own land, and then after they left Herod, we can draw a parallel, that only those who have eternal life can really see a little of the brilliant magnitude of the glory that is in the Lord Jesus.

But where do poor and needy sinners seek Jesus, the “King of the Jews,” today? On the third day after His crucifixion and death, the humble, grief-stricken believers sought after Him at the tomb, with their spices. They then heard words of great joy from the angels, which some believers found perplexing: “He is not here: for He is risen” (Matt. 28. 6). Jesus is not only risen, but He is now ascended “into His glory” (Luke 24. 26). “And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted

up His hands, and blessed them. And ... while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24. 50, 51).

In these New Testament times we seek the Lord Jesus in heaven’s high court above, where Jesus sits on the throne of grace, as the “King of glory.” “Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah” (Psa. 24. 10). This “King of glory” is “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev. 19. 16). Jesus sits and reigns as “a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God” (Heb. 2. 17). As He is both King and Priest, He becomes to poor sinners “as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa. 32. 2); as “my Rock” (Psa. 42. 9); “the Rock of my strength, and my refuge” (Psa. 62. 7); “my hiding place” (Psa. 32. 7); “God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psa. 73. 26). Jesus is all those things, and much more beside, to that people we read of in Zephaniah 3. 12: “I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD.” Immanuel reigns in glory above, to save and help His own flock upon earth. God in a precious Christ is the same today as He was in the days of the sweet singer of Israel. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psa. 46. 1). The Apostle Paul in the midst of many cares and trials was exercised daily in seeking the “King of the Jews,” and could say in his seeking, “For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 1. 12). Even when a believer is favoured with a good degree of assurance and consolation in Christ, he is still a seeking pilgrim in all his many conflicts and temptations, and never gets beyond seeking the “King of the Jews” while he is living this side of the grave. As those sages [men of penetrating wisdom] of old sought the Lord, and found Him at Bethlehem, so may we, in like manner, seek the Lord Jesus in the court of heaven above for everything that we need from Him. The promise is sure: “Seek, and ye shall find” (Luke 11. 9).

In this lower world there are so many afflictions, troubles, temptations, losses and peculiar and unique trials and sorrows experienced by the saints. A medical doctor may see hundreds of patients in a matter of weeks. He will meet with manifold afflictions, infections and conditions. Some he can deal with and write out a prescription for medication. Many have to be referred to a specialist or consultant surgeon for diagnosis and treatment. Sadly, some are beyond all help. But the dear Lord Jesus, the “King of the Jews,” is that great and glorious Physician who can do everything. Godly Job expresses this in the last chapter of the Book of Job: “I know that Thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee” (margin: “no

thought of Thine can be hindered”) (Job 42. 2). How he was humbled, and concluded at the end of his trial, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (verse 5 and 6). There is no trouble like soul trouble, and that is often combined with circumstantial sorrows. It is called “Jacob’s trouble.” “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” (Jer. 30. 7). Earthly physicians are so limited. But the great Physician, who is the “King of the Jews,” will bring all His dear people safely through their days.

“When most we need His helping hand,
This Friend is always near;
With heaven and earth at His command,
He waits to answer prayer.” (H. 132)

There are many instructions and encouragements in the Scriptures of truth for poor, sin-sick souls to seek the “King of the Jews,” that they may truly trust in Him, as they seek His blessed face. “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13. 20, 21). “Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength” (Isa. 26. 4). “And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22. 17). Only this glorious King can truly satisfy us with His mercy and grace. (See Psa. 90. 14, 15).

“Come boldly to a throne of grace,
Ye wretched sinners, come;
And lay your load at Jesus’ feet,
And plead what He has done.

“‘How can I come?’ some soul may say,
‘I’m lame, and cannot walk;
My guilt and sin have stopped my mouth;
I sigh, but dare not talk.’

“Come boldly to the throne of grace,
For Jesus fills the throne;
And those He kills He makes alive;
He hears the sigh or groan.

“Poor bankrupt souls, who feel and know
The hell of sin within,
Come boldly to the throne of grace;
The Lord will take you in.” (H. 675)

When the angel Gabriel visited the virgin mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, he stated, “That holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1. 35). Now that blessed Son of God reigns in infinite power, grace and glory. May we be among those true, believing seekers that approach the “King of the Jews” now sitting upon the throne of grace, and bring all our sins, mistakes, backslidings, worries, sicknesses, responsibilities, cares and concerns, and spread them before, and cast the care of them upon His lovely, kingly Person. It is in this gracious exercise that we shall prove that “He careth for you” (1 Pet. 5. 7).

What precious truths and promises the spiritual poet penned when he versed the following:

“In every condition – in sickness, in health,
In poverty’s vale, or abounding in wealth;
At home, or abroad, on the land, on the sea,
‘As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be.

“Fear not, I am with thee; O be not dismayed;
I, I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I’ll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.

“When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of woe shall not thee overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

“E’en down to old age, all My people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in My bosom be borne.

“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.” (H. 329)

While we live in this lower world, which will soon pass away, may we each be among those who flee to the “King of the Jews.” The “King of the Jews” is the King of all those believers who “live by faith,” after the pattern of Abraham. “And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15. 6). “For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Rom. 4. 3). Almighty God freely justifies by His grace all men, both Jew and Gentile, who truly believe in, and trust alone to, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Unto Him” – Shiloh – “shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen. 49. 10).

ABUNDANT GRACE

Extract from a sermon preached by Mr. Gerald D. Buss at Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham, on Lord's day morning, 28th March, 2010

Text: “And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1. 14, 15).

The Apostle Peter tells us, in his first Epistle, that we should be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us (see 1 Pet. 3. 15). That is, if we are asked by any man, whether he be a godly man, or even ungodly, if he challenge us as to why we have faith and hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, we should be ready to give an answer to such an one. Now, of course, if we are to give a right answer, we need the Lord to be with our mouth and with our tongue, so that we speak aright. But I wonder how many of us here this Sabbath morning, if we were asked, could give a reason of the hope that is in us? Let me come a little deeper. *Have you a hope to give a reason of?* It would be very solemn if your silent tongue and your shut mouth were because there was no hope, no knowledge of God, no knowledge of self, no knowledge of Christ and no preparation for that last step that must come from time into eternity. Those of you whose mouths are silent in this respect – do examine yourselves why you are silent! Then, those of you who do have a “good hope through grace” (2 Thess. 2. 16) – examine it and weigh it according to the scales of our text this morning.

Here we have Paul’s reason of the hope that is within him. Paul is giving the testimony to his son in the faith, Timothy, of his call by grace; of how the Lord plucked him as a brand from the burning, showed him himself as a guilty, hell-deserving sinner, and then revealed to him the *only* way of salvation. That very name he once despised and hated, now became his *only hope*. He says, in the very first verse, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ: “which is our hope.” Without Christ he had no hope. And, friends, without Christ you have no hope either, and nor have I. And those who are yet in their sins – the Word of God tells us in Ephesians 2 – are “without God, without Christ, and without hope” (see Eph. 2. 12). Very solemn! Though Paul was not *now* without God and not *now* without Christ, so he was not *now* without hope. He tells us this morning in our text how God dealt with him, how God found him, and how God brought him into this precious knowledge of salvation.

This glorious word, “grace.” Paul tells us in Romans 5: “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (verse 20). Go to the Epistle of James and hear these words, “But He giveth more grace” (Jas. 4. 6). May our first point this morning be this: in reviewing what he was and

what he is now, Paul gave all the honour, and all the glory to that word “grace.”

What is grace? How are we going to define grace this Sabbath morning? How could we define it? It has to be experienced to be known. It must be begun first. Has there been a beginning? “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1. 6). “Oh,” but you say, “that day may be a long way away yet. Need I be worried about it and concerned about it?” I am sure the oldest among us here this morning, whoever that may be, will tell you how short life is. You younger ones might not believe me. You say: “Well, I’m only ten or fifteen. I have yet got seventy years I hope, perhaps even eighty years left. Oh, I hope my life has yet only just begun.” Well, I hope it has only just begun, in one sense. But you ask the dear aged ones among us here this morning, and they will tell you how quickly life passes. “It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4. 14). It is “as a tale that is told” (Psa. 90. 9). It has a beginning; a few chapters – some tales are longer, and some have more chapters than others – but then there comes that final word: The end! And you are living, friend, a life like that: “a tale that is told.” Paul was, too. But – blessed be God’s holy name – although Paul could say that tale had begun so badly – and it *did* begin badly, and *your* tale began badly, and *my* tale began badly, as well. We were sinners, unregenerate, unbelieving, unhoping and unloving. We were alienated from God and godliness, although some of us thought we were not, yet we were. And Paul thought he was not, but he was.

But then that great change came. Grace intervened and grace took hold of him. And friends, if grace takes hold of you, it will never let you go. *Never*. The hymnwriter said: “O Love that will not let me go.” It is a mercy, isn’t it? Think of it. Why ever should God lay hold of a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious man? Whatever was there in him to give God, as it were, the motive (I say that most reverently) to begin a work of grace in him? Friend, the motive was in God. The love of God in Christ Jesus – the only way God could lay hold of such a sinner, such a wretch, such a beggar, such an undeserving man as Paul was. And some of us, friends, must join with Paul this morning. And the only argument we have with him: he says he was the chief of sinners. Well, Paul, we must argue with you there. We do not debate anything else with you. We acknowledge all else you have said. But this we must ask you to yield to us: we feel to be “sinners; of whom **I** am chief.”

I just make two comments here. Oh, poor sinner here this morning, who feels their wretched heart and says, “Who ever can do anything with it?” God can. And those of you that have loved ones over whom you mourn and weep – “Can anybody do anything with them?” God can.

God can. Plead this word, “Grace.” “The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” It is stored up in a precious Christ, for Paul and for all called by grace. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” Those of you who have been here over the thirty years I have been your pastor will have heard me try and preach from this word more than once. We have never exhausted it. Friends, if a thousand sermons were preached from this text, it would still be only like a thimbleful out of the ocean depths. May we get just a thimbleful this morning. It is a faithful saying, a worthy one, an acceptable one, that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

It is a worthy saying. Then do not trample it underfoot. How solemnly Paul speaks in the Hebrews to those who count the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing, and trample it underfoot! (see Heb. 10. 29). God will not look lightly on those who treat the gospel so lightly. Friends, may God deliver us from it. May He give us that grace to understand, as all His people are led to do, the exceeding value of this statement. It is an invaluable word, speaking of invaluable blood, and it speaks of an invaluable Saviour. Let us not trifle with these things. This is the only way of salvation. There is no other door God has ever provided than this door. God has never devised any other means of salvation but this means.

“Worthy of all acceptation.” This means three things. First of all, the whole saying is blessedly worthy to be received by sinners taught by the Holy Ghost, without exception. Secondly, sinners of every kindred, tribe and tongue, wrought upon by the Holy Ghost – as Paul was – will find it an acceptable word. And thirdly, how wonderful it will be in that great day when God gathers His dear people at His right hand! How they will acclaim this glorious word! They do so in glory this morning. “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5. 12). That is their anthem. They are speaking, they are praising and they are meditating upon this glorious word. Eternity will not be long enough to thank God for it: “That Christ Jesus came into the world” – not to make salvation possible; that will not save me. He does more than that – to accomplish it, to bring it to pass for those sinners in our text, “of whom I am chief.”

“This is a faithful saying.” It is like that scarlet cord on which those spies hung with all their weight as they descended the wall of Jericho. So, dear friend, a sinner may hang, with God’s help, all the weight of his soul, all the weight of his life and his eternity, his death, his sins, his guilt and his needs. All the weight may be borne by this blessed cord of

salvation, “That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.”

Now, who came? “Christ Jesus came.” Two blessed names of the Saviour were given here. The name Jesus, of course, is the name given to Him by the Father. Remember how the angel visited Joseph and told him and Mary how that dear Babe was to be named. Joseph and Mary were not left to make any decisions of their own, were they? No! God commanded them. It was, after all, the dear Father’s right to do so. It was His Son whom He was sending in the holy tabernacle of His holy humanity. He had a divine right to name the Child: “Thou shalt call His name JESUS.” Why? “For He **shall**” It is not, “He might,” not, “He perhaps,” not, “He might nearly.” “He **shall** save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1. 21). Who are His people? Those sinners in our text, given by the Father to the Son ere time began.

“Determined to save, He watched o’er my path,
When, Satan’s blind slave, I sported with death.
And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?” (H. 232)

No! God forbid you should think so.

Christ Jesus, blessed name! And friends, He fulfilled that name in all His life, in His dying, and in His rising. Jesus – the name He bears at the right hand of His Father this Sabbath morning, this Lord’s day morning. “Jesus” – it makes heaven’s arches ring with joy. It is the odour of the ointment that fills the house: the name of Jesus.

“How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer’s ear!
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.” (H. 135)

If it does that on earth below, dear friends, how much more will it do it in heaven above! “The house was filled with the odour of the ointment” (John 12. 3). It filled the house, and it fills heaven: the name of Jesus.

But then, it is Christ Jesus. What does that tell us? The anointed One. Yes, within His holy humanity “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2. 9). What an anointing! Now, there are those of us here this morning who humbly hope – if we are not solemnly deceived – that we have an anointing of the blessed Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. We are not children of God if we have not got that anointing. But, dear friends, it is only in measure. But, with Him it was without measure. The Holy Spirit dwelleth without measure in Him, the whole of the Godhead dwelleth within Him, bodily. “It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell” (Col. 1. 19). Christ Jesus. He came with a commission to save sinners, and how blessedly He fulfilled the

law that they had broken, satisfying its demands of obedience, yes, and payment. Blessed, precious Saviour, this Christ Jesus! He “came into the world to save sinners.”

And then, where did He come to? Into the world. That tells me, friends, three things about this condescension of the dear Saviour. First of all, He did not come as an angel. He came as a Man, a real Man. That is a wonderful thought, is it not? “He took not on Him the nature of angels”; we read, “but He took on Him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2. 16). Yes, His human genealogy (we say that most reverently) could be traced back to Abraham himself, as God had promised Abraham all those hundreds of years before. Yet we must also add something else, and this is vital.

Although, in a sense, He was miraculously the seed of Abraham, yet He was sinless. Abraham was not sinless, nor was Jesus’ mother, Mary. But, the Holy Ghost overshadowed her in this amazing conception so that He came forth from the womb as “that holy Thing” (Luke 1. 35), and so He came into the world.

Now think of it. You and I are sinners, and we are so used to being sinners that the sinfulness around us does not affect us like it ought to. But friends, the dear Saviour was holy. He was like that “lily among thorns” that we read of in the Song of Solomon (Song 2. 2). A lily surrounded by thorns. Think of it. What a comparison! There is the dear Lily, the dear Son of God in our nature – pure, holy, harmless, undefiled, verily God and yet verily Man – and He had sin all around Him. Everywhere He looked He saw sinners and the fruits of sin. That is why He was “a Man of sorrows” (Isa. 53. 3) all His days. There was a shadow over His holy life, from His very earliest breath, because of this solemn fact: He was the “Lily among thorns.” How wonderful to think he lived those thirty-three years like that! What a cross He took up! What uncongenial circumstances He condescended to dwell in! You think of it. We read of missionaries who go into the slums – and, friends, we admire them for it. But that is a very, very faint comparison with Him, who left His radiant throne on high, and stooped down into this sin-cursed earth to dwell among sinners. “Sinless, yet for sin He bled.” He “came into the world.”

Secondly, we come closer. Dear friends, you and I have the world in our hearts. That is a solemn thing that is true of us all by nature. How wonderful to think that there is a people into whom the dear Saviour comes, right into their hearts, bringing that great change I have been speaking of! He came, not just bodily into this world, but He comes by His Spirit into the hearts of His dear people who, by nature, are worldly, worldly-minded and of this world. But Oh, the great change His Spirit

brings! It translates them from the kingdom and power of darkness into the kingdom of His grace. What a great change!

And then, thirdly, He “came into the world.” For what reason? He came with this blessed purpose: to save sinners. This was the one motive of His holy life. Now, you younger ones are growing up. Some of you are now going out into life, and you have plans and ambitions. You are setting your sights on those, and, yes, with God’s help, I hope you may attain them. But (and I say this most reverently), think of what lay before the dear Saviour. The object of His life – Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha. Think of it! “I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luke 12. 50). Think of it! We read: “He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9. 51), knowing the things that were to be accomplished there. He came into the world for this very end: born to die. He took up a life to be able to lay it down. That, dear friends, is the Saviour in our text.

Now, what did He come to do? He came to save sinners. And how did He do it? Well, one of our hymns puts it like this, and expresses it just in four lines much better than I can:

“In guilt’s dark dungeon when we lay,
 Mercy cried, ‘Spare;’ and Justice, ‘Slay.’
 But Jesus answered, ‘Set them free,
 And pardon them and punish Me.’” (H. 837)

Now, poor, guilty sinner, here this morning – you have come into the house of God, and the only quarrel you have got with Paul is the last few words: “I am the chief of sinners.” You say: “I am that chief sinner. I have blasphemed, I have wandered and I have strayed. All the marks of the Fall are upon me. I am nothing but a filthy wretch.” Or, as one of the deacons said in the vestry prayer this morning: “A beggar.” Is that who and what you are this morning? Is that how you came into this house? These are the very characters for whom the dear Saviour came. This is the very case He came to take up, the very need He came to address, the very want He came to satisfy – the need of sinners. “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5. 32). You may have no other qualification for the gospel this morning than this: your feeling sense of being a sinner. Then friend, you have got all that you need.

“Let not conscience make you linger,
 Nor of fitness fondly dream;
 All the fitness He requireth,
 Is to feel your need of Him,
 This He gives you,
 ’Tis the Spirit’s rising beam.”

You say, "But do I feel my need enough?" Friends, none of us do. But it is a mercy to know just a little of that felt need. As the work of grace progresses, (I use that word aright) one thing you will feel more and more of is your need as a sinner. You will not outgrow that word "sinner." You will know it more deeply. What a mercy!

"All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him,
This He gives you,
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.

"Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all.
Not the righteous,
Sinners Jesus came to call." (H. 723)

"Jesus ready stands to save you." What a mercy! Yes. It is sinners He receives, the sinner in our text whose eyes have been opened, whose heart has been broken, whose life has been arrested by this word, "Grace." This is the one for whom the dear Saviour came to die. Chief of sinners you feel to be, but here is the Chief of Saviours; the only Saviour.

My dear predecessor, the pastor here, when first convinced of sin, said to his dear brother, who had been called by grace before him: "I am such a big sinner!" "Yes, that is quite true," his brother said. "But, He is a great Forgiver." And so He is. Poor, guilty soul this morning, what is there to hinder you? Your guilt? Why, the blood of Jesus answers for that. You say, "My impotence!" His strength answers for that. You say, "My lack of faith, and hope, and love, and all that I ought to be!" Yes, dear friend, but the supply is in Him. You must come as a beggar. You must come depending on charity. You must come leaning on this word, pleading it:

"No sinner shall ever be empty sent back
Who comes seeking mercy for Jesus's sake." (H. 11)

You say: "Can you prove that from Scripture?" Yes, I can, and I will close with it. "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6. 37). That is a faithful saying, and so is the one in our text. May God give you grace to lay hold of it. Amen.



150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF J.C. PHILPOT

This month marks the 150th anniversary of the death of Joseph Charles Philpot, who died at Croydon on December 9th, 1869, aged 67 years. J.C. Philpot was joint editor of the *Gospel Standard* from January 1840 until 1849 with John M'Kenzie, and then sole editor until 1869.

J.C. Philpot was the third son of Charles Philpot, who was the rector at Ripple, and vicar at St. Margaret's at Cliffe in Kent. These two villages lie between the town of Deal and the port of Dover in Kent. He was born at Ripple. He was educated at Merchant Taylors' School and later at St. Paul's School, both in London. From London, he studied at Oxford university, where he gained a Master of Arts degree, and later became a Fellow of Worcester College. From his early days to the end of his life he suffered from severe bronchial infections.

In the spring of 1826, he was engaged to tutor two boys in Ireland, not far from Dublin. All went well at first. However, a natural and lawful affection developed between J.C. Philpot and an older sister of the two pupils. The father of the young lady strongly disapproved of the warming and budding relationship, which resulted in Mr. Philpot returning to England in the following year. This great grief to Philpot was the appointed means in God's everlasting love to begin a work of grace in his soul. This visitation and calling by grace completely changed the course of his life. His great purpose in life was now to "win Christ, and be found in Him" (Phil 3. 8, 9). His old ways had to be forsaken, and former companions and friendships had to be broken off.

J.C. Philpot then took the joint curacy of Stadhampton and Chiselhampton in Oxfordshire. In the wonder workings of divine providence and grace, Mr. Philpot developed a warm friendship with William Tiptaft, vicar of Sutton Courtney. William Tiptaft seceded from the Church of England in 1831. The wondrous interweavings of grace and providence brought Mr. Philpot to hear John Warburton of Trowbridge preach at the newly-built chapel at Abingdon. Abbey Chapel, Abingdon was built at the sole expense of William Tiptaft. Mr. Philpot began to feel an increasing union with the Particular Baptists. He became so unhappy in the established church, that in 1835 he seceded from the Church of England, resigned his curacy, and relinquished his college fellowship.

After this, J.C. Philpot stayed with Joseph Parry, a deacon at Bethel Chapel, Allington, and a farmer in the Vale of Pewsey, Wiltshire. Mr. Philpot was baptized by John Warburton of Trowbridge at Allington Chapel on September 13th, 1835. He preached locally in Wiltshire and then further afield. He preached at Oakham in Rutland in 1836, and finding much liberty, continued preaching at both Oakham and Stamford. In July 1838, J.C. Philpot married Sarah Louisa Keal, and they settled in

Stamford. This marriage was a very happy one, which more than made up for his earlier grief. Mr. Philpot preached at both chapels as pastor for twenty-six years, until ill health, which had dogged him for most of his life, forced him to resign his dual pastorates and move south to Thornton Heath, Croydon, where the climate was much more suitable for his health. He very much valued the ministry of Francis Covell, the pastor at Providence Chapel, West Street, Croydon. A bond formed between them. Mr. Philpot referred to him as Brother Frank.

The writings of Joseph Charles Philpot were extensive, and have been read in all the inhabited continents of the world, especially through the medium of the *Gospel Standard* magazine. Mr. Philpot was a graphic writer, using many illustrations from creation or from the ways and works of man, to describe the spiritual point he was making. With his keen intellect, no doubt active in his young days, he would have seen many rural scenes at Ripple situated on the dip slope of the North Downs with its calcareous rolling meadows and woods gradually falling northward to the north Kent coast, or from the high, east-facing cliffs of St. Margarets, as shallowing northwards, until they finally peter out at Walmer, near Deal. Between Deal and the notorious Goodwin Sands (which are a graveyard of shipwrecks and mariners alike) there was an anchorage in the days of sailing ships, called, "The Downs." Boy Philpot would have seen the small boats as they rowed to and fro to exchange supplies or correspondence. His yearly visits to the lovely Vale of Pewsey, rimmed on the north and the south by chalk downs, with the water meadows and lush grassland of the Avon Valley (south coast Avon), would again have sparked many illustrative thoughts, that would have been brought into his writings or sermons.

J.C. Philpot was so skilful in describing the soul exercises of poor pilgrims. I would judge him to be the greatest preacher and writer of experience since John Bunyan (although Philpot admired William Huntington, whom he called "the immortal coalheaver"). How he graphically describes the ups and downs of soul conflict, deep soul troubles called "Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30. 7), with all the inward warfare between the flesh and the Spirit. Mr. Philpot insisted that salvation is all of grace alone. He laid down that the life in the soul of man is only from God in a precious Lord Jesus. He ever delighted to exalt the Lord Jesus as the Author and Finisher of God's great salvation. While he delighted in the truth that Jesus is exalted in heaven, yet he also insisted that Christ formed in the heart is the only hope of glory, and is the only real source of comfort.

J.C. Philpot was also raised up by God to defend vigorously the glorious truth of the eternal Sonship of Christ, and following on from this, he wrote an excellent meditation on the sacred humanity of the Lord Jesus. Mr. Philpot could not have realised how useful that article would

be in our day. His editorials, reviews and meditations have been made a blessing to the saints from his time right down to our days.

Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom (Editor of the *Gospel Standard* from January 1971 to December 2015) in his *History of the Gospel Standard Magazine, 1835-1985*, described the editorship of J.C. Philpot as “A Remarkable Editorship.” We can truly subscribe to that, and we believe our spiritual readers will subscribe to the same.

We must now come to the time of his departure from this world into the heavenly bliss prepared for him by the Lord Jesus. We quote from the writings of Mr. S.F. Paul, editor of this magazine from July 1964 to December 1970.

“His last sermons (as also his first among the Strict Baptists) were preached at Allington, the final ones being delivered on two Lord’s days in August 1869, the texts on one of these Lord’s days being John 16. 33 and Exodus 33. 15, 16; but he continued to be occupied with his pen until November 21st, when he failed again with his chest. On December 2nd he was too ill to leave his bed, and although it was hoped he might recover as in previous attacks, his strength failed on the 8th and he passed peacefully away early the next morning. His last words spoken at intervals gave evidence of his prevailing faith: ‘Better to die than to live! Mighty to save! I die in the faith I have preached and felt. “The blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth us from all sin.” O if I could depart and be with Christ, which is far better! Praise the Lord, bless His holy name!’ Then at the last came the climax as he looked up earnestly and then closed his eyes and said, ‘Beautiful!’ On being asked what was beautiful, he made no direct answer, but presently said with failing voice: ‘Praise the Lord, O my soul!’ and so breathed his last breath and passed gently into eternal bliss at the age of 67, on December 9th, 1869.”

We also quote from Mr. B.A. Ramsbottom’s history of this magazine and part of the funeral address given by Mr. Francis Covell:

“This was indeed a great loss to our little denomination, and especially to his family and his close friend, Mr. Covell, upon whom now fell the sad duty of committing the poor body to the tomb. In the midst of a storm of wind and rain this took place in the Croydon Cemetery amidst a large gathering of friends from all parts of the country. ‘Know you not,’ said Mr. Covell, ‘that a great man and a prince is buried this day, proving that all flesh is grass and the glory of man as the flower of grass. The gold of acquired literature that our dear, departed friend possessed, and the silver of human eloquence to speak it forth, now lie silent in the dust; but John said he “heard a voice ... saying ... Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.... Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” It is done; the conflict is over; the spirit has fled. Let Zion’s children weeping kiss the rod and gird on their robes of deepest sackcloth.”

And so Joseph Charles Philpot entered into the joy of his Lord. He entered into the expressed desire of the poet:

“But when this lisping, stammering tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then, in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save.” (H. 160)

May we poor sinners be gathered safely to that happy throng and see the “King in His beauty.”

THE HEAVENS DROPPING DOWN

An extract from a sermon by Joseph Charles Philpot (1802-1869)

When the Lord says, “Drop down, ye heavens, from above” (Isa. 45. 8), and calls upon them to let dew fall, it is as though He spake thus: “Out of Jesus’ fulness, who sits enthroned in majesty and glory, as the covenant Head of His church, full of grace and power, let the dew and rain of His grace drop into the hearts of His people.” So that the spiritual dew and rain are sure to come in the appointed season; seeing there is a covenant fulness in Jesus, out of which they drop into the hearts of His people, because God has already “blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen them in Him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (see Eph. 1. 3, 4.). So when in the text the Lord says, “Drop down, ye heavens, from above,” He calls upon them to let fall their dew as figurative of the coming down of the Spirit into their hearts.

But why should the Lord have selected the figure of *dew* to set forth the coming down of the Spirit into the soul? There must be something in natural dew analogous to the spiritual dew, or the Lord would not have employed such a figure. Let us, then, observe two or three circumstances in which the analogy is evident.

1. *Dew falls down independently of the power and will of the creature.* Who can command the dew to drop down? Who can go forth at night, and say, “Dew fall”? It falls just as and when God sends it; on some nights it falls, on others it falls not; each wholly depending on the sovereign will and power of the Creator. So spiritually. Who can command the dew and rain to fall into the hearts of God’s people? Who can go and say, “Dew of the Spirit, fall”? Who can command the grace of God to visit this or that individual? The dew, spiritually, falls just as the God of grace would have it; as the dew naturally falls, just as the God of creation would have it.

2. But in the falling of the natural dew *there is something soft, still, and gentle.* We therefore read, “We will light upon him as the dew

falleth on the ground” (2 Sam. 17. 12), that is, stealthily and unseen. It does not rush down like the pelting hail, but falls stilly, and often imperceptibly, so that we scarcely know it has fallen, till we go out in the morning, and see every blade of grass tipped with the sparkling dewdrops; by these bright gems we know that dew has fallen during the still hours of the night. So spiritually, the kingdom of God is not in noise, rant, or wild excitement. The Lord was not in the strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice (see 1 Kings 19. 11, 12). And thus there may be a great deal of religious fire, but no presence of God felt; fleshly passions worked up into a storm, but no “still small voice” speaking to the conscience; a very earthquake of natural convictions, but no inward “demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2. 4). But when the spiritual dew falls, it drops gently, softly and stilly into the heart, and it is only known by the sweet and blessed effects it produces.

3. But again. Dew, naturally, has a *softening effect*, especially in warm climates, where it falls very copiously. We therefore read, “Thou makest it soft with showers” (Psa. 65. 10). It does not tear up the ground as with thunderbolts, but by moistening and softening penetrates into the soil. And thus the dew of God’s grace moistens and softens the heart, humbles, dissolves and fertilises it; not by tearing it up with the thunderbolts of wrath and condemnation, but by dropping gently and stilly into it, so as to melt it into contrition, meekness and godly sorrow before the throne of mercy and grace.

But when the Lord says, “Drop down, ye heavens, from above,” they drop down not only dew, but sometimes *showers* also; as we find the prophet speaking, “For as **the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven**, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater” (Isa. 55. 10). The *rain* which the heavens drop down at the word of the Lord has the same effect as the *dew*, and only differs in being more copious. Rain is therefore needed more after a dry season. How, after this long season of drought, for instance, under which nature has pined, have a few showers refreshed the soil! How before our eyes has the dry, burnt-up ground, since the late fertilising showers, resumed its livery of green, and the brown hills re clothed themselves in their wonted garb of verdure, and again look fresh and beautiful! And do not the souls of God’s people become withered and dry, when neither dew nor rain fall, until they resemble the barren wilderness and the parched heath? But the heavens drop down rain and dew, and the soul becomes once more revived out of its barrenness and dearth.

“Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness.” Two expressions are here made use of, which seem to have a special allusion to dew and rain. The one is applicable to the dew,

which *drops*, and the other, to rain, which *pours down*. But whether in drops or showers, each lets fall the same blessing – *righteousness*.

What *righteousness*, then, is this which the heavens sometimes drop, and sometimes pour down? If we have any righteousness, where is it? It is in the heavens; we have none here. What read we? “Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and **righteousness**” (1 Cor. 1. 30). “**In the LORD** have I **righteousness** and strength”; “**In the LORD** shall all the seed of Israel be **justified**, and shall glory” (Isa. 45. 24, 25). This imputed righteousness is called in the Scriptures, “the righteousness of God,” because it is the righteousness of Him who is God; the righteousness of Emmanuel, who is in heaven at the right hand of the Father, and bestows it from heaven upon His needy, naked, shivering, destitute people. The Lord therefore says in the text, “Let the skies pour down righteousness,” that it may come down as in a shower. Thus, when God does manifest it to the soul, it is always through the revelation of the Holy Ghost. We can have no experimental acquaintance with Christ’s righteousness, nor any spiritual enjoyment of it, except as brought down into the heart through the power of God the Spirit. When the skies pour down righteousness, so that a sense of Christ’s righteousness is brought with divine power into the conscience, then, and then only, is it rightly received. But we look to the earth to bring forth fruit after the dew and showers. Look at those portions of the earth where they have no rain nor showers to fertilise the soil. What can they produce? They are a wild waste. The earth cannot produce fruit until the showers and dew come upon it; nor can a man’s heart produce anything spiritually good until “God works in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure” (see Phil. 2. 13).

JUSTIFICATION

By Edward Carr of Bath (1851-1920)

Properly speaking, the word *justification* is a forensic term [term used in law] expressing the gracious act of God in not only pronouncing a just and holy sentence of acquittal in favour of wretched, guilty, self-condemned sinners, whereby they are declared free from sin, delivered from the powerful grasp of the law, and released from the punishment of their transgressions; but also approving them as holy, through the imputed obedience and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, justification is the saints’ *charter of freedom*, by which they are brought into the liberty of the gospel, and liberated from the curse and bondage of the law.

Justification is the choicest and chiefest blessing of the covenant of grace. By it all believers are absolved from the guilt and shame of sin

(see Acts 13. 39), and made partakers of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, because of their interest in His redeeming love and work.

Freedom from sin is the effect of the imputation of the believer's trespasses to his Saviour, and of the imputation of the Saviour's righteousness to him (see 2 Cor. 5. 21).

The holy law of God requires universal and perpetual obedience to its commands, on pain of death (see Ezek. 18. 4; Jas. 2. 10), and this in respect to every particular, for, "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3. 4; see Heb. 2. 2). Since Adam fell, no man has been able to meet the law's demands; and seeing an imperfect and partial obedience (even if it could be yielded to the letter of the law) will never be accepted by a righteous God, it is evident that "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2. 16). A man cannot be justified by the law of Moses, because he cannot fulfil it (see Acts 13. 39). However, sovereign grace made a way by which God can be "just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3. 26). The Lord Jesus Christ became the Surety for His church according to the will of the Father; He came to earth, being found in fashion as a man, and in His humiliation wrought out a righteousness, by perfectly obeying, as the Daysman, every jot and tittle of the requirements of the law. He is "the end of the law for righteousness" (Rom. 10. 4), which glorious robe is "unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3. 22); and all such are, by the imputation of His obedience, made "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1. 6), and stand "complete in Him" (Col. 2. 10).

He had compassion on His church, cast out into the open field to the loathing of her person (see Ezek. 16. 5), and came where she was, taking her law-place; He was "made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4. 4), "made a curse" for her (Gal. 3. 13). The curse she deserved He endured, the law she had broken He fulfilled, the debt she had contracted He paid, the punishment she had entailed upon herself He suffered. Thus, she was justified, and "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him" (see Eph. 1. 3).

But we pass on to notice the *means* by which the soul is brought into an experimental participation of these truths. By nature, we have no functions or powers to comprehend spiritual things at all, much less to know and feel the necessity of being justified by the alone righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; neither can there be in the carnal man any desire after it, nor any laying hold of it. Therefore, when the Lord quickens a soul into divine life, He bestows upon him the grace of *faith*. Faith is the eye of the soul, by which the poor sinner perceives his need of Christ's righteousness, looking to it with desire, and seeking to be made a partaker of it. Faith is the hand of the new creature, stretched forth towards the righteousness of Christ, feeling after it, and clinging to Him. It holds fast to His righteousness, as the only way of escape from wrath.

The man who possesses saving faith, believes, feels, and laments that he is a miserable, helpless, ill-and-hell-deserving sinner. He apprehends the way of salvation, to a greater or less degree, and his faith is seen in those precious fruits and works, which prove it to be not a dead faith, but a faith of the operation of God. There is true repentance, a turning from sin with loathing, and to the righteousness of Christ with longing. There is a seeking and waiting for that application of the atonement, which makes manifest an interest in Christ's redeeming love, and brings the soul into the enjoyment of a good hope through grace, that "he is justified from all things, from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses" (see Acts 13. 39). Thus faith lays hold on Christ's righteousness as the sinner's only hope. Such an one sings:

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name." (H. 1106)

Thus, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2. 16). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5. 1).

Now, true faith implanted in the heart produces a tender conscience, a standing in awe of God's Word, a desire to walk in His fear, a reverential regard unto His precepts, and a seeking to glorify Him among men. Without some measure of these "fruits," there is no evidence of the possession of saving faith. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified" (*evidentially*), "and not by faith only" (Jas. 2. 24), for "faith without works is dead" (see verse 17). *A vital faith carries in itself the animating principle from which works proceed.*

Further, the *Justifier* is Jehovah – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father justifies by declaring the sinner's acquittal and forgiveness as the Judge of all. God the Son justifies by the robe of righteousness which He wrought out, the imputation of which is the ground of his justification. And God the Holy Spirit justifies by working that faith in him, which we have seen is the means of his justification, and in due time sealing it and revealing it to his heart and soul. It is evident that the justification of a sinner is all of grace from first to last. He himself has no hand in it whatever.

Again, the *sentence* of justification is declared by the Eternal Three in the covenant of grace; pronounced in the court of conscience by the witnessing of the Spirit, in the application of the peace-speaking blood of Jesus; and finally, will be openly promulgated before assembled worlds in the judgment day.

Lastly, consider the *extent* of justification. It is absolution from all guilt. Believers are “justified from **all** things,” and accounted perfectly righteous. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (Rom. 8. 33).

To conclude. The doctrine of justification displays the love of God in its unfoldings of the plan of salvation; it exalts the Lord Jesus Christ in His blood and righteousness; it humbles the creature by excluding boasting; it affords sweet consolation for an afflicted conscience; and an experience of its power and preciousness greatly promotes true godliness both in heart and life.

ANOINTED FOR THE BURIAL

The penultimate letter of William Tiptaft, written to his sister Deborah

Abingdon
July 11th, 1864

My dear Deborah,

You and the friends will be glad to hear that I have had my soul blessed in a similar manner to that I was blessed at Oakham. Friend Hicks had been praying earnestly that my soul might be blessed by what I might hear. A conveyance was sent for me both times, but I was too poorly to go. In the afternoon, about teatime, I began to have a softening of heart; my tears began to flow, and I told no one for some time. I did not want to be robbed; my soul could rejoice in the blessed testimonies of the Lord’s lovingkindness. I took up a *Gospel Standard* and read the letter to you at the baptizing here the first time. I say there, “I would rather have the blessing than a large bag of gold.” I had the same feeling yesterday. I looked out for a collection of hymns by Whitefield, in which I enjoyed reading hymn 48:

“Ah! lovely appearance of death,
No sight upon earth is so fair;
Not all the gay pageants that breathe
Can with a dead body compare.

“With solemn delight I survey
The corpse when the spirit is fled,
In love with the beautiful clay,
And longing to lie in his stead.

“This languishing head is at rest,
Its thinking and aching are o’er;
This quiet, immovable breast
Is heaved by affliction no more.

“This heart is no longer the seat
Of trouble and torturing pain;
It ceases to flutter and beat,
It never shall flutter again.”

I felt yesterday afternoon that I could not say *No* if death came. I was happy, and could realise blessed promises. It was a fresh proof of God’s lovingkindness. Friend Hicks had been praying that I might be blessed. At the prayer meeting last night, at half-past six, friend Hicks told the friends, and they were glad to hear it. Those in affliction, with death staring them in the face, will prize divine enjoyments, so that they can say,

“When Jesus, with His mighty love,
Visits my troubled breast.” (H. 251)

The friends pray for me; they know I need their sympathy and prayers; they are made glad to find me with my heart full of gratitude for blessings temporal and spiritual.

“These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free;
And break thy schemes of earthly joy,
That thou mayst seek thy all in *Me*.” (H. 295)

There is nothing in this world we can value highly except real religion. Those blessed with the teachings of God’s Spirit, so that they are real seekers in the narrow way, will stand when death comes. What an awful change it makes with the ungodly and with mere professors! Those who have bought the truth have cause to hope in God’s mercy. What a mercy that God will hear and answer the prayers of His people, so that they may be well exercised about being in the footsteps of the flock!

My throat is sorer than usual; taking cold and coughing try the ulcerated part. I need patience; the blessing yesterday afternoon made me better, mind and body. When we can realise our interest in the covenant of grace it makes us thankful for knowing the realities of religion. How much there may be in the head, and no humbling, or saving grace in the heart! What a precious treasure the fear of God is! None will endure to the end but such as are so enriched. This long affliction has more or less weaned me from the world. Give my love to the God-fearing, who will be glad to hear of the blessing. If people are to go to heaven, they must be made *fit*; how much hangs on that word *fitness*. How many act as if they had no souls!

Give my love to any enquiring friends. Greet the friends by name.
Yours very affectionately,

William Tiptaft

P.S. May you value highly what you can make out as real religion wrought by grace in your soul.

“See the vain race of mortals move,
Like shadows o’er the plain;
They rage and strive, desire and love,
But all their noise is vain.

“Some walk in honour’s gaudy show,
Some dig for golden ore;
They toil for heirs, they know not who,
And strait are seen no more.”

A PASTOR’S YEAR END LETTER

Thornlea,
Rochdale Road,
Blackley,
Manchester.
December 1927

Dear Friends,

Once more it is my sacred pleasure to greet you in the name of the Lord. Yes, that Lord who brought us into being, and who from that day till now hath provided for us, watched over us, and prevented us with the blessings of His goodness in His kind and merciful providences, so that when rightly viewed we are constrained to say, despite all our undeservings, that He has been, not only faithful to His Word, “Thy bread shall be given and thy water sure” (see Isa. 33. 16), but “has daily loaded us with benefits” (see Psa. 68. 19), and to many who read this letter how true are the words of the poet:

“’Tis sovereign mercy finds us food,
And we are clothed with love;
While grace stands pointing out the road
That leads our souls above.” (H. 498)

Yes, grace in covenant, grace in Jesus, the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, enlightening the mind and drawing the affections up to the God Man, Christ Jesus, “who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through His poverty, might become rich” (see 2 Cor. 8. 9), as the partakers of the riches of His grace, as faith views Him leaving heaven, coming in our nature (the sin of that nature excepted) that He might finish transgression, make an end of sin and become everlasting righteousness to an innumerable number of sinners, that they might be the children of God by faith in Him now, and to all

eternity. Until they reach that happy place where sin no more defiles, He stands engaged to support them in all their sorrows, comfort them in all their afflictions, shield them in the hour of temptation, yea, to make all things work together for their good by the communication of His grace which shall be sufficient for them, that they might be to the praise and glory of His grace, and sing the glorious theme for ever.

That the Lord may be pleased to bless us with such a sense of His goodness which has passed before us in the way, and a realisation of His powerful, efficacious, and unchangeable faithfulness and mercy; that we may

“Praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come” (H. 220)

is the desire of

Yours to serve in the gospel,

George Whitbread

THE MEMORY OF THE JUST

Miriam Lily Main entered into eternal rest on April 29th, 1970, in her 79th year. Our dear friend was the daughter of Mr. George Main, late pastor of Scaynes Hill Chapel. Being brought up by God-fearing parents, she was never left to feel or manifest an aversion to attendance on the means of grace, but in process of time was shown the difference between flesh and spirit, form and power, being caused to feel her sinnership before God. The following are some writings left by her as to her feelings at this time and in some subsequent experiences:

“I felt there was no hope for me and was in great trouble, but went to hear Mr. Kemp who spoke of the case of the Syrophenician woman, and I felt raised to a hope that the Lord would forgive my sins and appear for me as He did the poor woman. I went on for a long time in much darkness and then a little hope in hearing different ministers, until I heard Mr. F. Brockes preach from Psalm 90. 16: “Let Thy work appear unto Thy servants, and Thy glory unto their children.” O how he went into my case as if he had known all about me! I felt full of the Lord’s goodness to me in answering my poor prayers. On the following Lord’s day, hymn 766 was announced and as we sang the last verse:

‘On such love, my soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free;
Say, whilst lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah!
Grace shall reign eternally,’

my heart was broken with a sense of the Lord's goodness to me, and I came home and wept. On the following Wednesday, Mr. Walter preached at Scaynes Hill from, 'He bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land' (Psa. 68. 6). Once again my case was entered into.

"The following Wednesday, Mr. Walter expounded on the tempest on the sea and Jesus being asleep. While walking home it came so powerfully to me: 'Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?' (Matt. 8. 26). I said, 'Lord, I seem to have no faith.' On reaching home, I picked up my Bible and opened it on the sufferings of Christ. While reading, I was so led into it, I felt what my sins had cost Him. My heart was broken and my tears flowed as these words came powerfully to me:

'The soldier pierced His side, 'tis true,
But *you* have pierced Him through and through.' (see H. 153)

I felt I could not bear it, and then it seemed to be taken away and I felt what great love to me in suffering for my sins. I felt such a love to Him, I could not describe it and wished I might die to sin no more. Again the last verse of hymn 766 was powerfully brought to me. I went in the sweet enjoyment of this for many weeks. Then the Lord withdrew His blessing and once again I was brought into great darkness and doubted everything. I could not pray or read my Bible for many weeks, until one morning something seemed to say, 'Turn to Habakkuk,' which I did, and while reading the first chapter verse 5, latter part: 'For I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you,' I felt guilty before the Lord, for I felt He had worked a great work in me which I did not believe. I felt I must keep reading until I came to the second chapter, verse 3, 'For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry,' which came with great power to me. I closed my Bible, but while walking up the road to get the bus to go to work, the first verse of hymn 339 was brought powerfully to me:

'O my distrustful heart,
How small thy faith appears!
But greater, Lord, Thou art,
Than all my doubts and fears.
Did Jesus once upon me shine?
Then Jesus is for ever mine.'

I said, 'Yes, I felt Jesus had shone upon me once, if only once,' and desired if it was of the Lord He would cause our deacon to give out the hymn or our pastor to quote it. It was quoted and the hymn was given out on the following Sunday. While still on my way to the bus, these words were spoken to me: 'Satan hath desired to have you, that he may

sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee' (Luke 22. 31, 32). I felt it would be well if Christ had prayed for me.

"I must mention another special time I had. My sister was very ill at the time, and being much tried in providence and burdened with sin, I went into the garden, where these words were spoken to me: 'When thy father and thy mother forsake thee, then I, the LORD, will take thee up' (see Psa. 27. 10), followed by: 'Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price' (1 Cor. 6. 19, 20); also: 'Redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ' (1 Pet. 1. 18, 19). My troubles were removed and I was enabled to trust the Lord for all that we stood in need of.

"Another help I received was when very cast down and burdened with sin and providence. It was as if somebody spoke these words very loudly to me: 'Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? ... Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God' (John 20. 15, 17), which once again raised me to a hope. I was greatly helped under a sermon by my brother (Mr. Percy Main) from the words, 'God is love' (1 John 4. 8), some years after which I was brought very low with a severe illness, but was much helped with these words: 'O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me' (Isa. 44. 21). Also hymn 377 ('My soul, take courage from the Lord') was made a special help, and the words, 'They feared as they entered into the cloud' (Luke 9. 34), followed by hymn 320, verse 3:

'Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.'

"*May 26th 1963*: Isaiah 41. 10 was preached from: 'Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness,' which was a good time in hearing. I had been much tried during the week as to my standing before God, but felt it would be well with me, that 'He who had helped me hitherto would help me all my journey through' (see H. 961).

"*May 23rd, 1965*: Again much helped from 1 John 5. 20: 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.' The preaching entered into much that I had been exercised with during the previous week.

"*October 1965*: Have been greatly exercised for many years concerning the Lord's ordinances, but was so fearful of taking a wrong step. Also the fear of man and being brought to confusion have been a great snare to me, for which I feel the Lord has chastened me in many

ways. On hearing a sermon from Acts. 10. 45-48: 'And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days,' I felt I could not keep back any longer. I stayed to witness the ordinance and felt I was outside but should be in, yet still I had some fears which I wanted removed, which were taken away on the following Wednesday. On the Thursday I had a special time in hearing from the words in Jeremiah 15. 15: 'O LORD, Thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in Thy longsuffering: know that for Thy sake I have suffered rebuke.' Went before the deacons; felt nervous but was helped, then greatly tried during the night. Was afterwards unanimously received by the church and baptized on October 26th, 1965. Felt very calm and composed and that I was doing what the Lord had bid me. Was blessed under a sermon previous to the baptizing from, 'Them that honour Me I will honour' (1 Sam. 2. 30).

"March 6th, 1967: Was laid upon a bed of affliction, and as I lay was led to thank God for His kindness to me in providing for me, and was then led to think on the sufferings of Christ. He was despised and rejected of men and they all forsook Him and fled. I said, 'No Lord, I have never been left quite alone,' and then I was led to the garden and to the cross and heard these words: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' (Matt. 27. 46), and saw what my sins had cost the dear Saviour, these words being brought with power to my soul:

'The palms of My hands while I look on I see
The wounds I received when suffering for thee.' (H. 993)

It broke my heart and I wept as I had done only once before in my life, and then verse 5 of hymn 968 came:

'Thou shalt see My glory soon,
When the work of grace is done;
Partner of My throne shalt be;
Say, poor sinner, lovest thou Me?'

I said, 'Yes Lord, I do love Thee, I do' – a blessed and most sacred time never to be forgotten."

M.L.L.

Miss Main suffered much in recent months and it proved necessary for her to have a serious operation. The anticipation of this caused much apprehension and she was very earnest in prayer to the Lord that He would take away her fears. This request was granted, for after entering

hospital, she sent a message to her friends to say that she had not a single fear, but perfect peace. Our friend was brought through the ordeal in a wonderful way, but died suddenly and peacefully about a fortnight later. Our loss as a church is great, but her gain is immeasurably greater. "Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? Shew us Thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us Thy salvation" (Psa. 85. 6, 7).

John W. Walder

OBITUARY

Everal Dawson, a member of the church at Zion Chapel, Brabourne Lees, wife of the late Peter Dawson, minister of the gospel in our churches, passed away on August 19th, 2019 aged 93.

Everal was born into a godly home, being the second child of the late John and Edith Jarvis. He was an acceptable supply minister for many years in the southern churches. This godly home, where reading the Word of God, prayer and the singing of God's praises were a regular routine, was used of God to fasten home a desire in her young heart to be a real Christian. One hymn sung at the home of family friends was made her anxious desire.

"O for a closer walk with God" (H. 958). She says: "How I longed for this closer walk" This hymn remained a favourite with her all her days. At about the same time, Mr. Alfred Light spoke very solemnly at the Sunday school anniversary from the words: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6. 7). This left a lasting impression on Everal and deepened her desire to know that she was among God's people.

About this time, the Second World War broke out, and eventually Peter, whom she had a secret exercise about, was called up to the Royal Air Force. In 1944 he was seriously injured in a bombing raid on London, which called all these exercises into question. On his return, he made known his feelings. But even more precious to Everal at the time was a special hearing time the Lord gave her in the vestry at Union Chapel, Bethersden, when Mr. Herbert Dawson, her future father-in-law and pastor, spoke from the words, "We would see Jesus" (John 12. 21). "How close I felt to the Lord that evening," even though the bombing raids over Kent were continuing incessantly.

A little later, at Brabourne Lees, Mr. Jesse Delves preached from, "And the sheep follow Him" (John 10. 4). Other services were made a great help to her, and in particular when her pastor preached from, "One thing have I desired of the LORD" (Psa. 27. 4). Hearing the words of hymn 428: "Humble souls, who seek salvation," at a subsequent baptizing service, her bonds were loosed and she was baptized on March

24th, 1946. The text was, "Looking unto Jesus" (Heb. 12. 2), which became a guiding word in the long years of her profession. On being received into the church, she was given the words: "Commit thy way unto the LORD ... and He shall bring it to pass" (Psa. 37. 5), a word she proved the strength of for many years.

After she and Peter were married, they passed through a testing time, when they lost their first child, and Everal was dangerously ill. The words, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matt. 26. 39), were a sanctifying touch in this extremity. She was seemingly unconscious for several hours, but though unable to communicate with others, said afterwards: "I remember lying there feeling as though I was walking through the valley of the shadow of death, yet God was with me, and the words kept coming, 'God's ways are just.' I felt I was in His hands." Everal felt in the loss of this child of but a few hours old, that like Hannah of old, she had given the child back to the Lord, having a sweet persuasion given from the Lord that it was well in the words of the children's hymn, "Around the throne of God in heaven, thousands of children stand."

While carrying the three successive children God gave to Peter and Everal, the Lord graciously supported her at each trying time with exceeding great and precious promises; "Say to them that are of fearful heart, Be strong, fear not" (Isa. 35. 4). Again, the words spoken to Daniel: "Let my Lord speak; for Thou hast strengthened me" (Dan. 10. 19).

In 1960, when her mother-in-law, Elsie Dawson, had a stroke, the whole family moved into Claremont, where for nearly ten years Everal was engaged in an arduous labour of love in caring for Peter's parents. This was made additionally heavy when Mrs. Dawson developed dementia with all its attendant problems. Many times, Everal had to live in the exercise of the word given to her when received into the church.

During this testing time, whilst visiting family members in Bedfordshire, Everal had a special hearing under the late Mr. J.O. Pack of Irthlingborough, when he preached at Southill from the words: "Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I" (Psa. 61. 2). This gave Everal a blessed lift, enabling her to continue caring for her parents-in-law until they were taken home in 1969.

During the subsequent pastorate of the late Mr. K. Howard at Union Chapel, Everal had two special times at the ordinance of the Lord's supper. The words of Matthew 26. 27 were especially sweet: "Drink ye all of it." And as Mr. Howard quoted the words: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2. 13), she said, "I felt such a nearness."

Everal proved a true helpmeet to Peter when he was sent into the ministry in 1971.

After many years of membership at Union Chapel, Peter and Everal felt that the cloud was definitely moving them to another spiritual home, Zion Chapel, Brabourne Lees. The words of Genesis 15. 1 were used to confirm her in this momentous step for them: "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

Everal's last years were years of quiet support to many others who shared their troubles with her. She had a most gracious way of listening and sympathising with others. She was a true Phebe, "a succourer of many" (Rom. 16. 2).

Her last days were spent in an old people's care home, where her quiet witness of godliness was a marked testimony to grace in what was a spiritual wilderness. Constant visits by the Lord's servants and people were, however, a great comfort to her. She remained an exercised believer right to the end of her days, as was evident in her conversation with the Lord's people. At last she quietly slipped away from this poor world to enter the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

A large number of the Lord's people gathered at her funeral to remember the Lord's goodness to her, and to mourn the loss of yet another lily in Christ's garden here below. We feel for the little church and congregation at Brabourne Lees who loved and esteemed her for Christ's sake.

"And fast as sheep to Jesus go, may lambs recruit His fold below"
(H. 374).

Gerald D. Buss

BOOK REVIEW

Hope During Desperate Times, by William Guthrie (1620-1665); paperback; 84 pages; £6.30; published by Reformation Press and obtainable from their website, www.reformationpress.co.uk, and from Christian booksellers.

The time of Oliver Cromwell's protectorate was one of great liberty of worship for all denominations, but at the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 began a period of persecution for many Christians in both England and Scotland. A church governed by bishops and worshipping in the form defined by the law was the only worship allowed, which meant that the Presbyterian system of church government was abolished in Scotland, with nearly four hundred ministers ejected from their positions in 1663 because they refused to take the oath of allegiance to the bishop. In England around two thousand ministers were ejected in 1662 who could not conscientiously continue under the new regulations.

William Guthrie was a godly Scottish minister who was expelled from his pulpit in July 1664, and this book contains three sermons preached immediately before his ejection, the first from the text, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," and the others more from the words which follow, "but in Me is thine help" (Hos. 13. 9). Perhaps no text more aptly describes our own nation today, and the lessons he draws are just as applicable today. He stresses the need to bow before

God's sovereignty in all He brings upon us, in confession and mourning over our personal sins, as well as those of the nation. And before confession, there must be conviction of sin which is personal, particular, painful and permanent. Guthrie then proceeds to examine minutely the sins we are guilty of, from ministers, elders and deacons, to people in prominent positions, ordinary people, servants and godly people generally. In all the distress that comes upon us, God is not to blame – we have destroyed ourselves. He examines the ways in which people blame God for the situation they are in, and how God vindicates His own honour and glory. Then despite our utterly lost condition in which we can only “put our mouths in the dust if so be there may be hope” (see Lam. 3. 29), there is revealed how God is able and willing to help His people, and how they are encouraged to look and wait upon Him for that help.

It appears that these may have been the last sermons Guthrie preached. He was taken ill and died just over a year later, at the early age of 45. The book has been carefully edited with many old Scottish words being helpfully explained in brackets. There were occasional expressions which the reviewer could not follow, and peculiarities in the situation in which Guthrie was found which called forth comments which could not be made now, but the solemn and faithful witness which he bore to the truth is greatly needed today.

This is not a book to be read for enjoyment, but if kept in the spirit of the words of Jeremiah, “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD” (Lam. 3. 40), it may be for real profit. It would be a mercy indeed if the Lord would by His Spirit bring many to confess God's justice in His judgments upon our own nation in our own self-destruction, and to turn to Him for help.

John A. Kingham, Luton

CHRIST'S NATIVITY

Come sinners, hail with me this blessèd morn,
 Because this day our dearest Friend was born,
 To rescue us from danger;
 Propitious day for poor, lost, ruined man,
 The incarnate God was born at Bethlehem,
 Behold Him in a manger!

Born to complete Jehovah's ancient plan;
 Go see on Mary's lap the blessed Lamb,
 The sinner's Mediator;
 The great Jehovah wrapped in flesh and blood,
 Who was the very Man, the very God,
 The very world's Creator!

And why, my soul, was Jesus born today?
 To take the sins of God's elect away,
 And set poor captives free;
 God had agreed before the world begun,
 To lay poor sinner's help on God the Son,
 To die upon the tree.

The time was fixed before the birth of day,
 That Christ should come redemption's price to pay,
 And give the law its due;
 The curses man deserved, He bore them all,
 And pledged to die for man before the Fall,
 Jehovah's chosen few.

Hosanna to this glorious Prince of Peace!
 Lord, make my faith and love to have increase,
 Thy love so rich and free;
 Redemption's work may well make angels wonder,
 For Christ was born to still Mount Sinai's thunder,
 And settle God's decree.

In David's city, Messiah there was born;
 Mount Zion's King was subject there to scorn,
 And lodged within a stable;
 On Mary's knee the Lord of glory lay.
 To Bethlehem, poor sinner, ask thy way;
 To save thee He is able.

The life and death of Christ redemption cost;
 Poor sinner, Christ was born to save the lost,
 The helpless, and the poor;
 All this was planned by the eternal Three,
 One God in essence from eternity,
 The God whom we adore.

The shepherds were directed to an inn,
 The Babe born there, the Godhead dwelt in Him,
 Let scoffers laugh and jeer;
 Born to fulfil what God had fore-appointed,
 This was the Christ Jehovah had anointed,
 His chosen to set clear.

With special joy let's keep our Christmas day,
 Since Christ was born our wretched debt to pay,
 Such bankrupts by the Fall;
 He paid this debt upon a bloody tree;
 Go man, from Bethlehem to Calvary,
 And crown Him Lord of All!

His name is Wonderful, the Mighty God,
 The Everlasting Father; fear His rod
 Ye bold blaspheming tribe;
 Through strong delusions you believe a lie;
 Though you may dare His Godhead to deny,
 'Twas not for you He died.

No, He was born to save Jehovah's choice;
 Well might the shepherds at His birth rejoice,
 They knew for what He came:

To finish that great work He undertook,
 To save each soul that's written in the book,
 He knows them all by name.

For what did Jesus die, but to redeem?
 This was Jehovah's own eternal scheme,
 To save the chosen race;
 I'll trust my all with Him who died for me,
 And carry all my guilt to Calvary,
 And triumph in His grace.

Sweet Babe of Bethlehem, I hail Thy birth;
 There's none but saved sinners know Thy worth,
 Thou art the King of glory;
 From Mary's womb Thou travelledst to the tree,
 And there didst pay the mighty debt for me;
 O what a blessed story!

Shall I be dumb to celebrate Thy name?
 No, I would spread from pole to pole Thy fame,
 And tell to all around;
 It was poor Mary's Son, that Nazarene,
 Who once was born His people to redeem –
 This is the joyful sound.

Then go ye heralds, preach His precious name;
 Although ten thousand say you are to blame,
 Regard not what they say;
 In man's redemption Christ is All in all,
 And those who stood in Him before the Fall
 Will stand in that great day.

O may I stand amongst that blessed throng,
 To sing that sweet, that everlasting song,
 Redemption full and free!
 Methinks I'll raise the highest notes of all,
 To Him who loved me when in Adam's Fall.
 Jesus, that loved Me.

Daniel Herbert (1751-1833)

NOTICE OF DEATH

Jay Kenneth Stehouwer, faithful pastor at Zion Chapel, Grand Rapids, United States of America, for just under forty-four years, passed away to eternal rest on Lord's day, November 17th, 2019, aged 95 years.

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matt. 25. 21).

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OUR MAGAZINES

We must humbly acknowledge the Lord's gracious help with editing our magazine through another year. Even in this we have to prove, "For without Me ye can do nothing." May the *Gospel Standard* still be made a blessing to the pilgrims in Zion, as they journey on, seeking "a better country, that is, an heavenly." We express our appreciation to all who help in various ways. "Brethren, pray for us."

The Editor